On the Nature of European Culture and on Its Relationship to Russian Culture

LETTER TO COUNT E. E. KOMAROVSKY

At our last meeting, you and I had a long discussion about the nature of European culture and the characteristics that distinguish it from the culture that belonged to Russia in ancient times, traces of which to this day not only can be observed in the customs, manners, and mindset of the common people, but also permeate the soul, the turn of mind, the whole inner content, so to speak, of any Russian who has not yet been transformed by a Western upbringing. You demanded that I put down on paper my thoughts on this subject, but I was unable to comply with your request at that time. Now that I am to write an article on the same topic for the Moscow Miscellany, I ask your permission to cast it in the form of a letter addressed to you. The thought that I am conversing to you will lend warmth and life to my solitary meditations.

Certainly few questions nowadays are more important than this question—of the relationship of Russian to Western culture. How we resolve it in our minds may determine not only the dominant trend of our literature, but the entire orientation of our intellectual activity, the meaning of our private lives, and the nature of our social relationships. And yet only a short time ago this question could not have been posed or, what amounts to the same thing, would have been resolved so readily that there was no point in posing it. The consensus of opinion was that the difference between European and Russian culture was merely a difference of degree, and not of kind, and still less a difference of the spirit and basic principles of civilization. We (it was then said) previously had only barbarism; our civilization began only when we started to imitate Europe, which had outdistanced us immeasurably in intellectual development. In Europe, learning was in full flower before we had any; there it had come to fruition, while ours was only beginning to bud. Hence the Europeans were teachers, while we were only students; still, it was usually added with complacency, we were clever students, capable of learning so quickly that in all likelihood we would soon outstrip our masters.
In Riga, in 1714, draining his glass on a newly launched ship, Peter [the Great] said:

Who thirty years ago would have thought, lads, that you, Russians, would be building ships with me here in the Baltic Sea and feasting in German dress? Historians postulate that Greece was the ancient seat of learning; from Greece learning passed to Italy, and spread through all the European lands. But the uncouthness of our forefathers hindered it from penetrating beyond Poland, although before that the Poles, and all other foreigners as well, had been plunged into the darkness in which we still live, and it was only owing to the unremitting efforts of their rulers that they were finally able to open their eyes and assimilate European knowledge, art, and lifestyle. I would liken this movement of learning upon the earth to the circulation of blood in the human body; and it seems to me that one day learning will leave its present seat in England, France, and Germany and pass to us for a few centuries, in order then to return once again to its birthplace, Greece.

These remarks explain the enthusiasm with which Peter acted, and they largely justify the extremes to which he went. Love of culture was his passion. He saw culture as Russia's sole salvation, and Europe as its only source. But this conviction survived him by a whole century among the educated class of the Russian people—or, more accurately, among the class he transformed; and some thirty years ago you would hardly have found a thinking person who could conceive the possibility of any culture other than one borrowed from Western Europe.

Since then, however, a change has taken place both in Western European culture and in European-Russian culture.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, European culture has attained such a fullness of development that its special significance has become obvious to any thoughtful observer. Yet the result of this comprehensive development and clarity of conclusions has been an almost universal feeling of dissatisfaction and frustrated hopes. Western culture has proved unsatisfying not because learning has lost its vitality in the West; on the contrary, it has had a new birth before. Again, the reason lies in the prevailing direction of obstacles; the obstacles would only strengthen, and it would seem that nothing could be so heeded and agreed with.

But a feeling of dissatisfaction descended onto the heart, imbibed by fleeting interests. The European mind has revealed because, despite the great discoveries and advances in learning, the sum of knowledge has been measured by the consciousness of humanity. The convenience of life's affairs, drained of its essential material, and generally held conviction, it is a cold and unfelt.

The centuries has destroyed the culture. For the very reason, this abstract syllable of its own personal experience, accurately, this logical act of other cognitive faculties saved data on which it erects its

It should be remembered that and despondency now, not suddenly discovered a rationalistic nature. However, the people of the West place their abstract reason, pro- stroyed had been so great their moments of success, their
the West; on the contrary, it appears to flourish more richly than ever before. Again, the reason is not that there are some forms of outer life that impede human relationships or prevent them from developing in the prevailing direction; on the contrary, a struggle against external obstacles would only strengthen the bias for the favored orientation, and it would seem that never before has the organization of outer life so heeded and agreed with the intellectual requirements of learning.

But a feeling of dissatisfaction and disconsolate emptiness has descended onto the hearts of those whose thought was not circumscribed by fleeting interests precisely because the very triumph of the European mind has revealed the narrowness of its basic aspirations; because, despite the great wealth and magnitude of particular discoveries and advances in learning, the general conclusion from this entire sum of knowledge has been only of negative value for the inner consciousness of humanity. This is because, despite all the brilliance and the convenience of life's exterior improvements, life itself has been drained of its essential meaning; not being bolstered by a strong, generally held conviction, it could neither be decorated with lofty ideals nor warmed by deep sympathy. Cold analysis over the course of many centuries has destroyed the very foundations on which European culture rested from the very beginning of its development. As a result, the very fundamental principles from which it grew have become irrelevant and alien to it, in conflict with its contemporary conclusions. At the same time, its direct inheritance is now found to be the very analysis that destroyed its roots, this self-propelling scalpel of reason, this abstract syllogism that recognizes nothing but itself and its own personal experience, this autocratic understanding, or more accurately, this logical activity that is detached from all of humanity's other cognitive faculties save the coarsest and most primitive sensual data on which it erects its ethereal dialectical edifices.

It should be remembered, however, that the feeling of dissatisfaction and despondency now experienced by the people of the West was not suddenly discovered at the first obvious triumph of their destructive rationalistic nature. Having overthrown their age-old convictions, the people of the West placed boundless trust in the omnipotence of their abstract reason, precisely because the convictions it had destroyed had been so great, strong, and comprehensive. In the first moments of success, their joy was not only unmixed with regret; on
the contrary, intoxicated with self-confidence, they reached a state of poetic exaltation. They believed that, by using their own abstract mind, they could forthwith create a new, rational life for themselves and build a veritable paradise on the earth they had transformed. They were not frightened by their dreadful, bloody experiments; gross failures did not cool their hopes; individual suffering only set a martyr’s crown on their bedazzled heads. Perhaps an eternity of unsuccessful attempts might only have exhausted them, but it would have been unable to shatter their self-confidence had not the very abstract reason they had relied upon developed in such a way that it reached a consciousness of its limited one-sidedness.

This latest result of European civilization has not yet, it is true, become universal, but it is apparently beginning to predominate among the leading thinkers of the West. It belongs to the latest, and probably the conclusive, epoch of abstract philosophical thinking. Philosophical views do not, however, remain for long the property of the professorial podium. What is today the product of the meditation of a scholar closeted in his study will tomorrow be the conviction of the masses; the fate of philosophy becomes the fate of the entire intellectual life of people who have no faith save in rational science, and who recognize no other source of truth save the conclusions of their own logic. Philosophy is not only the point of convergence of all branches of learning and all worldly affairs, the point of connection of the shared consciousness; from this node, this shared consciousness, guiding threads issue forth again into all branches of learning and all worldly affairs, giving them meaning, establishing links between them, and shaping them according to their own tendency.

Thus we have often seen that in some remote corner of Europe an unnoticed idea will germinate in the brain of some scholar whose very face is barely noticeable to the crowd around him, and that twenty years later the unnoticed idea of this unnoticed man will rule the minds and desires of that selfsame crowd, making itself manifest in the wake of some dramatic historical event. This happens not because some solitary thinker seated in his dark corner can order history about at will, but because history reaches self-consciousness through the mediation of his system. He merely records and adds up the prevailing results, and any arbitrary element in his thought robs it of all its power over reality; for only that philosophic system attains dominance that follows as an inevitable consequence of the abstract reason which has previously enjoyed as the last refuge of those convictions are the philosopher’s brain is a reflection of their vital force of consciousness and from the sphere of overt history.

Hence it may be said become convinced of the Europe’s logical reason, development, has become the laws of the own act, self-propelling force of human knowledge; that all concepts must be found in knowledge; that the highest essential convictions, a process and, although not derived from them activity, if the latter has other faculties of the human mind.

Thus Western humanity, of its abstract reason lost, abstract reason, has not reason, lost its last faith in humanity, therefore, either to emerge toward anything higher relations (which may be the product of thin to those rejected convictions), reason reached its fingers have been unable to shaped in the historical permeated by the disastrous they have passed from sufficient fullness and in that Western humanity, but as having all the
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ation of their vital forces, ascending from external events to inner
sciousness and from inner consciousness returning once more to
the sphere of overt historical action.

Hence it may be said that it is not that Western thinkers have
come convinced of the one-sidedness of logical reason, but that
Europe's logical reason itself, having reached the highest degree of its
development, has become aware of its limitations. Having clarified
the laws of its own activity, it has found that the full capacity of its
self-propelling force does not extend beyond the negative aspect of
human knowledge; that its speculative concatenation of derivative
concepts must be founded on premises taken from other sources of
knowledge; that the higher truths of the mind, its living insights and
essential convictions, all lie outside the abstract circle of its dialectical
process and, although they do not contradict its laws, are nevertheless
not derived from them and are in fact beyond the reach of the mind's
activity, if the latter has been separated from its original unity with the
other faculties of the human spirit.

Thus Western humanity, having through the exclusive develop-
ment of its abstract reason lost faith in all convictions not derived from this
abstract reason, has now, owing to the development of this same rea-
son, lost its last faith in reason's omnipotence. It has been compelled,
therefore, either to content itself with a semi-bestial indifference
toward anything higher than sensual concerns and commercial calcu-
lations (which many have done, but which many are unable to do,
being the product of the remnants of Europe's former life) or to return
to those rejected convictions that animated the West before abstract
reason reached its final development. Thus some have done, but oth-
ers have been unable to do so because those convictions, as they were
shaped in the historical development of Western Europe, were already
permeated by the disintegrating effect of abstract reason. Therefore
they have passed from their original sphere, from a state of self-suffi-
cient fullness and independence, to the level of a rational system, so
that Western humanity sees them not as a higher, life-giving principle,
but as having all the one-sidedness of reason itself.
What then remains for thinking Europe to do? To go back still further, to the original purity of those basic convictions before they were influenced by the rationalistic nature of Western Europe? To return to those principles as they had been before Western development began? This is a well-nigh impossible undertaking for minds surrounded and saturated by all the delusions and prejudices of Western civilization. This is perhaps why most European thinkers have sought an escape, being unable to accept either a narrowly egoistic life limited to sensual goals and personal considerations, or a one-sided intellectual life in direct contradiction to the fullness of their intellectual consciousness, and being unwilling to be left without any convictions or to devote themselves to obviously false convictions. Their escape consisted of each beginning to invent in his own head new, common principles of life and truth for the entire world, searching them out in the individual play of their dreamy thoughts, mixing the new with the old, and the impossible with the possible, giving themselves wholly over to unbridled hopes, each contradicting the others and each demanding general recognition by the others. Everyone became Columbus; they all set out to discover new Americas within their own minds, seeking the other hemisphere of the earth in a vast sea of impossible hopes, individual suppositions, and rigorously syllogistic conclusions.

This state of European minds had the opposite effect in Russia from what it eventually had in the West. Only a few Russians, and then only for a moment, were fascinated by the superficial glitter of these foolish systems, were deluded by this artificial comeliness that was rotten to the core. But most of the people who followed the phenomena of Western thought became aware of the inadequacies of Western civilization and turned their attention to those cultural principles, underestimated by the West, which at one time had formed the basis of Russian life and which can still be found in it despite European influence.

The result was active historical research, collation, and publications. In this we owe a great debt to our government, which discovered so many valuable historical documents gathering dust in forgotten archives and remote monasteries and published them for all to read. Perhaps for the first time in 150 years, Russian scholars took an objective, searching look within themselves and their fatherland and, by studying elements of intellectual life that were new to them, they were struck by a strange phenomenon: they saw with amazement that they had heretofore been at one with Russia, its nature, and the clear, simple, and fresh face of old and on the map of the world about nearly everything. They saw that because anyone had their strong bias toward prejudice against Russia, it was easy to understand Russia; but the same prejudices, had they been applied, The spell was so powerful on objects that were being created, that people could not see people who shared them. Russia with highly cultivated convictions simply began to become themselves and their cultural principles that completely and rigorously they discovered place and no nourishment.

