



Department of International Relations and Regional Studies
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**Orthodoxy and Liberalism: A Conceptual History of the Religious Aspect of Liberal
Ideas of National Identity in Russia**

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Abstract:

This thesis explores the religious aspect of liberal ideas of national identity in the late Romanov Empire, focusing on how Orthodoxy shaped the work of key Russian liberal thinkers. While liberalism is often portrayed as a secular and Western ideology, this study argues that a distinctive Russian liberalism emerged through an innovative engagement with Orthodox theology, specifically concepts such as *Sobornost*, and *Godmanhood*. In doing so, it challenges dominant narratives of liberalism and postcolonial scholarship, in particular the notion of Russia's ideological subalternity.

Methodologically, the thesis employs Reinhart Koselleck's approach to conceptual history to trace the evolution and semantic layering of concepts such as liberalism, national identity, and Orthodoxy. It focuses on three major philosophical and political symposia from the early twentieth century: *Problems of Idealism*, *Landmarks*, and *Out of the Depths*. In doing so, it analyses how Russian thinkers such as Nikolai Berdyaev, Sergei Bulgakov, and Pyotr Struve synthesised European idealism with Orthodoxy.

The thesis demonstrates that these thinkers articulated a vision of national identity rooted not solely in ethnic chauvinism or secular nationalism, but in a theological ideal of personalism and cultural renewal. Their critique of positivism, materialism, and Western historicism led them to propose an alternative temporality; one shaped by a dialectic of loss and recovery, informed by both European and Orthodox intellectual traditions.

By recovering this neglected current of religious liberalism, the thesis contributes to the broader rethinking of Russian nationalism, and identity. It ultimately challenges the binaries of East and West, secular and religious, and progress and reaction, offering a more nuanced approach for understanding Russian political thought.

Introduction:

“Russia exists spiritually [...] It was conceived in the thought of God,”¹ concluded the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev. Nevertheless, most notable scholars of modern political thought have long presumed that liberalism, nationalism, and religion do not blend, especially regarding Russia. They have largely characterised liberalism and nationalism as secular phenomena. However, throughout Russian history, numerous prominent Russian liberals have couched their conceptualisations of Russian national identity in Orthodox ideas, such as *Sobornost*. While several scholars of political theology and philosophy have long studied these works, students of nationalism have devoted scant attention to them and the religious aspect of liberal ideas of Russian national identity more broadly. This neglect of religious thinking on national identity is the principal research gap addressed by this thesis. Studying the integration of European idealism and romanticism with Orthodox ideas in liberal articulations of Russian national identity will provide an explanation for the religious dimension of Russian liberalism.

Moreover, this examination of liberalism, nationalism, and Orthodoxy opens the possibility for a broader reflection on Russian identity, historiography, and its relationship to Europe. Hence, the thesis reflects on subaltern studies and its application in the Russian context, specifically the work of Vyacheslav Morozov.² He contends that Russia is both an imperial and marginal state.³ While Russia has colonised others, it has itself been marginalised by the West, ideationally and economically. He highlights Russia's economically subservient position through notions of uneven and combined development. However, this developmental emphasis in his work only recreates the historicist arguments he supposedly aims to deconstruct. For him, Russia simultaneously mimics and negates the West, demonstrating the latter's hegemony. Russia's inability to articulate an independent identity reveals its subaltern position in the global order. Additionally, he defends the idea of internal colonisation, the idea that Europeanised elites colonised

¹ William F. Woehrlin, trans., *Out of the Depths: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution* (Charles Schlacks Jr., 1986), 119.

² Despite Vyacheslav Morozov's conviction for actions against the Estonian state, both the University of Tartu and the Estonian authorities have explicitly stated that there is no reason to doubt the integrity of his academic work. The University of Tartu confirmed that “we have had no grounds to question Viacheslav Morozov's earlier work” (<https://www.err.ee/1609223568/kapo-kahtlustab-tu-professorit-eeesti-riigi-vastases-luuretegevuses>). Similarly, the Estonian Internal Security Service noted that “his activities did not interfere with his academic work.” (<https://news.err.ee/1609374515/university-professor-found-guilty-of-espionage-against-estonian-state>).

³ Vyacheslav Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

their people in ways analogous to Western imperialism. However, his emphasis on deconstruction as liberation does little to address the subaltern's apparent voicelessness. Thus, this thesis foregrounds the notion of recovery in its analysis of Russian thought.

Numerous scholars have criticised his diminishment of the consequences of Russian imperialism, especially its racial and ideational elements.⁴ However, through more nuanced historical examples, this thesis will illustrate how Russian thinkers during the late Romanov era participated in and developed European thought. Through this participation, they synthesised European and Russian Orthodox ideas. Reacting to the emerging crisis of modernity, they articulated a Russian identity based on the recovery of certain Orthodox principles, which would aid the cultural development of Russia. In this effort, they posited an idea of Russian history based on a dialectic of loss and recovery that stands apart from European historicism, whether nationalist, liberal, or Marxist. Rooted in the rediscovery of the Orthodox idea of theosis, they advance a perception of Russian history and time based on the gradual process of recovering an ideal spiritual and cultural community rather than the realisation of a material utopia. Ultimately, this exploration of Russian thought challenges the notion of Russian ideational subalternity.

Methodologically, this research will resolve another significant lacuna. This thesis will utilise a methodological approach rooted in the literature on conceptual history, principally the works of the German scholar Reinhart Koselleck.⁵ Excluding Mjør, relatively few scholars of Russian intellectual history have employed a conceptual historical approach.⁶ Conceptual history seeks to contextualise significant ideas and works, tracing how they have changed and developed under modernity. In doing so, it will not consider one concept in particular as most of Koselleck's works do. Instead, using his idea of conceptual semantic fields, it will analyse national identity as a field of interrelated concepts. Therefore, to understand the

⁴ Tamar Koplatazde, "Theorising Russian postcolonial studies," *Postcolonial Studies* 22, no. 4 (2019): 469-489; Vsevolod Samokhvalov, "Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World by Viacheslav Morozov," *Ab Imperio*, no. 1 (2016): 463-470.

⁵ Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Columbia University Press, 2004); Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Presner et al. (Stanford University Press, 2002).

⁶ Kåre Johan Mjør, "Smuta: cyclical visions of history in contemporary Russian thought and the question of hegemony," *Studies in East European Thought* 70, no. 1 (2018): 19-40; Kåre Johan Mjør, "Budushhee proshlogo: k istorii ponyatiya russkaya ideya," in *Issledovaniya po istorii russkoj mysli*, eds. M.A. Kolerova and N.S. Plotnikova (2014); Kåre Johan Mjør, "Metaphysics, Aesthetics, or Epistemology? A Conceptual History of *Tvorchestvo* in Nineteenth Century Russian Thought," *The Slavic and East European Journal* (2018): 4-25; Kåre Johan Mjør, "Universalising idealism: the cross-cultural case of Russian religious thought," *Global Intellectual History* 6, no. 5 (2021): 672-689.

religious aspect of liberal ideas of Russian national identity, it will consider the attempts of various liberal thinkers to reintegrate primordial Orthodox concepts, such as *Sobornost*, into a Russian identity based on a personalist political approach.

This study will analyse three symposia from the late Romanov Empire: *Problems of Idealism*, *Landmarks*, and *Out of the Depths*.⁷ These three works were published between 1902 and 1918. Besides possessing a broad thematic unity, these three texts share several crucial contributors in common. They all combined a critique of materialism and revolutionary violence, with an emphasis on spiritual and cultural renewal as the basis for national development. A plethora of prominent liberal and religious thinkers contributed to these collections, such as Nikolai Berdyaev, Sergei Bulgakov, and Semyon Frank. Others, such as the well-known Kadets Pavel Novgorodtsev, Alexander Izgoev, and Pyotr Struve, also wrote for at least two of the editions. William Woehrlin, in the introduction to his translation of *Out of the Depths*, notes:

“Taken together these three symposia, with minor variations, are part of a single religious inspiration – the minority voice in the intelligentsia in opposition to the mainstream.”⁸

While this thesis endeavours to use these texts' original Russian language editions where possible, it primarily relies on English translations due to a lack of access to the Russian originals. However, it contextualises them using a range of Russian language scholarly articles. Overall, analysing these collections provides an invaluable opportunity to appraise the development of the religious intellectual current in Russian liberalism during this period, especially its neglected emphasis on national identity.

Chapter one will outline the methodological approaches employed in this thesis. It will explore Koselleck's principal concepts and methods before comparing his work to that of Anglophone scholars of intellectual history. Ultimately, this research will ask what the main concepts articulated in these texts are concerning national identity? How have their valencies changed over time? How does secular thought overlap, complement, or antagonise Orthodox thought within these texts? Overall, what implications does

⁷ Randall A. Poole, ed., *Problems of Idealism: Essays in Russian Social Philosophy* (Yale University Press, 2005); Boris Shragin and Albert Todd, eds., trans. Marian Schwartz, *Landmarks: A Collection of Essays on the Russian Intelligentsia* (New York: Routledge, 2019); William F. Woehrlin, trans., *Out of the Depths: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution* (Charles Schlacks Jr., 1986).

⁸ Woehrlin, trans., *Out of the Depths: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution*, xx.

this investigation have for conceptualising Russia's relationship to Europe? Following this methodological deliberation, chapter two will consider the existing literature on Russian liberalism, nationalism, and Orthodoxy of this period. It will also define some central concepts, such as liberalism and nationalism. In addition, this chapter will outline how subaltern scholars have approached the Russian case. In doing so, it will consider some of the criticisms of these studies before elaborating on how this study will add to this ongoing debate. Chapter three will examine *Problems of Idealism* and *Landmarks*. Before engaging with the central arguments of these texts, it will develop an explanation of Vladimir Solovyov's thought to contextualise these texts and understand the intellectual current that formed them and to which they contributed. Additionally, this chapter will ask how the secular and religious or Slavophile conceptions of national identity are developed and overlap in these texts. Chapter four will analyse *Out of the Depths* and how the ideas presented in the earlier works evolved throughout the revolutionary period. It will more fully consider their views on history and time, which this thesis argues should be understood as a dialectic of loss and recovery. Lastly, chapter five will search for the relevance of these texts in the Soviet period and contemporary Russia. What does their use tell us about identity in Putin's Russia?

Chapter 1 – Methodological Approach

Before delving into the analytical portion of the thesis, a brief explanation of its methodological approach is required. The literature on conceptual history and postcolonial studies will form the methodological basis of this project. Ihalainen has described conceptual history as being concerned with the following:

“The ever-evolving meanings assigned to past political and social concepts by those who used them — as well as the changes in the content of such concepts over the course of time — are regarded as major objects of historical analysis.”⁹

Nevertheless, there are several approaches to intellectual history, from Lovejoy’s history of ideas to the *Begriffsgeschichte* of Koselleck to the more synchronic approach of Skinner. This chapter will argue that Koselleck’s idea of *Begriffsgeschichte* is the most suited to formulating an explanation of the religious aspect of liberal ideas of Russian national identity within the works analysed in this research. It will elaborate on the origins and principles of this approach and outline some of the research that has employed it. Following this synopsis of conceptual history, this chapter will demonstrate how conceptual history can better elucidate ideas of time, history, and identity in Russian historiography. This thesis will underline how conceptual history can provide us with an explanation of Russia’s ambiguity, overcoming the often myopic approach of postcolonial approaches.

As mentioned above, there are several approaches to conceptual history. Some are synchronic, concentrating on contextualising specific speech acts, while others are diachronic, focusing on understanding conceptual change over time. The Anglophone tradition, best represented by the works of Skinner and Pocock, is concerned with the former.¹⁰ They have foregrounded the interconnections between the language of politics, thought and action. For instance, Skinner has concentrated on the intentionality behind individual speech acts to ascertain how the user engages a concept to evoke a particular meaning. He does this by comparing its use in each speech act to the linguistic conventions of that epoch. Thus, Ihalainen, in his analysis of the various approaches to conceptual history, concludes “that each speech act

⁹ Pasi Ihalainen, "Between historical semantics and pragmatics: Reconstructing past political thought through conceptual history," *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 7, no. 1 (2006), 116.

¹⁰ Iain Hampsher-Monk, "Speech Acts, Languages or Conceptual History," in *History of Concepts: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Iain Hampsher-Monk, Karin Tilmans and Frank van Vree (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998), 45.

— or use of language in which something was done with language — is unique and has appeared within a specific context, and hence each occurrence of a concept is unique as well.”¹¹ On the other hand, Koselleck’s *Begriffsgeschichte*, combining the German terms for concept and history, favours a broader frame of analysis. While pursuing the synchronic study of speech acts, he integrates intellectual and social history to understand how concepts, such as revolution and crisis, have changed diachronically. He states: “Without common concepts there is no society, and above all, no political field of action.”¹² In doing so, he provides an insightful account of how the acceleration of time initiated by the onset of modernity has reshaped our past experiences and reformulated our expectations of the future.

The origins of *Begriffsgeschichte* lie in the perspectivism of Nietzsche and Weber and the works of Brunner, who sought to address the lacuna in the historical study of ideas regarding socio-political contexts and structures.¹³ Their efforts and those of their successors like Koselleck centre on the linguistic turn in historical studies, whereby language was recognised as constitutive and reflective of society. Koselleck’s colleague Rolf Reichardt expanded the emerging discipline to include semantic networks consisting of “opposite, equivalent, and complementary” concepts in his examination of political concepts employed during the French Revolution.¹⁴ Nevertheless, Koselleck’s diachronic exploration of conceptual history will form the methodological basis of this thesis, while incorporating Skinnerian synchronic approaches.

Central to Koselleck’s thought is the idea of multiple temporalities.¹⁵ He underlines that concepts are not just linguistic devices but are socially embedded; their meaning changes in response to structural and circumstantial social change. Hence, his insistence on synchronic and diachronic analysis. In addition, he maintains that concepts not only respond to change but also drive change. He illustrates this in his examination of the concept of revolution. He begins by commenting that our understanding of revolution

¹¹ Ihalainen, “Between historical semantics and pragmatics: Reconstructing past political thought through conceptual history,” 122.

¹² Reinhart Koselleck, “Begriffsgeschichte and Social History,” in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Columbia University Press, 2004), 76.

¹³ Kai Vogelsang, “Conceptual History: A Short Introduction,” *Oriens Extremus* 51, (2012): 10.

¹⁴ Vogelsang, “Conceptual History: A Short Introduction,” 11.

¹⁵ Reinhart Koselleck, “History, Histories, and Formal Time Structures,” in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Columbia University Press, 2004), 93-105.

is “a linguistic product of our modernity.”¹⁶ In contrast to our modern understanding of revolution, he outlines how revolution previously indicated a return to a point of departure, a return to an earlier political order. Citing Hareau’s observation in 1842, he noted how revolution previously signified the natural cycle of political regimes, not their destruction.¹⁷ While this notion of revolution referred to political struggle, it was pre-determined, natural.

He elaborates on how, through the Glorious Revolution and the arrival of the Enlightenment, revolution came to represent a more general movement filled with utopian expectations. This idea aligns with his notion of *Sattelzeit* or saddle time, how modernity transformed and accelerated our understanding of time.¹⁸ It also became social rather than political, rather than signifying the repetition of civil conflicts between reified social classes, such as the King and his barons; revolution became social, entailing the liberation of mankind. He cites Marx, who said, “Every revolution dissolves the old society, and to that extent it is social. Every revolution overthrows the old power.”¹⁹ In addition, he emphasises that revolution became universal and global, as well as permanent, at least until they attained their ultimate goal. Moreover, the revolution was future-oriented. Revolution was no longer concerned with centralising monarchs and aristocrats clinging to their ancient rights but with overcoming the past to reach a utopian future. Once more, he quotes Marx:

“Earlier revolutions required recollections of past world history in order to dull themselves to their own content. In order to arrive at its own content, the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead.”²⁰

Nevertheless, history remained relevant as revolutionaries recast history to support their claims to the future. Lastly, he explains how revolution became a claim to leadership for those who immersed themselves in the laws of history. Hence, Lenin’s notion of vanguardism and the messianic attitude of the pre-

¹⁶ Reinhart Koselleck, “Historical Criteria of the Modern Concept of Revolution,” in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Columbia University Press, 2004), 44.

¹⁷ Koselleck, “Historical Criteria of the Modern Concept of Revolution,” 45.

¹⁸ Reinhart Koselleck, “The Need for Theory in History,” in *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Presner et al. (Stanford University Press, 2002).

¹⁹ Koselleck, “Historical Criteria of the Modern Concept of Revolution,” 52.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 54.

revolution intelligentsia, which we shall return to later. Ultimately, Koselleck's exploration highlights how modernity revealed new spaces of experience and horizons of expectation.

The notions of "space of experience" and "horizon of expectation" are central to understanding Koselleck's approach. He differentiates between "the presence of the past" and "the presence of the future."²¹ The former is a spatial totality containing all the layers of meaning a specific concept has accumulated over time, while the latter is potential not yet present. The horizon is a line beyond which the possibility of new experience opens. To illustrate how modern concepts use a reading of the past to project future expectations, he recounts a joke about communism: In a speech, Khrushchev declared, "Communism is already visible on the horizon." He then received a question from the audience: "Comrade Khrushchev, what is a 'horizon'?" He replied, "Look it up in a dictionary." Once the questioner returned home, he found the following definition: "Horizon, an apparent line separating the sky from the earth, which retreats as one approaches it."²² We see this notion of the horizon of expectations at work in his analysis of the concept of revolution expounded above. His idea that a concept contains layers of meaning is also a cornerstone of his thought. While the meaning of a concept like revolution might explicitly change, other concepts can hold multiple meanings at once. Koselleck highlights this in his exploration of concepts, such as *Bürger*, *Staats Bürger*, and *Stadt Bürger*.²³ Ultimately, his approach concentrates on apprehending how concepts change with time and change our understanding of time and, in doing so, how they acquire layers of meaning, waiting to be untangled.

