

The Temptation of Civilizationism: Is It Possible to Resist the West without Bias and Reductive Thinking?

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Abstract

The article examines problems that Russia may face by positioning itself as a civilization-state. Russia's attempts to dissociate itself from the West and Western culture, completely reject liberalism—or advocate it along with a complete rejection of collectivism—may lead not to Russia's establishment as a civilization-state, but to self-denial. The author argues that many Western cultural trends are manifestations of radical 'expressive individualism' engendered by postmodern culture. Russia can counter

expressive individualism with its own ideal of personality rooted in its culture and the philosophical tradition of personalism, and consider the possibility of personalizing the majority based on collectivity. Russian culture could offer an alternative form of personalization that affirms the norm of the majority, not of the minorities.

Keywords: identity, civilization-state, individualism, collectivism, collectivity, expressive individualism, personalism, national ideology.

Russia's Foreign Policy Concept, adopted in the spring of 2023, states that Russia is a civilization-state: "More than a thousand years of independent statehood, the cultural heritage of the preceding era, deep historical ties with the traditional European culture and other Eurasian cultures, and the ability to ensure harmonious coexistence of different peoples, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups on one common territory... developed over many centuries, determine Russia's special position as a unique civilization-state and a vast Eurasian and Euro-Pacific power that brings together the Russian people and other peoples belonging to the cultural and civilizational community of the Russian World" (Concept, 2023).

At the October 2023 Valdai Club meeting, President Putin similarly defined Russia as a unique civilization-state: "In Russia's Foreign Policy Concept, our country is characterized as an original civilization-state. This...reflects how we understand not only our own development, but also the main principles of international order, which we hope will prevail. ... Each state and society strives to develop its own path of development which is rooted in culture and traditions, and is steeped in geography and historical experiences, both ancient and modern, as well as the values held by its people" (President of Russia, 2023). He also spoke about this much earlier, e.g., in his 2012 Address to the Federal Assembly (President of Russia, 2012).

This has spurred academic and public debate on the concept (Naumkin, 2020) in general, and its applicability to Russia in particular.

Russia's status as a civilization-state has both supporters (Spiridonova, 2023) and opponents (Blucher, 2020). The term itself is relatively young and was first applied to countries like China and India (Jacques, 2009).

China “has amalgamated the world's longest continuous civilization with a huge modern state” (Zhang, 2012, p. 2). However, the Chinese leadership's emphasis on the uniqueness of Chinese civilization (associated with the ‘Sinicization’ of Marxism) is questionable. Chinese civilization has never been confined to just one state. The country has gone through external conquests and periods of disintegration, and present-day China differs from Zhou or Han China just as much as modern and ancient Greece differ from one another. The Chinese state is a modern nation-state, “and its desire, for instance, to use its diaspora, or to popularize its culture abroad, is no different from similar efforts by Germany, France, Israel, or Kazakhstan” (Lukin, 2023, p. 90).

Russia is a far less culturally monolithic country. Moreover, things are complicated by the context that launched Russia's efforts to find its own civilizational identity; that context being the Special Military Operation (SMO) and confrontation with NATO. On the one hand, the presence of a relatively consolidated and hostile Other facilitates self-identification. On the other hand, Russia is now again host to the discussions, begun by Westernizers and Slavophiles, about whether Russia is truly distinct, or is an integral part of Europe and thus includes a large layer of Western culture.

As will be shown below, there are numerous problems with the revival and popularization of the civilizational approach to Russian ideology/identity. Many stem from the excessive breadth of the categories and dichotomies applied to the recent trends in Western culture that are rejected by Russia's leadership and society alike. These trends, seen as the collapse of norms, the triumph of nihilism and sexual promiscuity, are associated with Liberalism or Marxism or Modernity as such. But Liberalism, Marxism, and Modernity—due to their universalism—long ago became inalienable parts of Russian history and culture. Instead, given the categories' diversity (multiple

connotations) and changeability, it is necessary to specify *which* Liberalism, Marxism, and Modernity should be discussed.

If a disease of ‘Western Civilization’ (or more precisely, the ‘progressive trends’ in some Western countries) is incorrectly diagnosed, then obsolete, overly broad, ineffective medicine will be prescribed. At best, this results in rejecting the parts of Western culture that are already rejected by a significant fraction of the West itself (in which case the specifics of our culture remains unclear). At worst, it leads to extremely dubious criticism of democracy and human rights, even though these things are mostly or entirely unrelated to the Western progressivism/wokeism that is condemned by Russian society.

