

Nikolay Smirnov

Left-Wing Eurasianism and Postcolonial Theory

01/10

e-flux journal #97 — Nikolay Smirnov
Left-Wing Eurasianism and Postcolonial Theory

In this article, I argue that we should regard Eurasianism as an early experiment in postcolonialism. The key concern for both ideologies is the relationship between cultural relativism and universalism. I examine the left-wing Eurasianist project as an ideology that emphasized Russia's crucial role in building international socialism and as a specimen of Russian philosophical radicalism that attempted to wed the universal with the particular via the messianic.

Eurasianism was a philosophical and political current that emerged in the 1920s among the Russian diaspora in Europe.¹ Radically criticizing European cultural hegemony, Eurasianism subsequently attempted to elaborate a theory of Russian-Eurasian identity and a universal mission, reaching its peak in the 1920s and 1930s.

The linguist Prince Nikolai Trubetskoi launched Eurasianism with his book *Europe and Mankind*, published in Sofia in 1920. In the book, Trubetskoi denounced universalism, describing human cultures as hermetic communities that were opaque to each other. God had made the world diverse, and this diversity had to be maintained.

According to Trubetskoi, however, Europe was trying to impose its Romano-German culture as universal, which it did through chauvinism and cosmopolitanism. The latter feigned universality, but it had emerged in Europe and was therefore a vehicle for transmitting European values. The resulting universalization muddled the rainbow-like diversity of cultures, producing a faceless multitude. It could cause a cultural disaster similar to the one that had happened, according to the Old Testament, at the Tower of Babel. Therefore, Trubetskoi contrasted the rest of humanity with Europe and its universalist project. He thus tried to “provincialize” and “other” Europe long before postcolonial theorists Dipesh Chakrabarty and Gayatri Spivak did.

In 1921, the manifesto-like collection *Exodus to the East* was released, featuring four authors: Trubetskoi, geographer Peter Savitsky, music critic Pierre Souvtchinsky, and religious philosopher Georges Florovsky.

The collection dealt with Russia's self-discovery as a specific geoculture. According to the book's authors, Russia occupied a middle position between Europe and Asia. Accordingly, it should transform its civilizational identity by way of acknowledging and reinforcing its Eastern traits. This would not involve merging with Asia; instead Russia would become aware of itself as Russia-Eurasia, a distinctive geographical culture that had played a crucial role in world history. In the book's foreword, the authors wrote

that they felt history was now pushing in Russia's direction, just as the nineteenth-century exiled Russian revolutionary and writer Alexander Herzen had suggested.

Eurasianism proposed a geographical ideology of identity. We can thus consider it an Eastern, "organic" source of structuralism.² The most important element of Eurasianism was geosophy, the description and identification of the significance of geographical spaces. Identifying the significance of the Russian-Eurasian space led the Eurasianists to make a number of conclusions. In particular, they claimed Russia-Eurasia possessed a unique "place-based development" (*mestorazvitiye*) or topogenesis. It occupied the so-called middle continent, an area of vast land masses with no access to the ocean. Consequently, all processes that occurred there were continental and autarkic.

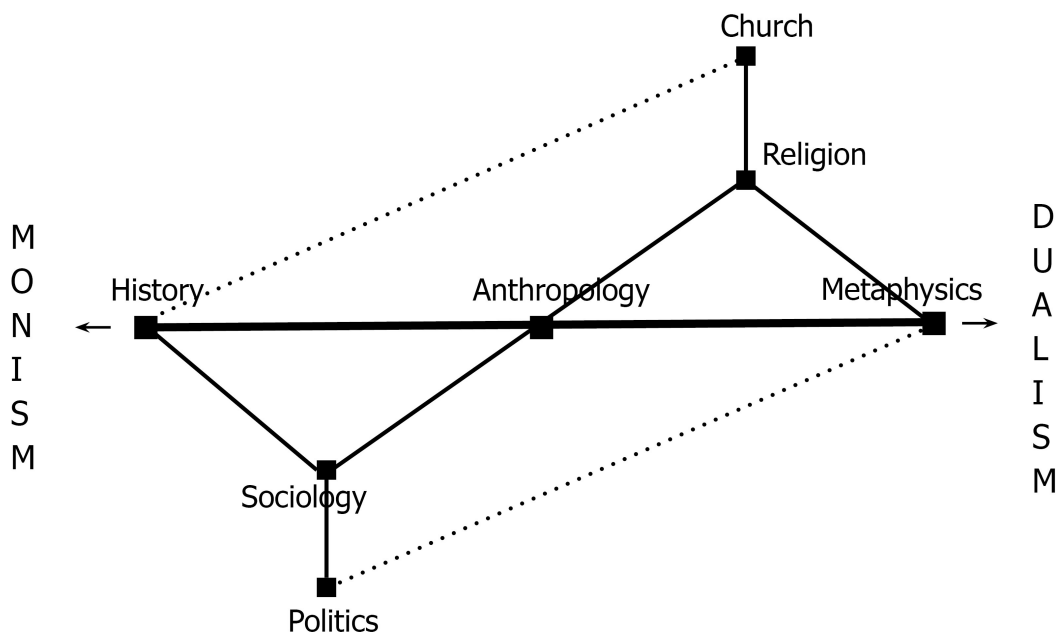
The concept of everyday confessionism meant religious life permeated the mundane in the form of rituals; that is, it had no need for institutionalization and was opposed to hierarchical clericalism. The outcome was the fusion of faith (the ideal) and life. Under these circumstances, life came to have a particular coherence. The various realms of life – for

example, state ideology, art, and science – tended to be indistinguishable from "life" and the ideal. This reading of Russian Orthodoxy as a religiously tolerant and semi-polytheistic "Orthodoxy of the folk" (Dostoevsky's coinage) alienated conventional theologians from Eurasianism.