Regarding identity construction, his notion of asymmetrical counter-concepts is crucial. He describes how groups employ different conceptual binaries to construct their singular identity. He continues that identities emerge first by delineating, universalising, and affirming themselves while excluding others. He notes, "However constituted, concepts are needed within which the group can recognise and define itself."²⁴ He elaborates on several historical examples, such as Hellene vs. barbarians

²¹ Reinhart Koselleck, "'Space of Experience' and 'Horizon of Expectation': Two Historical Categories," in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Columbia University Press, 2004), 260.

²² Koselleck, "'Space of Experience' and 'Horizon of Expectation': Two Historical Categories," 261.

²³ Koselleck, "Begriffsgeschichte and Social History," 82.

²⁴ Reinhart Koselleck, "The Historical-Political Semantics of Asymmetric Counterconcepts," in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Columbia University Press, 2004), 156.

and Christians vs. heathens. Concerning this study of the intersection of liberalism, nationalism, and Orthodoxy in the Romanov Empire, we can distinguish various examples: Slavophile vs. Westerniser, positivism vs. idealism, atheism vs. faith, and progress vs. reaction. These concepts serve to legitimise oneself while marginalising the other. In doing so, they have significant implications for how we analyse identities, discourses, and power dynamics.

In more recent decades, Anglophone scholars have reappraised conceptual history. Scholars like Melvin Richter and David Armitage have reintegrated an emphasis on the *long durée* into Anglophone intellectual history. Richter acknowledges the advantages of the *Begriffsgeschichte* of Koselleck, accepting the futility of concentrating on language at the expense of context.²⁵ Meanwhile, Armitage has advanced his idea of serial contextualism, claiming that big is back. In contrast to the synchronic focus of Anglophone scholarship, he ponders: “There is no good reason why we cannot overcome that objection by building corridors between the cars, as it were: that is, ways of joining diachronically reconstructed contexts across time - transtemporally - to produce longer-range histories which are neither artificially punctuated nor deceptively continuous.”²⁶ To an extent, this is what this research endeavours to do through the inclusion of an epilogue outlining how the ideas of early twentieth century idealist thinkers have been employed in modern-day Russia’s memory wars, demonstrating the utility of this approach in investigating conceptual uses that reinforce political grand narratives.

Therefore, this thesis will apply these diachronic and synchronic approaches to formulate an explanation for the intersection of Orthodox and religious thought in discourses of Russian national identity. However, as Ihaleinen extrapolates, conceptual history is not necessarily a rigid methodology but rather a “scholarly attitude” that explores the layered meanings of concepts in political discourse and how they relate to their socio-political context.²⁷ Therefore, this research will investigate the contexts in which concepts, such as liberalism, Orthodoxy, and national identity, were articulated. What were their specific valencies, and how did they change over time? How do concepts such as liberalism and Orthodoxy overlap

²⁵ Melvin Richter, *The History of Political and Social Concepts: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 1995).

²⁶ David Armitage, “What’s the Big Idea? Intellectual History and the *longue durée*,” *History of European Ideas* 38, no. 4 (2012), 498-499.

²⁷ Ihaleinen, “Between historical semantics and pragmatics: Reconstructing past political thought through conceptual history,” 117.

in developing a discourse on Russian national identity? If they intersect, how does a secular form of thought, such as liberalism, complement or antagonise Orthodox thought? What implications does this perspective have for understanding the relationship between Russia and Europe?

As alluded to above, this research will not elaborate on the specific history of Russian national identity. Instead, it will demonstrate how liberal thought interacted with Orthodoxy to articulate a particular idea of Russian identity. This thesis contends that concepts cannot be studied independently but exist within networks of meaning. While Koselleck's idea of asymmetrical counter-concepts provides for the study of the interaction between concepts, it foregrounds a mutually antagonistic relationship. However, he does refer vaguely to the idea of semantic fields or *Bedeutungsfelder*.²⁸ Concepts thus gain meaning through their interaction with other concepts. Developing his idea of *Sattelzeit*, he demonstrates how the social experience of modernity has shifted the meaning of whole conceptual clusters, such as nation, liberty, and revolution. However, he does not account for how concepts as opposed as liberalism and Orthodoxy intersect within discourses. Moreover, his notion of *Sattelzeit* does that neatly mirror the development of modernity in the Russian context. While this blind spot may result from Koselleck's focus on Western European conceptual history, this approach of looking at how concepts are represented and cohere in a discourse does represent a methodological innovation. Hence, this research incorporates postcolonial and subaltern studies, which will be outlined in the succeeding chapter. Through their incorporation, this study problematises the diminishing of subaltern agency and the binary representations present in subaltern studies of intellectual history and cultural exchange. Nevertheless, it remains indebted to Koselleck's development of ideas such as multiple temporalities and the layering of meaning within concepts.

Other scholars specialising in intellectual and conceptual history, such as Richter and Palonen, have similarly addressed this idea, concentrating on the development of political languages.²⁹ However, they do not account for how a concept like liberalism, associated with the language of progress, can be integrated with a concept like Orthodoxy, widely considered reactionary. Freedom and his theory of ideology develops

²⁸ Koselleck, "'Space of Experience' and 'Horizon of Expectation': Two Historical Categories," 257.

²⁹ Kari Palonen, "The Politics of Conceptual History," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 1, no. 1 (2005): 37–50.

the notion of core, adjacent, and peripheral concepts, building on Koselleck's idea of semantic fields.³⁰ Similarly, Ilhaleinen in his study of the secularisation of concepts of nationhood in English and Swedish political sermons during the eighteenth century considers combinations of concepts, such as "nation," "virtue," and "liberty."³¹ Thus, this study will consider Orthodoxy, liberalism, and national identity as a semantic network in the context of the late Romanov Empire. While this thesis relies on the work of Koselleck, it also considers how his ideas have been integrated and adapted into the work of other prominent scholars across the field. For instance, Freedon, in his study of political ideologies, outlines how "the basic units of thinking about politics are the concepts that constitute its main foci."³² He continues that the analysis of political thought "is most usefully promoted by proceeding from the conceptual morphologies it displays."³³ He notes how scholars of ideologies, such as liberalism and nationalism, may consider "basic concepts as individually shaped coathangers on which additional concepts may be draped, though the form of the latter then inevitably fits the contours of the specified hanger." Similarly to Koselleck, he underlines the importance of relating concepts to the social world in order to understand how they came about. To understand the entanglement of Orthodoxy, liberalism, and national identity in the late Romanov Empire, we must assemble a hierarchy of concepts to deconstruct the meaning of these discourses. This framework enables the investigation of sub-concepts, such as *Sobornost*, theosis and Godmanhood, whose articulation and reinterpretation joins liberal and Orthodox concepts and discourses to establish a Russian identity rooted in marrying Orthodox teleology with liberal civil and political rights. As Freedon outlines, "Political concepts acquire meaning [...] by means of their particular structural position within a configuration of other political concepts."³⁴ Ultimately, his work enables us to address the unresolved issue at the heart of conceptual history; how do individual concepts, such as liberty and equality, relate to each other.

³⁰ Michael Freedon, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Clarendon Press, 1996).

³¹ Freedon, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*, 78.

³² *Ibid.*, 2.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

In addition, several scholars, including Catherine Evtuhov and Stephen Kotkin, demonstrated how ideas and cultural movements did not simply diffuse from a Western European centre to a passive East.³⁵ They foreground the temporal and spatial complexity of ideational exchange, highlighting their multidirectional character. More specifically, they emphasise the agency of supposedly peripheral actors, who, in reinterpreting concepts, were often at the forefront of innovation. In doing so, they reframe this complex process as a cultural gradient. For instance, Mjør's study of religious idealism in the late-Romanov Empire outlines how thinkers like Solovyov reinterpreted Orthodox concepts like theosis through their encounter with German idealism.³⁶ Indeed, he questions the idea of a secular Europe and a religious Russia. Thus, by employing the varied approaches to conceptual and intellectual history outlined above, both synchronic and diachronic, this study will address the often binary approaches to intellectual history of postcolonial and subaltern studies. Rather than focusing on binaries like East vs. West or modernisation vs. backwardness, conceptual history enables us to consider peripheral liberalisms and nationalisms, not as derivative discourses, but as self-reflexive discourses that reflect the subtleties in their ideas of history and identity.

Until recently, scholars rarely employed conceptual history outside its original German context. Nevertheless, since the 1990s, scholars in the Netherlands and Finland, through endeavours such as the "History of Political and Social Concepts Group," formulated more country specific approaches.³⁷ In doing so, they synthesised various methodological approaches. As Ihalainen has stated: "An historian can and should apply theories advocated by these (and other) historians within the same study."³⁸ Thus, this research aims to contribute to this development of conceptual history.

Moreover, this research will consider three different collections of essays from the late Romanov period: *Problems of Idealism*, *Landmarks*, and *Out of the Depths*.³⁹ These collections have been selected

³⁵ Catherine Evtuhov and Stephen Kotkin, *The Cultural Gradient: The Transmission of Ideas in Europe, 1789-1991* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003).

³⁶ Mjør, "Universalising idealism: the cross-cultural case of Russian religious thought," 672-689.

³⁷ Palonen, "The Politics of Conceptual History," 37.

³⁸ Ihalainen, "Between historical semantics and pragmatics: Reconstructing past political thought through conceptual history," 121.

³⁹ Randall A. Poole, ed., *Problems of Idealism: Essays in Russian Social Philosophy* (Yale University Press, 2005); Boris Shragin and Albert Todd, eds., trans. Marian Schwartz, *Landmarks: A Collection of Essays on the Russian Intelligentsia* (New

as they are widely perceived to contain some of the most significant idealist works of political thought and philosophy in the late Romanov Empire. They were published between 1903 and 1921. They also share many of the same contributors, such as Berdyaev, Struve, and Bulgakov. In addition, as these figures were also actively engaged in the political and religious life of the late Romanov Empire, their works provide an ideal foundation from which to interrogate the assertion underlying conceptual history that concepts and social structures are intimately connected. In doing so, this thesis will rely on a range of other sources, both academic and polemical, to contextualise these principal texts. Therefore, these works provide an excellent insight into the development of idealist thought, integrating both liberal and religious elements, during the revolutionary period.

In addition, an epilogue will be included, developing an explanation of the utilisation of these ideas in Russia's current politics. While this juxtaposition may seem awkward, it is in line with both Koselleck's idea of semantic change and Armitage's serial contextualism. Kari Palonen contends that "conceptual history is becoming increasingly indispensable due to the historical trends in political practices."⁴⁰ Firstly, he criticises essentialist notions like modernity and civilisation, underlining the historicity and contingency of universalist concepts. For him the purpose of conceptual history is to question the underlying progressive search for a neat, certain, and stable order.⁴¹ This assertion speaks to what he sees as the relevance of conceptual history in seeking to understand the historical layers of usage in concepts in response to the shift in politics from a focus on issues to an emphasis on agenda-setting and determining which concepts are deemed political.⁴² He concentrates on the reinterpreting of concepts as the fulcrum of politics. Therefore, he notes the pedagogic purpose of conceptual history today revealing the contingency of concepts, preventing depoliticisation, and how to conceptually "read" politics.⁴³ Thus, this study will apply conceptual history to liberalism and Orthodoxy in contemporary Russian politics to demonstrate the

York: Routledge, 2019); William F. Woehrlin, trans., *Out of the Depths: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution* (Charles Schlacks Jr., 1986).

⁴⁰ Palonen, "The Politics of Conceptual History," 37.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 47.

relevance of conceptual history to investigating current ideas of Russian national identity and ideas of Russia's subalternity.

In conclusion, this thesis will employ Koselleck's *Begriffsgeschichte*, as well as the methodological approaches developed by several other scholars, to provide an explanation of the religious aspect of liberal ideas of Russian national identity, primarily during the late Romanov Empire. While this chapter has outlined the origins and pillars of this approach and considered its connections to other approaches in the field, it has also underlined the principal innovation of this approach. Demonstrating the complementarity of Orthodoxy and liberalism will problematise several binaries in Koselleck's thought, such as progress and reaction. Extrapolating the ideas of these thinkers in relation to time and history will account for Russia's ambiguity, overcoming the binary notions articulated in subaltern studies of Russian national identity. Ultimately, this is the principal gap in the literature that this thesis addresses.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Following the previous chapter's exploration of this research's methodological approach, we must extrapolate its contribution to the study of Liberalism and Orthodoxy. In addition, we must elucidate its relevance for postcolonial and subaltern studies in the Russian context. Firstly, this chapter will define the key concepts used in the study, such as liberalism, Orthodoxy, and national identity. Secondly, it will also place this thesis in the existing literature on liberalism, Orthodoxy, and national identity in the late Romanov Empire. It will highlight some gaps in the existing literature and suggest how conceptual history can address them. Thirdly, this section will outline how this study's exploration of these concepts, how they relate to other concepts and ideas like time, history, and progress, problematises certain understandings of Russia's relationship with Europe then and now. Ultimately, this thesis will foreground how Russian thought engaged and "talked back" to Western political thought, undermining notions of Russian subalternity.

Liberalism, Nationalism, and Orthodoxy:

Before engaging with the literature, we must define what liberalism means. Several definitions and understandings of liberalism have proliferated since the nineteenth century. Regarding Russia, Daniel Field remarks, "it is not clear . . . what 'liberal' and 'liberalism' mean with reference to nineteenth-century Russia."⁴⁴ Indeed, scholars have spilt a considerable amount of ink trying to decipher the core tenets of liberalism. John Gray contends that liberalism is simultaneously individualistic in its belief that the individual is the primary agent in political life, egalitarian and universalist in that each individual has dignity and worth, meliorist and progressive in its contention that society is improvable, and collectivist in its belief in the primacy of the nation-state and self-determination.⁴⁵ Perhaps Robinson, in his recent history of Russian liberalism, sums up the tradition best. He maintains that it is both an ideology and movement committed to the enacting of specific liberal political and economic principles and practices, such as pluralism and personalism, through a set of institutions like free elections.⁴⁶ In truth, definitions of liberalism varyingly emphasise different aspects: equality, liberty, progress, law, and rationality.

⁴⁴ Daniel Field, "Kavelin and Russian Liberalism," *Slavic Review* 32, no. 1 (1973): 59.

⁴⁵ John Gray, *Liberalism* (University of Minnesota Press, 1986), x.

⁴⁶ Paul Robinson, *Russian Liberalism* (Cornell University Press, 2023), 10.

Kapeliushnikov notes, “It is appropriate to compare it to a gigantic ship to whose bottom, after long years of sailing, there has stuck an inconceivable quantity of all kinds of odds and ends.”⁴⁷ Duncan Bell proposes a neat solution, contending that “the liberal tradition is constituted by the sum of the arguments that have been classified as liberal, and recognised as such by other self-proclaimed liberals, across time and space.”⁴⁸ Thus, we cannot speak of a singular liberalism but rather a family of liberalisms. This definition will be employed in this thesis.

In the Russian context, the issue is not any simpler. As Gutorov notes, “Defining liberalism was an extremely knotty problem in Russian social thought from the very beginning.”⁴⁹ As outlined above, there remains the contentious issue of how liberalism relates to and is influenced by other ideas, such as religion, metaphysics, and Orthodoxy. However, using Koselleck’s idea of semantic fields mentioned above, we may untangle the confusion. By understanding how these concepts relate to each other, we can comprehend how discourses of national identity are constructed.

Several scholars of liberalism, including John Gray, insist that liberalism is a distinct product of Western history, implying its failure elsewhere.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, this study does not accept his argument that “Liberalism did not die in Russia. It was never born.”⁵¹ Instead, it will argue that Western ideas, such as liberalism, positivism, and idealism, interacted with Orthodoxy to produce a distinct Russian liberal sensibility. On the other hand, this thesis agrees with his assertion that “Western puzzlement [over the fate of liberalism] reflected a long-standing failure to understand the role of religion in the Russian state.”⁵² Thus, this study maintains that we cannot disentangle the fate of liberalism in Russia from the study of Orthodoxy.

⁴⁷ Rostislav Kapeliushnikov, “Rossiiskii liberalizm: Byt’ ili ne byt’?” *Colta*, July 16, 2019, <https://www.colta.ru/articles/specials/21886-rossiyskiy-liberalizm-byt-ili-ne-byt>.

⁴⁸ Duncan Bell, “What Is Liberalism?” *Political Theory* 42, no. 6 (2014): 689.

⁴⁹ V. A. Gutorov, “Rossiiskii liberalizm v politiko-kul’turnom izmerenii: Opyt svravnitel’nogo teoreticheskogo i istoricheskogo analiza” *Politeks* 13, no. 2 (2017): 7.

⁵⁰ John Gray, *The New Leviathan: Thoughts After Liberalism* (Penguin Books, 2024).

⁵¹ Gray, *The New Leviathan: Thoughts After Liberalism*, 55.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 24.

In recent decades, numerous studies of Russian liberalism and Orthodoxy through the lens of philosophy and political theology have emerged.⁵³ Scholars have underlined Russian liberalism's statist and religious emphasis in an effort to explain its singularity.⁵⁴ Others, such as Poole and Sharova, have examined the religiosity of Russian liberals.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, most studies prioritise explaining the contemporary failure of liberalism in Russia over its interaction with imperialism and nationalism. For instance, Cucciolla's comprehensive and cross-disciplinary study of Russian liberalism privileges political and economic factors over nationalism.⁵⁶ However, many fall back on simplistic clichés, denying the existence of a unique Russian liberalism, neglecting its interaction with nationalism and imperialism, and couching their explanations in ideas of Russian backwardness. For example, Richard Pipes stated, "Russian liberalism has a far less original theoretical basis than either conservatism or radicalism: its ideas came second hand."⁵⁷ Thus, scholars of liberalism in Russia frequently neglect or deny liberalism's dialogue with Orthodoxy and nationalism and the extent to which liberal arguments were embedded in religious ideas.