This does not mean that Russia’s cultural heritage cannot support a unique civilizational project. But the search for such a foundation must account for the rapid socio-economic transformations that are making some categories and dichotomies outdated or ambiguous. We should discard cumbersome ideological sediments, focusing on the norms that are actually becoming dominant in the West, and on those that could serve as alternatives.

REJECTING INDIVIDUALISM, WE REJECT THE INDIVIDUAL

What is a civilization-state? Vadim Tsyburskiy (2000) defines it as “as a geocultural community that, due to its historical (including religious-ideological) experience, comes to see Fundamental Humanity in itself and tries to support this vision with a corresponding geopolitical project.” Alexander Girinsky (2025, p. 153) similarly views a civilization-state as a culturally and ideologically autonomous entity, since civilizational autonomy implies its own “unique vision of history and of what a person should be and become” (Girinsky, 2025, p. 153).

Researchers note that attempts to portray Russia as a civilization-state face many problems.

First of all, there are no clear criteria for assigning civilizational status to states. Oleg Barabanov (2020) believes that appointing “chosen” states may lead to discrimination against the rest and to conflicts between large and small non-Western countries. Ivan Timofeev (2023) emphasizes the “constructed” nature of modern

nations, to which cultural artifacts of the past are barely applicable. Leonid Fishman (2025, p. 181) justifiably notes that “Spenglerian expansionism, Russia as the Katechon, Leontiev’s proposal to ‘freeze’ Russia, the Eurasianist theories of Pyotr Savitskiy and Nikolai Trubetzkoy and Lev Gumilyov, isolationist concepts like the ‘Island of Russia,’ eternal mystical confrontation between Canaan and the Empire, and more—all contain the temptation to base foreign and domestic policy on arbitrary ideas about the essences and boundaries of civilizations and on equally arbitrary historiosophies” (Fishman, 2024, p. 181). While Slavophiles could still speak of Russian culture as rooted in traditions, today, after the Soviet era, Russian society is more Western and modern than traditional and religious. As Timofeev notes, “historical depth does not always allow the real influence of distant history on modern politics to be revealed” (Timofeev, 2023).

Another set of problems is associated with the search for identity, i.e., with defining the specifics, essence, and distinctive features of Russian civilization. In the current geopolitical conflict, there is a clear need to contrast something Russian with something Western. But what is Western and what is purely Russian? Is Russia part of Europe? Or is our civilization an intermediate one, between West and East—Eurasian? Girinsky (2025, p. 153) notes that Russia can hardly cast off the civilizational foundation that it shares with Europe. Moreover, the ‘turn to the East’ is problematic, given “the deep-rooted fear in Europeanized Russian culture” of the East, Orient, China, ‘Asiaticism,’ and ‘pan-Mongolism.’ There is undeniably a huge cultural gulf between Russia and e.g., China, and thus the Russo-Chinese alignment is more a geopolitical process than a search for Russian civilization somewhere between West and East.

But for us, something else is important: in defining ourselves through the Other or the Enemy, we risk conflating this Other with an overly broad set of characteristics. This would lead to the rejection of much of what is common between us and this generalized Other, (and is not the source of the Other’s genuinely objectionable qualities), limiting our own options.

Moreover, since this Western Other also embodies Modernity, change, and progress, rejecting it wholesale could trap us in a retrograde stance: if the West equals progress, understood as “negation and negative power” (Kapustin, 2024), and that in turn leads to nihilism, sexual deviance, and wokeism, then the essence of Russian civilization should be sought exclusively in traditional values, Orthodoxy, or even nationalism, rather than in ambitious projects aimed at transforming the world and moving towards the Future.

There are many examples of such overgeneralization. For instance, Natalia Rutkevich claims that Western Civilization is unique in its liberal anthropology, according to which being a human means having rights. And we may agree that the Western legal system “elevates the fundamental rights of individuals, which politicians are called to satisfy and protect, sometimes to the detriment of collective interests and the successful functioning of the national community” (Rutkevich, 2024, p. 185). But perhaps we should not also agree that “anti-historicism, one of the main features of modern Western Civilization, is the result of the triumph of human rights ideology” (Ibid, p. 191). Such discourse would logically imply that a state should create its own ideology denying human rights, an extremely dubious (if not terrifying) choice that may lead to anti-humanism.¹

Similar and even more radical ideas can be found in Alexander Dugin’s works, according to which Modernity is rejected not through postmodernity, but through premodernity. According to Dugin (2024), the West’s crisis is a crisis of the liberal idea itself and of everything associated with it (even Marxism). For Dugin, “the entire substance of European Modernity—science, culture, politics, technology, society, values, and so on—was just a brief episode with a shameful and miserable end.” Dugin sees an alternative in monarchy. But what should this monarchy be like if all the ideas generated by Modernity are rejected? Estates, unelected organs of government, Orthodoxy as an official ideology (in a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society)? A return to the tsarist empire?