It must be said, however, that the understanding and familiarity of Russian literature have not manifested the principles of Western culture to discover them: the protection. Europe has had to be said to have come to the 19th. Although in some respects more civilized than the West, it was able to preserve its culture, but only certain cultural principles and their content.

What are these principles from the principles? They are capable of further work, but only on the intellectual
had heretofore been mistaken about nearly everything having to do with Russia, its history, its people, its faith, the basic roots of its culture, and the clear, still-warm traces left by that culture on Russian life of old and on the mind and character of the people—I mean to say, about nearly everything. They saw that they had been mistaken, not because anyone had intentionally sought to deceive them, but because their strong bias toward Western civilization and their unconscious prejudice against Russian barbarism had made it impossible for them to understand Russia. Perhaps they themselves, under the sway of the same prejudices, had in the past helped to spread the same delusion. The spell was so potent that it concealed from them the most obvious objects that were before their very eyes; but then their awakening occurred so rapidly that its unexpectedness is surprising. Every day we see people who share the Western orientation, many of them people with highly cultivated minds and firm characters, who change all their convictions simply because they have turned their attention within themselves and their fatherland. In the latter they learn those basic principles that comprised the peculiarity of Russian life. Within themselves they discover those essential faculties of the spirit that found no place and no nourishment in the development of the Western mind.

It must be said, however, that it is not as easy as some may think to understand and formulate the basic principles that comprised the peculiarity of Russian life. For the fundamental principles of Russia’s culture have not manifested themselves as clearly in its life as have the principles of Western culture in its history. One must seek them in order to discover them; they do not catch the eye, as does European civilization. Europe has had its full say. In the nineteenth century, Europe may be said to have completed the cycle of development it began in the ninth. Although in the early centuries of its history Russia was no less civilized than the West, it was constantly hampered and set back in its cultural growth by external and presumably accidental obstacles, so that it was able to preserve for the present not a complete and perfect culture, but only certain hints, so to speak, of its true meaning, only its first principles and their first impress on the minds and lives of Russians.

What are these principles of Russian culture? In what do they differ from the principles from which Western culture developed, and are they capable of further development? And if they are, what can they do for the intellectual life of Russia, and what promise do they hold
for the intellectual life of Europe? For, after the accomplished inter-
penetration of Russia and Europe, it is no longer possible to conceive
of any development in Russian intellectual life that would not affect
Europe, nor of any development in European intellectual life that
would not affect Russia.

The principles underlying Russian culture are totally different from
the constituent elements of the culture of European peoples. True, each
of these peoples has something peculiar in the character of its civiliza-
tion; but their individual, ethnic, political, or historical peculiarities do
not prevent them from forming a spiritual whole into which they all fit
as living members into a single body. Hence, amidst all the accidents of
history, they have always developed in close and sympathetic interrela-
tion. Russia, having separated from Europe in spirit, lived a life separa-
ted from Europe's. The Englishman, the Frenchman, the Italian, and
the German never stopped being Europeans, while always preserving
their national traits. Russians, on the other hand, nearly had to destroy
their national personality in order to assimilate Western civilization; for
both their appearance and their inner cast of mind—which explained
and supported each other—were the result of an entirely different type
of life, originating from entirely different sources.

Apart from ethnic differences, three historical circumstances gave
the entire development of culture in the West its distinct character: the
special form through which Christianity reached it; the peculiar
aspect in which it inherited the civilization of the ancient world; and,
lastly, the particular elements that entered into the formation of state-
hood in the West.

Christianity was the soul of the intellectual life of the Western peo-
pies, just as it was in Russia. But it was transmitted to Western Europe
solely through the Roman Church.

Naturally, each patriarchate, each nationality, each country in the
Christian world never ceased to preserve its individual personality,
while continuing to participate in the general unity of the entire
Church. Each people, owing to local, ethnic, or historical factors,
developed some one aspect of intellectual activity; naturally, in its
spiritual life as well and in the writings of its theologians, it was to
retain this special character, its natural physiognomy, in a manner of
speaking, but illuminated by a higher consciousness. Thus the theo-
logians of the Syrian lands appear to have paid most attention to the
inner, contemplative life. Roman theologians were more practical activity and the theological writers of Egypt gave more attention than others to the problems of Christology and the particular disciplines warred against Christian heresies of Alexandria, with the Gentile and gnostic schools, of Christian doctrine.

These divergent paths of the churches and the particular heresies sprang up among the nations within the bounds of the
unanimity of the entire patriarchates. The identity of the Catholic Church was contrary to that principle of the independence of the
nations, the Loyalty of the churches, and the times of trial, when the principles of either splitting away from the Rome of the whole Orthodox Universal Church could have led to a condition and communion that remained faithful to the principle of love, each particular spiritual activity, only a particular spiritual life of all Christendom. What we might call its condition from the Universal Church, was bound to transform this into a form through which alone the minds of the nations submit

The civilization of the...
inner, contemplative life of those who have renounced the world. Roman theologians were especially concerned with the aspect of practical activity and the logical concatenation of concepts. The theological writers of enlightened Byzantium seem to have paid more attention than others to the relationship between Christianity and the particular disciplines that flourished around it, which at first warred against Christianity, then later submitted to it. The theologians of Alexandria, waging a double war—against paganism and against Judaism—and surrounded by philosophical, theosophical, and gnostic schools, concentrated above all on the speculative side of Christian doctrine.

These divergent paths led to a single common goal so long as those who followed them did not deviate from that goal. Everywhere, particular heresies sprang up, each closely related to the trend prevailing among the nation within which it arose; but they were all eliminated by the unanimity of the Universal Church, in which all the particular churches were united in one holy concord. There were times when entire patriarchates stood in danger of deviation, when a doctrine that was contrary to that preached by the Universal Church was nevertheless in conformity with the prevailing trend and the intellectual peculiarity of the nations comprising that particular church; but in those times of trial, when the particular church faced the irrevocable choice of either splitting away from the Universal Church or sacrificing its particular views, the Lord saved His Churches through the unanimity of the whole Orthodox world. The specific character of each particular church could have led it into a schism only if it separated from tradition and communion with the other Churches; so long as it remained faithful to the common tradition and the common covenant of love, each particular church, through the special character of its spiritual activity, only added to the common wealth and fullness of the spiritual life of all Christianity. Thus the Roman Church, too, had what we might call its legitimate peculiarity before it broke away from the Universal Church. Once it split off, however, it was naturally bound to transform this peculiar character into an exclusive form through which alone the Christian doctrine could penetrate into the minds of the nations subordinated to it.

The civilization of the ancient pre-Christian world—the second element that entered into the making of European culture—was until the
mid-fifteenth century known to the West almost exclusively in that special form that it had assumed in pagan Rome: its other aspect. Greek and Asian civilization, virtually did not reach Europe in its pure form—almost until the very fall of Constantinople. Yet, as is known, Rome was far from representative of all pagan culture; it had merely held physical mastery over the world, whereas intellectual supremacy had belonged to the Greek tongue and Greek civilization. Hence, to receive all the experience of the human mind, the entire heritage it had amassed through its efforts over the course of six thousand years, solely in the form given to it by Roman civilization meant to receive it in an utterly one-sided form, with the certain risk of imparting the same one-sidedness to the character of one’s own civilization. That is precisely what happened in Europe. And when, during the fifteenth century, Greek exiles flocked to the West carrying their precious manuscripts with them, it was too late. True, European culture became newly animated, but its meaning remained the same: the mind and life of the European had already been given their special cast. Greek learning broadened the scope of knowledge and taste, stimulated thinking, gave minds flight and motion; but it was helpless to change the dominant orientation of the spirit.

Finally, the third element of Western culture—its polity—was characterized by the fact that hardly a single one of the nations of Europe attained statehood through a tranquil development of national life and national consciousness, where dominant religious and social concepts, embodied in social relations, are able to grow naturally, strengthen, and join into a general unanimity that is reflected in the harmonious wholeness of the social organism. On the contrary, owing to some strange historical accident, nearly everywhere in Europe social life arose violently out of a death struggle between two hostile races—out of the oppression of conquerors, out of the resistance of the conquered, and finally out of fortuitous settlements that brought a superficial end to the conflict between the two antagonistic, incommensurate forces.

These three elements peculiar to the West—the Roman Church, Roman civilization, and a statehood arising out of the violence of conquest—were entirely alien to old Russia. Having accepted the Christian religion from Greece, Russia was in constant communion with the Universal Church. The civilization of the pagan world passed to it through Christian mediation with it. as the story goes. Only later, after it had been transferred, that Russia began to come into its own. Its nation, culture of the ancients, saw fit to arrest the movement, thus possibly satisfactory for, not having yet acquired Russia all the more of its peculiar development, it did not meet with it in Rome, Greek civilization. The Slavic nation experienced the obstacles to the pure intellectual and social life, and development of the Western nations, Slavic life faced the same principles.

Furthermore, the basic concepts of human personality, the classes, just as, after all, the neighboring states in Europe by compromise. With organized itself in its history remained outside of it. The Tatars, the Poles, the scourges sent to the Russian formation—and, in the meaning of its inner life.

In the meantime, the nation, alien to Russia, and statehood achieving the cycle of Europe’s fate, not to determine the circle for...
to it through Christian doctrine, without provoking a one-sided fascination with it, as the living remnant of some particular nation. It was only later, after it had become firmly grounded in Christian civilization, that Russia began to assimilate the latest fruits of the learning and culture of the ancient world—at which point Providence, it would seem, saw fit to arrest the further progress of its intellectual development, thus possibly saving it from the one-sidedness that would inevitably have been its fate if its rationalistic education had begun before Europe had completed the cycle of its own intellectual development; for, not having yet achieved its final results, Europe could have drawn Russia all the more unconsciously and deeply into the limited sphere of its peculiar development. When Christianity penetrated into Russia, it did not meet with the immense difficulties that it had to overcome in Rome, Greece, and the European countries steeped in Roman civilization. The Slavic world did not present those insurmountable obstacles to the pure influence that Christian doctrine could exert on inner and social life, such as Christianity encountered in the self-contained civilization of the classical world and the one-sided civilization of the Western nations. In many respects, even the ethnic characteristics of Slavic life favored the successful assimilation of Christian principles.

Furthermore, the basic concepts of human rights and duties and concepts of human personal, family, and social relations were not violently composed from the formal conditions of warring tribes and classes, just as, after a war, artificial boundaries are traced between neighboring states in obedience to the dead letter of a treaty obtained by compromise. With no experience of conquest, the Russian nation organized itself in its own way. The enemies who afflicted it always remained outside of it, not interfering in its internal development. The Tatars, the Poles, the Hungarians, the Germans, and the other scourges sent to the Russian nation by Providence, could only halt its formation—and, in fact, did so—but could not change the essential meaning of its inner and social life.

In the meantime, these three elements of early European civilization, alien to Russia—the Roman Church, the ancient Roman world, and statehood achieved through conquest—determined the entire cycle of Europe’s further development, just as three points in space determine the circle that passes through them.
The living ruins that had survived the destruction of ancient Roman civilization had an all-embracing influence on the newly emerging civilization of the West. Penetrating into the very structure of social relations, into the language, customs, mores, into the initial development of European learning and art, ancient Rome was bound to inform all aspects of Western humanity with the particular character that had distinguished it from all other peoples; and this particular character, permeating all the relationships that surround humankind, could not help but penetrate to the very composition of human life, shaping and transforming all other influences to a greater or lesser degree in conformity to its dominant trend.

Consequently, the principal feature of Rome's intellectual character was bound to be reflected in the intellectual identity of the West. If we were to describe the dominant feature of the Roman civilization in one general formula, we would not go far wrong if we said that the distinctive cast of the Roman mind consisted in the predominance of superficial rationality over the inner essence of things. This is clearly to be seen in Roman social and family life, which with logic and ruthlessness distorted people's natural and moral relationships, according to the letter of the law's arbitrary composition. We find the same characteristic in Roman poetry, which aspired to perfect artistically the outer forms of foreign inspiration. The same can be said of their language, in which the artificial harmony of grammatical constructions stifled all natural freedom and the living spontaneity of emotional reactions. We see the same thing in the famous Roman laws, where the beauty of outer formality reaches such astonishing logical perfection, despite the equally astonishing absence of inner justice in them.