Trubetskoi explained the desire to be guided by a coherent system of life in terms of the so-called Turanian psychological type, which had originated in the depths of Eurasia and entered Russian culture along with the Slavic psychological type. The Turanian type was marked by a disdain for abstraction, the dominance of clear, symmetrical patterns in the mind, and the desire to implement them in everyday life and culture. In terms of governance, this led to ideocracy – literally, the rule of the idea – a political system in which all areas of life were subordinated to the ruling idea. Mstislav Shakhmatov termed it a truth-based state, as opposed to a state based on the rule of law.³

Eurasianism was politicized in 1924. It aimed to infiltrate the Soviet Union clandestinely and replace communism with its own ideology, which, it imagined, embodied a "third way" that differed from both European liberalism and Soviet communism. Steeped in conspiracy

02/10



²"Structure of the Ideocratic System," diagram from the weekly *Evrasiiskii vremennik* 17 (1929). Translation and graphic by Nikolay Smirnov.

theory, the Eurasianists employed a sophisticated set of code words, referring to Russia, for example, as “Argentina,” and calling Eurasianism “our oil business.”

Trubetskoi, Savitsky, and Souvtchinsky remained the leaders of the movement, but the circle of their confederates expanded considerably to include, among others, the medievalist Peter Bitsilli, philosophers Lev Karsavin and Vladimir Ilyin,⁴ legal scholar Nikolai Alexeyev, literary scholar D.S. Mirsky, historian George Vernadsky, orientalist Vasily Nikitin, and former officers of the tsarist Imperial Guard Peter Arapov and Peter Malevsky-Malevich.

A network of regional cells was organized in Berlin, London, Prague, Belgrade, and Paris. Souvtchinsky headed the Paris cell that would give birth to left-wing Eurasianism between 1925 and 1930. Its ideologues tried to build a coherent system that would cover all aspects of life, but it was particularly focused on theory, art, and political activism.

Souvtchinsky was profoundly influenced by D.S. Mirsky, borne out by the correspondence between the two men. “If you don’t set up a Eurasian Soviet government for me soon, I shall become a communist. I really cannot stomach the vile imperialist west,” Mirsky wrote to Souvtchinsky in 1925.⁵

Mirsky pushed Souvtchinsky towards a Marxist-flavored ethical radicalization. In 1927, Mirsky published an essay, “The Eurasian Movement,” in which he argued the Eurasianists had arrived at a metaphysical materialism that unexpectedly chimed with the materialism of the Bolsheviks.⁶ What they had in common was their focus on the transfiguration of matter. The conquest of nature was for the Bolsheviks what the transubstantiation of matter was to the Eurasianists.

The philosopher Lev Karsavin also joined the movement in 1925. In his first Eurasianist article, “Lessons of the Forsaken Faith,” published in the fourth issue of *Evraziiskii vremennik*, Karsavin claimed a “new Russian people” had taken shape in the Soviet Union, along with a powerful new culture that was based on a profound religiosity that made no sense to Soviet leaders. It was the Bolsheviks who embodied this culture, a culture congenial to Eurasianism.

The attitude of left-wing Eurasianists towards Soviet communism was subtle and ambivalent. They criticized communism for its materialism and atheism, while recognizing Bolshevism as the ideology most nearly congruent with Eurasianism. This ideological ambivalence was made explicitly by opposing communists to Bolsheviks. In the 1926 manifesto “Eurasianism: An Attempt at a Collective

Statement,” the Eurasianists proclaimed the slogan, “Up with the Bolsheviks, down with the communists!” The Eurasianists argued Bolshevism was the form of communism’s “organic” reception in Russia-Eurasia. It was a communism that took into account the traits and values of the specific geoculture. The really outstanding thing about the Bolsheviks, allegedly, was they were imbued with the profound religiosity typical of the Russian-Eurasian peoples, while the leaders of the Soviet Communist Party thought too abstractly and unforgivably denied the profound religiosity of the grassroots. The Bolsheviks, after all, were Russian maximalists, while the communists were westernizers and atheists.

In 1926, Souvtchinsky and Karsavin moved to the Paris suburb of Clamart. It was during this period Karsavin elaborated several ideas that would prove crucial to the movement, in particular the historiosophy of Eurasianism. Karsavin based it on the doctrine of the symphonic person, which argued that part and whole were bound up in an organic unity. Examples of symphonic entities include man, family, nation, state, and world. The concept of the symphonic person was opposed to that of the atomized bourgeois individual. Among its obvious prototypes were Dostoevsky’s notion of the Russian soul’s universality (*vsemirnost*) and philosopher Vladimir Solovyov’s concept of total unity (*vseedinstvo*).