¹ Rutkevich herself concludes that such an approach carries a great risk of rejecting the very idea of human rights, potentially leading to fascism, archaicism and ethnocentrism (Rutkevich, 2023, p. 200).

Vladimir Shevchenko (2019) writes that “the Russian Empire, as a form of organizing power, was distinguished, *inter alia*, by the following features: autocracy, the sacredness of supreme power, the rigid centralization of the administrative-bureaucratic vertical of power, social relations based on direct domination and subordination, the convergence of power and property, a multi-ethnic population, and a dominant ethnic group.” All this looks strange in a dynamic era of technology, personalization and self-realization, when everyone increasingly feels like an independent individual with means (social networks, at least) of political engagement (Gurri, 2018).

All these are examples of reducing the complex to the simple. But even the “simple” is not selected correctly. Reductions also suppose a false homogeneity in the West. For instance, propaganda of the Western way of life, and its latest trends like gender ideologies, are condemned as tools for destroying Russian culture and identity. “The replacement of traditional values with anti-Christian, postmodern morality (or rather, amorality)” is “the enemy’s objective on the ‘values front’ of the ongoing hybrid proxy war” (Alasaniya and Moshchelkov, 2024). In reality, these are not so much hybrid warfare tools as they are something inherent in Western countries, and moreover something that is defied by a significant part of Western society. Trump’s reelection in 2024 clearly indicates that a significant part of the Western hegemon does not welcome the active promotion of radical feminism or LGBTQ+,² including gender ideologies. Moreover, this half of the U.S. population is more religious and committed to traditional values (as recognized in Russian official documents: religion, patriotism, family, etc.)³ than are Russians themselves.

There are many in the West (Mounk, 2023), such as ‘natcons’ (national conservatives) (Ismagilova, 2024), who oppose the modern

² Rosfinmonitoring has included the LGBT movement in the Registry of Extremist and Terrorist Organizations.

³ For example, the divorce rate in Russia is higher than in the U.S. (*Novyye Izvestiya*, 2023). And in Russia, 24% of zoomers (born in 2001-) pray regularly, versus 27% in America. 9% of Russian zoomers regularly go to church, versus 25% in the U.S. In Russia, 43% of believers from the Thaw Generation (born before 1947) pray regularly, while 80% of religious Americans born before 1949 do so (ADPASS, 2025).

left-liberal and woke agendas, but their criticism cannot be called racist, national-chauvinistic, or fundamentalist. Rather, as in Russia, they are trying to breathe new life into conservatism, including through humor and parody.

A recent striking example is Peachy Keenan—a pseudonymous writer and mother living ‘deep behind enemy lines.’ She identifies herself as a husbosexual (a parody of newly ‘discovered’ genders) attracted only to people who identify as her husband. Her 2024 book, *Domestic Extremist: A Practical Guide to Winning the Culture War*,⁴ became an instant bestseller. Keenan believes that one does not need to look far back into the past to find a time when American culture was less corrupted: “Forget the 1780s. I’ll take the 1980s!” (Keenan, 2023, p. 13). “Becoming a domestic extremist requires reclaiming normalness as a way of life... . I am in a monogamous marriage, and I intend to stick with it until death do us part. My husband and I had more than four children together. I stayed home to nurse and raise our babies. We rejected local Marxist public schools for a combination of homeschooling and classical parochial schools. Every person in our household remains the gender they were assigned at conception. The only flag we fly on our home has fifty stars and thirteen stripes. We are trying our best to instill normal (or what was considered normal a few years ago) American values in our kids. We hope they marry young and produce a lot of grandchildren for us to dandle on our arthritic knees one day” (Keenan, 2023, p. 14).

In her equally popular book, Carrie Gress argues that radical feminism has only made women unhappier. In fact, Western societies are living through a period of the “end of the woman” as an idea and ideal, which has manifested itself in growing senses of loss and unhappiness: “In the 1970s, women rated their overall life satisfaction higher than men did, but it has been on the steady decline ever since. ... ‘women of all education groups have become less happy over time[,] with declines in happiness having been steepest among those with some college’” (Gress, 2023, p. 15). There is much literature, including

⁴ “Extremist” is used here sarcastically, referring to how things like monogamous families with children have become ‘extremist’ in the context of predominating progressive discourses.

academic work, showing that the collapse of family values accelerates the growth of socio-economic inequality and leads to children increasingly growing up in single-parent families, receiving insufficient attention, and ending up in high-risk groups (e.g., Kearney, 2023).