Roman religion—which, for all its external rites, almost forgot their mystical significance—presents the same picture of an external concatenation of ideas achieved at the cost of an inner, living fullness of meaning. Roman religion was a collection of many heterogeneous, and frequently contradictory, deities of the pagan world, externally combined but internally discordant, yet all brought to logical agreement within a single symbolic worship, where the veil of philosophical connection was used to cloak the inner absence of faith.

The same rationalistic tendency was manifest in the mores of ancient Rome, where external activity was so highly esteemed and so little attention was paid to its inner meaning; where pride was held to be a virtue; where all vital religious convictions; where the individual could not be merely distinct from society; where they could conceive of religious life as a logical deduction from society. Consequently, Romans knew a bond of mutual interests, which was not the very patriotism of the spirit which they were capable of. They did not love the fatherland, but the hearth. The Greek hearth had given way to the Roman hearth, and it flattered their pride of ownership.

But immediate and the Roman soul. With respect, as is equaled. Equally ready for all, in contemplation, ever attentive to the inner voice, the voice of the rational mind, and self-expressing others, which often reflected the blind love of glory and the brief, in all the characteristic intellectual and spiritual traits of the superficial harmony of things achieved at the cost of an inner, living fulness of meaning, Roman religion was a collection of many heterogeneous, and frequently contradictory, deities of the pagan world, externally combined but internally discordant, yet all brought to logical agreement within a single symbolic worship, where the veil of philosophical connection was used to cloak the inner absence of faith.

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be a virtue; where all were guided in their actions solely by their own logical convictions; where, consequently, all regarded themselves to be not merely distinct but also different from all other persons, and they could conceive of no attitude toward them except one that was logically deduced from the external circumstances of life. Consequently, Romans knew almost no other bond between people but the bond of mutual interest, and no other unity but partisan unity. The very patriotism of the Romans—the most disinterested emotion of which they were capable—was not what it had been for the Greeks. They did not love the smoke of their fatherland; even the smoke of a Greek hearth had greater attraction for them. What they loved in the fatherland was the interests of their party and, even more, the fact that it flattered their pride in being Roman.

But immediate and spontaneous human feelings were stifled in the Roman soul. With respect to their compatriots, Romans regarded themselves much as great Rome regarded the cities that surrounded it. Equally ready for alliance or war, they risked either on the basis of calculation, ever attentive to the dictates of the passion that generally rules a dryly logical, and selfishly active mind—I mean the passion for dominating others, which occupied the same place in the soul of the Roman that blind love of glory held in the soul of the compassionate Greek. In brief, in all the characteristics of the Romans, in all the nuances of their intellectual and spiritual activity, we find the same common trait: that the superficial harmony of their logical concepts was more essential to them than the very essence of the concepts, and that the internal equilibrium of their being, as it were, consisted for them solely in the balance of rationalistic ideas and of external, formal activity.

Naturally, Christianity—from the moment it sprang into being in the midst of the pagan world—was in direct opposition to this tendency of the selfish personality and arrogantly rationalistic nature of the Roman. By turning the spirit toward the inner wholeness of being, Christianity not only resisted passionate fascinations, even those disguised by noble pretexts, but also, by raising the mind to the living heart of self-knowledge, it prevented that state of spiritual disintegration in which one-sided rationality splits away from all the other faculties of the spirit and fancies itself able to find the truth in the superficial connections of concepts. Whereas to this external, rationalistic wisdom the Christian message seemed utter madness, from
the heights of Christian doctrine this arrogant rationality appeared in all the poverty of its unfeeling blindness. Hence during the first centuries of the Church we find even theological writers of the Roman world frequently attacking the fallacies of pagan philosophizing.

At the same time, the predominance of the purely Christian orientation could not erase from their minds the peculiarity of the Roman physiognomy, which, as already noted, when kept within its legitimate limits not only presented no obstacle for the true direction of the spirit, but, on the contrary, was even able to increase its multifarious manifestations, leading into error only whenever its excesses violated the inner equilibrium of the spirit. Thus Tertullian, perhaps the most eloquent of Rome’s theological writers, astounds us particularly by his brilliant logic and the outer coherence of his theses; many of his works will always remain an ornament of the Church, although the hypertrophy of his logical faculty or, more accurately, its separation from the other faculties of the reason led him to extremes where his doctrine diverged from purely Christian doctrine. His famous disciple, St. Cyprian, was more fortunate, although no less remarkable for his powerful logical capacity. But of all the Church Fathers, both early and late, surely no one had so marked a predilection for the logical concatenation of truths as St. Augustine, most often called the Teacher of the West. Some of his works are like an iron chain of syllogisms, each link fitting seamlessly into the next. Perhaps for this reason he occasionally allowed himself to become too carried away, and for all the outer harmony he failed to notice the inner one-sidedness of his thought, so that in the last years of his life he found himself obliged to write a refutation of some of his own earlier assertions.

This special fondness of the Roman world for the formal coherence of ideas represented a pitfall for Roman theologians even at a time when the Roman Church was a living part of the Universal Church and when the shared consciousness of the entire Orthodox world maintained a reasonable balance between all special traits. Thus, it is to be expected that after Rome’s separation this peculiarity of the Roman mind was bound to attain decisive predominance in the character of Roman theologians’ teachings. It may even be that this Roman peculiarity, this isolated rationality, this excessive inclination toward the formal coherence of ideas, had itself been one of the main reasons for Rome’s defection. This is hardly the place to analyze either the causes or the circumstances of whether its main domination or by other reasons— the new addition of the very teaching of the Church, was justified or theologians.

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We make special mention of this fact because, better than any other, it helps to explain the character of Western civilization, where, from the ninth century on, the isolated rationality of Rome penetrated into the very teaching of the theologians, destroying with its one-sidedness the harmony and wholeness of their inner speculation.

If we look at the matter from this angle, it becomes clear why Western theologians, for all their rationalistic conscientiousness, could fail to visualize the unity of the Church in any other form than that of the formal unity of the episcopate; why they were able to ascribe essential merit to external human works; why, in the absence of such works, despite the inner readiness of a soul they could see no other means of salvation for it apart from a specified period in Purgatory; why, finally, they were able to credit some persons with an actual excess of good works and use that excess to offset the deficiency of others, again thanks to superficial actions performed for the external benefit of the Church.

In this way, having subordinated faith to the logical conclusions of rationalistic understanding, the Western Church, already in the ninth century, sowed within itself the inescapable seed of the Reformation, which later summoned it before the court of that very abstract reason that it had itself elevated above the shared consciousness of the Universal Church; and at that time a thinking man could already have seen Luther looming behind Pope Nicholas I, just as, according to the Roman Catholics, a thinking man of the sixteenth century could already have discerned Strauss behind Luther.

It is obvious that the same moral cause, the same bias toward one-sided logic, which gave rise to the doctrine of the necessary external unity of the Church, was bound to produce also the doctrine of the infallibility of its visible head. This was a direct consequence of the special type of civilization that was attaining dominance in the Western
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world. Because of this turn taken by the general state of the European mind, the Frankish Emperor was able to offer, and the Roman hierarchy to accept, secular dominion within his diocese. Later, for the same logical reason, the Pope's half-spiritual dominion was bound to extend over all the rulers of the West, giving rise to the organization of the so-called Holy Roman Empire and the entire character of historical development in the Middle Ages, where secular power constantly entered into confusion and conflict with spiritual power, each preparing the other a place in popular opinion for its future downfall, while a similar struggle was taking place in the mind of Western man between faith and reason, tradition and personal presumption. Even as the Church sought to base its spiritual power on secular might, so the spiritual conviction of Western minds attempted to ground itself on rationalistic syllogisms.

Having thus contrived to bring about superficial unity by placing over itself a single head combining both spiritual and secular power, the Western Church caused a split in its spiritual activities, its internal interests, and its external relations with the world at large. The twin towers that usually rise over a Catholic church may serve as a fitting symbol of this dichotomy.

In the meantime, the secular rulers, having accepted the supremacy of the three-crowned ruler of the Church, thereby sealed the feudal organization of the so-called Holy Roman Empire. It may well be that this was the only reasonable solution for the social life of nations whose state organization had arisen out of conquest. The relentless struggle between two warring tribes, the oppressors and the oppressed, had resulted, throughout their historical development, in a lasting antagonism between opposing estates. They continued to face each other without movement, with their conflicting rights, with the exclusive privileges of the one and the profound discontent and endless complaints of the other, with the stubborn envy of the middle-estate that arose between them, and the general and eternally painful fluctuation in their relative strength. This engendered formal and coercive terms of reconciliation, terms with which all parties were dissatisfied and which might have been somewhat acceptable in the social consciousness only when based on a principle external to the state.

Meanwhile, the fewer the rights that were granted to the estate descended from the conquered, the less did the estate that descended from the conquerors acquire the supreme legal notion of the unified dependent hearts, shielded as outer, formal relationships, and voluntarily accepted Codes of honor—though times as the only possibilitylessness—by their natural such extreme emphasis on relationships, and such themselves alone, they, development of Western Each noble knight with reason, relations between nations, entirely formal inter had to mark their relation law in Western states, a normality, the same dispute constituted the very base to survive and been strengthened this formal Roman law also displayed superficial letter of the person possibly being that result of the unremittently propelled by force to form Incidentally, this exercise of European peoples, continued exception of the few conquest and that, therefore, in the future.

But, having begun to develop through revolution the unfolding of the essential European societies, formal relationships, permeated, produce not a social si
The general state of the European nations to offer, and the Roman hierarchy within his diocese. Later, for the spiritual dominion was bound to giving rise to the organization and the entire character of histories, where secular power conflict with spiritual power; each opinion for its future downfall, presence in the mind of Western man personal presumption. Even as power on secular might, so the attempted to ground itself on world by placing in spirit and the world large. The twin church may serve as a fitting

having accepted the supremacy church, thereby sealed the feudal Empire. It may well be that for the social life of nations act of conquest. The relentless oppressors and the oppressed, relentless development, in a lasting They continued to face each conflicting rights, with the exclusion, found discontent and endless born envy of the middle estate and eternally painful fluctuation rendered formal and coercive which all parties were dissatisfied acceptable in the social concern external to the state. The rights were granted to the estate did the estate that descended

from the conquerors act with justice. All noble persons strove to become the supreme law regulating their relations with others. The notion of the unified state or nation could not penetrate their independent hearts, shielded as they were on all sides by iron and pride. In outer, formal relationships, only rules that they themselves invented and voluntarily accepted could control their autocratic, arbitrary wills. Codes of honor—though they arose in response to the needs of the times as the only possible substitute for law in the face of utter lawlessness—by their nature reveal such one-sidedness of social life, such extreme emphasis on the external and formal aspect of personal relationships, and such disregard of their essential aspect that, in themselves alone, they could serve as a faithful mirror of the entire development of Western society.

Each noble knight within his castle formed a separate state. For that reason, relations between noble persons could be only external relations, entirely formal in character. That same external, formal character had to mark their relations with other estates. For that reason, civil law in Western states, as it developed, was marked by the same formality, the same disputatious emphasis on the letter of the law, that constituted the very basis of social relations. Roman law, which continued to survive and be applied in a few European cities, still more strengthened this formalistic tendency of European jurisprudence. For Roman law also displays this same formalism that concentrates on the superficial letter of the form while forgetting inner justice—the reason possibly being that the social life of Rome also developed as a result of the unremitting struggle of two hostile nationalities compelled by force to form one state.

Incidentally, this explains why Roman law, although foreign to the European peoples, could be so readily accepted by them, with the exception of the few countries in which society did not arise out of conquest and that, therefore, gave promise of a more integral evolution in the future.

But, having begun with violence, the European states were forced to develop through revolutions, for the development of a state is simply the unfolding of the essential principles on which it is founded. Hence, European societies, founded on violence, cemented by formal personal relationships, permeated with one-sided rationality, were bound to produce not a social spirit, but a spirit of individual separation, and
they were held together only by the knots of private interests and parties. Consequently, although the history of European states often presents external signs of a flourishing social life, in fact social forms always sired merely to disguise the separate, particular parties, which forgot about the life of the whole state in the pursuit of their private goals and personal systems. Papal parties, imperial parties, city parties, church parties, court, private, governmental, religious, political, and popular parties, parties of the middle estate, and even metaphysical parties were ever contending in the European states, each vying to upset the existing system in accordance with its own particular aims. As a result, European states developed not through peaceful growth but always by means of a more or less palpable revolution. Revolution was the precondition of all progress, until it became not a means to an end, but in itself the distinctive end of popular aspirations.