As mentioned above, several students of Russian liberalism have examined it through the lens of political theology, demonstrating how liberal ideas were embedded in Orthodoxy throughout Russian thought. Central to the integration of liberal and Orthodox thought is the dispute between Comtean positivism and German Neo-Kantian Idealism in late-nineteenth century Russia. While this debate will be thoroughly elaborated in succeeding chapters, providing an initial conceptualisation to clarify and delineate the two ideas is crucial. The French thinker Auguste Comte considered that the only sound and justifiable

⁵³ Gary M. Hamburg and Randall A. Poole, eds., *A history of Russian philosophy 1830–1930: faith, reason, and the defense of human dignity* (Cambridge University Press, 2010); Paul Valliere and Randall A. Poole, eds., *Law and the Christian Tradition in Modern Russia* (Routledge, 2022); Marina F. Bykova, Michael N. Forster and Lina Steiner, eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of Russian Thought* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2021).

⁵⁴ Donald Treadgold, "The Constitutional Democrats and the Russian Liberal Tradition," *American Slavic and East European Review* 10, no. 2 (1951): 85–94; Charles E. Timberlake, "Introduction," in *Essays on Russian Liberalism*, ed. Charles E. Timberlake (Columbia, 1972), 5–7; Randall A. Poole, "Introduction" in *Problems of Idealism* (New Haven, CT, 2003), 6–78; Randall A. Poole, "Religion, War, and Revolution: E. N. Trubetskoi's Liberal Construction of Russian National Identity, 1912–20," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 7, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 195–240; Randall A. Poole, "Nineteenth-Century Russian Liberalism: Ideals and Realities," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16, no. 1 (2015): 157–81.

⁵⁵ Veronika L. Sharova, "The Cultural and Spiritual Dimension of Russian Liberalism at the Turn of the Nineteenth/Twentieth Centuries," *Russian Studies in Philosophy* 60, no. 2 (2022), 153–166.

⁵⁶ Riccardo Mario Cucciolla, ed., *Dimensions and Challenges of Russian Liberalism: Historical Drama and New Prospects* (2019).

⁵⁷ Richard Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and Its Critics: A Study in Political Culture* (New Haven & London, 2005), 154.

knowledge was that which was empirically verified.⁵⁸ Religion had no place in determining truth or ethics as it was not empirical. He also maintained that laws governed societies and were progressing to a more rational form. However, his Russian critics believed his ideas deified man and brought about man-godhood. Some critics sought the “replacement of positivism by neo-idealism as the theoretical foundation of liberalism.”⁵⁹ These idealists, such as Vladimir Solovyov, Nikolai Berdyaev, and Sergei Bulgakov, endeavoured to infuse a degree of liberality into Orthodox thought. They disputed the universalist and rationalist claims of positivist liberals, such as Pavel Milyukov, and insisted that only religious belief could address the metaphysical and ethical deficit within liberalism. Bulgakov claimed, “No matter how well developed, positive science will always remain limited by its object—it studies only fragments of a reality that widens constantly before the eyes of the scientist . . . we must also obtain answers to questions that fall completely outside the field of vision of positive science . . . not only how, but also what, why and what for? Positive science has no answers to these questions.”⁶⁰

While several studies have interrogated this debate and what it meant for the politics of the late Romanov Empire, few studies have examined its relationship to Russia’s imperial and national identity more broadly.

Studies of the three principal works to be investigated in this thesis also demonstrate this bias towards political theology. While scholars of political theology, such as Randall Poole and Paul Valliere, have extensively researched *Problems of Idealism* and *Landmarks*, they have been largely untouched by students of nationalism. *Out of the Depths* has been more extensively neglected. However, this might be due to the apocalyptic nature of its polemic. In contrast to the Cold War era, these texts have received scant attention in recent years. During the 1960s and 1970s, both Western and Soviet scholars frequently cited these works.⁶¹ However, more often than not, they were employed in an ideological and polemical style. Indeed, Christopher Read has remarked on how they contributed to the ideological formation of the New

⁵⁸ Paul Robinson, *Russian Liberalism* (Cornell University Press, 2023), 55.

⁵⁹ Robinson, *Russian Liberalism*, 58.

⁶⁰ Sergei N. Bulgakov, “Basic Problems of the Theory of Progress,” in *Problems of Idealism*, ed. Randall A. Poole (Yale University Press, 2005), 86–87.

⁶¹ Leonard Schapiro, “The “Vekhi” Group and the Mystique of Revolution,” *The Slavic and East European Review* 34, no. 82 (December, 1955): 56-76.

Right in the U.S.⁶² This polemical use is also reflected in current contributions, such as the work of Gary Saul Morson.⁶³ Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, these symposia along with the other works of their authors received significant attention and several new editions were published.⁶⁴ However, this research will aim to address the nationalism gap in the literature on these works.

In recent years, Russian nationalism, and liberal nationalism more specifically, has received increasing attention. However, the debate has tended to concentrate on the tension between nationalism and imperialism in the Russian context.⁶⁵ As we shall see later in our examination of the application of postcolonial and subaltern studies to the Russian context, discussions of internal colonisation and how imperialism hindered Russian nation-building have often obfuscated the complex intersection of liberalism, nationalism, and Orthodoxy. Nevertheless, Susanna Rabow-Edling's study of Russian liberalism and nationalism calls into question the idea of Russian nationalism as reactionary.⁶⁶ She demonstrates how nationalist ideas infused liberal discourses in Russia and how Russian nationalism was intertwined with similar discourses in Europe. She notes that Russia is "a country with its own tradition of liberalism, that was nevertheless very much linked to the discourse of European liberalism with its ties both to nationalism and imperialism."⁶⁷ However, few studies of Russian liberalism and nationalism have addressed the religious aspect of these ideas. They have focused on tracing the influence of European ideas of nationalism and imperialism in Russian thought.

To explain this religious dimension, this research must also compare and contrast these early-twentieth century idealist texts with Slavophile thought. While studies of Slavophilism from the 1830s have rooted the movement in European Romantic thought, they often downplayed the importance of Orthodoxy in these ideas.⁶⁸ Therefore, this thesis advocates the emphasising of Orthodoxy in ideas of

⁶² Christopher Read, "The Intelligentsia Fights Back: The Left-Wing Response to Vekhi and its Significance," in *Landmarks Revisited: The Vekhi Symposium 100 Years On*, eds. Robin Aizlewood and Ruth Coates (Academic Studies Press, 2013).

⁶³ Gary Saul Morson, "Suicide of the Liberals," *First Things*, October 1, 2020, <https://firstthings.com/suicide-of-the-liberals/>.

⁶⁴ M. I. Litvak, *Intelligentsiia i Mifotvorchestvo: K 90-Letiiu Sbornika "Vekhi"* (S.-Peterburgskogo Universiteta 2000); I.I. Vinogradova, "Vekhi" i Problema Russkoi Intelligentsii: K Istorii Termina "Intelligentsiia" v Russkoi Obshchestvennoi Mysli (Moskovsky rabochii 1993).

⁶⁵ Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: people and empire, 1552~1917* (Harvard University Press, 1997).

⁶⁶ Susanna Rabow-Edling, *Liberalism in pre-revolutionary Russia: State, nation, empire* (Routledge, 2018).

⁶⁷ Rabow-Edling, *Liberalism in pre-revolutionary Russia: State, nation, empire*, 6.

⁶⁸ Paul Robinson, *Russian conservatism* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2019).

Russian identity. While European liberalism, Romanticism, and nationalism represent the secularisation of identity, this was less evident in Russia.

Besides Mjør, relatively few scholars have applied the methodological approaches associated with conceptual history in the Russian context.⁶⁹ In his work, he has explored the history of several crucial concepts in Russian history, such as idealism, *smuta* and *tvorchestvo*. In doing so, he elaborated on the study of how Western ideas were received and selectively reinterpreted in Russia. In his article analysing the development of *tvorchestvo*, he notes how the literary and intellectual elaboration of notions of creativity, particularly its mystical character, came to be tied to the articulation of concepts such as *lichnost* and nationality, reflecting the entanglement of discussion of liberal and national ideas.⁷⁰ In addition, his work more accurately reflects the hegemonic yet contested position of Western ideas in Russia than subaltern studies. Nevertheless, this study builds on this work exploring concepts, such as *Sobornost*, and how liberal ideas of political rights became intertwined with religious conceptualisations of the Russian nation. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal defines *Sobornost* as “organic unity in which individuality is retained.”⁷¹ Meanwhile, Paul Valliere outlines how the theologian N. P. Giliarov-Platonov conceived of the term in 1867 “to indicate the ideal of spiritual unity, fellowship, integral community.”⁷² Thus, this thesis aims to expand the study of these concepts and interrogate their interconnections.

However, Nikolai Plotnikov has also interrogated ideas of personhood or *lichnost* through the lens of conceptual history.⁷³ He showcases how the Russian conceptualisation of personhood differed substantially from the European, adopting a *long durée* approach that analyses its development from the 1820s through to today. For instance, he explains that “the basic distinction underlying the discourse on

⁶⁹ Kåre Johan Mjør, “Smuta: cyclical visions of history in contemporary Russian thought and the question of hegemony,” *Studies in East European Thought* 70, no. 1 (2018): 19-40; Kåre Johan Mjør, “Budushhee proshlogo: k istorii ponyatiya russkaya ideya.” In *Issledovaniya po istorii russkoj mysli*, edited by M.A. Kolerova N.S. Plotnikova (2014); Kåre Johan Mjør, “Metaphysics, Aesthetics, or Epistemology? A Conceptual History of *Tvorchestvo* in Nineteenth Century Russian Thought,” *The Slavic and East European Journal* (2018): 4-25; Kåre Johan Mjør, “Universalising idealism: the cross-cultural case of Russian religious thought,” *Global Intellectual History* 6, no. 5 (2021): 672-689.

⁷⁰ Mjør, “Metaphysics, Aesthetics, or Epistemology? A Conceptual History of *Tvorchestvo* in Nineteenth Century Russian Thought,” 4-25.

⁷¹ Woehrlin, trans., *Out of the Depths: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution*, ix.

⁷² Paul Valliere, “Law and the Orthodox Church in the history of Russia,” in *Law and the Christian Tradition in Modern Russia*, eds. Paul Valliere and Randall A. Poole (Routledge, 2021), 42.

⁷³ Nikolai Plotnikov, “‘The person is a monad with windows’: sketch of a conceptual history of ‘person’ in Russia,” *Studies in East European Thought* 64, no. 3 (2012): 269-299.

personhood in Russia is not the differentiation between ‘person’ and ‘thing’ as in the European tradition, but the distinction between ‘individual’ and (anonymous) ‘community’.”⁷⁴ Plotnikov demonstrates that Russian conceptualisations of personhood, rooted in Romanticism, emphasised individuality over autonomy, with the central distinction being between individual and community rather than person and thing. This *long durée* account helps illuminate how later Russian debates about liberalism, rights, and Orthodoxy were framed within this semantic field. Like Mjør and relevant to our discussion of Russian national identity, he reveals how Russian thinkers of the period framed individuality as conditioned by a national essence. He also demonstrates how Orthodoxy conditions the liberalism of individual rights articulated by the works analysed in this thesis. More broadly, this relationship between individuality and nationality reflects the tension between the particular and the universal throughout Russian thought. Nevertheless, this study aims to further the study of conceptual history in Russia by expanding the range of concepts under analysis to Orthodoxy, liberalism, and national identity.

In conceptualising national identity, this study understands it as the sum of the abovementioned concepts: liberalism, nationalism, and Orthodoxy. While Koselleck develops the idea of concepts having different layers of meaning, this research highlights how discrete discourses are constructed through the layering of different concepts. Therefore, crucial to understanding discourses of national identity in Russia is the study of the relationship between concepts such as liberalism, nationalism, and Orthodoxy.

Postcolonialism and Russia:

A significant debate has emerged regarding the application of postcolonialism to the Russian context. For instance, scholars such as Vyacheslav Morozov have endeavoured to investigate Russian national identity from the perspective of subaltern studies, conceptualising Russia as a “subaltern empire.”⁷⁵ Multiple critics of this approach have noted that the term “subaltern empire” is an oxymoron and conceals Russia’s imperial legacy. This section will outline postcolonial and subaltern studies before engaging with the idea of “subaltern empire.” It will consider some of the idea’s critics, who dispute the notion of subaltern

⁷⁴ Plotnikov, “‘The person is a monad with windows’: sketch of a conceptual history of ‘person’ in Russia,” 269.

⁷⁵ Vyacheslav Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

voicelessness in the Russian case. Ultimately, this research will contribute to the imperial vs. nation-building debate by highlighting the extent to which Russian thinkers not only adapted Western concepts, such as liberalism and nationalism, but also voiced their ideas of history and identity.

Subaltern studies is a field within postcolonialism that investigates how marginalised groups are heard or not heard in the global social, economic, and political order. Scholars from the subaltern studies group, such as Spivak, Chatterjee, and Chakrabarty, have contributed substantially to our understanding of subaltern voices.⁷⁶ Spivak argues that subalterns cannot truly speak. She demonstrates how well-intentioned attempts to represent their views only reproduce colonial power structures. On the other hand, Chakrabarty contradicts this view in his efforts to provincialise Europe by exploring how subalterns adapt Western concepts. In the Indian context, he illustrates how modern concepts coexist with pre-modern religious ideas and structures. Similarly, in her explanation of colonial nationalism, Chatterjee explains how colonial nationalist narratives combine modern ideas of the nation with certain pre-historical traditions and memories. Regarding Russia, Morozov seeks to argue its subaltern relationship to Europe and its liminal global position.

In his principal work on the topic, Morozov contends that Russia's subalternity has both ideological and economic aspects. He defines subalterns as "disenfranchised individuals and groups, those whose agency is limited and who are deprived by the hegemonic social order of the possibility to make their voices heard."⁷⁷ He concentrates on demonstrating Russia's political and economic peripherality to Europe. In great detail, he describes how Russia was orientalised and subsequently marginalised by Europe. Examining Russian identity, he insists it is centred around an orientalised figure, uncontaminated by Western influences, rather than the Russian peasant as a repository of specific pre-modern memories, as Chatterjee advances. Putin reproduces this identity created by Western narratives and clichés about Russia, and this reproduction allegedly determines his political direction. Not only has Russia been ideationally Europeanised, but it is also economically dependent on the West. European standards determined Russia's

⁷⁶ G.C. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. C. Nelson, and L. Grossberg (Macmillan Education, 1988); Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton University Press, 1993); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

⁷⁷ Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World*, 1.

development, which involved a Europeanised and alien elite's internal colonisation of the country. In general, he insists that colonial narratives suffuse our discourses of identity to such an extent that it is impossible to recover an uncontaminated identity. In his opinion, it is the duty of the scholar to deconstruct these discourses as best they can.

In many respects, his work contains several possible gaps, contradictions, and theoretical cherry-picking to be expected from a work rooted in ideological concepts like uneven development. This next section will unpack some of the assertions outlined above. Firstly, we must consider the role of ideological intentions. Secondly, this research will problematise his neglect of how the Russian “subaltern” can talk back. Lastly, we will evaluate his analysis of internal colonisation and the debate of empire-building vs. nation-building in Russia.

Central to his thesis is scepticism of the cultural turn in postcolonial studies. He grounds his conceptualisation of the subaltern empire in ideas of uneven and combined development, believing local oppressive institutions are constructed based on global inequalities.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, his reliance on notions of combined and uneven development developed by Eric Hobsbawm and deconstruction only reinforces Western historicism, which, as both Spivak and Chakrabarty underscore, only renders the colonial experience even less tangible. These neo-Marxist assertions that present an un-political colonial peasant dominated by a Europeanised elite fail to account for the development of colonial nationalism. In his eagerness to challenge nationalist narratives employed by indigenous elites to maintain their power, he fails to account for the indigeneity of these narratives and how they carry a significant mobilisational and legitimating import. Thus, while scholars like Morozov claim that this materialist and deconstructive approach highlights the dynamics at play in international relations, they selectively employ a Western teleology and neglect the extent to which the unpolitical subaltern can talk back. If the deconstruction of what they claim are false anti-historical memories is what they posit against global inequalities, how can the colonial subject ever contend with their subjugation? All it amounts to is a denial of agency. Thus, there is an apparent tension between the emancipatory zeal claimed by subaltern scholars and their purported

⁷⁸ Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World*, 2.

means. He continues that viewing Russia as a subaltern empire creates a productive tension in the field that will enable us to reassess critiques of injustice. Having said that, he later states that he empathises with these values.

While subaltern scholars like Morozov and Chakrabarty admit that the ideas presented above, as well as other universal ideas like liberalism and democracy, should be appropriately considered as products of “Western historical experience,” they do not consider the consequences of their essentialising rhetoric.⁷⁹ We emphasised above how their deconstructive impulse undermines postcolonial agency. However, their polemic also reinforces oriental tropes through notions like internal colonisation. For instance, there is a remarkable synergy between Morozov's work and Etkind and Hosking's work, who differentiate Russia from other European empires because of its lack of a national core.⁸⁰ One of Morozov's principle contentions is the similar experience of the Russian masses and the other peoples colonised by the Soviet Union and the Romanov Empire. Nevertheless, to what extent did Soviet and Romanov colonial practices towards the Russian people differ from Western nation-building? After all, Western nations have a long history of integrating different peoples into the nation-building projects of the imperial metropole.

Regarding the Soviet case, we could cite the idea of *homo Sovieticus*, which shares many of the same nation-building characteristics as attempts to assimilate the Celtic fringe in Britain. In addition, Koplatazde has highlighted how these works neglect the racial dimension of Soviet and Romanov imperialism.⁸¹ Thus, the Soviet Union and the Romanov Empire employed Western imperial and nation-building techniques. However, Morozov neglects the agency of the marginalised who participated in and contested these efforts. Additionally, Vsevolod Samokhvalov questions Morozov's contention that Russia is normatively dependent on the West and struggles to articulate its own identity and narrative of the world.⁸² For instance, he notes Russia's formulation of counter-Western narratives and concepts, such as “sovereign democracy.”⁸³ Morozov's reliance on uneven development and economic dependency to

⁷⁹ Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World*, 16.