The modern progressive agenda is being reconsidered along the entire “cultural front.” And probably, in the U.S., on a more fundamental and scientific basis than in our country.

The above suggests that rejecting the West per se would endanger the threads that still connect it to us. As Rodion Belkovich has correctly noted: “Russia’s outcast-status has won it a useful reputation: many Western conservatives look to us with heartfelt trepidation and hope. But unfortunately, our overseas admirers will be disappointed when... instead of flowering complexity ... [they find here only] endless variations on the theme of Komsomol. What exactly will we boast of, apart from the struggle against gender fluidity, which many American states are also fighting today? Will the American Right find here universities free from political pressure? Real freedom of speech? There is only one answer to these questions, and it is not comforting” (Belkovich, 2024, p. 213).

However, this train of thought risks bringing public discourse to the other extreme and reduction: seeing the evil emanating from the West as consisting solely of its collectivism and violation of classical liberalism.

REJECTING COLLECTIVISM, WE REJECT COLLECTIVITY

The above-considered position identifies the West’s negative emanations as liberalism, human rights, and Modernity. The other viewpoint sees recent progressive attacks on the family, gender identity, and sexual norms as rejections of liberalism, human rights, and Modernity. In this view, modern Wokeism is a fusion of Marxism and postmodernism (Hicks, 2011) that sees normative (symbolic and discursive) structures as oppressive, i.e., defines ‘norm’ and ‘oppression’ as virtually synonymous. The resulting ‘applied postmodernism’ has turned postmodernism’s initial skepticism/detachment regarding overarching narratives, and regarding established norms, into a

political, i.e., practical tool (Pluckrose and Lindsay, 2020). Furthermore, while classical liberalism is universalistic, demanding legal and social equality for all regardless of identity, the West's current culture wars revolve around calls for abandoning universalism in favor of group identities and epistemologies (Al Gharbi, 2024).

“After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the ‘free world’ was replaced by the universal ideology of human rights that expanded American (initially Protestant) liberalism to all humanity. But it did not reign long either. It was replaced by a new illiberal orthodoxy that elevates collective identities above individual ones, arranges them into complex ‘intersectional’ hierarchies, and demands unequal opportunities (‘equity’ rather than equality) in the name of inclusivity, which means deposing the heirs of exploiters” (Slezkine, 2023, p. 52).

So, some Russian authors suggest that we are (or should be!) moving away from the West not because of its liberalism or ‘human rights ideology,’ but precisely because we reject the extremes of certain ‘collectivist’ and ‘Marxist-postmodern’ tendencies; not because of Modernity per se, but because of something in Modernity that has gone out of control. For example, the ideology of Russia as a civilization-state is identified as moderate conservatism: “Today, this unique hybrid ‘Putinist’ model of the country—based on liberal business opportunities, social pluralism, individual freedom, conservative imperial ideas, traditional values, and a welfare state—has already passed through the design phase, and is now going through its ‘field trial’ to refine its systems and train them to manage the country in conditions of a struggle for sovereignty, resilience, and import-independence (Ilyicheva, Lapin, and Ilyicheva, 2024, p. 33).

Indeed, Putin's discourse hardly reveals an intent to give up liberal freedoms and Modernity. His political principles can be described as conservative modernity: “the Russian state is based on Western modernity's secular values, but opposes the radical, left-liberal modernity of the current West.” “Such a view automatically blocks all neo-traditionalist and anti-modern concepts of a special path, from economic autarky to a Eurasian empire” (Girinsky and Azyrkin, 2024, p. 46).

But what conclusion is to be drawn from all this? The logic is usually quite simple: if Russia's civilizational mission is to protect the West from itself, then Russia must return to the values of "pure" liberalism, discarding modern Marxist and/or postmodern speculations. The source of evil is in collectivism or even socialism. "It was not private property or freedom of speech that brought the United States to monuments' destruction, BLM looting, transgender transitions, and the other charms of progressive society. No, all this is the result of almost a hundred years of 'social policy' inspired significantly by the Soviet Union, resulting in the elimination of personal responsibility and in dependence on government support. Where economic wellbeing is based on relations of domination and submission, a servile ethos develops, which suppresses a person's self-esteem and sense of personal moral responsibility for his family's and country's future" (Belkovich, 2024, p. 228).