It is obvious that in these circumstances European civilization was bound in the end to destroy the whole social and intellectual edifice that it had itself erected.

Reason’s disintegration into particular faculties, this predominance of rationality over the other activities of the spirit, would ultimately destroy the entire edifice of European medieval civilization; yet in the beginning it had an opposite effect, and the more one-sided it became, the quicker was the development that resulted. For such is the law of the deviation of human reason: the appearance of brilliance is accompanied by inner darkness.

Arab civilization evolved even more rapidly, for it was even more one-sided, though it exhibited the same abstract rationalistic tendency as did medieval Europe. It was easier for Islamic culture to turn its basic convictions into logical formalism than it was for Christian culture, which was essentially living and integral. The systematic linkage of abstract concepts was the highest goal that Muslim intellectual consciousness of self could attain to, and it may be said to have formed the very basis of Muslim faith. It demanded of Muslims only the abstract recognition of certain historical facts and the metaphysical recognition of the oneness of God, but it did not require an integrated wholeness of self-consciousness, thereby calmly allowing a disjoined human nature to persist in its unreconciled duality. It did not indicate to them the supreme purpose of being but, on the contrary, offered them a the greatest reward of life afterlife.

Consequently, the scope was limited to the need for a superficial order of actions among them. The inquiring Islamic mind—Muslim’s philosophy—considered intangible activities of the demonic link between the sublunar world. Heresies, alchemy, chiromancy, unusual-spiritual disciplines—borrowed their civilization relations with Byzantium and the evolution of Greek culture.

Their impact on Western civilization was because they brought it at the very time Europe was no doubt that the abstract and the concrete strengthen the same tendency. Only a short while, the relations mingled with the were the first to acquire Aristotle, which first became Arabic, with Arabic civilization by this time.

Aristotle, who has rarely studied ad infinitum in the Scholasticism, which is the development of European Scholasticism was not a systematic theology: for it was the goal and the main source of Scholasticism not only to conten but also to provide Augustine’s writings at
contrary, offered them a state of gross sensual pleasures, not only as the greatest reward of life on earth, but even as the highest aim of the afterlife.

Consequently, the scope of Islamic intellectual requirements was limited to the need for abstract logical unity, for bringing thoughts into a superficial order and correctly establishing systematic interrelations among them. The supreme metaphysical problem that the inquiring Islamic mind could set itself—the very poetry of the Muslim’s philosophy—consisted in evolving tangible formulas for the intangible activities of the spiritual world, in searching for the talismanic link between the laws of the supercelestial world and those of the sublunar world. Hence their passion for logic; hence their astrology, alchemy, chiromancy, and all their abstract-rationalistic and sensual-spiritual disciplines. This also explains why, although Arabs had borrowed their civilization from Syrian Greeks and maintained close relations with Byzantium, they exerted almost no influence on the evolution of Greek culture.

Their impact on Western Europe, however, was particularly great, because they brought it the brilliance of their flourishing knowledge at the very time Europe lived in almost total ignorance. There can be no doubt that the abstract-logical tendency of their learning helped to strengthen the same tendency in European learning. And, though for only a short while, the varicolored stream of their talismanic speculations mingled with the dominant current of European thought. They were the first to acquaint the Latin theologians with the works of Aristotle, which first became known to them in translation from the Arabic, with Arabic commentaries—so unfamiliar to them was Greek civilization by this time.

Aristotle, who has never been fully understood, but who has been studied ad infinitum in fragments, was, as is known, the soul of Scholasticism, which in its turn represented the entire intellectual development of Europe at that time and was its clearest expression.

Scholasticism was nothing other than an attempt to evolve a systematic theology; for in those days theology was both the supreme goal and the main source of all knowledge. It was the task of Scholasticism not only to combine theological concepts into a rational system, but also to provide them a rationalistic, metaphysical basis. St. Augustine’s writings and Aristotle’s works on logic were the main
tools used. The supreme development of the schools consisted in dialectic debates on articles of faith. The most famous theologians attempted to deduce the dogmas of faith from their logical ratiocinations. From Scotus Erigena to the sixteenth century, there was probably not a single one of them who did not attempt to balance his belief in God's being on the point of an artfully honed syllogism. Their enormous works were filled with abstract subtleties, spun in a logical manner out of nakedly rationalistic concepts. To them, the least essential aspects of thought were objects of learning, causes of partisanship, the purpose of life.

It is not the abstract arguments of the nominalists and realists, nor the strange debates about the Eucharist, grace, the birth of the Most Holy Virgin, and other such topics that can provide a real understanding of the actual spirit of Scholasticism and the condition of minds at the time. No, these are most clearly revealed by what constituted the main object of attention and engaged the most learned philosophers of the day—that is, the posing of arbitrary problems based on improbable assumptions and the analysis of all possible arguments for and against them.

This endless, tiresome juggling of concepts over seven hundred years, this useless kaleidoscope of abstract categories spinning ceaselessly before the mind's eye, was bound in the end to blind it to those living convictions that lie above the sphere of rationalistic understanding and logic—convictions to which people do not attain through syllogisms, but whose truth, on the contrary, people can only distort, if not utterly destroy, through syllogistic deduction.

A spontaneous, integral understanding of inner, spiritual life and a spontaneous, unprejudiced observation of exterior nature were equally excluded from the charmed circle of Western thought. The first was rejected as "mysticism," which by its very nature was hateful to Scholastic rationalism (the term also included the aspects of the doctrine of the Orthodox Church that did not accord with the Western systems); the second was persecuted as "godlessness" (and included the scientific discoveries that contradicted the views of contemporary theologians). For Scholasticism had welded its faith to its narrow understanding of learning into a single, indissoluble fate.

Therefore when, with the conquest of Constantinople, the fresh, uncontaminated air of Greek thought poured in from the East and thinkers in the West began to throw off the shackles of Scholasticism, the seeds of its inner freedom of human reason became the basis of the edifice of Scholasticism in the West. The object and direction of this inner freedom of human reason was the discovery of a new comprehension of the object of inquiry, the study of the living truths that formed the consciousness of his own life, to be comprehended not by abstract syllogistic reasoning which demonstrated in it that the middle of the eighteenth century is a general orientation, but revealed by the way of light that the author of the treatise, of his own life when such an event, thereby assuaging the craving for intellect and a better life for himself.

This is not to speak of Spinoza, was able to reach the inner freedom of human reason and unbroken mesh of syllogistic deduction of his abstract concepts.
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thinkers in the West began to breathe more easily and freely, the entire
edifice of Scholasticism collapsed instantaneously. Nevertheless,
traces of Scholastic one-sidedness remained on minds brought up on
. The object and direction of thought were different, but the emphasis
rationality and the blind neglect of living truths were hardly altered.

The great originator of modern philosophy himself provides an
structive example of this fact. He thought that he had completely
thrown off the shackles of Scholasticism; nevertheless, without sus-
pecting it, he was still so much a captive that, despite his marvelous
prehension of the formal laws of reason, he was so strangely blind
to living truths that he did not regard his inner and immediate
sciousness of his own being as sufficient proof until he had deduced it
by abstract syllogistic reasoning! This example is all the more remark-
able in that it reveals not an individual peculiarity of the philosopher
but a general orientation of minds. For Descartes’ logical deduction did
not remain his exclusive property, but was hailed with delight and
became the basis of thought for most modern philosophers until almost
the middle of the eighteenth century. Even today, thoughtful people
might still be found who base upon it their certainty of their own being,
thereby assuaging their civilized need for solid convictions. In any
event, the author of these lines still vividly remembers a time in his
own life when such artificial thinking processes gave sweet satisfac-
tion to his craving for intellectual tranquillity.

This is not to speak of another of Descartes’ peculiarities, which was
that, carried away by the rigorous necessity of his deductions, he
was able to reach the genial conviction that all animals except human
beings are mere external machines, skillfully constructed by the Cre-
ator and, having no consciousness, feel neither pain nor pleasure.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that his disciple and successor as
predominant figure in philosophical development, the famous
Spinoza, was able to weld together so skillfully and strongly a net-
work of logical deductions concerning the First Cause, the supreme
order, and the workings of the entire cosmos that, through continuous
and unbroken meshes of theorems and syllogisms, he was unable to
discern any traces of the Living Creator in all of creation or notice the
inner freedom of humanity. A similar excess of logical rationality
concealed from the great Leibniz, behind the intellectual linkage of
his abstract concepts, the obvious connection of cause and effect,
forcing him to hypothesize his Preestablished Harmony in order to explain this connection, although this theory actually makes up for some of its one-sidedness by the poetry of its basic idea.

I say the poetry of the idea makes up for some of its one-sidedness because it seems to me that when logical merit is reinforced by aesthetic or moral merit, this very combination of qualities enables reason itself to recapture some of its primordial fullness and thus move closer to the truth.

Must we continue to enumerate subsequent representatives of Western philosophy and recall their systems in order to convince ourselves of the general one-sidedness of the Western orientation? Is there any need to recall that Hume—that direct and inevitable result of another branch of Western philosophy, a follower of Bacon, Locke, and other such thinkers—the unprejudiced Hume, using the faculty of unprejudiced reason, proved that no truth of any kind exists in the world and that truth and falsehood are subject to the same degree of doubt? Or that the illustrious Kant, roused by Hume and prepared by the German school, deduced from the very laws of pure reason incontestable proof that for pure reason no proofs of the higher truths can exist?

This may have been but one step from the truth—but the Western world was not yet ripe for it.

One abstract aspect of Kant’s system was developed in the system of Fichte, who proved, through a remarkable construct of syllogisms, that the whole external world is but a false phantom of the imagination, and that the only thing that really exists is the self-developing I. From this, Schelling developed the opposite aspect of the same hypothesis—that although the outer world really exists, the soul of the world is none other than this human I, which develops in the being of the universe only in order to achieve self-consciousness in human beings. Hegel further strengthened and elaborated this system of the independent development of human self-consciousness. At the same time, probing more deeply than anyone before him into the very laws of logical thinking, on the strength of his vast, extraordinary genius, he carried the implications of these laws to their ultimate fullness and clarity, thereby enabling Schelling to prove the one-sidedness of all logical thought. Thus Western philosophy now finds itself in a situation where it can neither continue any further along its abstract-rational path, for it has become conscious of the one-sidedness of abstract rationality, nor can it, as logic has consisted in development.

In the meantime, the aim of Scholastic philosophy was to be achieved by the one-sidedness and wholeness feature of Christian thought. For the period all contemporaneous Greeks were almost certainly the pupils of the school of Plato, the philosophy of which had been a sort of idealism—a philosophy of things as they are in themselves, a philosophy that aimed at the total and perfect knowledge of the world. And it was not until the middle of the 16th century that the philosophy of the Christian Church who, having reinterpreted the ancient text of the Bible, was able to understand the mystery of the Trinity, the unity of the three persons in one God, who is not one person but three persons, united in one substance, that the idea of the one-sidedness of the abstract nature of the world became apparent. And it was not until the middle of the 16th century that the philosophy of the Christian Church who, having reinterpreted the ancient text of the Bible, was able to understand the mystery of the Trinity, the unity of the three persons in one God, who is not one person but three persons, united in one substance, that the idea of the one-sidedness of the abstract nature of the world became apparent. And it was not until the middle of the 16th century that the philosophy of the Christian Church who, having reinterpreted the ancient text of the Bible, was able to understand the mystery of the Trinity, the unity of the three persons in one God, who is not one person but three persons, united in one substance, that the idea of the one-sidedness of the abstract nature of the world became apparent. And it was not until the middle of the 16th century that the philosophy of the Christian Church who, having reinterpreted the ancient text of the Bible, was able to understand the mystery of the Trinity, the unity of the three persons in one God, who is not one person but three persons, united in one substance, that the idea of the one-sidedness of the abstract nature of the world became apparent. And it was not until the middle of the 16th century that the philosophy of the Christian Church who, having reinterpreted the ancient text of the Bible, was able to understand the mystery of the Trinity, the unity of the three persons in one God, who is not one person but three persons, united in one substance, that the idea of the one-sidedness of the abstract nature of the world became apparent.
rationality, nor can it strike out along a new path, since all its strength has consisted in developing precisely this abstract rationality.