⁸⁰ Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World*, 29; Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (Polity, 2011).

⁸¹ Koplatazde, “Theorising Russian postcolonial studies,” 474.

⁸² Samokhvalov, “Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World by Viacheslav Morozov,” 463-470.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 467.

explain Russia's supposed normative and ideational dependence is simplistic. How does technological borrowing bring about normative subordination? Moreover, in essentialising binaries, such as East vs. West and subordination vs. resistance, he fails to present the hybridity and complexity inherent in global relations. Here, conceptual history helps recover the agency that subaltern studies overlooks, because it shows how Russian liberals and theologians reinterpreted concepts in dialogue with Europe. Ultimately, this thesis will nuance the above arguments by investigating Russian intellectual history, particularly the intersection of liberalism and Orthodoxy.

Therefore, the existing literature on postcolonialism in the Russian context, in particular the work of Morozov, does little to explain the relationship between Europe and Russia. Similarly, another illustrative example of such work is Etkind's "Russia Against Modernity" where he presents Russia as simultaneously anti-modern and embodying a *paleomodernity* that opposes a true *gaiamodernity* being realised by the West, ignoring the complex reciprocal ideational, economic, and political relationship between the two.⁸⁴ However, this study does not assert that subaltern studies are of little analytical value to the study of the former Soviet Union and the Romanov Empire. This thesis rests on the idea of travelling theory and its invitation to cross-fertilisation.⁸⁵ However, instead of developing an understanding of how Russia simultaneously adopts and contextualises European thought, subaltern scholars frequently perpetuate Eurocentrism by inversion by denying the agency of the supposed subaltern. For instance, by sidelining the diversity in Russian thought, Morozov indirectly supports Russia's continued instrumentalisation of anti-Western rhetoric. Additionally, his conceptual ambiguity only obscures Russia's imperial legacy. Indeed, we noted above how he engages in theoretical cherry-picking to support their arguments. For example, Morozov repeatedly cites Spivak, who interrogates subaltern powerlessness. Given this understanding of her work, it is challenging to describe Russia as voiceless.

In contrast, this thesis purports that Russian history and identity must be understood as a dialectic of loss and recovery. In doing so, it also builds on the work of scholars of conceptual history like Mjør who argue that the transmission of ideas to Russia created new and hybrid adaptations due to the "refraction"

⁸⁴ Alexander Etkind, *Russia Against Modernity* (Polity Press, 2023).

⁸⁵ Koplatadze, "Theorising Russian postcolonial studies," 471.

of these ideas.⁸⁶ While this framework appears similar to the cyclical interpretations of Russian history noted above, it emphasises the process of recovering an ideal political and spiritual community based on the Orthodox idea of theosis rather than the attainment of a specific utopia as in Marxist or Liberal teleologies. By investigating the symposia above, this thesis will demonstrate how they married Orthodox ideas of gradual theosis with liberal principles to forge a distinct identity contesting materialism and utopianism.

Ultimately, this research posits that by studying the intersection of liberalism, nationalism, and Orthodoxy, we can develop an explanation of how Russian figures mimic and contest European thought while simultaneously articulating their ideas of history and time. Therefore, the ambiguity of Russian thought can best be understood as both structurally dependent and independent of the West in ways that the studies above often fail to capture. Ultimately, it is an affirmation of their agency, which challenges notions of Russian exceptionalism, an East-West binary relationship, and the instrumentalisation of anti-Western rhetoric. Moreover, how analysing these three texts contributes to our understanding of the Russian present will be elucidated in a final epilogue.

⁸⁶ Mjør, “Metaphysics, Aesthetics, or Epistemology? A Conceptual History of *Tvorchestvo* in Nineteenth Century Russian Thought,” 5.

Chapter 3: *Problems of Idealism and Landmarks*

The previous chapter outlined the negation of the West inherent in Russian identity. However, this thesis contends that rather than purely negating the West, Russia maintains a complex ideational dialogue with Europe. As indicated above, the literature on Russian thought vacillates between Russian essentialism and viewing Russia as a subaltern in relation to the West. However, in his review of Morozov's work, Samokhvalov questions, "To what extent do these borrowings or negations reveal a genuine intellectual dependence?"⁸⁷ By analysing the three texts mentioned above, the following chapters will demonstrate how Russian thinkers participated in pan-European intellectual currents, probing, expanding and adapting ideas within their context. In doing so, it will build on studies that have questioned Russian essentialism, the idea that Russia constituted a counter or alternative modernity, and explain how Russian thinkers and political figures employed Western discourses of nationalism and imperialism. However, these studies have often neglected the religious influence on these Russian ideas and how, rather than negating Western thought, they built on and added to it. Therefore, this chapter will analyse the principal ideas and themes in *Problems of Idealism and Landmarks*, elucidating what they mean for Russian identity in the late-Romanov Empire. Firstly, it will situate these texts in their broader intellectual, political, and social contexts. After a brief sketch of the contours of the positivism vs. idealism debate, it will explore the thinking of Vladimir Solovyov. Indeed, many scholars attribute the spiritual turn of the early-twentieth century in Russian philosophy and culture to him. Following this elaboration of Solovyov's influence, it will examine the principal texts, demonstrating how they built on earlier forms of Orthodox and secular thought, both Russian and Western. Lastly, it will underline the tension in the liberal idealist camp between those who shared similar views of nationalism and imperialism to Solovyov and those whose views adhered to European notions of liberal imperialism.

As mentioned above, *Problems of Idealism and Landmarks* emerged in the intellectual context of what scholars have conceptualised as the positivism-idealism and Slavophile-Westerniser debates. Positivism reflects the belief that specific determinable laws govern societies and that humanity is

⁸⁷ Vsevolod Samokhvalov, "Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World by Viacheslav Morozov," *Ab Imperio* 2016, no. 1 (2016): 469.

converging towards an ever more rational form of governance.⁸⁸ Meanwhile, idealist thinkers, such as Vladimir Solovyov, highlighted the metaphysical hole in positivism. They demonstrated how positivists turned the “ought” of Christian teleology into the “is” of historicism. They advanced a Christian idea of natural law derived from Kant to address this metaphysical deficit in positivism and positive law. Our experience of the world cannot be reduced to the phenomenal; there must be a spiritual principle (Solovyov’s all-unity discussed below) that makes it comprehensible. Thus, Solovyov and others sought to fill this transcendental principle with a Christian content. Regarding national identity, they problematised the Marxist idea of false consciousness and the Slavophile idea of Russian messianism. They argued for the recognition of each nation’s right to mutually flourish while at the same time emphasising the Christian content of Russia’s messianic role. While *Problems of Idealism* and *Landmarks* developed this line of thought, it was first initiated and revitalised by Vladimir Solovyov.

Students of Russian intellectual history consider Vladimir Solovyov one of the most significant philosophers in Russian history.⁸⁹ They claim he developed a coherent synthesis of philosophical idealism and Orthodoxy. In doing so, he stimulated the elaboration of a distinct idealist philosophy of law in the late Romanov Empire by several notable scholars considered in this thesis, such as Pavel Novgorodtsev, Ivan Ilyin, and Sergei Kotliarevsky, among others. Throughout his works, he criticises the one-sidedness of socialist and legalist thought: “The moral principle, [...] is determined exclusively by one of the elements of the totality of human life—the economic element.”⁹⁰ While he believed in socialism’s goal of an ethical economic order, he criticised its assumption that a change in economic order could bring about a change in ethics or norms. He anticipates the critique articulated in *Landmarks* towards the intelligentsia, that they are obsessed with changing external forms rather than human souls, reflecting Solovyov’s idealist impulse. He believed in political and economic rights, but those rights should transcend economic interests and reflect the innate freedom of human beings. Hence, he concludes, “Law is freedom, conditioned by

⁸⁸ Robinson, *Russian Liberalism*, 58.

⁸⁹ Gregory Gaut, *A Christian westernizer: Vladimir Solovyov and Russian conservative nationalism* (University of Minnesota, 1992), 1.

⁹⁰ Paul Valliere, “Vladimir Soloviev: Faith, Philosophy, and Law,” in *Law and the Christian Tradition in Modern Russia*, ed. Paul Valliere and Randall A. Poole (Routledge, 2022), 197.

equality.”⁹¹ However, he defines law merely as a means, not an end. Law does not provide any normative end. In addition, despite at first identifying as a Slavophile and Russia’s singular spiritual mission to redeem the world, he later criticised Slavophile thought, especially the Pan-Slavism advanced by Danilevsky. He attacked them for being self-interested and chauvinistic. However, what positive alternative did he posit in the place of socialism and Pan-Slavism?

In his writings, Solovyov strove to articulate a normative foundation for politics. In doing so, he sought to address the weaknesses of the Russian intelligentsia’s thought, which he summed up in the following syllogism: “Man is descended from the apes; therefore, love thy neighbour as thyself.”⁹² Paul Valliere believes him to be one of Russia’s most systemic thinkers as he endeavoured to develop an “inner, harmonious relation or synthesis”⁹³ of what he termed the juridical and religious principles. He believed in “a mystical or religious community, that is to say, the Church,” that shared and voiced an idea of the common good.⁹⁴ Thus, he expounded a “Christian politics” centred on the idea of “applying the principles of true religion to all social and international relations, and in resolving all existing problems of social and political life in a Christian way.”⁹⁵

As a thinker, Solovyov was infused with Christianity. Central to his understanding of a Christian order were the concepts of *bogochelovechestvo* (“Godmanhood”) and *vse-edinstvo* (“all-unity”). For Solovyov, all-unity is the idea that reality is a single whole united in God, expressing the “connectedness of creation.”⁹⁶ It also represents the interconnection of all spheres of knowledge, that they cohere, producing an absolute truth. Solovyov understood Godmanhood as the process by which humanity is united with God.⁹⁷ It is the process involving the deification of man and society by which all unity is achieved, and the Kingdom of God is created on Earth. This idea is crucial for his understanding of egoism and individualism. Solovyov condemned self-centred individualism as it precipitated societal fragmentation. In its place, he

⁹¹ Valliere, “Vladimir Soloviev: Faith, Philosophy, and Law,” 198.

⁹² Gary Saul Morson, “The Intelligentsia and its Critics,” in *A Companion to Russian History*, ed. Abbott Gleason (Blackwell Publishing, 2014), 269.

⁹³ Valliere, “Vladimir Soloviev: Faith, Philosophy, and Law,” 199.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 199.

⁹⁵ Gaut, *A Christian westernizer: Vladimir Solovyov and Russian conservative nationalism*, 115.

⁹⁶ Nelly Motroshilova, “Vladimir Solovyov: philosophy as systemic unity.” In *The Palgrave Handbook of Russian Thought*, ed. Marina F. Bykova, Michael N. Forster, and Lina Steiner (Springer International Publishing, 2021), 167.

⁹⁷ Gaut, *A Christian westernizer: Vladimir Solovyov and Russian conservative nationalism*, 117, 151.

advocated a relational individualism. In his view, people could only fulfil themselves in relation to others and God. Here, we see the principle of *Sobornost*, or organic unity, proposed by early Slavophiles like Khomiakov.⁹⁸ However, how should the Kingdom be established? What does he mean by Christian politics? How did he relate his metaphysical conceptualisation of the world to practical reality?

Initially, Solovyov developed the idea of free theocracy.⁹⁹ He did not advocate the rule of a priestly class but rather a society voluntarily guided by Christian principles. Rejecting clerical authoritarianism and secular materialism, he presented a vision of society freely guided by a higher moral truth. Thereby, the state would be in symphony with the Church. The institutional Church would not subjugate the state. Instead, the state would be subordinate “to the authority of the Universal Church and to assign a proper place to social freedom.”¹⁰⁰ This free theocracy also envisaged the overcoming of the schism in the Christian church, creating a new political order ruled by the Russian Tsar and the Pope. The legal scholar Andrzej Walicki has gone as far as to conclude that the rule of law was a part of this theocratic utopia.¹⁰¹

Before his death in 1900, his thinking began to align more with *Rechtsstaat* liberals, such as Boris Chicherin.¹⁰² During the 1880s, he moved away from his earlier Slavophilism and his belief that Russia had a special messianic mission in the world after a series of disputes with other conservative figures, such as Pobedonotsev, the head of the Holy Synod. For instance, after the assassination of Alexander II, he advocated clemency for those who committed the regicide. Becoming increasingly disillusioned with the institutional Church, he criticised the Church as pagan in character, embodying a compromise between the spiritual and temporal. As a result, he drifted into more liberal circles and became involved with the liberal journal *Vestnik Evropy*.¹⁰³ Additionally, he collaborated with the Moscow Psychological Society, contributing to its journal *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii*.¹⁰⁴ He came to associate the coming Kingdom of God on Earth with the European notion of progress. In “Idoly i idealy,” he insisted that the intelligentsia’s

⁹⁸ Gaut, *A Christian westernizer: Vladimir Solovyov and Russian conservative nationalism*, 132.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁰¹ Andrzej Walicki, *Legal Philosophies of Russian Liberalism* (Clarendon, 1987), 184.

¹⁰² Walicki, *Legal Philosophies of Russian Liberalism*, 193.

¹⁰³ Gregory Gaut, “A Practical Unity: Vladimir Solov’ev and Russian Liberalism,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 42, no. 3 (2000): 295.

¹⁰⁴ Gaut, *A Christian westernizer: Vladimir Solovyov and Russian conservative nationalism*, 80.

role was to educate the Russian peasantry and accelerate cultural progress.¹⁰⁵ He also spoke about a Christian state being necessary to institute the Kingdom of God. He believed the state's role was "to defend human society from the most concrete and clearly manifested forms of evil or injustice."¹⁰⁶ In line with this shift in emphasis to the state, he emphasised ethical freedom but argued that the state and its laws played a crucial role in realising a Christian moral order. Applying natural law theory, he defined law as "a compulsory demand for the realisation of a definite minimum of good, or for a social order which excludes certain manifestations of evil."¹⁰⁷ Thus, his thinking on the role of the state and law altered dramatically over his career. This shift reflected his changing view of the Church and State and a transformation in his view of Russian identity and its role in the world.

Solovyov's thinking on nationality mirrored the conceptualisation of all-unity above. As mentioned earlier, Solovyov turned away from Slavophilism towards a more liberal politics later in his career. He increasingly believed that messianism led to national chauvinism and believed the nationalism of his former ideological compatriots to be behind "Russia's sins."¹⁰⁸ For Solovyov, nations were not the ideal form of social organisation. Instead, they constituted a step in the process of the coming universal Kingdom. He believed the social organisation of each stage in this process reflected the morality of that time. Thus, he argued that every nation had the right to develop. National differences contributed something unique to universal humanity. He distinguished between *narodnost* and nationalism. *Narodnost* or nationality represented a nation's contribution to humanity when it opened itself to interaction with others.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, nationalism represented chauvinism. He criticised the official antisemitism and the Russification policies pursued under Alexander III and argued that Russia could only develop culturally by learning from its minority populations, especially the Poles. While he lamented the actions of other European imperial powers and argued that Russia should not aim to imitate them, his views of Asia and Africa reflected those of his liberal European contemporaries. Responding to Pan-Slavism and national jingoism, he advanced what he called national self-denial to open the nation to outside influences and

¹⁰⁵ Gaut, *A Christian westernizer: Vladimir Solovyov and Russian conservative nationalism*, 127.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 227.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 207.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 150.

dialogue, bringing about the universal Kingdom. Therefore, he retained his belief in the religious aspect of the Slavophile's messianic thinking, that Russia would bring about the establishment of the universal church.

As highlighted above, Solovyov's thought contained several often contradictory elements. Indeed, in his polemical works, he frequently combined Kantian metaphysics with Slavophile and Orthodox notions like *Sobornost* and theosis. He was neo-Kantian as he refused to countenance a return to medieval dogma, instead positing the unity of all forms of knowledge, the noumenal and phenomenal.¹¹⁰ Most importantly, they were to be pursued freely. In addition, Greg Gaut analysed his thought in the context of the turn to social religion in the nineteenth century.¹¹¹ He compared Solovyov to the German theologians Albrecht Ritschl and Walter Rauschenbusch, who established a movement within German Protestantism that placed the Kingdom of God at the fore. They paved the way for the social gospel, which developed across Europe and North America and pushed Christians to work towards realising the Kingdom of God on Earth. Like Solovyov, they believed that earlier theology had obscured the social gospel and called for it to be central to Christian thought. Through his participation in the burgeoning social gospel movement, Solovyov achieved a thorough synthesis of Orthodox, social Catholic, and Protestant thought.

While scholars have mostly considered Solovyov's thought through the lens of the struggle between positivism and idealism, any analysis of his thought must contend with its place in the *long durée* of Russian thought. For instance, in contrast to what he perceived as the deification of man, initiated by the secular Enlightenment, Solovyov posited the ideas of Godmanhood and all-unity, reflecting that influence of the Orthodox idea of theosis, which by the nineteenth century had fallen into abeyance.¹¹² Indeed, he initiated a revival of earlier forms of mysticism, such as Hesychasm.¹¹³ During the late-thirteenth century, this movement contended that through ascetic discipline, one could achieve inner calm and thus a direct personal connection to God. Later in the fifteenth century, Orthodox monks, such as Maxim the Greek,

¹¹⁰ Konstantin Antonov, "Pavel Novgorodtsev: Natural law and its religious justification," in *Law and the Christian Tradition in Modern Russia*, ed. Paul Valliere and Randall A. Poole (Routledge, 2022), 250.

¹¹¹ Gaut, *A Christian westernizer: Vladimir Solovyov and Russian conservative nationalism*, 136.

¹¹² Valliere, "Vladimir Soloviev: Faith, Philosophy, and Law," 207.

