



Nikolai Karamzin's Philosophy of History in Russia's Intellectual Culture

Ol'ga A. Zhukova

To cite this article: Ol'ga A. Zhukova (2017) Nikolai Karamzin's Philosophy of History in Russia's Intellectual Culture, *Russian Studies in Philosophy*, 55:6, 381-395, DOI: [10.1080/10611967.2017.1409496](https://doi.org/10.1080/10611967.2017.1409496)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10611967.2017.1409496>



Published online: 13 Feb 2018.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



OL'GA A. ZHUKOVA

Nikolai Karamzin's Philosophy of History in Russia's Intellectual Culture

Nikolai Karamzin's multivolume work History of the Russian State occupies a special place in Russian culture. It could with good reason be considered a great intellectual and moral feat for the Russian thinker and historian. Karamzin rediscovered Russian history and returned it to the mainstream of national life. Inspired by philosophical ideas from the Enlightenment, Karamzin created a historical encyclopedia of the Russian people. As a heroic poem about Russia, Karamzin's creation has deep moral meaning. According to Karamzin, by turning toward the events and customs of the past, society fosters in itself the sense of history as a basis for its moral and social development in the present and future.

Keywords: *natural and cultural, continuity, cultural identity, aesthetic myth, narrative, historical memory, historical consciousness, moral philosophy, philosophy of history*

National Tradition and the Reality of History

Contemporary Russian society has a fear of history. This traumatization of public consciousness is the result of losing a country twice during the

English translation © 2016 Taylor & Francis Group, LLC, from the Russian text, "Filosofii istorii N.M. Karamzina v intellektual'noi kul'ture Rossii." Published with the author's permission.

The study has been funded by the Russian Academic Excellence Project '5-100'.

Ol'ga Anatol'evna Zhukova, doctor of philosophical sciences, is a professor at the National Research University Higher School of Economics, Russian Federation. Email: logoscultura@yandex.ru

Translated by Brad Damaré.

course of the twentieth century. Finding a defense for its history means giving Russia a historical chance in the present and a justification for its political and cultural future. This is why the unresolved issues of Russian history, including the problem of Russia's civilizational identity, act as a sort of marker of difficulties in the "growth" experienced by post-Soviet society. Disputes about the interpretation of key events in the national history, the politics of memory and oblivion, and the possibility of a unified historical text demonstrate the difficult path of historical self-knowledge on the part of an emerging Russian political and cultural nation. The main problem that arises is the lack of agreement on cultural tradition, or a narrative of cultural history that unites and reconciles the nation in its understanding of a past that necessarily imbues the present with meaning and serves as a prototype for the future.

It is true that any society "remembers" itself in the form of cultural tradition based on a cultural myth that arises at a certain historical stage and is later transmitted to subsequent generations. That myth is present in one form or another in both public and individual consciousness, drawing together various fragments of reality into a certain image, an integrated picture of one's being of a person who considers one's own life as taking place not only within history but also beyond its borders in the transcendent world. Myth strives for this kind of cultural memory about itself, when the self-image of a nation, a country, a cultural community, or an individual faces the difficult questions of history and comes to a consensus developed by removing contradictions from a tradition that seeks to become a canonical interpretation of the past. However, the narrative approved in the form of accepted historical canon is no guarantee of historical truth. Between the historical image and the reality of history, there may be a large gap or even a chasm to be filled either with knowledge not yet discovered or with lazy forgetfulness, entrenched silence, or conscious amnesia.

In the spirit of these arguments about cultural traditions and the reality of history, let us ask ourselves why our contemporaries should be interested in reading and understanding the national tradition of Russia as presented by the author Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin. Can his *History of the Russian State* answer how the spiritual, moral, intellectual, and political traditions of Russia developed and interacted with one another? What kind of optics of the past does the main historian of the Russian Empire construct, and to what extent can Karamzin's historical narrative help us overcome the ruptured inheritance of traditions, strengthen the process of continuity of the nation's social and spiritual experience, and serve as a basis for the formation of cultural memory?