In the meantime, whereas Roman theology developed along the line of Scholastic philosophy, writers of the Eastern Church did not get distracted by the one-sidedness of syllogistic constructs, but retained the fullness and wholeness of speculation that comprise the distinctive feature of Christian philosophy. For we must not forget that at that period all contemporary culture was concentrated in Byzantium. Educated Greeks were well versed in ancient Christian and pagan writers, particularly the philosophical writers, and the manifest traces of a thorough study of these predecessors can be found in most spiritual works until the middle of the fifteenth century. At the same time, the West, unlearned and, one might even say, ignorant in comparison with Byzantium, was restricted in its thinking, until almost the fourteenth century, to the milieu of Latin writers, apart from a very few Greeks. It was not until the middle of the fourteenth century that the first learned academy was founded in Italy by the famous monk Barlaam, Petrarch's teacher—that same miserable betrayer of the Orthodox Church who, having become infected with Western confidence in logical reasoning, had rejected several dogmas of the Christian doctrine he was unable to understand, for which he was condemned by the Council of Constantinople and expelled from Greece in disgrace—which only led to his being welcomed in Italy with even greater honor.

There is no doubt that Aristotle was far better known to the Greeks than to the Latins, although possibly without the additions by which Arab and Latin scholars had enriched him and that, until the fall of scholastic education in Europe, comprised a necessary condition for all intellectual development in the West. Nevertheless, the Greek thinkers did not show any particular predilection for Aristotle. On the contrary, the majority of them clearly preferred Plato—not that the Christian philosophers assimilated the pagan concepts of either, but they probably found that Plato's very manner of thought presents more wholeness in its intellectual reactions and more warmth and harmony in the speculative activity of reason. Hence, very nearly the same relation that obtained between the two philosophers of the ancient world can be found between the philosophy of the Latin theologians, which developed into Scholasticism, and the spiritual philosophy we find in the writers of the Eastern Church, which was
expressed with particular clarity by the Holy Fathers who lived and wrote after the defection of Rome.

It is worth noting that the spiritual philosophy of the Eastern Church Fathers who wrote after the tenth century was openly and purely Christian. It was profound, alive, elevating the reason from the status of rationalistic mechanism to higher, morally free speculation, a philosophy that even an unbelieving thinker could well find instructive because of the remarkable wealth, depth, and subtlety of its psychological observations. Despite all its merits (I speak here of speculative merits only, leaving aside its theological significance), the rationalistic tendency of the West had so little capacity to comprehend this philosophy that not only was it never properly appreciated by Western thinkers, but, even more astounding, to this day it has remained almost totally unknown to them. It is, at any rate, not mentioned by a single philosopher or historian of philosophy, although in every history of philosophy there are lengthy disquisitions on the philosophy of India, China, and Persia. The works of Eastern writers were for a long time utterly unknown in Europe; many still are unfamiliar to them; others, while known, have been ignored because they were not understood; still others have been published only recently and remain unappreciated. Although a few Western theological writers have remarked on certain distinctive traits of Eastern writers, they were so little able to understand those characteristics that their comments frequently yield conclusions directly opposite to the truth. Finally, in practically none of the theologians of the West do we note a living trace of the influence that the writings of the Eastern Church would certainly have left on them had they known them even half as well as they knew the ancient pagan writers. Perhaps the only exception to this rule is Thomas à Kempis—or Gerson—a book ascribed to him was really written by him and is not, as some think, a translation from the Greek, slightly altered to fit Latin views.

Of course, we will find the trine in those writers—Arianism in the Church of Rome—nothing in the first centuries. But that distinctive trait—that they considered doctrine in all its forms always to be the heart, so that everyone more clearly both can lead it to true knowledge of its various aspects.

In point of fact, even Rome's defection and the more pronounced Western influence, were not all one-sided. This difference may have been partly due to the extent of familiarity with ancient philosophy, while Western Latin writers and writers in the form of ready concepts, even in modern times. In Greek literature, they contained much within the same narrow window of thought. Other explanation for how the one-sidedness of their views have crumbled under the influence of the Eastern Fathers. Having maintained notice or sometimes have not even present an aspect directly opposing the view of rejecting it as 'mysticism'.

Hence, apart from the great schism of the fifteenth century, even in Latin literature, we were primarily concerned with the historical development, with the internal intellectual powers, when the higher and higher powers were assumed that the concept...
Of course, we will find nothing new with respect to Christian doctrine in those writers of the Eastern Church who lived after the defection of Rome—nothing that may not be found in the writings of the first centuries. But that is precisely their merit; that, I say, is their distinctive trait—that they preserved and maintained the essential Christian doctrine in all its purity and fulness, and that they, keeping always to the heart, so to speak, of true conviction, were able to discern more clearly both the laws of the human mind and the path that can lead it to true knowledge, as well as the external signs and internal causes of its various deviations.

In point of fact, even the early Church Fathers, who lived before Rome’s defection and who were consequently recognized by East and West alike, were not always understood identically by West and East. This difference may have arisen because the East was at all times fully familiar with all the writers and teachers of the Universal Church, while Western scholars were acquainted mainly with the Latin writers and with only a few of the Greeks, whom they viewed through ready concepts taken from their Roman teachers. Hence, even in modern times, when they made closer acquaintance with Greek literature, they involuntarily continued to view it through the same narrow window with colored, if not darkened, glass. There is no other explanation for how they could for so long have persisted in the one-sidedness of their rationalistic trend, which otherwise should have crumbled under the combined impact of all the ancient Church Fathers. Having maintained their one-sidedness, they either failed to notice or sometimes had no knowledge of those ancient writers who present an aspect directly opposite to this narrowness, complacently rejecting it as “mysticism.”

Hence, apart from their different concepts, East and West also differed in the very method of theological and philosophical thinking. For, in seeking to arrive at the truth of speculation, Eastern thinkers were primarily concerned with the proper inner condition of the thinking spirit, while Western thinkers were more interested in the external coherence of concepts. Eastern thinkers, striving for the fullness of truth, sought the inner wholeness of reason—that heart, so to speak, of intellectual powers, where all the separate activities of the spirit merge into a higher and living unity. In contrast, Western philosophers assumed that the complete truth could be discerned by the separated
faculties of the mind, acting independently in isolation. They used one faculty to understand moral matters, and another to grasp aesthetic ones; for practical affairs they had yet another: matters of truth were apprehended by the abstract understanding. And none of these faculties knew what any of the others was doing until its action was completed. They assumed that each path led to a final goal, which had to be attained before all paths could unite in combined motion. They deemed frigid ratiocination and the unrestrained sway of sincere passions to be equally legitimate human states; and when Western scholars in the fourteenth century learned that the Eastern contemplative thinkers sought to preserve the serenity of inner wholeness of the spirit, they ridiculed the idea and invented various mocking appellations for it.

It is true that at times they used the same expressions as those in the East, speaking of the “internal concentration of the spirit,” the “gathering of the mind in itself,” and so on. But the meaning given to these expressions was generally quite different: not the concentration, gathering, and wholeness of inner powers, but merely their utmost intensity. In general, it may be said that they did not seek the center of spiritual being. Western humanity had no comprehension of that living unity of the highest intellectual powers in which none acts without the sympathy of the others, or of the equilibrium of inner life that marks even the most external actions of those brought up in the traditions of the Orthodox world. For in their actions, even during the most acute crises of their lives, there is a deep calm, a natural rhythm, a dignity coupled with humility, all of which bear testimony to the spiritual equilibrium, profundity, and wholeness of their spiritual being. Europeans, on the other hand—always ready to give way to extreme impulses, forever bustling about (when they are not being theatrical), and eternally restless in their inner and external movements—can impose on these movements an artificial proportionality only through conscious effort.

The teachings of the Fathers of the Orthodox Church reached Russia, so to speak, with the first pealing of Christian church bells. It is under their guidance that the authentic Russian mind, which lies at the foundation of Russian life, was formed.

The vast land of Russia, even when it was divided into petty principalties, remained conscious of itself as a single living organism. It found its center of gravity not so much in its shared language, as in its shared convictions arising from its vast expanse of isolated—though bonds of spiritual communio light of faith and learning. Not only did the people, but all their ethical, social, and civilizing influence and activity received a common origin, drawn without distinction to the highest—in turn, from the very center of Constantinople, Syria, and Mesopotamia.

This civilization spread so far that, even today, it amazes us, princes of the twelfth and the library of Paris, then in the number of volumes; that is, as Russian, while well. In some of the century, we find excerpts from the not only were unknown until during its decline and have taken effort in the uncataloged silence of their monastic churches, studied and copied (in a day) the Slavonic translationings, filled with supreme may even today test the philosophy (though none of them, of a century and a half since...
shared convictions arising from a shared faith in Church resolutions. For covering its vast expanse, like an unbroken net, a countless multitude of isolated monasteries lay scattered, linked by sympathetic bonds of spiritual communion. They radiated a uniform and harmonious light of faith and learning to all the separate tribes and principalities. Not only did the people derive their spiritual notions from them, but all their ethical, social, and legal concepts were subjected to their civilizing influence and returned to the social consciousness, having received a common orientation. The clergy, whose members were drawn without distinction from all classes of society—from the highest to the lowest—in turn transmitted to all social classes and levels the higher civilization that it obtained directly from primary sources, from the very center of contemporary culture, which then meant Constantinople, Syria, and Mount Athos.

This civilization spread in Russia so quickly and to such a degree that, even today, it amazes us to recall that some of the appanaged princes of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries had libraries that even the library of Paris, then the largest in the West, could barely rival in number of volumes; that many of them spoke Greek and Latin as fluently as Russian, while some knew other European languages as well. In some of the compositions that survive from the fifteenth century, we find excerpts from Russian translations of Greek works that not only were unknown in Europe, but had been lost in Greece itself during its decline and have only recently been rediscovered with great effort in the uncataloged treasure troves of Athos. In the distant silence of their monastic cells, often in the depths of the forest, monks studied and copied (in ancient manuscripts that have survived to this day) Slavonic translations of Church Fathers whose profound writings, filled with supreme theological and philosophical speculations, may even today test the wisdom of any German professor of philosophy (though none of them is likely to admit this). Despite the passage of a century and a half since our monasteries ceased to be centers of

4. Appanaged princes were those who were supported by the peasants' taxes. — Ed.
5. See the writings of Nil Sorskii. [Nikolai Fedorovich Maikov, (1433–1508) took the monastic name Nil (Nilus). He was a leader of the spiritual movement of the Trans-Volga Elders, tied closely to the Hesychast tradition, and a leader of those who opposed monastic possessions (the nonpossessors). — Ed.]
culture, despite the fact that the entire thinking segment of the nation, in its upbringing as in its views, has largely deviated from, and in some cases completely abandoned, the former Russian style of life and erased the very memory of it from its mind, this learning was so widespread, so strong, so highly developed, and therefore so deeply rooted in Russian life, that the Russian style of life, fashioned according to and impregnated with the ideas of our former civilization, has survived almost without change among the lower classes of the people. It has survived, although it lives in them almost unconsciously, in the customary tradition, no longer tied to the predominance of formative thought, no longer revived, as in the olden days, by the concerted efforts of the upper classes of society, nor permeated, as it was before, with inspirational sympathy for the entire sum of the country’s intellectual activity.

How great a force it must have been that produced so lasting an effect! And this stability of custom, the result of our earlier civilization, has been manifested by the same people who had so readily shed their pagan civilization when they embraced Christian doctrine.

Hence, these Russian customs and the former life of Russia reflected in them are precious to us, especially since they still show traces of the pure Christian principles that had such an uninhibited effect on the Slavic tribes that submitted to them. It is not any inborn merits of the Slavic race that allow us to place such high hopes in its future prosperity. No! Racial characteristics, like the soil on which an intellectual seed is sown, can only retard or accelerate its early development; racial characteristics can give it healthy or poor nourishment, and they can grant it a free path into God's world or strangle it with alien growths. The actual nature of the fruit, however, depends on the nature of the seed.

Whatever we may think of the coming of the Varangians—whether we hold that the entire Russian land voluntarily asked them to come, or believe one party called them in against another party—their coming did not represent an invasion by a foreign tribe. Neither could it have been a conquest; for if it was so easy to expel them, or a considerable part of them, from Russia one hundred and fifty years later, could they have conquered it so easily before? And how could they have remained undisturbed there against Russia’s will? Under the Varangians the formation of social and state relations proceeded calmly and naturally, without the introduction of Christianity, and with the social organization of Russia adopting a Christian orientation.