¹¹³ James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture* (Vintage Books, 1970), 51.

achieved a similar synthesis of humanism and hesychasm.¹¹⁴ Similarly to Bulgakov and Solovyov, Maxim combined the asceticism of hesychasm with the humanist idea of a universal truth outside institutional Christianity. The Florentine Savonarola significantly influenced Maxim and provided him with a puritanical zeal and an idea of the fallen Church.¹¹⁵ In continuing this line of thought, Solovyov responded to figures like Nikolai Chaikovsky and the *Chaikovtsy* or members of his “Godmanhood sect,” who believed each individual would become God.¹¹⁶ Through the idea of Godmanhood, he conceptualised individuality as being realised through communion with God and our fellow man. He believed that the secular “scientist” individualism of his ideological opposites would only produce individual totalitarians. As a result, he conceptualised the historical process as a coming together of humanity to achieve this ideal relationship with the divine on Earth. However, in contrast to similar Marxist utopian projects, he emphasised the process of gradual union with the divine or the ideal rather than the actual achievement of the ideal. This study will return to this idea of individualism by examining Bulgakov's contribution to *Problems of Idealism and Landmarks*.

Ultimately, Solovyov contributed to the intellectual undercurrents present throughout later works like *Problems of Idealism and Landmarks*. In reviving earlier forms of Orthodox mysticism, he provided the basis for synthesising Orthodoxy and Western humanist ideas like liberalism and nationalism. While some might contest this combination, noting the irreconcilable differences between mysticism and law and science, he did not contest the basis of modern science but endeavoured to address its metaphysical deficiencies. In many aspects, later figures, such as Berdyaev and Bulgakov, are a footnote to Solovyov’s work.

Problems of Idealism represents one of the most significant articulations of the neo-idealist current in early-twentieth century Russia. The collection of essays was published in 1902 by a range of political and religious thinkers.¹¹⁷ Its principal contributors included those involved in the Moscow Psychological Society and who frequently collaborated with Solovyov, such as Sergei Trubetskoy, ex-Marxist lay

¹¹⁴ Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture*, 91.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 394.

¹¹⁷ Pavel Ivanovich Novgorodtsev, *Problemy Idealizma: Sbornik Statey* (Moskovskago Psihologicheskago Obshestva, 1903).

religious thinkers like Nikolai Berdyaev and Sergei Bulgakov, and those involved in the Union of Liberation, which coordinated the 1905 revolution, such as Pyotr Struve. Each contributor came from significantly different backgrounds and ideological starting points before cooperating on this collection of essays. For instance, Sergei Trubetskoy, like Solovyov, began his career as a Slavophile.¹¹⁸ However, his politics shifted in a liberal direction following his relief work during the 1891 famine and Tsar Nicholas II's "senseless dreams" speech, "which provoked terrible discontent with the government and gave a strong push to constitutional dreams."¹¹⁹ Others, such as Struve, Berdyaev, and Bulgakov, were previously legal Marxists who became estranged from Russian Marxism due to its lack of "legal consciousness." Struve would be a significant figure in the liberal Kadet party that emerged from the 1905 revolution. Berdyaev would become one of the principal philosophers of the Silver Age, while Bulgakov would later be ordained as a priest and articulate a radically liberal version of Orthodoxy.

In his assessment of the collection, Randall Poole summarised their thinking: "The value of the person is seen as rooted in transcendent being (personalism)."¹²⁰ Here, we see the evident influence of Solovyov on their thinking. However, the collection has more in common with Solovyov's later thought, as he drifted from theocratic utopianism to a defence of liberal ideals and the rule of law. Indeed, the collection features contributions from liberal scholars, such as Pavel Novgorodtsev, who argued that natural law provides a moral framework to evaluate positive law.¹²¹ Thus, Solovyov profoundly influenced *Problems of Idealism*. However, it was an apparent attempt to move beyond the limitations of his work, such as the utopianism.

The different contributions to the collection differed significantly in emphasis, whether legal, metaphysical, or historical. However, they shared a central principle – personalism. They believed the person, rather than the individual, was endowed with a transcendental freedom and moral intuition that transcended the Kantian phenomenal. Thus, ethics are not empirical. As a result, the person enjoyed certain

¹¹⁸ Randall A. Poole, *Neo-idealist Philosophy in the Russian Liberation Movement: The Moscow Psychological Society and Its Symposium, "Problems of Idealism"* (The Woodrow Wilson Centre, 1997), 18.

¹¹⁹ Poole, *Neo-idealist Philosophy in the Russian Liberation Movement: The Moscow Psychological Society and Its Symposium, "Problems of Idealism,"* 19.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

rights and must be the basis of a new and free politics. In contrast to the positivists, these idealists demonstrated how the self was not merely empirical but transcendental and metaphysically grounded. As Struve stated in his essay on true nationalism: “to reject the ethical problem means in essence to defy the immediate consciousness of every person.”¹²² In his contribution, he endeavoured to reveal the substantiality of the person. A person is trans-phenomenal; they transcend the phenomenal and the noumenal. Thus, they are free because they have access to a higher consciousness. He states:

“Freedom is the capacity to act, without being determined by anything external, foreign, or other; it is independence from the uninterrupted causal chain, and only substance possesses this capacity.”¹²³

Investigating the objectivity of values, Novgorodtsev, in a similar vein, outlines,

“metaphysics as a theory of the transcendent [...] of that which is not given in experience and cannot be revealed by it.”¹²⁴

The idea that the person possesses a transcendental freedom beyond empirical experience grounds their understanding of liberalism and nationalism. In his essay, Struve goes on to conclude,

“In historical development, the absolute, formal principle of ethics becomes clear to us – freedom, or the autonomy of the person [...] Liberalism in its purest form, ie., as the recognition of the inalienable rights of the person [...] is also the only form of true nationalism.”¹²⁵

Here, we also see the influence of Solovyov and the Hesychast idea of theosis that he revived. The notion that a person, through duty and ascetic devotion to humanity, could possess a transcendental subjectivity.

Struve ties this line of thought into a discussion of nationalism and a critique of classical Slavophilism. In his essay, he interrogates Solovyov’s work “The National Question in Russia.” As mentioned above, Solovyov’s idea of nationality was deeply interwoven with the notion of cultural progress and the education of the masses. Struve continued this by criticising neo-Slavophiles, such as Danilevsky, for reifying national cultures, neglecting political rights and, thus, moral progress. He highlighted the importance of the earlier Slavophiles’ emphasis on religious consciousness in the

¹²² Poole, *Neo-idealist Philosophy in the Russian Liberation Movement: The Moscow Psychological Society and Its Symposium*, “Problems of Idealism,” 23.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

development of morality and culture. In doing so, they challenged the caesaropapism of the Orthodox Church and its lay leaders, such as Pobedonostsev. Lastly, he channelled Solovyov's idea of all-unity when he noted that only a combination of secular and religious insight can ensure progress.

As a consequence of their interpretation of man's metaphysical freedom, they derived an alternative view of history that diverged from the historical determinism and utopianism criticised by Bulgakov in his contribution. They posited that since absolute reason is currently inaccessible to us, we cannot yet analyse history as a whole. Thus, they understand history and progress as a moral task whereby we gain greater access to the divine and transcendental. They dismiss scientific determinism as "a form of contraband which abuses the authority of the natural sciences to predict the realisation in the history of ideal hopes."¹²⁶ As a result, they "envisage a future that unfolds not by historical inevitability, but by our moral evaluation of the present and the course of action deemed necessary to improve it."¹²⁷ Where *Problems of Idealism* laid the philosophical groundwork for a moralised vision of liberalism and nationhood, *Landmarks* introduced these principles into the political and existential crisis of revolutionary Russia.

First published in 1909, *Landmarks* criticised the "radical intelligentsia" and its role in the 1905 revolution and its aftermath. Its contributors blamed the revolution's failure to usher in a constitutional monarchy on its absolutist and revolutionary attitude. However, what do we mean by intelligentsia? In his contribution, Berdyaev distinguished between the intelligentsia, consisting mainly of the professional classes, and the "inner-circle intelligentsia" who sought to overthrow the tsarist regime: the Social Democrats (Bolsheviks and Mensheviks), Socialist Revolutionaries, and the Kadets.¹²⁸

While the 1905 revolution brought about the promulgation of the October Manifesto and the establishment of a Duma, it unleashed a wave of violence across the Empire, incited and harnessed by various revolutionary groups. As a result, the new Prime Minister, Pyotr Stolypin, subsequently quashed all dissent, curtailed the powers of the Duma, and restricted the franchise. The failure of the revolution generated a debate around the future of the intelligentsia and its core beliefs. Liberals, such as the

¹²⁶ Poole, *Neo-idealist Philosophy in the Russian Liberation Movement: The Moscow Psychological Society and Its Symposium*, "Problems of Idealism," 40.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹²⁸ Nikolai Berdyaev, "Philosophic Truth and Moral Truth," in *Landmarks: A Collection of Essays on the Russian Intelligentsia*, ed. Boris Shragin and Albert Todd, trans. Marian Schwartz (Routledge, 2019), 3.

contributors to *Landmarks*, called on their ideological bedfellows in the Kadets to distance themselves from the revolutionaries. Meanwhile, *intelligenty*, such as Lenin and Chernov, fervently criticised any revisionism. *Landmarks* emerged in this intellectual tumult as one of the most significant calls for a reevaluation of the intelligentsia's worldview. While the various contributions to *Landmarks* differed substantially, as Leonard Schapiro summarised, they all presented a critique of the intelligentsia's "mystique of revolution."¹²⁹ In contrast to what they perceived as the intelligentsia's obsession with revolution, Mikhail Gershenzon outlines their shared programme as "the theoretical and practical pre-eminence of spiritual life over the external form of community."¹³⁰ Similarly to *Problems of Idealism*, they emphasised individual spiritual freedom as the basis for cultural progress and the evolution of society over the materialist perspective of many *intelligenty*.

In his essay, Berdyaev criticised the intelligentsia for using political and utilitarian criteria to evaluate philosophical thought.¹³¹ In their eyes, an idea or theory was only to be believed if it supported their revolutionary ambitions. As Berdyaev states: "It [the intelligentsia] has regarded with suspicion any ideology that places creation and values in the centre of things."¹³² Like earlier Orthodox thinkers, they searched for an integral worldview, resulting in their reliance on positivism and historical materialism, which they associated with social radicalism. He continues: "Given such a mental make-up, there can be no genuine love for objective universal truth and value."¹³³ As a result, they dismissed religious belief, believing that specific laws governed the world and could be comprehended. Ultimately, Berdyaev underlines their attraction to what they understood as the deification of mankind. Berdyaev underlines their misinterpretation of the relationship between religion and science. Channelling Solovyov, he emphasises how they are both essential for attaining universal truth and all-unity. Ultimately, his work also highlights the implications for Russian national identity of their concrete idealism. He believes they are the

¹²⁹ Leonard Schapiro, "The 'Vekhi' Group and the Mystique of Revolution," *The Slavic and East European Review* 34, no. 82 (December, 1955): 59.

¹³⁰ Mikhail Gershenzon, "Preface," in *Landmarks: A Collection of Essays on the Russian Intelligentsia*, ed. Boris Shragin and Albert Todd, trans. Marian Schwartz (Routledge, 2019), 1.

¹³¹ Berdyaev, "Philosophic Truth and Moral Truth."

¹³² *Ibid.*, 5.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 11.

“Bearers of the universal philosophical spirit and, at the same time, national philosophers laying the foundations for a philosophy of concrete idealism.”¹³⁴

Thus, he underlines how their distinctly Russian idealism constitutes Russia’s principal contribution to mankind. Once more, the tension between the universal and the particular in Russian identity is revealed, demonstrating their descent from earlier Slavophilism.

Semyon Frank echoes Berdyaev’s critique of the intelligentsia’s outlook and its “ethic of nihilism.”¹³⁵ Like his co-contributors, he arraigns its absolutist moralism, which he equates with nihilism. For instance, he explains:

“If objective reality lacks all intrinsic meaning, if subjective human desires are the only reasonable criteria for practical existence, why should I recognise any kind of obligations, or legitimate right not be an egoistic enjoyment of life, an artless and natural *carpe diem*?”¹³⁶

Hence, the efforts of *Problems of Idealism* and *Landmarks* to outline a concrete idealism which could undergird their desire for objective values. In its focus on social progress, the intelligentsia adopted a utilitarian morality. They rejected any objective moral criteria in favour of whatever justified or furthered their cause. They attempted to fill this void with service to an idealised collective, diminishing their subjectivity and sense of personal responsibility. However, their service to the collective devolves into overcoming the perceived obstacles to realising earthly happiness, hence the destructive revolutionary impulse. Once more, they denounce the intelligentsia’s failure to further Russia’s moral and cultural development.

Moreover, Bulgakov contrasted the intelligentsia’s man-Godhood with Solovyov’s Godmanhood. Firstly, like his counterparts, he criticised the intelligentsia’s focus on external social forms as the principal determinant of earthly contentment. From this stemmed their belief in man-Godhood. Bulgakov defines it as:

¹³⁴ Berdyaev, “Philosophic Truth and Moral Truth,” 20.

¹³⁵ Semyon Frank, “The Ethic of Nihilism: A Characterisation of the Russian Intelligentsia’s Moral Outlook,” in *Landmarks: A Collection of Essays on the Russian Intelligentsia*, ed. Boris Shragin and Albert Todd, trans. Marian Schwartz (Routledge, 2019).

¹³⁶ Frank, “The Ethic of Nihilism: A Characterisation of the Russian Intelligentsia’s Moral Outlook,” 160.

“The basic dogma characteristic of all these religions is the belief in man’s natural perfection and in unending progress realisable through man’s own powers.”¹³⁷

Alongside Berdyaev and Frank, he attributes the intelligentsia’s heroism, self-sacrifice, and fondness for suffering to this understanding of history. For instance, he continues:

“Heroism strives to save mankind by its own powers and by external means; hence their exceptional regard for heroic acts that embody the program of maximalism to a maximal degree.”¹³⁸

This inclination to heroism highlights Frank’s point regarding the intelligentsia’s propensity to nihilism in its personal conduct and, as Bulgakov notes, the high frequency of suicide among its ranks.¹³⁹ For them, suicide represented a principled act of self-assertion against the world. Ultimately, he contrasts their maximalism and self-absorption with the ascetic Godmanhood proposed by Solovyov. He expounds a view similar to the social individualism expressed by the concepts of Godmanhood and all-unity. Man can only fully realise himself in relation to and through his duty to others. For instance, he notes how:

“This shift of the centre of attention to oneself and one’s own obligations, the liberation from that false state of mind of the unsummoned saviour of the world and the inevitable pride associated with it, heals the soul, filling it with a feeling of wholesome Christian humility.”¹⁴⁰

As a result, attention is refocused on one’s personal moral and cultural development. The concept of Godmanhood and its embodiment in Christ provides the ideal type towards which Man strives.

Bulgakov continues his critique by denouncing their shallow cosmopolitanism and neglect of the national idea. Firstly, he contends that Russian enlightenment and culture cannot be predicated on atheism. By neglecting the moral foundation of Russian society, they are undermining it. Thus, *Landmarks’* articulation of Russian national identity blends the Slavophile emphasis of Orthodoxy with the liberal idea of moral and cultural progress, joining the national and universal.

¹³⁷ Sergei Bulgakov, “Heroism and Asceticism: Reflections on the Religious Nature of the Russian Intelligentsia,” in *Landmarks: A Collection of Essays on the Russian Intelligentsia*, ed. Boris Shragin and Albert Todd, trans. Marian Schwartz (Routledge, 2019), 34.

¹³⁸ Bulgakov, “Heroism and Asceticism: Reflections on the Religious Nature of the Russian Intelligentsia,” 39.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

While most contributors were closely aligned with Solovyov's thinking, others, such as Struve and Kistyakovsky, were influenced by late nineteenth century European liberal nationalism and imperialism. In his contribution to *Landmarks*, Struve believes the key to understanding the 1905 revolution is the intelligentsia's alienation from the state and its belief that external social institutions are the source of man's oppression. For instance, he states:

"The key to understanding the revolution we have lived and are living through consists in this religious dissociation of the Russian intelligentsia against the state."¹⁴¹

According to Struve, due to its focus on the opprobrium of external social forms, the intelligentsia was inclined to needless destruction and recklessness. He continues that, as a result, they neglected individual development and personal responsibility. Meanwhile, Kistyakovsky criticised the intelligentsia for its lack of legal consciousness. He explained:

"The Russian intelligentsia's dulled legal consciousness and its indifference to legal ideas is the result of a chronic evil – the lack of any kind of legal order in the daily life of the Russian people."¹⁴²

Thus, they envisage a statist Russian identity, with a renewed democratic Russian state advancing the nation's cultural development. Like Berdyaev and Bulgakov, they pondered the recovery of an objective religious principle to guide Russia's development. While Kistyakovsky and Struve do not specifically address national identity in *Landmarks*, Struve began to pay increasing attention to the topic during the First World War.

In her study of Russian liberal nationalism, Rabow-Edling presents a compelling analysis of the development of liberal nationalism and imperialism among the liberal Kadets. While the Kadets believed in the integrity of the Romanov state, they also relied on non-Russian liberals for support. Thus, they were split between those who advocated for imperial renewal and those who argued for national self-determination for the Empire's national minorities. Struve was the principal proponent of imperial renewal. His Greater Russia centred on increasing popular participation by granting civil liberties. The creation of

¹⁴¹ Pyotr Struve, "The Intelligentsia and Revolution," in *Landmarks: A Collection of Essays on the Russian Intelligentsia*, ed. Boris Shragin and Albert Todd, trans. Marian Schwartz (Routledge, 2019), 145.

¹⁴² Struve, "The Intelligentsia and Revolution," 116.

a civic nation would pave the way for Russia's economic and cultural development, leading to the creation of a cultural nation. For example, after the 1905 revolution, he stated:

“Until now there was no nation, because the people were nothing in the state. Now the people want to be all in the state. Inspired by national feeling, they say “the State, it is I’.”¹⁴³

Like Western liberal imperialists, he advanced Russia's civilising mission towards its minority culture and argued that nations possessed different levels of civilisation. He viewed the civilised core as the “All Russian nation.” As a result, not only did he not believe in the development of Ukrainian and Belarussian identity, but he also believed they did not exist.¹⁴⁴ On the other hand, Pavel Milyukov doubted nationalism could contribute positively to Russia's democratic development.¹⁴⁵ He believed that the integrity of the state depended upon the toleration of national minorities and the granting of a degree of cultural autonomy. Ultimately, they both believed that modernisation would contribute to the homogenisation of Russia.