Higher symphonic persons, like cultures, were self-governed by the selection of a ruling class from among their own ranks. Ideally, the ruling class “naturally emerge[d] from the people and in itself, as in a microcosm, voice[d] the popular cosmos.”⁷ Sooner or later, however, the ruling class would break away from the people, triggering revolution. This circumstance prompted Karsavin to elaborate a phenomenology of revolution.

Karsavin singled out five stages of revolution, starting with the degeneration and death of the ruling class, followed by anarchy, and then the rise to power of a “revolutionary” ruling class, which would tyrannically restore the state apparatus, thus rendering its pre-revolutionary ideology of struggle meaningless. This would give rise to the fourth stage: the assumption of power by people guided by no ideology. The fourth stage was supposed to be followed by a fifth stage in which the people would conceive a new “organic” national ideology. Karsavin thus prepared the ground for the inevitable emergence of a new ideology in Russia, imagining Eurasianism would be this ideology.

Karsavin promoted his ideas at a Eurasianist seminar held in Paris from 1926 to

04/10

1928 titled “Russia and Europe.” Its debates drew audiences of as many as one hundred and fifty people – Eurasianism was all the rage. The fact was that European vanguard intellectuals, say, the Surrealists and the ethnologists, were then engaged in similar pursuits. They questioned the norms of their native European culture as they tried to imagine alternatives. Moreover, Russia was quite popular in France. It was associated with the pre-modern, with the archaic and authentic, making it appear relevant amid the wholesale critique of bourgeois individualism.

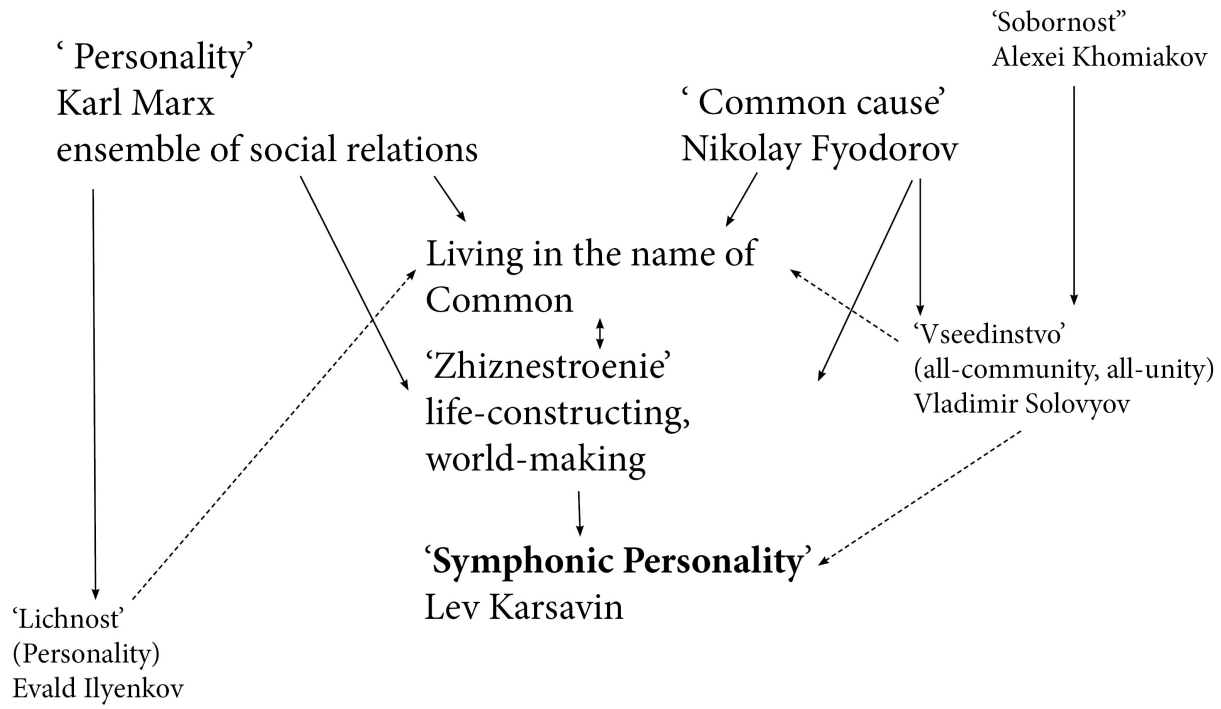
Eurasianism had veered leftward by 1927. It seemed at the time it could become a second Soviet ideology, an ideology for the people that would fuse Russian Orthodoxy, etatism, and communist rhetoric. In late 1927, Souvtchinsky suggested making a “temporary transcription of Eurasian doctrine into theoretical terms typical of the Soviet milieu,” that is, engaging in linguistic mimicry and honest-to-goodness entryism by way of infiltrating the Soviet system and transforming it from within.⁸ His arguments were rejected by the larger movement, leading the Clamart faction to distance itself from them.

The ideologues of left-wing Eurasianism set about reconciling the philosophies of Nikolay Fedorov and Karl Marx. They imagined Russia-

Eurasia as the “chrysalis” of a future universal socialism in the Russian mold, a “universal kingdom of truth,” and they believed building it was Russia-Eurasia’s “common cause.” These ideas were roundly rebuffed by the other Eurasianists.