St. Vladimir’s initial act of desire to forgive all crime and ready effort from the very start of the new conviction that he had brought out his private spiritual obligations and the time, the Church established between herself and the higher principles and the lower clergy, always remaining always outside interests, like an unattainable ideal toward and that transcended the people’s private convictions and ambition to guide their world, secular government, and government authorities. The more it was permeated by the foundations became, the integral its internal life. However, even as the state and worldly calling, never called sometimes called “Holy Russia, monasteries, and churches represented an interpenetration like that of the “Holy Rome.”

Thus, in ruling society did not endow worldly institution of the monastic orders of knowledge, half-secular, half-spiritual, all of people’s intellectual state toward a realization while never hindering its
calmly and naturally, without any coercive innovations, purely as an outgrowth of the inner composition of Russia's moral notions. With the introduction of Christianity, the moral notions of Russians changed, and with them their attitude toward society; hence all the social organization of Russia, as it developed, was also bound to adopt a Christian orientation.

St. Vladimir's initial and impulsive (but so beautifully impulsive!) desire to forgive all criminals is the best example of the Russians' ready effort from the very beginning to realize in their life the fullness of the new conviction they accepted. The Church herself stopped him from carrying out his purpose, thus drawing the line between personal spiritual obligations and those of secular government. At the same time, the Church established, once and for all, clear boundaries between herself and the state, between the absolute purity of her higher principles and the worldly compromises of the social system, remaining always outside and high above the state and its worldly interests, like an unattainable, radiant ideal that people should strive toward and that transcends their earthly motivations. In guiding the people's private convictions, the Orthodox Church never nurtured any ambition to guide their wills coercively or to acquire any powers of secular government, and even less to seek official dominion over government authorities. The state, it is true, depended on the Church; the more it was permeated by the Church's influence, the stronger its foundations became, the more harmonious its structures, the more integral its internal life. The Church never desired to be the state, however, even as the state, for its part, in humble recognition of its worldly calling, never called itself "holy." If the Russian land was sometimes called "Holy Russia," that was solely due to the sacred relics, monasteries, and churches it contained, not because its structure represented an interpenetration of the ecclesiastical and the secular like that of the "Holy Roman Empire."

Thus, in ruling society as the spirit rules the body, the Church did not endow worldly institutions with an ecclesiastical character, like the monastic orders of knights, the trials of the Inquisition, and other half-secular, half-spiritual institutions of the West. But, by suffusing all of people's intellectual and moral convictions, it invisibly led the state toward a realization of the higher principles of Christianity, while never hindering its natural development. The spiritual influence
of the Church on this natural growth of society was all the more com-
plete and pure that there was no historical obstacle preventing people
from allowing their inner convictions to be expressed in their external
relationships. Unblemished by conquest, the Russian land in its inter-
nal structure had not been hindered by the violent forms that were
bound to arise from the conflict of two tribes that hate one another yet
are compelled to organize their shared life in constant hostility.

In Russia, there were neither conquerors nor conquered. It knew
neither an ironclad demarcation of static social estates, nor privileges
granted to one estate at the expense of another, nor the resulting poli-
tical and moral struggle, nor contempt, hatred, or envy between the
estates. Consequently, it was also spared the inevitable result of this
struggle: artificial formality in social relations and a painful process
of social development proceeding through the forcible alteration of
the laws and the tempestuous overthrow of institutions. The princes,
the boyars, the clergy, the people, and the armed guards of the
princes, boyars, towns, and rural communities—all these classes and
strata of the population were imbued with the same spirit, the same
convictions, homogeneous notions, and an identical need for the gen-
eral good. There might have been differences of opinion regarding
some particular circumstance, but one hardly meets traces of discord
in essential matters.

Thus, Russian society developed distinctively and naturally, under
the influence of a single inner conviction that was nurtured by the
Church and customary tradition. Nevertheless—or, more precisely,
for that very reason—it was as free from utopian egalitarianism as it
was from repressive privilege. It represented not a plane, but a ladder
with a great many rungs; but these rungs were not fixed forever, for
they were established naturally, as necessary vessels for the social
organism, and not violently, owing to the contingencies of war, or
deliberately, to correspond to the categories of reason.

Anyone who attempts to imagine Western society in feudal times is
bound to compose an image by picturing a profusion of castles, forti-
fied with walls, within which lives a noble knight and his family, and
around which the lowborn rabble is settled. The knight was a person;
the rabble was part of his domain. The hostile relations obtaining
between these individual castles and their relations with the free cit-
ties, the king, and the Church, comprise the entire history of the West.

When, on the other hand, we do not see castles, lowly
and a king struggling with small communities scattered
an administrator with
consensus, its own small
merge into other, larger
tribal communities
community of the entire
Russias, serving as the
foundation for all that
were meant to be
artificial formality. An inner conviction—the belief, to bear the char-
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When, on the other hand, we imagine ancient Russian society, we 
do not see castles, lowborn rabble surrounding them, noble knights, nor 
a king struggling against them. You see instead a countless multitude of 
small commons scattered over the face of the Russian land, each under 
an administrator with a delimited status, each land representing its own 
census, its own small world. These small worlds, or communities, 
merge into other, larger communities, which in turn form territorial and 
then tribal communities. Out of these is formed the one shared, vast 
community of the entire Russian land under the Grand Prince of All the 
Russias, serving as the support for the entire roof of the social edifice, 
the foundation for all the ties of its supreme structure.

Given such natural, simple, and concordant relationships, the laws 
that were meant to express these relations could not be marked by 
artificial formality. Arising from two sources—popular tradition and 
inner conviction—they were bound, in spirit, composition, and appli-
cation, to bear the character of inner rather than exterior truth, prefer-
ing the evidence of essential justice to the literal meaning of the 
form, the sanctity of tradition to logical deductions, and the morality 
of its prescriptions to utility. Of course, I am not speaking of any one 
law in particular, but of the general orientation or tendency of ancient 
Russian law, in which inner equity had the upper hand over superfi-
cial formality.

The jurisprudence of Rome and the West draws abstract logical 
conclusions from every legal condition, saying, “The form is the law,” 
and endeavors to link all forms into a single, rational system, each 
part of which should follow logically from the whole, with the whole 
and reason itself constituting not merely a rational matter but reason itself in 
written form. Customary law, as it was in Russia, on the other hand, 
arose from life and avoided development through abstract logic. In 
Russia the law was not prefabricated by some learned legal consultants; it was not ponderously and eloquently discussed at some legisla-
tive assembly; and it did not subsequently fall like an avalanche into 
the midst of an astounded crowd of citizens, wrecking some existing 
system of relationships. Usually, a law in Russia was not composed, 
but simply written down after the idea of it had been conceived by the 
nation, and after it had gradually, by the compulsion of objective 
necessity, become part of the popular customs and way of life. Logi-
cal progress in the law is conceivable only where society itself rests
on artificial foundations and, consequently, where any further development of the social order must be governed by the opinion of some or all of the people. On the other hand, the stability of customs, sanctity of tradition, or continuity of customary relationships of a society based on basic consensus cannot be corrupted without destroying the most essential conditions of society’s life. In such a society, every coercive change dictated by logical conclusion would be a stab to the heart of the social organism. For here society is based on convictions, and therefore opinions, even when shared by all, would be fatal for it if they governed its development.

Opinion and conviction are two wholly different mainsprings of two entirely different kinds of social order. Opinion differs from conviction not only in that the former is more fleeting while the latter is more stable, and in that the former stems from logical considerations while the latter is the result of a lifetime’s experience. From the political viewpoint, we can see yet another distinction: conviction is a spontaneous awareness of the sum total of social relations; opinion is an exaggerated sympathy for that aspect of social interests that happens to coincide with the interests of some one party, thereby concealing its selfish exclusivity with the deceptive appearance of the common good.

Hence, in an artificial society, one founded on a formal linkage of interests, every improvement is introduced as a result of some deliberate plan; a new relationship is instituted because today’s opinion gains ascendancy over yesterday’s order of things; and each decision forcibly changes the preceding one. Development, as already noted, proceeds according to the law of revolutions, whether from above or from below, depending on where the victorious party concentrated its forces and where the victorious opinion has directed them. On the other hand, in a society that has arisen naturally, through the distinctive development of its basic principles, every upheaval is an illness, fraught with some degree of danger; to such a society, the law of revolutions is not a condition for improvements in life, but rather of disintegration and death; for such societies can develop only in a harmonious and imperceptible way, following the law by which natural growth is conditional upon the retention of the original meaning.

One of the basic differences between the legal systems of Russia and the West consists of their fundamental conceptions of the right to land ownership. All Roman and subsequent European social systems held these original rights, which were subject to some mutual relationships. The entire land was said to rest on the development that individuality itself expressed this right to cultivate the land. As the law did not hold the amount of land at its disposal, neither did the amount of land limited by the rights of those other aggregate rights were determined by the personal relationship of the landowner to the state. This relationship was determined by the personal relationship of the landowner to the state. Society was made up of individuals, not of individuals, but of individuals.

When small principalities with administrative structure had arisen due to these relations, the incidental and would appear as causes, so that it was not a fundamental spirit of Russian position, altogether unlike the West, which was defined in terms of the entire sum of social, complex.
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land ownership. All Roman civil laws may be said to be no more than
an outgrowth of the unconditional character of this right. Western
European social systems also arose out of various combinations of
these original rights, which were initially unlimited, and which were
subjected to some mutually conditioned limitations only in social
relationships. The entire edifice of the Western social order may be
said to rest on the development of the personal right of ownership, so
that individuality itself—legally speaking—is no more than an
expression of this right to ownership of the land.

In the structure of Russian society, the individual is the primary basis
of the law, and the right of ownership is merely one of its accidental
attributes. The land belonged to the commune because the commune
was comprised of families that consisted of persons who were able to
cultivate the land. As the number of persons in a family increased, the
amount of land at its disposal increased also; as the number decreased,
so did the amount of land. The commune’s rights over the land were
limited by the rights of the landowner or estate-holder; the landowner’s
rights were determined by his position vis-à-vis the state. The rela-
tionship of the landowner to the state did not derive from his estate, but his
estate did depend on the personal relationship of the owner [to the
state]. This relationship was determined in equal measure by his
father’s personal relationship and by his own; it was lost if he proved
incapable of supporting it, while it grew if his merits proved superior to
those of other aggregate personalities. In other words, the unconditional
nature of land ownership could arise in Russia only as an exception.
Society was made up not of private property to which persons
were attached, but of individuals to whom property was attached.

When small principalities were abolished and merged into one
administrative structure, any confusion that may have subsequently
arisen due to these relationships in the upper strata of society was
incidental and would appear to have been the effect of adventitious
causes, so that it was not part of the inherent development of the
fundamental spirit of Russian statehood. In any event, this very special
position, altogether unlike that obtaining in the West (where a person
was defined in terms of landed property), was an intrinsic part of the
entire sum of social, communal, and moral relationships.

Consequently, interrelationships among Russians were also different
from those of the West. I am not speaking of the difference of
some particular forms, which may be regarded as negligible national idiosyncrasies. The very nature of popular customs, the very meaning of public relationships and private morals was quite different. Western people fragment their lives into separate aspirations; and though they then unite them into a coherent plan by means of rationalistic understanding, at each moment of life the individual is like a different person. One corner of the heart shelters the Western person’s religious feeling, which is called upon on occasions of ritual observance; another, quite separate, harbors the faculties of reason and the capacity for worldly activity; a third corner contains the person’s sensual desires; a fourth, a sense of morality and family; a fifth, self-interest; a sixth, the desire for aesthetic pleasure. And each of these separate strivings is subdivided into further aspects, each accompanied by a special state of mind, each manifesting itself separately from the others, all bound together only by an abstract, rationalistic recollection.

Western people can easily pray in the morning with fervent, intense, amazing zeal and then rest from that zeal, forgetting prayer and exercising other faculties in their work. They then rest from their work, not just physically but morally, forgetting its dull routine in laughter and the sound of drinking songs. They then forget the rest of the day—indeed, their whole life—in dreamy enjoyment of an artificial spectacle. Next day it will be easy for them to begin again turning the wheel of their outwardly correct lives.