While their ideas were rooted in the unique religious and ethnic context of the Romanov Empire, they borrowed heavily from European thinking on national identity. For instance, in a conversation with the British Foreign Secretary Edward Grey, Milyukov explained that their plan for national autonomy was based on the 1914 Irish Home Rule Bill.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, Rabow Edling notes that Struve's Greater Russia Plan was founded on John Robert Seeley's notion of Greater Britain.¹⁴⁷ In 1913, an English translation of his Great Russia article was published in *The Russian Review*, with several reviewers heralding it as “the first gospel of Russian liberal imperialism.”¹⁴⁸ Thus, through the exploration of secular liberal nationalism in the late Romanov Empire, one gains an understanding of Russia's place in the broader European imperial discourse of the early twentieth century.

Overall, this chapter has explored how Russian thinkers at the turn of the twentieth century sought to reconstruct moral and political life by synthesising metaphysical idealism, Christian ethics, and legal philosophy. Building on the theological and philosophical framework of Vladimir Solovyov, *Problems of*

¹⁴³ Rabow-Edling, *Liberalism in pre-revolutionary Russia: State, nation, empire*, 108.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 117.

Idealism articulated a vision of personhood grounded in transcendental freedom and moral intuition. It represented a deliberate response to the perceived moral vacuum of positivism and historical materialism. In *Landmarks*, this philosophical foundation was radicalised into a critique of the revolutionary intelligentsia, exposing its political maximalism and spiritual nihilism. Across both texts, we see a consistent effort to unite the universal and the particular, affirming Russia's cultural and religious distinctiveness while engaging deeply with broader European intellectual currents. In doing so, these thinkers redefined Russian identity not as a negation of the West but as a creative and morally charged dialogue with it. They saw their acceptance of moral and cultural progress alongside a firm defence of the particulars of Orthodoxy as complementary to national identity construction, rather than contradictory.

Chapter 4: *Out of the Depths*

Following the reaction to *Landmarks* and the events of 1917, many contributors to *Problems of Idealism* and *Landmarks* felt that the intelligentsia and the Romanov authorities failed to heed their premonitions about society in the late Romanov Empire. For instance, Pavel Novgorodtsev, in his contribution to *Out of the Depths*, noted that after the debate surrounding *Landmarks*, the intelligentsia concluded that it had “nothing to reconsider and nothing to change.”¹⁴⁹ Reacting to this perceived intellectual myopia and inertia, *Out of the Depths* expanded the earlier critiques of revolutionary politics. Indeed, it was significantly more polemical and apocalyptic in style than its predecessors, reflecting the collapse of the Romanov dynasty and the short-lived provisional government. The contributors often expressed substantially divergent analyses of the Russian national consciousness and its relationship to Europe. However, they shared a critical stance on the intelligentsia’s failure to advance Russia’s cultural development and Russia’s relationship with Europe. *Out of the Depths* also appears more all-encompassing, considering everything from Russia’s war-induced economic collapse to the symbolist poetry of Alexander Blok and Solovyov’s idea of artistic theurgy. Thus, this chapter will first outline the reaction and debate that followed the publication of *Landmarks* and the context that led to the publication of *Out of the Depths*. It will then consider its ideas on Orthodoxy, history, liberalism, and the dearth of analysis of the nationality question. Ultimately, it will demonstrate the interconnection between Russian and European thought and how they situated the events of 1917 in the context of the interwar European spiritual crisis, contributing to our dialogical understanding of Russian and Western liberal thought.

Pyotr Struve first compiled *Out of the Depths* between April and August 1918.¹⁵⁰ The immediate context for the collection was the violent first year of the revolution and the beginning of the Russian Civil War. Many of the contributors, who were ardent supporters of liberalism and the Kadets, had seen the political institutions and procedures, which they believed would govern Russia’s future, collapse into terror. They also believed that Russian statehood was in danger. The Bolsheviks had recently concluded the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which ended the war with Germany and Austria-Hungary in exchange for

¹⁴⁹ William F. Woehrlin, “Introduction,” in *Out of the Depths: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution*, trans. William F. Woehrlin (Charles Schlacks Jr., 1986), xxi.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, xxiii.

enormous tracts of territory. As they drafted the text during the summer of 1918, there was little to suggest the imminent collapse of the German war effort. They were also troubled by what they perceived as the rise of separatism in the former Empire's peripheries. As Woehrlin notes in his translation of *Out of the Depths*: "Facing these cruel alternatives, it is little wonder that the authors [...] felt themselves, their nation, and their culture to be *in extremis*."¹⁵¹ While they completed most of the essays by the end of the summer, the political situation changed dramatically that autumn. The Civil War had commenced, and Fanny Kaplan had made her attempt on Lenin's life. The beginning of the Red Terror rendered the publication of any religious and overtly anti-Bolshevik text impossible. The book languished at the offices of the Kushnarev Press for over two years.¹⁵² However, there were attempts to distribute the text in 1921, but it remains unknown how many were distributed. Nevertheless, some of the articles in the collection were published in the émigré press, while only two copies were known to exist outside the Soviet Union. One was in Berdyaev's possession, while the other was ordered from the Soviet book agency *Kniga* by a Professor Bekker from Amsterdam in the 1930s.¹⁵³ While the text received renewed attention in the late-twentieth century, there have been few studies of its contents, with students of Russian intellectual history often neglecting it in favour of *Landmarks*.

Out of the Depths was principally a continuation of the debate on the fate of the intelligentsia triggered by the publication of *Landmarks*. The publication of *Landmarks* in 1909 elicited a substantial response from those it addressed. Indeed, Frank noted that it was "essentially a success of scandal."¹⁵⁴ As *Landmarks* had allegedly criticised the intelligentsia's "basic sacred dogma [...] the 'mystique of revolution,'" they had gone over to the "side of black reaction."¹⁵⁵ Figures from Lenin to Milyukov denounced it as treachery. Their fellow Kadets were often the fiercest critics, with Kisevetter noting, "in place of the rattle of the gendarme's sabre I hear the clink of the censor."¹⁵⁶ Many, especially Milyukov,

¹⁵¹ Woehrlin, trans., *Out of the Depths: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution* (Charles Schlaacks Jr., 1986), xxii.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, xxiii.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, xxiv.

¹⁵⁴ Nikolai P. Poltoratzky, "The Vekhi Dispute and the Significance of Vekhi," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 9, no.1 (Spring, 1967): 95.

¹⁵⁵ Schapiro, "The 'Vekhi' Group and the Mystique of Revolution," 59.

¹⁵⁶ Christopher Read, "The Intelligentsia Fights Back: The Left-Wing Response to Vekhi and its Significance," in *Landmarks Revisited: The Vekhi Symposium 100 Years On*, ed. Robin Aizlewood and Ruth Coates (Brighton: Academic Studies Press, 2013), 92.

were suspicious of *Landmarks*' religiosity and its calls for the intelligentsia to devote itself to the people. Milyukov believed it was natural for the intelligentsia to maintain its distance from the masses. Meanwhile, Lenin characterised it as "an encyclopaedia of liberal renegacy."¹⁵⁷ He continued by stating that it exemplified the embourgeoisement of the intelligentsia and the reactionary nature of liberalism. In general, the consensus among the intelligentsia was that *Landmarks*' focus on spiritual development at the expense of social and political revolution constituted a betrayal. Even those who shared similar beliefs, such as the legal scholar Novgorodtsev, concluded that several articles, especially Gershenson's, failed to adequately express the importance of law and legal consciousness.¹⁵⁸ In his *Out of the Depths* essay, he explains that

"to juxtapose individual spiritual life to external forms of communal life and self-sufficient principles of political order, is to repeat, from the opposite direction, the same error made by those who preach the omnipotence of external forms."¹⁵⁹

They neglected the fact that political and social forms reflect the inner spiritual life of a person. The two are interconnected. Thus, *Out of the Depths* is both a continuation of *Landmarks*, a response to its critics, and an assessment of the events of 1917.

Despite its many stylistic differences, *Out of the Depths* generally reiterated the critique of Russian society made by *Landmarks*. They denounced the radical intelligentsia for its populism, or *narodnichestvo*, which they alleged was responsible for stirring the masses to violent action. Kotliarevsky noted that this populism was one of the principal obstacles to Russia's cultural development. He states, "For this development requires, above all, both a solicitous attitude toward, and a respect for, culture – it requires qualities which could be nourished least of all by *narodnichestvo*. *Narodnichestvo* preached only an equalising justice in its most elementary form, a justice which must be understood as levelling downward."¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Vladimir Lenin, "Concerning Vekhi," *Novy Dyen*, December 13, 1909, [Lenin: Concerning Vekhi](#).

¹⁵⁸ Pavel Novgorodtsev, "On the Paths and Tasks of the Russian Intelligentsia," in *Out of the Depths: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution*, trans. William F. Woehrlin (Charles Schlacks Jr., 1986), 177.

¹⁵⁹ Novgorodtsev, "On the Paths and Tasks of the Russian Intelligentsia," 177.

¹⁶⁰ S.A. Kotliarevskii, "Recovery," in *Out of the Depths: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution*, trans. William F. Woehrlin (Charles Schlacks Jr., 1986), 147.

He believed that this emphasis on purely utilitarian equality unleashed the purely economic desires of the peasantry to go forth and plunder the country, inhibiting its development. They blame this nihilistic attitude for the outcome of the revolution. Similarly to *Landmarks*, they advocate a return to Christian ethics as a solution to what they believe to be a moral crisis. Other contributors advance a related line of argument. For instance, Pokrovskii, in his essay “The Curse of Perun,” distinguishes between interests and rights. In his eyes, “the criterion of right dominates over the criterion of interest.”¹⁶¹ However, in appealing to the interests of the populace, the Bolsheviks neglected the importance of political rights in providing the basis for a person’s free development. Indeed, this neglect runs deep in Russian political thought. Earlier populist thinkers, such as Mikhailovsky, emphasised the singular role of the peasant commune in Russian history.¹⁶² As a result, they believed Russia could leapfrog the individualistic capitalist stage of development. Hence, Pokrovskii noted, “not for everything in which we have an interest, do we also have a right.”¹⁶³ Thus, *Out of the Depths* criticised the intelligentsia for its focus on external political interests at the expense of personal and cultural development.

Struve and Novgorodtsev further developed this train of thought in their more systemic analyses. They highlighted the intelligentsia’s fixation on the external forms of society, political institutions and economic structures. They pilloried the intelligentsia’s belief that if only the external structures of oppression could be eliminated, man would be free. Positive construction need not be necessary. They attributed the intelligentsia’s alienation from the state and its failure to recognise the importance of law and culture to this core tenet of its thinking. Thus, concentrating on economic interests, they failed to develop a national culture or feeling. As Muravev noted, “*Narodnichestvo* never rose to the idea of a nation, therefore it was never able to nurture a healthy national feeling.”¹⁶⁴ In response, *Out of the Depths* countered with an emphasis on the need to rediscover a spiritual unity or *Sobornost*. Like Solovyov, they articulated a unity based on a shared history and faith. In contrast to the class and economic identity

¹⁶¹ I.A. Pokrovskii, “The Curse of Perun,” in *Out of the Depths: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution*, trans. William F. Woehrlin (Charles Schlacks Jr., 1986), 199.

¹⁶² Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture*, 394.

¹⁶³ Pokrovskii, “The Curse of Perun,” 199.

¹⁶⁴ Kotliarevskii, “Recovery,” 148.

advanced by the Bolsheviks, they advocated a national identity based on spiritual values and *Sobornost* that retained a continuity with the Orthodox tradition. Before exploring the implications of *Out of the Depths* for Russian national identity, this chapter will compare it to its predecessors to highlight some of the issues in Russian liberal thought.

While this idealist current in Russian intellectual history has been regularly criticised for its emphasis on ideational influences and neglect of economic factors, several articles in *Out of the Depths* articulated an explanation of the economic factors that caused the revolution and a critique of the Bolshevik's economic policies.¹⁶⁵ Throughout his article, Struve staunchly defended private property. However, his thinking reflected many of the blind spots of the liberal camp at the time. For instance, they failed to consider the effects of the Whites' policy of *Nadklassnost* and nonpredetermination (*nepredreshenstvo*). *Nadklassnost* refers to rising above class interests.¹⁶⁶ It mirrors their belief that the state should mediate between different interests, protect people's rights, and facilitate the development of the nation. As the jurist Sergei Gessen explained: "The state's task is to be an above-class intermediary between classes."¹⁶⁷ Likewise, nonpredetermination referred to the liberals' belief that the provisional government should not resolve important policy issues, but rather the constituent assembly, when it convened.¹⁶⁸ As a result, they allowed themselves to be outflanked on numerous issues, from nationality policy to land reform, by the Bolsheviks and non-Russian nationalists.¹⁶⁹ Thus, while works like *Out of Depths* foregrounded the need to focus on developing national culture and the rule of law, it is difficult to ascertain what this meant in practice, especially given that several of the contributors to the edition participated in the various White governments.

¹⁶⁵ See Pyotr Struve, "The Historical Meaning of the Russian Revolution and National Tasks," in *Out of the Depths: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution*, trans. William F. Woehrlin (Charles Schlacks Jr., 1986); Alexander Izgoev, "Socialism, Culture, and Bolshevism," in *Out of the Depths: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution*, trans. William F. Woehrlin (Charles Schlacks Jr., 1986).

¹⁶⁶ Robinson, *Russian Liberalism*, 75.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁶⁹ Oliver Rowe, "For a United Russia? the White Movement's Rejection of National Self-Determination, 1918–20," *The Russian Review (Stanford)* 83, no. 4 (2024): 577-594.

Out of the Depths also differs significantly from *Problems of Idealism* and *Landmarks* in its style, reflecting the desperation of the writers' situation. The tone of the work is more polemical and apocalyptic, except in Struve's and Novgorodtsev's articles, which attempt a historical analysis of the revolution, its causes and consequences. For instance, several contributions descend to blatant name-calling. Sergei Bulgakov resorts to referring to his opponents as "nihilistic savages."¹⁷⁰ Additionally, they described the Bolsheviks as "pure evil" and the work of Lucifer.¹⁷¹ This religious inflection in their name-calling mirrors their apocalypticism. Indeed, apocalypticism was a significant feature of Silver Age poetry, especially the symbolist poetry of Blok and Belyi.¹⁷² The symbolists were a group of writers and poets who rejected the idea that art should have a social purpose.¹⁷³ Instead, they sought to understand the moral significance of Russian literature. They were profoundly influenced by Solovyov's idea of free theurgy, which Berdyaev and his philosophy of creativity later developed.¹⁷⁴ Solovyov conceived of art as theurgy or divine work, efforts that invoke the divine or unite it with humanity. It is a sacred activity through which the soul draws closer to God. He views it as the free work of human beings in collaboration with God. He contrasts this free partnership with formalistic religion and considers it cosmic and transformative. Several contributors to *Out of the Depths* embody this symbolist influence. In contrast to *Landmarks*, several articles, such as Berdyaev's, engage in literary criticism in an effort to purify the national spirit. For example, Berdyaev claimed that the revolution represented a particular Russian style and that these "Russian demons" must be exorcised.¹⁷⁵ He claimed, "We have gone beyond the foundation of an entire historical epoch; we are entering a period of terrible revelations."¹⁷⁶ This apocalypticism is also evident in Ivanov's promulgation of a new ideology, "mystical anarchism."¹⁷⁷ Like the symbolists, Gogol was a particular favourite. They considered one of the main themes in Gogol's work to be man's struggle with the devil, embodied by the

¹⁷⁰ Sergei Bulgakov, "At the Feast of the Gods," in *Out of the Depths: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution*, trans. William F. Woehrlin (Charles Schlacks Jr., 1986), 97.

¹⁷¹ Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, "Foreword," in *Out of the Depths: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution*, trans. William F. Woehrlin (Charles Schlacks Jr., 1986), xiii.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, xiii.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, ix.

¹⁷⁴ Vladimir Marchenkov, "Nikolai Berdyaev's philosophy of creativity as a revolt against the modern worldview," in *The Palgrave handbook of Russian thought*, eds. Bykova, Marina F., Michael N. Forster and Lina Steiner (Springer International Publishing, 2021), 227.

¹⁷⁵ Rosenthal, "Foreword," x.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, xi.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, xi.

Gogolian characters of Chichikov and Khlestakov. Throughout his essay, Berdyaev frequently alludes to the revolution as a “Chichikovian undertaking.”¹⁷⁸ He also characterised the Bolsheviks as “Gogolian Russia in a red nightcap.”¹⁷⁹ However, this apocalypticism must also be considered in its political and economic context. Indeed, their great disappointment must be juxtaposed with the tremendous optimism of 1914 and the hopes of a national revival that arose. Nevertheless, through their apocalypticism, we gain an insight into their idea of Russian national identity. Their conception of Russian national identity portrays the lingering influence of Slavophilism and belief in spiritual continuity and renewal. It is grounded in the Russian Orthodox tradition.