But is collectivism really responsible for the West's nihilism?

INDIVIDUALITY AND COLLECTIVITY

As Russia attempts to find its own civilizational identity through criticism of the West, the main weakness of that criticism is its outdated conceptions. We have gotten used to viewing the world in categories invented during the French Revolution—a time of mass social and class struggle. Today, we live in a world that is increasingly conceptualized through the lens of individuals. So, instead of contrasting all of individualism to all of collectivism, we should consider various *ways and methods of personalization*.

The personalization of social relations suggests the growing role, strength, significance and, more importantly, *value* of individuals. The process of personalization is unstoppable: it simply agrees with the elementary logic of liberation from the burden of material necessity. This process was convincingly demonstrated by renowned sociologist Roland Inglehart on an extensive empirical basis. He described it as an inevitable shift from materialism to post-materialism, from the values of survival to the values of self-expression. This transition does not depend on cultural or national characteristics, because economic growth enables people to perceive themselves as individuals, strive for

self-realization, and seek broader political and civil liberties. In other words, they express themselves more as individuals, since they no longer have to spend most of their time trying to survive (Inglehart, 1997). Post-materialism and self-expression are also associated with secularization: modern people cannot be thrown back into the past or subjected to a religious-dogmatic worldview (Inglehart, 2021). They are “doomed” to independently seek the meaning of life. Although religion still plays an important role in many people’s lives, it cannot determine them completely. Today it is more something that an individual forms, partly autonomously, while searching for the meaning of life (hence the widely observed departure from the Church and the spread of practices offering ‘personal access’ to God) (Taylor, 2018).

But does that vindicate the critics of modern progressivism’s liberal nature? Some academics seem to reach such a conclusion. For example, Carl Trueman (2020) believes that modern Western nihilism was generated by Modernity. Modern gender ideologies are not a result of collectivism but of maximized ‘expressive’ individualism. For an expressive personality, self-expression is sacred, while society is a collection of forces of oppression and exploitation, a set of obstacles. Such individualism places an individual, his feelings and choices at the center of the Universe. This conception of the individual becomes normatively guiding, which is how gender becomes a choice: if a little girl says that she is a boy, then society should supposedly accept this.

The main danger here is that we risk confusing the most distorted and repugnant forms of personalization with personalization as such. We should ask: *Could there be a different form of personalization and triumph of the human as an individual, instead of slipping into reactionarism and crude, antiliberal, antidemocratic collectivism?*

Significantly, many Western researchers argue that LGBTQ+,⁵ gender ideologies, and radical feminism are not the result of Western peoples’ democratic choices, but rather are a *minority ideology imposed upon the majority* by the structurally-advantaged intellectuals and opinion leaders who comprise the progressive, left-liberal elite

⁵ Rosfinmonitoring has included the LGBT movement in the Registry of Extremist and Terrorist Organizations.

(Al Gharbi, 2024). None of these ideologies meet the interests of the majority, or of the many poor and socially-vulnerable people who have concerns more pressing than gender choice or the ability of trans-‘women’ to compete against biological women (Davydov, 2024).

We should, then, consider the possibility of *personalizing the majority based on collectivity*.

Russia’s civilizational heritage, namely some political and social concepts of Russian classical (mostly Silver Age) philosophy, could be of help here. They are increasingly invoked these days to emphasize the uniqueness of Russia’s culture, and Russia’s possession of its own, self-sufficient philosophy (and thus rightful agency, etc.) (e.g., Savenkov, 2024).

True, that philosophy is often seen as largely opposed to personalization, as being more reactionary than it is progressive and future-oriented. For example, Ivan Ilyin is seen as statist (although his philosophy is actually more complex and deep than many of its interpretations) (Makarkin, 2022), and a religious worldview is seen as prioritizing service above rights (Demin, 2022).

These interpretations usually overlook the personalism of many Russian classical philosophers: Vladimir Solovyov, Lev Lopatin, Alexey Kozlov, Nikolay Lossky, Nikolay Berdyaev, Sergey Bulgakov, Pavel Florenskiy, Lev Shestov, Lev Karsavin, Semyon Frank, etc. (Polovinkin, 2020; Katsapova, 2022). In the center of Russian classical philosophy is the person as a special anthropological type, as an ideal to strive for—as an image and semblance of God. *This is not a self-contained individual or a faceless part of the masses, but someone who realizes his essence through free creation and dialog*. Scholar of Russian philosophy Vassily Zenkovsky states that “Russian philosophy is not theocentric (although deeply and essentially religious for many of its thinkers), not cosmocentric (although questions of natural philosophy attracted the attention of Russian philosophers very early); it is mostly interested in man, his fate and paths, and in the meaning and goals of history” (Zenkovsky, 2001, p 21).