Not so for Russians. When they pray in church, they do not scream in exaltation, beat their breasts, and fall senseless from deep emotion. On the contrary, during the act of prayer they make a supreme effort to preserve mental sobriety and wholeness of spirit. Then, when the fullness of prayerful self-consciousness—rather than the unbalanced intensity of feeling—permeates the soul and the heart is touched by emotion, their tears flow imperceptibly and no passion troubles the deep quiet of the inner state. Thus, they do not sing drinking songs; they partake of their dinner with a prayer. It is with a prayer that they begin and finish every task. It is with a prayer that they enter and leave a house. The lowliest peasant appearing in a palace before the Grand Prince (to defend whose honor he may but yesterday have risked his life in some chance skirmish with the Poles) would not greet his host before bowing to the image of Holiness, which likewise may be found in a place of honor in every hut, large or small. Thus Russians have always directly with the highest aspiration of the heart.

It must, however, be remembered that the wholeness aspect. For it is only in the same spirit; where numerous monasteries have attained spiritual maturity; it is, must lead people to suggest the guidance of a superior maturity of spiritual literature of excess tension. I see Russians who accomplish more in this spirit.

On the other hand, however, they resume their tasks with maturity and absence of limitations of mind, by the degree of the Russian work of the Russian.

In ancient Russia, holiness, which was fostered reflected in their family self-sacrifice was not an ordinary obligation. The integrity of the family. In the peasant’s hut, we see at work and at pains to faithfully, never think of the root any thought of the one common goal and goes to the head of the private earnings are conscience.

The life of the family head of the family rea
Russia, be regarded as negligible national popular customs, the very meaning of morals was quite different. Western separate aspirations; and though they be explained by means of rationalistic understanding, the individual is like a different person the Western person’s religious occasions of ritual observance; the faculties of reason and the capacity of the person’s sensuality and family; a fifth, self-interest; pleasure. And each of these separate aspects, each accompanied by a feeling itself separately from the other abstract, rationalistic recollection. The morning with fervent, intense, that zeal, forgetting prayer and exercise. They then rest from their work, getting its dull routine in laughter. They then forget the rest of the dreamy enjoyment of an artificial for them to begin again turning the energies.

In church, they do not scream and fall senseless from deep emotion. Prayer they make a supreme effort holiness of spirit. Then, when the stillness—rather than the unbalanced feeling and the heart is touched by pity and no passion troubles the heart, they do not sing drinking songs; they pray. It is with a prayer that they start appearing in a palace before the throne he may but yesterday have (in Germany with the Poles) would not image of Holiness, which likewise in every hut, large or small. Thus

Russians have always linked all their activities, important or not, directly with the highest concept of the mind and the deepest concentration of the heart.

It must, however, be admitted that this constant striving for the combined wholeness of all moral faculties may have its dangerous aspect. For it is only in a society in which all classes are imbued with the same spirit; where all minds are governed by universally respected and numerous monasteries, those popular schools and institutions of higher learning of a religious state; where, consequently, those who have attained spiritual wisdom may always direct others who have not reached maturity; it is only in such a society that such a disposition must lead people to supreme perfection. But if they lack the care and guidance of a superior mind, not having attained to the distinctive maturity of spiritual life, their lives might present the wrong combination of excess tension and undue exhaustion. Hence we occasionally see Russians who concentrate all their faculties on their work and accomplish more in three days than the prudent German will in thirty.

On the other hand, however, then they will for a long time be unable to resume their tasks voluntarily. Because of the Russian’s lack of maturity and absence of a sympathetic guide, Germans, for all their limitations of mind, by tabulating and dividing into hours the extent and degree of the Russian’s endeavors, can often regulate and order the work of the Russians better than they themselves can.

In ancient Russia, however, this inner wholeness of self-consciousness, which was fostered in Russians by their very customs, was also reflected in their family life, where the law of constant, unceasing self-sacrifice was not a heroic exception but a matter of common and ordinary obligation. The character of peasant life still maintains the integrity of the family. If we decide to look closely at the inner life of the peasant’s hut, we shall see that members of the family, constantly at work and at pains to keep the whole household operating successfully, never think of their own selfish interests. They have cut off at the root any thought of personal gain. The integrity of the family is the one common goal and motivation. Any surplus in the household goes to the head of the family, who is accountable to no one; all private earnings are conscientiously handed over to him in full.

The life of the family as a whole usually improves little when the head of the family reaps additional benefits. The various members,
however, do not interfere in how they are used, nor do they even seek to learn their total sum, but continue their eternal labors with the same selflessness, as a moral duty, as a mainstay of familial concord. In former times this was even more striking, since families were larger, composed not only of children and grandchildren; they preserved their integrity, however, even when the clan increased considerably. Nevertheless, even today we see everywhere, when there is serious trouble, how readily, how willingly—I would even say how gladly—members of a family will sacrifice themselves voluntarily for one another when they see that their sacrifice will be for the common good of the family.

In the West, family ties were weakened as a result of the general trend of Western civilization. From the higher classes this tendency spread to the lower classes due to both the upper classes’ direct influence on the lower and the lower classes’ irresistible urge to copy the manners of the ruling class. This passionate bent for imitation is all the more natural the more homogeneous is the civilization of the different classes, and it bears its fruits the more readily the more artificial the nature of civilization is and the more it is subordinated to personal opinions.

In the higher strata of European society, generally speaking, family life very soon became an incidental matter, even for women. From their very birth, the children of noble families were brought up without the mother’s involvement. Particularly in those countries where it was fashionable in families of the upper estate to rear daughters outside the family, in convents severed from the family by impenetrable walls, the mother almost lost her family function. Leaving the convent only in order to go to the altar, a young woman immediately entered the charmed circle of social duties before learning her family duties. For that very reason, she was more sensitive to social than to family relations. The selfish and noisy delights of the drawing room replaced for her the alarms and joys of the quiet nursery. The graces of the salon and the ability to live in high society, developing abundantly at the expense of other virtues, became the most essential element of feminine merit. The brilliant salon soon became for both sexes the main source of pleasure and happiness, of wit and culture, and of social influence, and the leading and engrossing goal of their artificial life. Hence, particularly in countries where women of quality were brought up apart from the enchanting development accompanied by the metamorphosis of the first germ of what was to become a comprehensive emancipation.

In Russia, in the measured reflection of the whole independent development and therefore could not hinder the wholeness of the Russian character, no individual personality of nature as some vainly think it to be, correct expression of the salon does not rule a state. The wholeness of social life distinguishes a society that stands. Society is not governed by what the stability of the general.

Such being the tempers of their life and the simplification of means or of inadequately defined by the very charmed luxury was not a contradiction inherent in artificial civilization, general view, may have considered almost a virtue. People were proud of it, as of a way to be created a person of consequence. Official glitter to the con-

sians, on the other hand, than the gold brocade of the court, but like a pestilence caused it; people succumbed to it was wrong, not only from social standpoints.
they are used, nor do they even seek to use their eternal labors with the same faithfulness as a mainstay of familial concord. In Russia, the striking, since families were larger, children, and grandchildren; they preserved their strength through the clan increased considerably. Everywhere, when there is serious competition—-I would even say how gladly—-they sacrifice themselves voluntarily for one another. Sacrifice will be for the common good.

Some weakened as a result of the general trend, the higher classes this tendency to pass on both the upper classes' direct influence of the classes' irresistible urge to copy the French. The passionate bent for imitation is all the more visible in the civilization of the difficult the more readily the more artificial and the more it is subordinated to the society, generally speaking, family sentiment matter, even for women. From noble families were brought up within, particularly in those countries where it was the upper estate to rear daughters outside of the family by impenetrable family function. Leaving the convent young woman immediately entered the world before learning her family duties. She were sensitive to social than to family life. The silken draperies of the drawing room replaced the quiet nursery. The graces of the woman, value in high society, developing abundantly at the same time the most essential element of the woman soon became for both sexes the happiness, of wit and culture, and of the engrossing goal of their artificial fancies where women of quality were brought up apart from the family, there was a magnificent and enchanting development of social refinements; this development was accompanied by the moral rot of the ruling class, which contained the first germ of what was later to become the notorious doctrine of the comprehensive emancipation of women.

In Russia, in the meantime, the various forms of social life, being a reflection of the wholeness of life, never underwent any separate, independent development, sundered from the life of the entire nation, and therefore could neither stifle the family feeling of people nor hinder the wholeness of their moral growth. The striking peculiarity of the Russian character in this respect was that, in social relationships, no individual person ever sought to display a personal peculiarity of nature as some virtue; all individual striving was limited to a correct expression of the fundamental spirit of society. Even as the salon does not rule a state if all parts of the state are in sympathy with the wholeness of social life; even as a personal opinion does not dominate a society that stands firmly on conviction; even so, such a society is not governed by whims of fashion, for fashion is thwarted by the stability of the general style of life.

Such being the temper of the Russian people, the simplicity of their life and the simplicity of their needs was not the result of a lack of means or of inadequately developed civilization; it was determined by the very character of the dominant culture. In the West, luxury was not a contradiction but the logical consequence of fragmented human and social aspirations; it may be said to have been inherent in artificial civilization. The clergy, going against the general view, may have condemned it, but in the popular mind it was almost a virtue. People did not yield to it as to a weakness, but rather were proud of it, as of an enviable privilege. In the Middle Ages, the people gazed with respect at the superficial glitter that surrounded a person of consequence, and their minds reverently joined this superficial glitter to the concept of human virtue in a single feeling. Russians, on the other hand, venerated the rags of the holy fool more than the gold brocade of the courtier. Luxury did penetrate Russia, but like a pestilence caught from its neighbors. People apologized for it; people succumbed to it as to a vice, always remaining aware that it was wrong, not only from the religious, but also from the moral and social standpoint.
Western humanity sought to relieve the burden of its internal shortcomings by developing exterior means. The Russian endeavored to avoid the burden of exterior necessities by inwardly rising above them. Had the science of political economy existed in those days, there can be no doubt that Russians would have found it incomprehensible. They would have been unable to reconcile the existence of a separate science of wealth with the wholeness of their own view of life. They would not have understood why one should intensify people's awareness of outer necessities merely to increase their efforts toward producing material goods. They knew that the development of wealth is a secondary factor in the life of society and should therefore not merely be closely tied to other, higher factors, but be entirely subordinate to them.

Nevertheless, whereas luxury was able to enter Russia as a sort of pestilence—as artificial comfort with its aesthetic pampering—any other deliberate artificiality in life, or dreamy relaxation of the mind, could never have gained a foothold there, being directly and clearly contrary to its dominant spirit.

For the same reason, if there had been time for the fine arts to develop in ancient Russia, they would certainly have taken a very different form from that which they took in the West. In the West their development followed the general trend of thought; consequently, the same fragmentation of the spirit that, in the speculative sphere, resulted in logical abstraction produced fancifulness and disjointed emotions in the fine arts. Hence the pagan worship of abstract beauty. Instead of maintaining an eternal bond between beauty and truth—a bond that, it is true, may impede their progress individually but that safeguards the general wholeness of the human spirit and preserves the truthfulness of its manifestations—the Western world founded its ideal of beauty on a delusion of the imagination. It established its ideal on a fancy it knew to be false, or on an extreme straining of a one-sided emotion, which was born of a deliberate splitting of the mind. The Western world did not realize that a flight of fancy is a lie of the heart, and that an inner wholeness of being is essential not only for the truth of reason, but also for full aesthetic enjoyment.

This trend of the fine arts was not without effect on the life of the Western world. Free art is born of the sum total of human relationships, and having made its entrance into the world, it again returns into the depths of the human faculties or soul: orientation of the fine arts found more deeply than did the same development only if it is superfluous, and, so to speak, inner self-consciousness. Reason is thus transformed into passion, beauty into barbarism, essentiality into a servility; all the while the companion, serving as an ideal, serves as its internal master.

By mentioning "smug" as a general difference between people, generally speaking, a moral state: almost all are ready to put their hands upon the other"s that they have a clear God and humanity, and should be like they then come into variance with they will invent their own, more pacify the conscience.

Russians, on the other shortcomings, and the higher the more they demand of satisfied they are with themselves; they do not seek to deceive, thus lending an appearance of the contrary, even when they are always ready to recognize.

But let us stop here an inference between Western surely we have noted enough to arrive at a general definition.