In these pages, we find an attempt to diagnose the causes of the revolution and an attempt to lay the groundwork for national renewal. As Woehrlin notes in his introduction, they asked: “What are the unique characteristics of the Russian national identity? What is Russia’s destiny or mission in universal history?”¹⁸⁰ As noted above, they blamed the intelligentsia for the breakdown of the Russian community and the loss of *Sobornost*. Several of the volume’s contributors develop this concept, describing it as “the higher quality of the herd – the herd, not as a mechanical, but an organic unification of the people.”¹⁸¹ For them, the nation was more than the sum of its parts; a higher spirit bound it. In the more Slavophilic contributions like Muravev’s, this spirit is that of the Church. Orthodoxy is the glue that binds the nation together and connects it with its past. This is evident in Muravev’s defence of the centrality of Orthodox ritual in Russian culture. He underlines:

“The Russian people knew nothing of abstract concepts, the fruits of detached intellectuality. Its attachment to rituals was not chance, but full of profound meaning. Ritual is a mystical act, and all believers take part in it. It is like the eternal order of the life of the *sobor* body.”¹⁸²

In response to the intelligentsia’s alleged lack of national feeling, several essays posited Orthodoxy as the basis of Russia’s development and national spirit.

¹⁷⁸ Rosenthal, “Foreword,” x.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, xi.

¹⁸⁰ William F. Woehrlin, “Introduction,” in *Out of the Depths: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution*, trans. William F. Woehrlin (Charles Schlacks Jr., 1986), xxvi.

¹⁸¹ V.N. Muravev, “The Roar of the Tribe,” in *Out of the Depths: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution*, trans. William F. Woehrlin (Charles Schlacks Jr., 1986), 172.

¹⁸² Muravev, “The Roar of the Tribe,” 160.

The influence of Slavophilism is also present in their conceptualisation of the relationship between the intelligentsia, the state, and the people. They opposed the *Narodnik* or populist view outlined by Novgorodtsev:

“The people are always prepared, mature, and perfect; and that one need only destroy the old state structure and immediately it will become possible for the people to realise the most profound reforms and the most grandiose work of social construction.”¹⁸³

In opposing this view, they also criticised the dismissive attitude of many of their fellow liberals, rejecting the idea that the people were sufficiently cultured as “simply stupid.”¹⁸⁴ Threading the needle between these diametrically opposed views, they posited the people as the saviour. However, the intelligentsia’s role was to educate and lead rather than manipulate the people for their ends. Instead of stirring the masses into what they saw as the revolutionary destruction of the state and nation, they emphasised the need for a responsible and enlightened national intelligentsia to advance *Sobornost*. Nevertheless, their view of the people often strays closer to the mythological *Narodnik* definition they criticise. For instance, Pokrovskii states, “Where is the saviour? [...] He is there, because the people itself has not yet said its word; others have spoken for it.”¹⁸⁵ Therefore, one must be cautious when evaluating these texts, remembering the ideological intentions behind these words produced in a politically charged context.

Frank articulated a similar view in his essay *De Profundis*. He reiterates many of the criticisms of the intelligentsia and its worldview outlined above. For instance, he refers to the revolution as a suicide rather than a murder due to “the fact that the pernicious spirit of decomposition plaguing the whole country was injected and absorbed in the national organism willingly.”¹⁸⁶ He also advances cultural development as the antidote, arguing for a recovery of “the vital force of spiritual creativity” as the basis for a new “national-political ideology.”¹⁸⁷ In addition, he maintains that the adoption of a “religiously conceived and nationally and historically based social and political culture,” the country can “embark onto the path of

¹⁸³ Novgorodtsev, “On the Paths and Tasks of the Russian Intelligentsia,” 181.

¹⁸⁴ Struve, “The Historical Meaning of the Russian Revolution and National Tasks,” 204.

¹⁸⁵ Pokrovskii, “The Curse of Perun,” 201.

¹⁸⁶ S.L. Frank, “*De Profundis*,” in *Out of the Depths: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution*, trans. William F. Woehrlin (Charles Schlacks Jr., 1986), 219.

¹⁸⁷ Frank, “*De Profundis*,” 229.

creativity and positive development.”¹⁸⁸ This argument builds on Mjør’s earlier exploration of *tvorchestvo* or creativity. In his analysis of the transmission of European Romanticism, especially Schelling, into the Russian context, he underlines the tension between the early Slavophiles’ belief in creative genius as the basis for their conceptualisation of individualism and their belief in a spiritually bound organic community. During the Silver Age, thinkers such as Berdyaev and Frank and artists like Blok, describe an individual creativity conditioned by an organic spiritual community.

In contrast, other contributors, such as Struve and Novgorodtsev, emphasised the need for secular patriotism. Building on his earlier contention that the intelligentsia had disassociated itself from the state, Struve argued for the development of state institutions and a legal and civic consciousness. His analysis traces the development of the Petrine Russian state, demonstrating its gradual alienation of the educated segment. In doing so, he even nostalgically praised the tsarist institutions and order. Thus, he concluded that,

“The nation is a spiritual unity, created and supported by a community of culture and a spiritual content bequeathed to it by the past, alive in the present, and in the making for the future.”¹⁸⁹

Superficially, his conceptualisation of the nation is not entirely dissimilar to that of the Slavophiles. However, as mentioned above, his nationalism was rooted in European and Enlightenment ideas of the nation-state, hence his emphasis on the state and the rule of law. This emphasis is evident in Novgorodtsev’s article:

“With our own hands, we have torn our state and our people to shreds; we have not only torn them into “self-defined” historical pieces but also into “self-defined” social classes.”¹⁹⁰

In contrast, the Slavophiles viewed the nation as a living spiritual organism. While the contributors to this edition might differ on how they define the nation, they agreed on the need to confront what they saw as the spiritual crisis afflicting not only Russia but also Europe.

¹⁸⁸ Frank, “*De Profundis*,” 234.

¹⁸⁹ Struve, “The Historical Meaning of the Russian Revolution and National Tasks,” 216.

¹⁹⁰ Pokrovskii, “The Curse of Perun,” 201.

Novgorodtsev's article situates *Out of the Depths* and the revolution in a broader European spiritual crisis in the aftermath of the First World War. In his exploration of *Landmarks* and the debate it provoked, he compares it to similar works throughout Europe, such as *Les Méfaits des Intellectuels* by Georges Sorel and Edouard Berth.¹⁹¹ Published in 1914, it argues for French socialism to turn from Descartes to Pascal, from rationalism to mysticism. Thus, *Out of the Depths* must be understood in this European context and debate. While *Out of the Depths* possesses distinctly Russian characteristics, it must be understood as a particular national contribution to a perceived universal crisis. This national contribution is most evident in its idea of history and time.

What sets *Out of the Depths* apart is its development of the notion of progress. Modern notions of progress are deeply embedded in the Hegelian dialectic, in which the past is negated and developed. This dialectical process is evident in Morozov's work, his exploration of uneven and combined development, and how Russian identity is based on negating the West. However, as this thesis contends, Russian thinkers developed and amended this idea of progress, undermining essentialist ideas of Russian identity and contributing to our understanding of Russia's relationship with Europe, the relationship between Orthodoxy and liberalism, as a dialogical process. Instead of Morozov's emphasis on deconstruction and negation, the contributors to *Out of the Depths* stressed the notion of recovery, the necessity of a recoverable past as the basis of a national identity. In his essay "Recovery," Kotliarevsky says they must search for a national renaissance "in such principles as nationality, state, and culture, even if at present our spiritual structure has pushed away from them."¹⁹² This thread runs throughout both the secular and Slavophilic essays.

In his article, Muravev outlines how identity and time are interconnected, how "*Sobornost* and temporality are inseparable."¹⁹³ He begins by quoting from Chaadaev's *Philosophical Letters*:

¹⁹¹ Novgorodtsev, "On the Paths and Tasks of the Russian Intelligentsia," 177.

¹⁹² Kotliarevskii, "Recovery," 154.

¹⁹³ Muravev, "The Roar of the Tribe," 161.

“It is time to recognise that human reason is not limited by the force which it draws from the narrow present – that there is another force in it which, combining in one thought both time past and time promised, forms its original essence and raises it up into the true sphere of its activity.”¹⁹⁴

This idea may sound similar to this research’s earlier exploration of Koselleck’s thinking on conceptual history. Specifically, it appears indistinguishable from his idea of conceptual change over time, how past experience informs future expectations and how multiple definitions of a concept can exist simultaneously. However, in fitting with the emphasis of *Sobornost* on the unity and wholeness of both knowledge and time, they would no doubt dispute Koselleck’s splitting of time. Instead, they consider time an integral whole. Hence, their foregrounding of recovery concerns the reestablishment of this wholeness. Muravev continues: “The foundation of the world view of old Rus’ was its unprecedented wholeness of spirit” and its “integral sensation of reality.”¹⁹⁵ There is no separation of past and present, thought and action. For him, the past is the present in action. Man existed “not outside of history, but inside it, and he did not think it, but lived it.”¹⁹⁶ From this rather esoteric explanation, we gain insight into their sense of the wholeness of time. Wading through the standard Slavophile condemnation of Catholicism, we come to his idea of the individual’s place in history. Muravev understands the *Sobornost* as the joining of the individual and the collective *Sobor*, with neither being able to flourish without the other. However, what about the idea of recovery mentioned above?

In his essay, Bulgakov presents a series of dialogues. Throughout, it is apparent that he expresses his thinking through the personage of the “Refugee.” In the final dialogue, he inquires: “Are we not witnesses to a general catastrophe, to the collapse of all “modern history?”¹⁹⁷ He continues: “But I think that in general the old way of life is not being restored, and it would be too great an absurdity, a failure of history, if everything was simply restored. To grasp, no matter what, for fragments of the past, is the same as clinging to the boards of a shattered ship.”¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁴ Muravev, “The Roar of the Tribe,” 157.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 159, 160.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 161.

¹⁹⁷ Bulgakov, “At the Feast of the Gods,” 116.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 116.

Thus, the authors of *Out of the Depths* are engaged in an effort to find a usable and recoverable past that could be the basis of a national identity. Since they are adherents to the belief of cultural progress, they dismiss the notion that they can recover an Orthodox medieval culture in its entirety. Nevertheless, how they intend to achieve this remains unclear.

Morozov believes that compared to other subalterns, the Russian masses are even more voiceless as they do not possess pre-historical memories and instead construct their identity on Putin's "paleoconservative" negation of the West. Perhaps there is no such past. Muravev once again quotes Chaadaev in a similar vein:

"We advance in time in such a strange way, that with our every step forward the preceding moment disappears irretrievably for us."¹⁹⁹

Chaadaev attributed Russia's vacuous history to its peculiar half-European identity. He identified recovery with the adoption of universal Western principles. However, Muravev believes Chaadaev is mistaken and contends that the Russian people, unlike the intellectuals, are the bearers of Russian history. They preserved the traditions of Orthodox religiosity. Thus, the history and culture they seek to recover is Orthodoxy. However, like all those who seek to rediscover a religious past, they fail to explain how this can be achieved in an increasingly secular world. After all, they do not dismiss secular concepts like progress, liberalism, and national identity. Despite their frequent references to traditionalists such as Edmund Burke,²⁰⁰ they are not traditionalists who wish to preserve the existing order; they admit it is already shattered. Additionally, they are not romantic nationalists either. As mentioned above, while European romanticism, particularly figures such as Schelling, influenced early Slavophilism, later Slavophiles, like the contributors to *Out of the Depths*, differ.²⁰¹ Romantic nationalists consider the national spirit to be present and alive. However, most of the contributors to this collection see it as fragmented and lost; it has to be recovered through cultural and intellectual effort. Thus, they devise a dialectic of loss and recovery. Ultimately, they sought to affirm an Orthodox idea of the Russian nation.

¹⁹⁹ Muravev, "The Roar of the Tribe," 165.

²⁰⁰ Novgorodtsev, "On the Paths and Tasks of the Russian Intelligentsia," 185.

²⁰¹ Paul Robinson, *Russian Conservatism* (Cornell University Press, 2019), 63.

What about those belonging to other Christian denominations? What about the millions of Jews and Muslims who lived in the Romanov Empire? Similar to *Landmarks* and the broader liberal debate on nationalism, at least in the imperial centre, most of the writers in this edition are remarkably silent about the growth of nationalism in the Empire's peripheries.²⁰² Overall, the symposium contains little acknowledgement that the Romanov Empire consisted of many different peoples, languages, and traditions. While they do not discuss separatism or other issues pertaining to the national question, one can conclude from their insistence that the Empire's collapse was a moral and spiritual failure that they disapproved of the growth of national movements.

Out of the Depths represents a profound attempt to grapple with the spiritual, cultural, and political collapse of the Romanov Empire in the wake of the 1917 revolutions. Building on the earlier critiques articulated in *Landmarks*, this collection reflects both continuity and rupture in Russian liberal thought. On the one hand, it reiterates the enduring critique of the radical intelligentsia's obsession with external structures, such as economic systems, political forms, and revolutionary utopias, at the expense of inner moral and spiritual development. On the other hand, it responds with heightened urgency and a distinctly apocalyptic tone, mirroring the violence and chaos that engulfed Russia during the civil war.

At the heart of *Out of the Depths* lies a vision of national recovery rooted in the concept of *Sobornost*. Whether framed through Slavophilic appeals to Orthodoxy or through more secular calls for civic consciousness and legal order, the contributors believe that Russia's salvation depends on establishing a shared moral framework. However, this project of recovery is inherently fraught. The authors wrestle with the paradox of invoking a recoverable past while acknowledging that the pre-revolutionary world has been irrevocably shattered.

This tension is further complicated by their relative silence on the multiethnic and multiconfessional reality of the former empire. Their exclusive focus on Orthodox conceptions of national identity raises critical questions about the inclusivity of their vision. In centring Russianness around spiritual and cultural continuity, they marginalise the other peoples and religions that constituted the Romanov Empire. Overall,

²⁰² Woehrlin, "Introduction," xxviii.

their critique of the Bolsheviks' materialism and class politics is sharp. However, their prescriptions remain somewhat vague, particularly regarding how an Orthodox national identity could exist alongside modern liberal principles in a secularising world.

Ultimately, *Out of the Depths* must be read as both a national and a European response to a broader European crisis of modernity. The dilemmas it grapples with, such as faith and reason, tradition and progress, nationalism and universalism, reflect broader currents of thought that transcended Russia's borders. While their answers are imperfect and marked by the blind spots of their time, the contributors offer a poignant meditation on the fragility of civilisation, the costs of revolutionary rupture, and the enduring human search for meaning, order, and spiritual renewal amidst historical catastrophes.

Chapter 5: Epilogue

In the previous chapters, we have analysed a variety of texts from the late Romanov period to develop an explanation of the religious aspect of Russian liberals' thinking on Russian national identity. This thesis has explained how a collection of thinkers devised a Russian identity combining Western ideas of the rule of law and the nation-state with a recovery of Orthodox principles, such as *Sobornost*. Through this explanation, this study has demonstrated how Russian identity must be considered in the context of the tradition of Russian Orthodoxy. Thus, it has problematised the notion that Russian identity is constructed purely on negating the West. Regarding subaltern studies, it has revealed how any attempt to recover the voiceless identity of the subaltern cannot be solely based on deconstruction but should include recovery. After all, in deciphering these identities, one must consider their positive and negative content. However, this explanation would not be complete without considering how these ideas influence the formation of contemporary Russian identity. Indeed, one of the principal thrusts of this thesis has been to problematise Morozov's idea of Putin's identity building. While the connection between these late Romanov era thinkers and the Russian present may seem tenuous, this study takes its lead from Armitage and his *long durée* transnational approach to conceptual history explained above. Armitage notes, "In many realms of historical writing, big is back."²⁰³ Therefore, this chapter will outline an explanation of how the intellectuals and ideas analysed above have been variously used and abused in contemporary Russia's identity wars. Firstly, it will briefly trace the development of this intellectual current through the Soviet period until today. Secondly, it will consider how scholars have analysed Putin's use of these thinkers and how that fits into the broader literature on national identity, memory, and imperialism in modern Russia. However, this chapter is purely illustrative and aims to suggest how this analysis could be extended into the Soviet and contemporary period.

Following the outbreak of civil war across the former Romanov Empire in 1918, many of the contributors to the collections analysed above were scattered throughout the former Empire and abroad. For instance, Struve served under the White government of General Anton Denikin before emigrating to

²⁰³ Armitage, "What's the Big Idea? Intellectual History and the *longue durée*," 493.

Paris in 1920.²⁰⁴ Berdyaev was expelled from the Soviet Union in 1922 on the so-called “Philosopher’s Ship.”²⁰⁵ However, many of them continued their intellectual and political work in exile. Berdyaev continued to publish in Paris, where he was known as the “red priest.”²⁰⁶ He published some of his most well known works at this time, such as *The Russian Idea*, *The Meaning of History*, *Freedom and the Spirit*, and *The Meaning of the Creative Act*.²⁰⁷ For example, in *The Russian Idea*, he continues many of the same arguments articulated in *Out of the Depths*. He believed a spiritual duality, a blend of Orthodox and Western elements, shaped Russia's identity. Russian identity is fundamentally a moral and spiritual idea, giving rise to its apocalypticism, universalism, and totalitarianism.²⁰⁸ Nevertheless, a recurring theme throughout his work is personalism, the innate moral value of the individual. He wrote:

“Every human personality [. . .] bearing as it does within itself the image of the highest existence, cannot be a means to any end whatsoever. It has in itself a right not only to life [. . .] but also a right to possess the universal content of life.”²⁰⁹

Besides their intellectual activity, several were active in political organisations, such as the National Committee, the Republican-Democratic Union, and the Émigré Congress held in Paris in 1926.²¹⁰ However, these entities, representing the various factions of the emigration, failed to unite owing to their differences on various issues, including the nationality question, democracy, and the rise of fascism. Several of them, Ilyin and Struve in particular, flirted for a time with fascism and Nazism.²¹¹ This fascination reflects their gradual alienation from liberal democracy during the interwar years. Indeed, one former Kadet politician, Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, claimed, “To have calm, you need machine guns.”²¹² Novgorodtsev, speaking in 1919, concurred:

²⁰⁴ Robinson, *Russian Liberalism*, 92.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 102.

²⁰⁶ Woehrlin, trans., *Out of the Depths: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution*, xvi.