The acme of left-wing Eurasianist journalism was the weekly *Evraziia*, published in Clamart in 1928 and 1929. The editorial board consisted of Arapov, Karsavin, Nikitin, Mirsky, Souvtchinsky, composer Arthur Lourié, and Sergei Efron, a former White Army officer, writer, and husband of the world-renowned Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva.

Evraziia focused on analyzing the Russian Revolution, which had made Russia unique, cutting it off from the West. Conceived as a westernizing project, the revolution had become Russia’s national cause. It had become a Bolshevik revolution. The Eurasian way, which the left-wing Eurasianists identified as the Russian Revolution’s primary lesson, was worldwide revolution, which would consist of a series of authentic revolutions that would bring the various cultural and geographical worlds together in a common, universal lifeworld. The Russian Revolution was the prototype of this upheaval. According to the Clamart faction, post-revolutionary Russia had become the “new



Form of non-individual being, capacity to give to the Other whatever may be lacking, form of human activity dedicated to the Common, capacity to be Other whilst remaining oneself

Nikolay Smirnov, *Symphonic Personality versus Bourgeois Individuality*, 2018–19. Digital graphic. Courtesy of the author.

West,” meaning a new exemplar for all of progressive humanity.

In pursuing the Eurasian ideal, its supporters sought to “animate humanity with the idea of ‘world-making’” (*mirodelanie*).⁹ Ideocracy, the Eurasian system of governance, would serve to deploy the ideal. Due to the impossibility of realizing its ideal in practice, metaphysics was tainted with pessimism, while history and sociology, which dealt with tangible “life-building” (*zhiznestroitelstvo*), were marked by optimism due to their self-directed desire to fully heed the ideal. Ideocracy thus combined metaphysical dualism with historical monism, giving free rein to world-making.

Marx’s work was informed by historical monism, while Fedorov was guided by metaphysical dualism. As the Eurasians wrote, Fedorov had picked up where Marx had left off. They meant Marx had critiqued capitalism, while Fedorov had imagined an ideal whose realization could be the sole focus of humanity’s creative energies.

Another important subject in *Evraziia* was the defense of contemporaneity. In the article “Modernism versus Contemporaneity,” composer Vladimir Dukelsky (aka the future American composer and songwriter Vernon Duke)

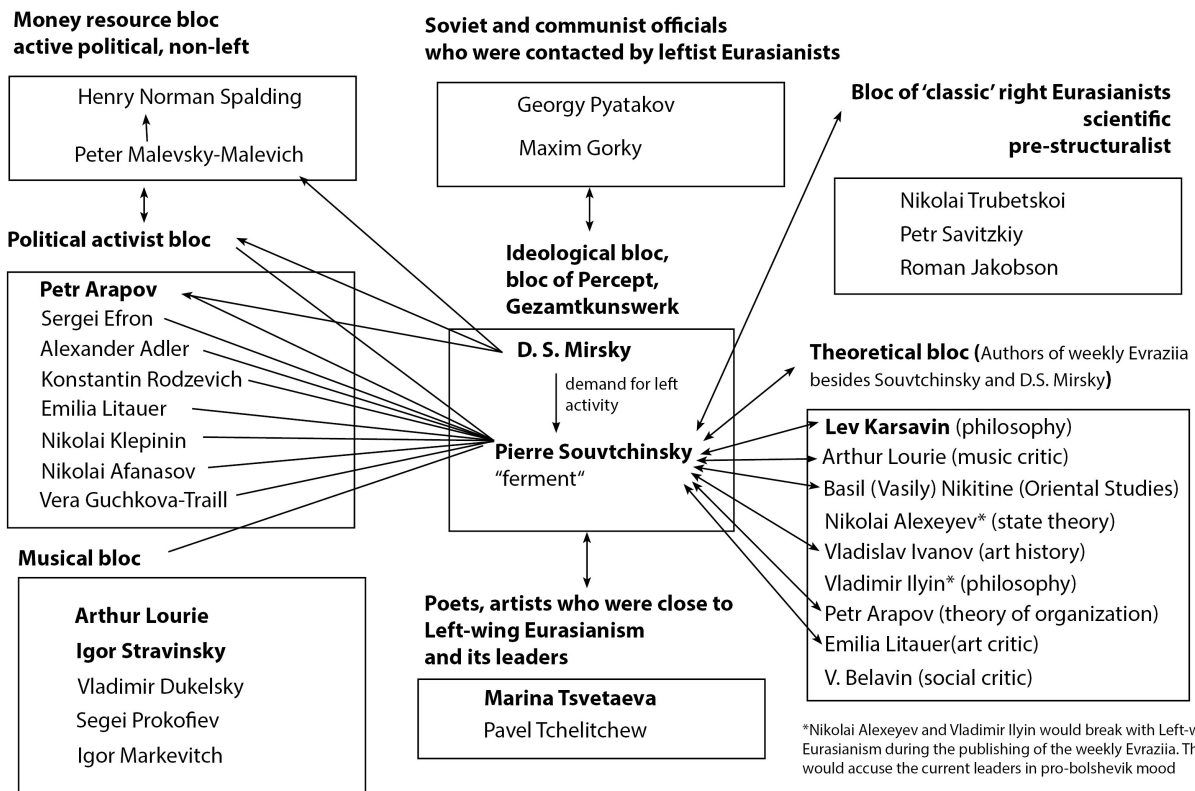
contrasted mechanistic, rational modernism with “organic,” “germinating” contemporaneity.¹⁰ From this perspective, contemporaneity represented a break with modernity (the modern age) and its final phase, modernism.