Christianity was coming solely through the teach
into the depths of the human spirit, fortifying it or weakening it, gathering its faculties or scattering them. I believe, therefore, that the false orientation of the fine arts distorted European culture even more profoundly than did the same trend in philosophy, which can stimulate development only if it itself results from it. But the voluntary, continuous, and, so to speak, enthusiastic striving for a deliberate split in inner self-consciousness shatters the very root of the soul’s powers. Reason is thus transformed into cleverness, sincere emotion into blind passion, beauty into fancy, truth into opinion, learning into a syllogism, essentiality into an excuse for the imagination, and virtue into smugness; all the while, theatricality becomes life’s inseparable companion, serving as an external cover of falsehood, even as fancy serves as its internal mask.

By mentioning “smugness” I have touched upon yet another fairly general difference between the Westerner and the Russian. Western people, generally speaking, are nearly always satisfied with their moral state; almost all Europeans are ready at any time, proudly placing their hands upon their hearts, to declare to themselves and to others that they have a clean conscience, that they are innocent before God and humanity, and that they ask from God only that all others should be like they themselves. If their overt acts should happen to come into variance with the generally accepted notions of morality, they will invent their own, original system of ethics, and thus once more pacify the conscience.

Russians, on the other hand, are always keenly aware of their shortcomings, and the higher they rise on the ladder of moral development, the more they demand of themselves, and consequently the less satisfied they are with themselves. When they deviate from the true path, they do not seek to deceive themselves by some ingenious argument, thus lending an appearance of rightness to their inner delusions; on the contrary, even when they are most carried away by passion, they are always ready to recognize its moral unlawfulness.

But let us stop here and summarize all that we have said on the difference between Western European and ancient Russian culture; for surely we have noted enough features to be able to add them up and arrive at a general definition of the two types of civilization.

Christianity was communicated to the minds of Western peoples solely through the teaching of the Roman Church, while in Russia it
was kindled by the lanterns of the entire Orthodox Church. In the West, theology became a matter of rationalistic abstraction, whereas in the Orthodox world it retained its inner wholeness of spirit. In the West, the forces of reason were split asunder, while here there was a striving to maintain a living totality. There the mind sought to find the truth by establishing a logical sequence of concepts, while here people aspired to it by elevating their self-consciousness to the wholeness of heart and the concentration of spirit. There we see a search for a superficial, dead unity, while here we find a striving toward inner, living unity. There the Church mingled with the state, uniting spiritual with temporal power and merging the ecclesiastical and the secular in a system of a mixed character, while in Russia the Church remained distinct from worldly goals and structures. There we see Scholasticism and juridical universities, while in ancient Russia we find prayerful monasteries as centers of higher knowledge. There we observe a rationalistic and scholastic study of supreme truths, while here we note an aspiration to a living and integral cognition of them.

In the West, pagan and Christian civilization grew into one another, while here there was a constant effort to keep the truth pure. There statehood arose from violent conquests, while here it arose from the natural development of the nation’s life, permeated with the unity of fundamental belief. There we find a hostile demarcation of the estates, while in ancient Russia we see them united in concord while still maintaining their natural variety. There the artificial connection of the nobles’ castles with their manors resulted in separate states, whereas here the joint consent of the entire land gives spiritual expression to its indissoluble unity. There land ownership is the primary basis of civil relationships, while here property is merely an accidental expression of personal relationships. There formal-logical law predominates, while here the law is based on life. There the law tends toward outer justice, while here inner justice is preferred. There jurisprudence strives to logical codification, while here, instead of looking for outer connections between forms, it seeks the inner link between legal conviction and the convictions of faith and custom. In the West, laws issue artificially from the prevailing opinion, while in Russia they were born naturally out of the way of life. There improvements have always been effected by means of violent change, here by means of intellectual conviction.

In the West we find the preeminent strength of family and the artificial life, here the moral fortitude. In the West we find the healthy wholeness of reason, while in Russia the anxiety of spirit coupled with emotionalism, here a profound self-consciousness, coupled with a striving for moral improvement.

In other words, in the West we find a dichotomy of thought and action, a dichotomy of state, a dichotomy of extra- and extra-familial rights and duties, a dichotomy of the sum of all being, both social and individual, individual and social. Thus, if what we have presented is a rationalistic understanding of Western European and Russian civilization, we naturally do not develop more fully the idea that the culture was imported from the East into Western Europe? Why did it not come from the East? For what reason? Holy Providence will of the Promised Land across the ages only.

If, by way of explanation, we say that the supreme will of Providence was held back for several centuries until the appointed time, that would be a question. Holy Providence will of humankind will only be accomplished by a path humankind will only have taken forty days to travel through the Promised Land across the ages only.
change, here by means of harmonious, natural growth. There we find the turbulence of the partisan spirit, here the firmness of basic conviction.

In the West we find the whim of fashion, here the stability of life. There one finds the precariousness of individual autonomy, here the strength of family and social ties. There we see ostentatious luxury and artificial life, here the simplicity of vital needs and the courage of moral fortitude. In the West is the effeminacy of fancifulness, here the healthy wholeness of reasonable faculties. There we find an inner anxiety of spirit coupled with a rationalistic surety of one's moral perfection, here a profound peace and tranquility of inner self-consciousness, coupled with constant self-mistrust and an incessant striving for moral improvement.

In other words, in the West we find a dichotomy of the spirit, a dichotomy of thought, a dichotomy of learning, a dichotomy of the state, a dichotomy of estates, a dichotomy of society, a dichotomy of familiar rights and duties, a dichotomy of morals and emotions, a dichotomy of the sum total and of all separate aspects of human being, both social and individual. We find in Russia, in contrast, a predominant striving for wholeness of being, both external and inner, social and individual, intellectual and workaday, artificial and moral. Thus, if what we have presented is correct, dichotomy and wholeness, rationalistic understanding and reason, are the ultimate expressions of Western European and ancient Russian culture, respectively.

The question naturally arises: Why, then, did Russian civilization not develop more fully than European civilization before Western culture was imported into Russia? Why did Russia not outstrip Europe? Why did it not head the intellectual movement of all humankind, since it has so many prerequisites for the correct and comprehensive development of the spirit?

If, by way of explanation, we were to say that it was due to the supreme will of Providence that the development of the Russian mind was held back for several centuries from what would appear to be its appointed time, that would be true enough, but not an answer to the question. Holy Providence does not lengthen or shorten the appointed path of humankind without moral cause. The people of Israel might have taken forty days to accomplish the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land across the Arabian deserts, but it actually took forty
years to traverse. This was simply because their souls strayed from a pure striving toward God, Who was leading them.

We have already mentioned, however, that each patriarchate, each nation, each person of the Universal Church in placing their own individual characteristics at the service of this Church find that the very development of the particular characteristic presents a danger to their inner balance and steadfast harmony with the general spirit of Orthodoxy.

What, then, was the unique characteristic of Russia compared to other nations of the Orthodox world, and what was the danger that threatened it? Did this characteristic develop to excess, so that its mind was deflected from the direct path it should have taken to reach its appointed goal?

The answer to this question can be, of course, only a hypothetical guess. As for my personal opinion, I believe that Russia’s distinguishing feature was the very fullness and purity of expression it gave to the Christian doctrine throughout its social and family life. This was the great strength of its civilization; but it also concealed within it the main danger to its development. The purity of expression merged so closely with the spirit it expressed that it was easy for people to confuse the two and to respect the outer form as much as the inner meaning. They were, of course, protected against such confusion by the very nature of Orthodox doctrine, which was primarily concerned with preserving the wholeness of the spirit. Yet the reason of the doctrine one accepts does not liberate one from the weakness common to all humanity. Thus no teaching and no decrees can destroy the moral freedom of will in humankind nor in a nation. Indeed, we see that, during the sixteenth century, esteem for the form in many ways outweighs respect for the spirit.

Perhaps we should look for the origins of this imbalance even earlier, but it had become obvious by the sixteenth century. Certain distortions that had crept into the liturgical books and certain peculiarities in Church ritual persisted stubbornly among the people, despite the fact that constant contact with the East should have convinced them of the differences with the practice of the other [Orthodox] churches. At the same time we see that particular judicial decisions taken by Byzantium were not only studied, but were respected almost as much as Church-wide decisions, and that there appeared a demand that generally obligatory services of life. At the same time the proximity of foreign innovations, augmenting the entirety of fundamental external and literal aspect

In this way, respect for the Church was imperceptibly transformed into a form of devotion, perhaps in Russian civilization. A century later, it became its opposite extreme: to strive for a form of Church which would be one-sided, it could be called.

The essence of Russia lies in the people and, what is more, in the people and, what is more, in the people and, what is more, in the people. Hence it is on this founda- sted edifice of Russian constructed out of mixed and therefore must be a tions that is not wholly means and whose appointment seem self-consciousness rated with Western ideas. The self-consciousness of European could be for the whole truth, it turn to the Orthodox faith of its nation, to the distinct echoes of the hearth in Russia’s former. of the rationalistic system...

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appeared a demand that they be applied in Russia as if they were gen-
ernally obligatory. At the same time in the monasteries, which pre-
served their outward splendor, one notes a certain decline in the rigor
of life. At the same time the relationship between the boyars and the
landed gentry, which at first had sound, deteriorated into the
ugly formalism of the complicated mestnichestvo system. It
At the same time the proximity of the Uniate Church, inspiring fear of for-
eign innovations, augmented the general desire to preserve the
entirety of fundamentally Russian Orthodox civilization, even its
external and literal aspects.

In this way, respect for tradition—which was Russia's strength—
was imperceptibly transformed into respect more for its external
manifestations than for its vivifying spirit. This gave rise to the imbalance
in Russian civilization, one striking result of which was Ivan the Ter-
rible. A century later, it caused the schisms, and later still, because of
its one-sidedness, it caused some thinking people to swing to the
opposite extreme: to strive for foreign forms and a foreign spirit.

The essence of Russia's civilization, however, still lives on among
the people and, what is most important, in the Holy Orthodox Church.
Hence it is on this foundation and on no other that we must erect the
sturdy edifice of Russian culture, which heretofore has been con-
structed out of mixed and, for the most part, foreign materials, and
which therefore must be rebuilt with our own pure materials. The con-
bstruction of this building can be carried out only when that class of our
nation that is not wholly occupied with the procurement of material
means and whose appointed role in society is therefore to develop the
social self-consciousness—when that class, I say, which is still satu-
rated with Western ideas, finally becomes fully convinced of the one-
sidedness of European culture; when it grows more keenly aware of
the need for new intellectual principles; when, in a reasonable desire
for the whole truth, it turns to the pure fountainhead of the ancient
Orthodox faith of its nation and, with a responsive heart, hearkens to
the distinct echoes of the Holy Faith of the fatherland still clearly to be
heard in Russia's former, native life. Then, having thrown off the yoke
of the rationalistic systems of European philosophy, the educated

6. A system calculating seniority in service according to one's ancestors' service
position. — Ed.
Russian will find in the depths of the special, living, integral philosophy of the Holy Fathers of the Church—a philosophy inaccessible to Western concepts—complete answers to the very questions of the mind and heart that most perturb a soul deceived by the latest results of Western self-consciousness. In the former life of one's country will be discovered the possibility of understanding how a different culture may be developed.

It will then be possible in Russia for learning to develop on distinctive principles, different from those that European culture offers us. Art, flourishing on native roots, will then be possible in Russia. And social life in Russia will affirm an orientation different from that which it can receive from Western civilization.

In using the word orientation, however, it is necessary to add that this word delimits sharply the extent of my desire. For, if ever I were to see in a dream that some long-dead, external feature of our former life had suddenly been resurrected among us and, in its former shape, become part of our present life, I would not rejoice at such a vision. On the contrary, I would be frightened. For such an intrusion of the past into the new, of the dead into the living, would be tantamount to transferring a wheel from one machine into another that requires a different type and size: in such a case, either the wheel or the machine must break. My only wish is that the principles of life that are preserved in the doctrine of the Holy Orthodox Church should permeate the beliefs of all estates and strata of our society; that these lofty principles, in prevailing over European culture, should not force it out but embrace it in their fullness, thus granting it a higher meaning and bringing it to its ultimate development; and that the wholeness of being that we observe in ancient Russia should forever be the destiny of our present and future Orthodox Russia.

7. A. S. Khomiakov expressed a number of profound ideas on the present state of the arts and their future development back in 1845, in his article "Pis'mo y Petersburg" ["Letter to St. Petersburg"], published in Moskovitanin, No. 2 (1845). But his views seem to have been found premature by his public, for our literature did not respond to those living ideas in the way that might have been expected if a more receptive frame of mind had prevailed.