²⁰⁷ Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*, trans. R. M. French (Steiner Books, 1992); Nikolai Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit*, trans. Oliver Fielding Clarke (Geoffrey Bles, 1935); Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, trans. George Reavey, (Geoffrey Bles, 1936); Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, trans. Donald A. Lowrie, (Collier Books, 1955).

²⁰⁸ Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*.

²⁰⁹ Nikolai Berdyaev, *Slavery and Freedom* (Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1944), 10.

²¹⁰ Robinson, *Russian Liberalism*, 103.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 111.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 98.

“If nothing remains of our democratism, then that is an excellent thing, since what is needed now is dictatorship, a force for creating authority.”²¹³

Many even expressed a certain degree of nostalgia for the imperial authorities they had previously so vigorously opposed. Struve suggested they were “beginning to understand what a cultural role the bureaucracy and police of the overthrown monarchy played.”²¹⁴ Throughout the emigration, there was an apparent radicalisation.

One of the most prolific émigré intellectuals was Ivan Ilyin. A student of Novgorodtsev, he emphasised the importance of developing legal consciousness and spiritual renewal. He was sceptical that a universal formula for democracy existed. His later work displayed a fascination with understanding the necessary conditions for democratic development. According to P.T. Grier, he believed:

“That it [democracy] could only emerge in specific nations whose individual citizens were possessed of sufficiently high standards of legal consciousness and self-discipline (i.e., a certain level of spiritual development), civic education, a strongly developed sense of social solidarity, and a belief that the government was a genuine expression of their own national unity.”²¹⁵

Nevertheless, scholars have compared numerous aspects of Ilyin's thought to fascism. For instance, he believed Russia needed an aristocratic national dictatorship of “the best people” to facilitate cultural development and lay the groundwork for democratic governance.²¹⁶ However, Grier correctly highlights that he foresaw this as a temporary measure. He never advanced the perpetual subservience of the Russian people. Additionally, his views are not dissimilar to those of liberals of the 1990s who argued for a “national dictatorship of the best people.” For instance, the journalist Yuliya Latinina once stated:

“It’s not enough to be a dictatorship, it’s necessary to be a good dictatorship, like in Singapore or Chile and not like in the Philippines or Haiti.”²¹⁷

Scholars have also noted Ilyin’s hatred for Ukraine. In one work, he wrote:

²¹³ Robinson, *Russian Liberalism*, 98.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

²¹⁵ Philip Grier, “Ivan A. Ilyin: Russia’s ‘Non-Hegelian’ Hegelian,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Russian Thought*, eds. Bykova, Marina F., Michael N. Forster and Lina Steiner (Springer International Publishing, 2021), 331.

²¹⁶ Grier, “Ivan A. Ilyin: Russia’s ‘Non-Hegelian’ Hegelian,” 332.

²¹⁷ Paul Robinson, “Classical Liberalism in Russia,” *Econ Journal Watch* 21, no. 1 (2024): 173.

“Ukrainian separatism is artificial, devoid of genuine foundations. It was born from the ambition of its captains and international military intrigue.”²¹⁸

However, to attribute these views to Ilyin alone would be a failure to understand that most Russian thinkers of his time saw Ukraine as an indivisible part of Russia.²¹⁹ Ultimately, scholars must consider figures such as Ilyin, Struve, and Berdyaev in their historical context and how European and Orthodox thought simultaneously moulded them. Be that as it may, how have these ideas shaped current debates on Russian national identity?

The essay collections studied above continue to have an enduring effect on Russian intellectual and political life. The ideas they fostered have given rise to several descendant and derivative collections during the Soviet period and today. For example, Alexander Solzhenitsyn and six other dissidents published *From Under the Rubble* in 1974.²²⁰ While it appears modelled on the earlier symposia, Solzhenitsyn also refers to *Out of the Depths* when he says: “from out of those dank and dark depths.”²²¹ Max Hayward, the translator for the English edition, also notes the phonic similarities in their Russian language titles, *Iz Pod Glub* compared to *Iz Glubiny*.²²² Like its predecessors, *From Under the Rubble* emphasises individual spiritual and cultural development as a precursor to social change. They also denounce what they believe to be the dehumanising effects of Soviet totalitarianism and Western materialism as a basis for their search for an objective moral truth. In 1976, Pavel Litvinov, Mikhail Meerson-Aksyonov, and Boris Shragin published a similar collection of essays.²²³ Describing themselves as liberal democrats, they cited Nikolai Berdyaev, Sergei Bulgakov, Aleksandr Izgoev, Pavel Miliukov, Pyotr Struve, Georgy Fedotov, and Semyon Frank as their principal inspiration. Nevertheless, establishing clear connections and direct lines of descent between these works is difficult.

²¹⁸ Ivan Ilyin, *Osnovy bor'by za natsional'nuyu Rossiyu* (1938), 58.

²¹⁹ Marlène Laruelle, “The Intellectual Origins of Putin’s Invasion: There is no Rasputin in the Modern Russian Court,” *UnHerd*, March 16, 2022, [The intellectual origins of Putin’s invasion - UnHerd](#).

²²⁰ A. I. Solzhenitsyn, I. R. Shafarevich, V. V. Borisov, *Iz-pod glyb* (Posev, 1974).

²²¹ Alexander Solzhenitsyn et al., *From Under the Rubble*, ed. and trans. Max Hayward and Michael Glenny (Little, Brown and Company, 1975), 161.

²²² Solzhenitsyn et al., *From Under the Rubble*, ed. and trans. Max Hayward and Michael Glenny, vii.

²²³ Pavel Litvinov, Mikhail Meerson-Aksenov, and Boris Shragin, “Ot Sostavitelei,” in *Samosoznanie: Sbornik statei*, ed. Pavel Litvinov, Mikhail Meerson-Aksenov, and Boris Shragin (Khronika, 1976), 6–7.

Moreover, several Russian thinkers have compiled a series of essays titled *Before the Face of Catastrophe* in recent years.²²⁴ The collection seeks to address what the authors believe are the consequences of the Putin era of Russian history. The editor of the volume, Nikolai Plotnikov, noted:

“Our collection recalls most of all [Solzhenitsyn’s] *From Under the Rubble* as that volume too was organised using authors both living in Russia and those living outside.”²²⁵

They are concerned with defining themselves and Russia, which they believe Putin has severed and isolated from its previous civilisation. As alluded to earlier, this severance represents a critical difference between Putin and earlier Slavophiles and other conservative figures. Ultimately, they endeavour to address the fundamental ethical issues of how Russia repents and recovers from its aggression and the political questions that will shape Russia's future. Like their intellectual ancestors, they couch their future expectations in the religious language of repentance.

Studies of contemporary Russia present nationalism and religion as purely reactionary and conservative phenomena. However, several scholars have highlighted Putin’s reference to various intellectuals, especially Berdyaev and Ilyin, to support his civilisational narrative, which is that Russia constitutes a singular Orthodox civilisation. Scholars have used these references to signal the fascist nature of the contemporary Russian state.²²⁶ However, the fundamental differences between the civilisational discourse articulated by those analysed in this thesis and the current Russian state are worth noting. While the discourse examined in the earlier chapters views Russian identity as the product of a combination of both Orthodox and European influences, the current Russian regime, influenced by later Eurasianist ideas, considers Russia a hermetically sealed and essentialist entity.²²⁷ Expressed in the metaphors used by many subaltern and postcolonial scholars, they contrast the idea of Russia as a bridge versus Russia as a wall.

However, the current thinking on Russian identity does share some similarities with those of its predecessors. For instance, the dialectic of loss and recovery outlined in the previous chapter is present in

²²⁴ Nikolai Plotnikov, ed., *Pered litsom katastrofy: Sbornik statey* (LIT Verlag, 2023).

²²⁵ Paul Goble, “‘Before the Face of Catastrophe’ — Putin Era Gets Its ‘Vekhi’ and Its ‘Iz-pod Glyb,’” *Window on Eurasia – New Series*, March 13, 2023, <https://windowoneurasia2.blogspot.com/2023/03/before-face-of-catastrophe-putin-era.html>.

²²⁶ Timothy Snyder, “Ivan Ilyin, Putin’s Philosopher of Russian Fascism,” *The New York Review of Books*, March 16, 2018, <https://www.nybooks.com/online/2018/03/16/ivan-ilyin-putins-philosopher-of-russian-fascism/>.

²²⁷ Marlène Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire* (Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

the cyclical vision of Russian history articulated by the regime. Since the early 2000s, numerous publications, documentaries, and speeches have portrayed Russian history as oscillating between periods of *smuta* or chaos, such as the Times of Troubles, the revolutionary period, and the 1990s, and periods of recovery, such as Russia under Putin.²²⁸ While serving their regime-building interests, it reflects the above thinking with its apocalyptic yet messianic inflexion. Here, we see the relevance of these thinkers for contemporary Russia. Indeed, scholars frequently refer to Ilyin as Putin's ideological guru. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, many of his works, especially *Our Tasks*, enjoyed long print runs. Berdyaev's works were also promptly rediscovered and experienced similar acclaim.²²⁹ In his addresses, Putin regularly cited their works and assigned them as required reading to Russian officials and military officers.²³⁰ However, analysing a body of work based on selective quotations used by a politician is hardly scientific or academic. These works ought to be examined in their historical context and as the result of a complex interaction between Russian and European thought.

Orthodoxy continues to influence contemporary Russian liberalism and nationalism. In the early 2010s, the *Natsdem* movement, involving figures such as Alexei Navalny, represented an attempt to challenge the civilisational conceptualisation of Russian national identity and advance a new approach for rethinking Russian national identity, combining various elements of liberal nationalism and Orthodoxy.²³¹ However, there was little consensus within the movement over whether the basis of Russian national identity should be linguistic, ethnic, or religious. Navalny embodied these different eclectic approaches. He variedly expressed outright xenophobia, civic nationalism, and his endorsement of imperial expansion.²³² While his religious faith was a mainstay of his politics, it remains largely understudied. In general, most contemporary studies of religion, nationalism, and liberalism in Russia treat them as reified

²²⁸ Sander Brouwer, "From Empire to Smuta and Back. The Mythopoetics of Cyclical History in Russian Film and TV-Documentaries," in *Contested Interpretations of the Past in Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian Film*, ed. Sander Brouwer (Brill, 2016).

²²⁹ Grier, "Ivan A. Ilyin: Russia's 'Non-Hegelian' Hegelian," 335.

²³⁰ Vladimir Putin, "Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly," December 4, 2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47173>.

²³¹ Igor Torbakov, "A Parting of Ways? The Kremlin Leadership and Russia's New-Generation Nationalist Thinkers," *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 23, no. 4 (2015): 427-457.

²³² Marlene Laruelle, "Alexei Navalny and challenges in reconciling 'nationalism' and 'liberalism'," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 30, no. 4 (2014): 276-297.

categories, neglecting their interconnections. Much of this research has searched in vain for Putin's ideological guru to no avail. How European idealism interacted with Orthodoxy and social liberalism to produce a unique liberal, Orthodox, and idealist perspective on Russian national identity has been disregarded.

Peter Pomerantsev, in his aptly titled work *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible*, demonstrates how Putin selectively uses European ideas and concepts, as well as memory politics, for his strategic ends.²³³ Vsevolod Samokhvalov says that this indicates how, for the regime, "Europe (whether conservative or progressive) has turned into a means to their own ends."²³⁴ Ultimately, they both explain how they use a postmodernist approach to cherry-pick ideas and memories to support their strategic ambitions. In a similar vein, Jade McGlynn, in *Memory Makers: The Politics of the Past in Putin's Russia*, provides a detailed analysis of how the regime has weaponised history and selectively uses WWII metaphors, public rituals, murals, and history clubs to legitimise their actions.²³⁵ Ultimately, they weave various historical ideas and memories into a broader civilisational narrative that guides current policies, such as the war against Ukraine. Thus, scholars must understand Putin's decontextualised citation of Berdyaev and his contemporaries as such a manipulation instead of lazily characterising them as fascist.

This thesis has traced how Russian liberals of the late Romanov period articulated a vision of national identity that wove together Orthodox spirituality, European legalism, and liberal idealism. Far from being solely oppositional to the West, their thought reveals a complex dialogue between tradition and modernity, faith and reason. In revisiting their legacy through a *long durée* approach, this study has shown that their ideas have continued to resonate unevenly and often contentiously in modern Russia. The appropriation of thinkers like Ilyin and Berdyaev by the Putin regime underscores how they mobilise memory and identity selectively to justify their grip on power. However, such appropriations risk distorting the nature of the original discourse. By examining this intellectual lineage, this thesis has highlighted the importance of spiritual and moral dimensions in Russia's self-conception. Ultimately, understanding the

²³³ Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible: Adventures in Modern Russia* (Faber & Faber, 2015).

²³⁴ Samokhvalov, "Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World by Vyacheslav Morozov," 469.

²³⁵ Jade McGlynn, *Memory Makers: The Politics of the Past in Putin's Russia* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023).

historical interplay between liberalism, Orthodoxy, and nationalism is essential not only for interpreting contemporary Russian politics but also for imagining alternative futures. Rather than reducing these thinkers to ideological tools, we must engage them critically, recovering the moral and philosophical complexity they offer to Russia's enduring and unsettled national question.

Conclusion:

This thesis developed an explanation of the intersection between liberalism, nationalism, and Orthodoxy in Russian thought. Scholars of Russian liberalism have frequently neglected the significance of Orthodoxy in Russian liberal conceptualisations of Russian national identity. Students of Russian liberalism continue to perpetuate an essentialist narrative of Russian identity and characterise nationalism and Orthodoxy as purely reactionary forces in the Russian context. Additionally, they have analysed Russian liberalism as a foreign import devoid of substantial originality. As noted in the previous chapters, recent works, such as Rabow-Edling's, have attempted to question the idea of a Russian *Sonderweg* or alternative modernity by examining the influence of Western liberal nationalism and imperialism on Russian liberals in the early twentieth century, particularly Pyotr Struve. While they demonstrate a dialogic relationship with Europe, problematising perceptions of Russian identity based on negation or essentialism, they fail to consider the singular effect of Orthodoxy on their thinking. This failure is the principal lacuna addressed in this thesis. Moreover, reflecting on the unique influence of Orthodoxy on Russian liberalism presents us with an occasion to reconsider Russia's relationship with Europe, specifically the arguments advanced by postcolonial and subaltern studies. Scholars in these fields present Russia in an economically and ideationally subaltern relationship with the West. Through their deconstruction of identity narratives in contemporary Russia, they characterise Russian identity as based on a pure negation of the West. Developing the argument of internal colonisation, they deny that the Russian people possess a historical memory. They view them as ideationally colonised by an elite that uses a negation of the West to realise its strategic ends. Following this train of thought, it would appear Russia is among the most voiceless of the subalterns. Indeed, this line of argumentation chimes with many of the analyses evaluated in the epilogue. However, the arguments from fields as different as international relations and postcolonialism lack historical depth. Despite their efforts to demonstrate the dearth of history in Russia, they fail to consider any historical examples meaningfully. Ultimately, this thesis has sought to redress this lack of history and neglect of agency by integrating various forms of thought on Russian identity, past and present.

In place of the subaltern focus on deconstruction, this thesis emphasised recovery in its analysis. Thus, it demonstrated the dialogic nature of Russian identity by analysing the various streams of thought

that have affected it, from Orthodoxy to liberalism. The three symposia (*Problems of Idealism, Landmarks, and Out of the Depths*) dissected above exemplify this dialogue by attempting to redress what they saw as the metaphysical void of Russian liberalism. In doing so, they highlighted the spiritual dimension of Russian thought, particularly its singular conceptualisation of individualism as rooted in the collective. According to this principle of *Sobornost*, one's individual identity is only actualised in relation to others. Overall, this thesis has explicated the meaningful difference Russian thinkers articulated.

As explained above, this research has centred its study around the methodological approach to conceptual history developed by Reinhart Koselleck. Central to his thought is the idea that past experience shapes future expectations. Applying this to the revolutionary period of the late Romanov Empire, we see how Russian thinkers, while profoundly historicised by European modernity, introduced a singular notion of history. In contrast to traditional conservatism or romantic nationalism and the significance they attached to the preservation of national historical memory, the texts considered in this study presented Russian history through the loss and recovery of a spiritual identity rooted in Orthodoxy. This dialectic of loss and recovery is also apparent in the current cyclical interpretation of Russian history, with its focus on different periods of *smuta* and the subsequent recovery. Thus, the dialogic study of the relationship between Russia and European modernity enables us to nuance the discussion of Russian identity instead of falling back on clichés of alternative modernity. In addition, demonstrating the ability of Russian thinkers to articulate a meaningful difference with Europe problematises the notion of Russia's voicelessness and subaltern status.

Numerous scholars from as far back as the 1960s have roundly criticised such *long durée* approaches to intellectual history for developing abstract conceptual life stories and ignoring agency and intention. However, more recent works have reconfigured the balance between contextualisation and abstraction, as highlighted in the methodological chapter. Armitage has indicated that "ideas should be linked through time, as well as in the freight of meanings they carry from their dialogue with the past and, occasionally, with the future."²³⁶ This study has similarly connected these ideas through time. Following the lead of Armitage and others, it has considered the various debates over concepts, such as liberalism,

²³⁶ Armitage, "What's the Big Idea? Intellectual History and the *longue durée*," 499.

Sobornost, and national identity, as episodes in a more extended narrative. It has contested the reifying of concepts or their siloing into different periods or contexts.

This approach opens numerous future avenues of study, especially regarding the study of other conceptual debates in the Russian context. For instance, future studies could consider the location of the liberal subject within *Sobornost*, debates around other concepts, such as solidarity and conciliarity, and the role of dissent in the Orthodox Church during the late imperial period. This research highlights the need for a transtemporal understanding of Russian intellectual history.

By foregrounding the religious foundations of Russian liberal thought, this thesis has advanced a more dialogic and historically grounded understanding of Russian national identity. It thereby challenges entrenched binaries, such as East vs. West and modernity vs. tradition, that dominate this field of study. Future research must continue to uncover the concepts and debates that shaped Russian identity in dialogue with Europe.

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