The Eurasianists, however, had two perspectives on contemporaneity. On the one hand, they imagined it in a futuristic vein, as the very essence of the here-and-now. On the other, they saw it as “organic” self-organization, which was opposed to modernism. The left-wing Eurasianists blended both notions, just as they understood Russia-Eurasia’s common cause as its global task. This was archeo-futurism, the avant-garde tilt towards the relevance of “primary” anti-individualistic arrangements.

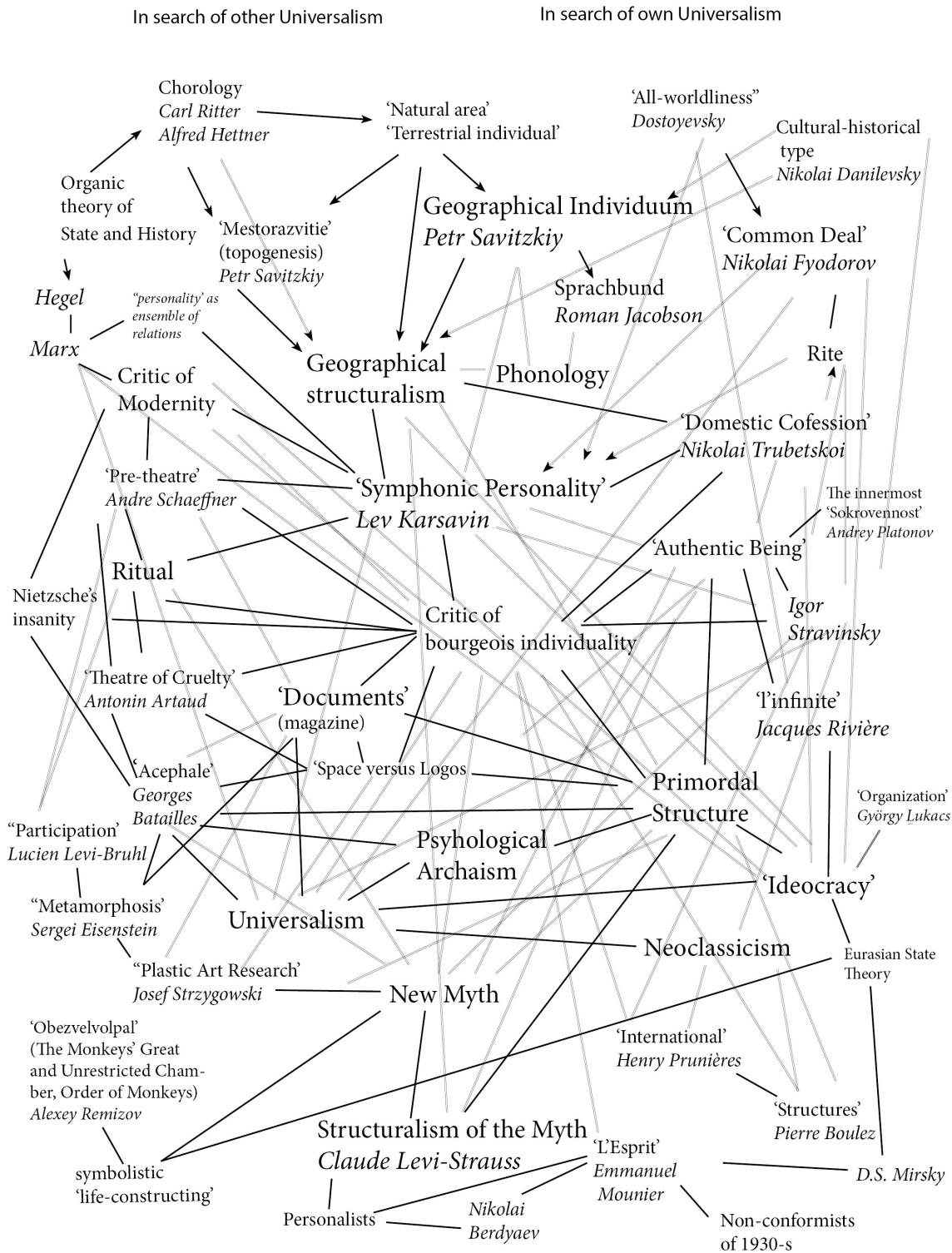
Evraziia also published a number of other interesting articles, for example, a series of letters from Fedorov’s followers in the Soviet Union. One of them wrote that the connection between Fedorov and Marx appeared self-evident. Moreover, it would be wrong to separate them: “Rejecting one of them would lead you to a breakdown, while the attempt to do without them altogether would lead you to defending the most vulgar fascism or even descending into it.”¹¹

Art historian Vladislav Ivanov argued

05/10



Nikolay Smirnov, *Structure of Left-wing Eurasianism*, 2018-2019. Digital graphic. Courtesy of the author



Nikolay Smirnov, *Left-wing Eurasianism as "New Myth" and Heterogeneous Conceptual Percept*, 2018-2019. Courtesy of the artist.

aesthetics should be understood as a generative principle, meaning it had an active effect on the world. As disciplines dealing with will and representation, ethics and aesthetics encompassed a broad range of material.¹² Life-building, the social and political organization of matter, was thus an aesthetic phenomenon.