Crucially, Russian philosophers’ ideal of ‘personality’ was very different from today’s fashionable ‘expressive individual.’ It was the ideal of a person whose semblance to God is expressed in the ability

to create, love, and attain eternal truths. This ideal is infinitely far from extreme individualism and from the oppressive, anti-democratic collectivism that rejects ‘human rights ideology.’ For example, Nikolai Berdyaev was wary of the very word ‘collectivism’: “The temptation and slavery of collectivism is nothing more than the shifting of spiritual community, communitarianism, and universality from the subject [the individual] to the object [communal institutions], the objectification of part or all of human life. Collectivism is always authoritarian; it places the center of consciousness and conscience outside of the person, in mass, collective social groups, such as the army or totalitarian parties. Cadres and parties can drive a person’s consciousness to paralysis. ... This is one of the reasons why collectivism is tempting. There is a great danger in viewing any organization as the ultimate goal, and the rest of life as a means, a weapon” (Berdyaev, 1939).⁶

For philosophers like Berdyaev, the personalistic ideal cannot be ultimately embodied in the earthly world. The material world is a world of objectification, where everything ultimately limits a person’s freedom. This is why many classical Russian philosophers associated a person’s true life with spiritual aspirations, the Church, and communion with God.

However, Berdyaev does not reject all forms of collectivity. On the contrary, for him and many other classical Russian philosophers, *sobornost’* (togetherness) is a special form of *harmonic collectivity* and unity: “mature, meaningful freedom implies the development and rise of the inner person, his organic reunion with other people and the cosmos” (Berdyaev, 2018, p. 357).

* * *

Thus, completely rejecting liberalism—or advocating it along with a complete rejection of collectivism—will lead not to Russia’s establishment as a civilization-state, but to *self-denial*. But one can use more subtle

⁶ Berdyaev here, as almost everywhere, considers Marxism a manifestation of collectivism. This is a very simplified view of Marxism, probably resulting from observation of its practice in the Soviet Union. Berdyaev could hardly have rejected so actively the entire diversity of Marxism and the forms of collectivity that it generated.

tools, which are available in our cultural and philosophical heritage. Russian classical philosophy's fundamental features are the search for a balance between the extremes of individualism and collectivism, the anthropology of the person whose essence is in the dialog and unity of the individual, social, and transcendent Whole. Of course, today we cannot arm ourselves with classical Russian religious philosophy in unaltered form. Its religious language is too complicated and alien to modern secular people. Besides, our society is not Orthodox, but secular and multi-ethnic. But there is another way. Any philosophy is potentially open and flexible; one can draw *inspiration* rather than blindly follow its instructions. A philosophy, or rather some idea deep within it, can serve as the basis for something new and open to change.⁷

The justification of civil liberties' growing restriction, on the grounds that genuine freedom is through communion with God, will probably not be believed by a modern secular person. (Who will also not believe in such abstract things as Christian socialism, promising that everyone will ultimately be saved only through "universal unity in the name of Christ" (Gorelov and Gorelova, 2019).)

Yet ideas such as *total unity* (*vseyedinstvo*) (Vladimir Solovyov) can still inspire modernization projects, alternative to the West's: pursuant of egalitarianism, social justice, and *cultural unity*. After all, if the Western progressive agenda is the means (and result) of minorities' self-realization (through imposing on the majority the rejection of the Norm), then a greater and constantly growing level of democracy and dialog in Russian culture could offer an alternative form of personalization. Let our norm be the Norm of the majority. But then it will be of utmost importance that this Norm actually be formed by the majority,⁸ a majority ever more engaged in politics. So that the person remains a personality, not part of a guided mass.

⁷ Today, the Russian religious-philosophical classics would objectively play a role completely different from that of their heyday. They would be one of the reference points guiding a modern person's self-determination. They were already products of Modernity 100-150 years ago; the philosophy of free-thinking, educated citizens, by no means concurrent with unhelpful church dogmas. (Many of the philosophers were former Marxists and nihilists who had come to God, but whose spiritual needs were far from traditional.)

⁸ Yet respects the minority, and gives everyone a chance to be heard and to feel like a party to the debate.

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