After all, the Russia traumatized by dramatic twentieth-century events is today addressing colossally complex problems despite an obvious lack of historical time. Can a literary and historical work from the beginning of the nineteenth century, or even the experience of philosophical knowledge of domestic history on the part of the author of that multivolume work, give us some clear understanding or point toward a direction of development for contemporary Russia, which must think hard about its own cultural and political project under the tough competitive conditions of global modernity? In a word, does an appeal to Karamzin's work seem archaic as far as *philosophical comprehension of the national being* in the multifaceted process of Russia's historical self-determination among the global ensemble of cultures, civilizations, and historical memories?

I must admit that historical self-knowledge is not a strong point of Russian political and intellectual culture. In the twentieth century, the people's historical memory was subjected to a painful vivisection of political and ideological features. It is fully understandable why, from a psychological point of view, a large part of society has no desire to come to grips with history. The past bears a certain risk. To free oneself from unresolved issues of the past is symptomatic of the postmodern individual who prefers the ideology of internal comfort and success to the complex spiritual and philosophical work associated with moral reflection. The contemporary individual generally tries to escape the burden of history, explicitly or implicitly avoiding the work involved in the study of cultural history. If history is no longer perceived as an important experience from which lessons are drawn, then historical examples do not matter. It is precisely historical examples and cultural models of creativity, however, that contain enormous socializing and nurturing potential, forming a person of culture and a system of social values. "Human wisdom requires experience, but life is short," as Karamzin says in the preface to his work (Karamzin 1993, 18). Karamzin will also demonstrate this spiritual, practical, and intellectual power of examples in his *History*, understanding history in the spirit of Enlightenment moral philosophy as, in Karamzin's words, "a record of revelations and rules, a covenant of ancestors with posterity" (Karamzin 1993, 18). In his interpretation of history, which shares the basic philosophical ideas of Enlightenment-era Germans (Kara-Murza 2016, 102), he will also direct himself to the authority of ancient authors, drawing inspiration from "any written History" (Karamzin 1993, 19).

The reputation and expertise of thinkers and historians of antiquity served Karamzin not only as a model for narrative but also as a basis for his designs regarding Russian history. "World History with its great memories adorns the world for the mind, while Russian history adorns the fatherland where we live and feel," Karamzin exclaims (Karamzin 1993, 19). In that context, we might

compare Karamzin's work with that of an ancient genius, Virgil. In creating his *History of the Russian State*, Karamzin used a narrative style and literary techniques for depicting heroes and events in order to transform the "shades of centuries past" into "pictures" of national tradition (Karamzin 1993, 19), and into a legendary myth that gives Russia the right to its history and place in the world's book of traditions, just as Virgil connected the threads of ancient Greek and Roman history in the *Aeneid*, justifying Rome's right to be the primary heir of Mediterranean civilization and to take its place as the ancient world's new demiurge. B.M. Eikhenbaum points to the affinity in genre between Karamzin's *History* and the epic:

We see here not only a justification for historical study, but a definition of the composition of historical emotion itself, a rationale for this turn to the past, and moreover: an aesthetic rationale. *History of the Russian State* is, of course, less a history than a heroic epic. (Eikhenbaum 1969, 203–4)

I agree with the distinguished Russian literary scholar that Karamzin's *History* is, according to its design and artistic embodiment, a heroic poem about Russia, a legend about the Russian people who created "the expanse of this singular Power." "The thought is paralyzing," Karamzin writes with reverence and rapture. "Rome, reigning as it did from the Tiber to the Caucasus, from the Elba to the sands of Africa, could never equal it in its grandeur" (Karamzin 1993, 19). Reactivating the mechanisms of historical memory in the process of creating a national tradition, Karamzin undertook this colossal work with a desire to show readers "how Astrakhan and Lapland, Siberia and Bessarabia, could form a single Power with Moscow" (Karamzin 1993, 19). He projected the past onto the screen of the present, the Kievan Rus' of St. Vladimir and the Muscovite Rus' of Dmitry Donskoy onto the spiritual space of Russian noble culture, and the Kievan principedom and Muscovite tsardom onto the political construction of the Russian empire. In writing the history of Russia in a new, artistic language, he created a canvas on whose basis Russian society could proceed to develop a historical sense and recognize itself as the creator responsible for the present. What Karamzin really accomplishes might be called the *fostering of historical consciousness*. What does this mean? To paraphrase Ivan Aksakov in reference to Pushkin's place in Russian culture, the historical sense and historical consciousness awakened by Karamzin and later by Pushkin signify "respect for his land and recognition of his people's right to a distinctive historical life and organic development; the ongoing memory of what came before us is not dead material from which you could sculpt any figure you want, but a living organism, a great, unique,