Left-wing Eurasianism's first endeavor in the arts was the literary almanac *Vyorsty* (*Milestones*). The title was borrowed from an eponymous 1921 collection of poems by Marina Tsvetaeva, who herself was a mascot of left-wing Eurasianism. The titles of her poems resemble poetic expressions of Eurasianist sentiments: "The universal migration began in gloom," "From beneath the hooves," "I adjure you to avoid gold."

The most Eurasianist of all arts, however, was music.¹³ Souvtchinsky was an ardent admirer of Igor Stravinsky's work. In the 1910s, Stravinsky had attempted to demolish the tonal system of music on which European classical music had been based. Stravinsky's extensive use of polytonality, dissonance, non-rhythmic passages, and Russian folk motifs could be interpreted as a manifestation of Russian-Eurasian spontaneity in the texture of music itself, as something archaic and radically innovative at the same time.

Souvtchinsky enjoyed collaborating with Sergei Prokofiev, writing the libretto for the latter's *Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution* (Op. 74), consisting of texts by Marx, Lenin, and Stalin.

In the late 1930s, Souvtchinsky elaborated his theory of time in music, dividing music into chronometric and chronoametric music.¹⁴ The latter was focused on conveying the composer's individual psychological peculiarities; it was thus not as valuable as the former, which was the abode of the musical Chronos, the intermediary between human rhythms and Being. Souvtchinsky saw Stravinsky as the contemporary composer most capable of embodying Chronos.

Souvtchinsky also conceived his own concept of the deed (*fakt*). The deed was an interruption of history, stasis that emerged ex nihilo. History was a logical continuum, process and progress, but it also consisted of a number of events, of discontinuities. An event was, in fact, a deed. Stravinsky and his *Rite of Spring* were deeds, as was the Russian Revolution.¹⁵ The deed solved the conundrum of connecting the particular and the universal, and this connection was effected via the figure of the messianic.

Involvement in politics was the third part of the Eurasianist project. It took on particular significance in the 1930s, after the Clamart faction had split during the period when it

published *Evrasiia* and left-wing Eurasianism collapsed.¹⁶

In 1931, Mirsky joined the Communist Party of Great Britain and left for the Soviet Union, as Peter Arapov had already done. Other left-wing Eurasianists were directly involved in politics. Efron collaborated with the Soviet secret police. He was implicated in a number of high-profile cases, including murders. After one such incident, Efron and his colleagues and fellow Eurasianists Nikolai Klepinin, his wife Antonina Klepinina, and Emilia Litauer left for the Soviet Union.

The left-wing Eurasianists Vera Guchkova-Trail, Alexander Adler, and Nikolai Afanasov also collaborated with the OGPU (Joint State Political Directorate) and NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs). Another Eurasianist, Konstantin Rodzevich, who had worked as Souvtchinsky's secretary, would go on to join the French Communist Party, fight in Spain with the International Brigades, and work in the French Resistance. Later in life, he became an artist. Mirsky, Souvtchinsky, Tsvetaeva, Efron, Rodzevich, and Guchkova-Trail were involved in a rather messy love polygon. Nearly everyone who left for the Soviet Union would be executed by the Stalin regime, except Guchkova-Trail, who was able to return to Europe.

It is curious that it was Mirsky and Souvtchinsky, people steeped in the aesthetic realm, who turned Eurasianism in the direction of a percept, a total artwork in which theory was supplemented by aesthetics and politics.¹⁷ Left-wing Eurasianism sought to make its mark more emphatically in art than in theory and politics alone. Mirsky appreciated Eurasianism's aristocratic heroism, aesthetic maximalism, and tragic self-sacrifice. Since it was programmatically radical, left-wing Eurasianism was on a par with such manifestations of Russian spiritual maximalism as religious icons, the avant-garde, and the Bolshevik Revolution.

Recently, interest in Eurasianism has been growing steadily, but assessments of its significance have varied.¹⁸ First, I would argue we should regard the Eurasianists as ideologists of certain groups in power, which would explain the primary feature of their thinking: the tension between cultural relativism and universalism. They were all members of the aristocracy, of the former Russian elite. They saw revolution and exile as a symptom of the gap between the elites and the common people. They were thus encouraged to examine their dual identities closely, to "discover" (construct) the nation, thus becoming an organic part of it.

Second, we should consider Eurasianism, along with Négritude, as one of the first experiments in postcolonialism, as a forerunner

of postcolonial theory. Eurasianism was strategic essentialism avant la lettre. Its abrupt break with the Romano-Germanic culture that enthralled contemporary Russian elites functioned like decolonization, deploying the Oedipus complex in terms of geography.

This would explain Eurasianism's heterogeneity, for postcolonial theory has claimed not only to be a theory but also a political practice. It is a post-theory, which is not nearly so comely as modernist theories, but on the other hand it can make room for interventions.¹⁹ Telltale in this sense are the titles of three books written by the world-renowned Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: *Barrel of a Pen*, *Decolonising the Mind*, and *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedom*.

Postcolonial theory jelled as an academic discourse only in the late 1970s and 1980s. Its emergence has usually been associated with postmodernism, and Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and the Subaltern Studies Group have been seen as bearing responsibility for its institutionalization. Initially, postcolonial theory was regarded as a replacement for Marxism, as generated by the cultural turn in the humanities and social sciences. Culture was seen in terms of the political and social. Postcolonial theorists took on board Gramsci's ideas of hegemony and counter-hegemony and examined the possibility of emancipation through the lens of culturocentricity.

Classic, 1980s-vintage postcolonial theory preached that a special colonial modernity held sway in countries that had recently adopted capitalism. Western theories, Marxism in particular, were applicable only in Europe and the US. In other regions of the world, they should be replaced by various studies of subordination and oppression that accounted for the specific features of local modernities. Recognition of these cultural differences would enable theorists to "provincialize" Europe.

The quest for local descriptive systems has proven much less successful than the deconstruction of hegemony. For all its significance, classic postcolonial theory has found itself trapped between desperate forays into strategic essentialism and the inability to wrest itself free of modern, nation-centered analytical methods. Meanwhile, a revival of Orientalism has occurred.²⁰

The binary mindset has brought about a stalemate by denying universalism and calling for multi-polarism in the western discursive idiom amid the "negotiable" Anglophone milieu. Elites in countries that have recently adopted capitalism have found themselves in similar circumstances. They need to modernize their

societies, but the populist rhetoric of liberation from the West has made modernization problematic. Trying to ground modernization by invoking local cultural differences has often proven ineffective, producing either duplicity on the part of elites or confrontation with the world at large.

This is a new take on the Whig view of history, an ideology updated in the 1980s that has flourished since, an ideology of national oligarchic elites inhabiting a world where cultural identities are for sale. Classic postcolonial theory has been its academic fellow traveler. Postcolonialism permeates politics in the developing countries. This, for example, has happened with Eurasianism in today's Russia. Along with the undeniable achievements of postcolonialism, which has facilitated emancipation and increased discursive diversity, these ideologies can have dangerous effects. In this regard, a critique of postcolonialism is necessary, and understanding Eurasianism can help us perform this critique.

There are three solutions for post-postcolonial theorists who are aware of the crisis in classic postcolonial theory.

The first solution involves critiquing postcolonialism's essentialist ideas from the left, recognizing the universalism extant in the world, and its fissure into "good" and "bad" universalisms. Acknowledging the universalism of the market, we could counter it with another universalism by fighting for our own rights and appealing to international values and norms of justice.

The second strategy involves critiquing postcolonial theory from the right and pursuing a more decisive project for elaborating and constructing another cultural world. This road implies containment, isolation, and indifference to all other values, even when this means breaking with the west or confronting it. This is the path advocated by the Neo-Eurasianist doctrine, which has partly infiltrated the curriculum of government academies in Russia today. Alexander Dugin, Neo-Eurasianism's chief ideologue, has always been more concerned with shaping another cultural world than deconstructing and analyzing. Hence, Neo-Eurasianism's main feature has been a strategic essentialism in which affirmation of identity has been a means of constructing this selfsame identity for emancipatory ends.

The danger in such cases is that essentialism can become "sacred." Discursive emancipation can then slide into a real confrontation among geocultures that becomes an end in itself. Dugin himself has repeatedly made it clear that his struggle is purely ideological and that he is basically a discursive

constructivist. On minds less capable of abstract thinking, however, postcolonial ideologies function as calls to head-on geopolitical confrontation.

Moreover, Neo-Eurasianism has been taken directly on board by the Putinist political elites. Such sentiments, it would seem, have only been gaining traction, both on the regime's part and on the part of its liberal critics. The regime regards the specific nature of Russia-Eurasia as an absolute advantage that enables emancipation from an imaginary West, while liberal critics see it as a curse. The regime employs the rhetoric of a "multi-polar world," while sweeping the market's universalism under the rug when it is convenient. However, many of the complexities that emerged in old-school Eurasianism have been jettisoned, naturally. In particular, the left-wing current of old-school Eurasianism, with its commitment to socialism and Marxism, has been almost completely forgotten. Neo-Eurasianism also dispenses with the Marxist critique of postcolonialism found in more recent strains of left-wing Eurasianism.

Moreover, the birth of the subject is an essentially Western procedure, is it not? If it is, then those who seek confrontation with the West in order to find their authentic selves would prove to be the West's most diligent disciples.²¹ More important, where can this path lead? An excessive enthusiasm for essentialism threatens incessant "perennial" and "organic" international confrontation. Postcolonial ideologies sometimes let rather ugly phenomena and regimes run amok.

Let us suppose, however, there is a third way. The Eurasianists attempted to conceptualize the world as a "unity in diversity." This jives with Peter Osborne's definition of contemporaneity as the disjunctive unity of different spatialities and temporalities. As he writes: "This disjunctive, antagonistic unity of the contemporary is not just temporal, but equally – indeed, in certain respects primarily – spatial."²² Perhaps this idea is extremely speculative, meaning it is easier to imagine than to make a reality.

The Eurasianists tried to solve the problem theoretically and dialectically. With the emancipatory imperative as their starting point, they pursued a relativism that highlighted the world's diversity, but they immediately sublated relativism by positing the messianic event that combined the particular with the universal, and the material with the ideal, making them indistinguishable from one another. This dialectical system could be dubbed the Eurasianist optic.

I would like to close with a programmatic Eurasianist claim: the world is destined to be

unified and diverse. This is the core of Eurasianist thought and contemporaneity, whose prophets the Eurasianists regarded themselves.

x

09/10

e-flux journal #97 — Nikolay Smirnov
Left-Wing Eurasianism and Postcolonial Theory

1
My research on left-wing Eurasianism has been supported by a 2018 Pernod Ricard Fellowship, a residency program run by Bétonsalon at Villa Vassiliev in Paris.

2
For more details, see Patrick Sériot, *Structure et totalité. Les origines intellectuelles du structuralisme en Europe centrale et orientale* (Paris: PUF, 1999); and Patrick Flack, "Roman Jakobson and the Transition of German Thought to the Structuralist Paradigm," *Acta Structuralica* 1 (2016): 1–15.

3
Mstislav Shakhmatov, "Podvig vlasti (opyt po istorii gosudarstvennykh idealov Rossii)" ("Power's deed: an essay in the history of Russian national ideals") in *Evraziiskii vremennik* 3 (1923). Republished in Mstislav Shakhmatov, *Gosudarstvo pravdy (The truth-based state)* (Moscow: FondIV, 2008), 5–20.

4
Vladimir Ilyin (1891–1974) was a Russian philosopher, theologian, music critic, and composer. In 1929, he broke with the Eurasianists, accusing their leaders of loyalty to Bolshevism. He should not be confused with Ivan Ilyin, another, more notorious Russian émigré philosopher.

5
Letter dated February 2, 1925, in Gerald Stanton Smith, ed., *The Letters of D.S. Mirsky to P.P. Suvchinskii, 1922–1931* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1995).

6
D.S. Mirsky, "The Eurasian Movement," *Slavonic Review* VI, 17 (1927): 311–319.

7
L.P. Karsavin, "Fenologiiia revoliutsii" ("A phenomenology of revolution"), *Evraziiskii vremennik* 5 (1927): 38.

8
GARF (State Archive of the Russian Federation), f. 5783, op. 1, d. 359, l. 225.

9
Anastasia Gacheva, "Evraziistvo: ot vostochnichestva do vsechelovestnosti" ("Eurasianism: from orientalism to universalism"), *Tetrad' po konservativizmu* 2, 5 (2015): 215–239.

10
Vladimir Dukel'skii, "Modernizm protiv sovremennosti" ("Modernism versus contemporaneity"), *Evraziia* 9 (1929): 7.

11
"Pis'ma iz Rossii. Pis'mo chetvertoe" ("Letter from Russia: fourth letter"), *Evraziia* 22 (1929).

12
Vladislav Ivanov, "O novoi estetike II" ("On the new aesthetics, II"), *Evraziia* 9 (1929).

13
See Igor Vishnevetskii, "Evraziiskoe yklonenie" v muzyke 1920–1930-kh godov ("The 'Eurasian deviation' in music of the 1920s and 1930s") (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2005).

14
Pierre Souvchinsky, "La motion du temps et la musique," *Revue musicale* 191, 1 (1939): 70–80.

15
I would like to thank Irina Akimova for her insights on Souvchinsky's philosophy of the deed.

16
Left-wing Eurasianism ceased to exist in 1930. Subsequently, none of the political involvements of the faction's former members was directly connected with Eurasianism. For example, the membership of certain left-wing Eurasianists in communist parties and the collaboration of others with the Soviet secret police took place after the movement per se had become a thing of the past. It would be an oversimplification, however, not see any connections between the earlier and later periods of their often wildly contradictory careers.

17
In this case, I draw upon the distinction made between percept and concept in a number of works by Deleuze and Guattari, in particular *What Is Philosophy?* and the 1988–1989 French television program *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*. They argued that philosophy created concepts, while art created percepts and affects. In this sense, all total utopias, Eurasianism in particular, are initially aesthetic constructions (percepts). Only later do they become political constructions (concepts).

18
See, for example: Mark Bassin, Sergey Glebov, and Marlène Laruelle, eds., *Between Europe and Asia: The Origins, Theories and Legacies of Russian Eurasianism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015).

19
Robert J.C. Young, "Editorial: Ideologies of the Postcolonial," *Interventions* 1, 1 (1998): 4.

20
For a critique of postcolonial theory, see Vivek Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (London & New York: Verso, 2013).

21
Marlène Laruelle has made a similar argument in her book *Russian Eurasianism: Ideology of*

Empire (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).

22
Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: The Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (London & New York: Verso, 2013), 26. For another account of the difference between modernity and contemporaneity, see: Peter Osborne, "Global Modernity and the Contemporary: Two Categories of the Philosophy of Historical Time," in Peter Osborne, *The Postcolonial Condition* (London & New York: Verso, 2018).

10/10

e-flux journal #97 — Nikolay Smirnov
Left-Wing Eurasianism and Postcolonial Theory