mighty Russian people with a thousand-year history!” (Aksakov 2006, 283–84).

What, according to Karamzin, should one remember and depict in History, and what constitutes the work and craft of the historian? “A Historian is not a Chronicler,” Karamzin stresses. His goal is to show “the features and relationship of deeds” (Karamzin 1993, 25), not to document the time. Karamzin would formulate his goals as a Historian in the following way:

Without allowing myself any kind of invention, I searched for expressions in my own mind, but for ideas solely in monuments; I sought the spirit and life from within smoldering charters; I desired to unite the traditions given us by the centuries with a system clear in its harmonious convergence of parts; I depicted not only the calamities and glories of war, but also everything belonging to people’s civic lives: the victories of reason, art, customs, law, and industry; I did not fear the importance of discussing what our ancestors esteemed; I wanted to describe the ages of spiritual infancy, credulity, and fables without pride or ridicule and without transforming it into my own age; I wanted to represent the nature of the era and the nature of the Chroniclers: for it seemed to me that one was necessary for the other. (Karamzin 1993, 24–25)

An idea worthy of the French Enlightenment thinkers, the authors of the *Encyclopedia*¹, who created a compendium of modern knowledge about the “periodic system of cultural elements” of European civilization, as represented by the sciences, arts, and crafts! *History of the Russian State* was truly *the first Russian historical encyclopedia*, written in the genre of *historiosophical poem*, a unique intellectual event and cultural monument that united the goals of academic and civic enlightenment of Russian society within the aesthetic framework of Russian Sentimentalism and Romanticism. “In diligently exhausting the materials of ancient Russian History, I encouraged myself with the thought that the narratives of distant ages contain some kind of inexplicable charm for our imagination: the source of Poetry is there!” Karamzin recognizes (Karamzin 1993, 25). History as poetry, as a cultural work, as the creation of a people who built an enormous country and state, is like *a legendary epic in its cultural heroes and aesthetic myth about the origins of Russia*. This is what invariably inspired Karamzin the artist and awakened his creative senses.

Eikhenbaum was the first to point out the mutual semantic conditionality of Karamzin’s poetics and philosophical intuitions. This inner connection manifests in the author’s desire to shed light on historical truth, to increase

new knowledge by using his mind, to bring facts into the system while allowing room for the imagination. Eikhenbaum writes:

Karamzin's language does not aspire to provide an image of the thing: it is directed to some other areas of our imagination, or I should say of our fantasies. In Karamzin, these poetics are inseparably linked to his general philosophical judgments ... Reason and imagination derive from the same source, from an intuition of being whose threads extend in different directions. We have paid too little attention to the fact that Karamzin was not only an artist, but also a thinker, and we might even say our first philosopher. (Eikhenbaum 1969, 204–5)

I believe it can also be argued that, in his philosophical and aesthetic process of unlocking history, Karamzin invented a *unique mnemonic technique of recollection* through artistic reconstruction and recording of cultural tradition. In aspiring to his main goal of “making Russian History known to many,” even for “its severest judges” (Karamzin 1993, 26), he wanted to teach his compatriots, the sons and citizens of Russia, to peer into the “mirror of being and activity” of their people (Karamzin 1993, 18).

The Karamzinian line on fostering through history is ideologically related to philosophical concepts and aesthetic experience from the Enlightenment. History not only attests to the manifold cultural forms of life among peoples, but also appears as the accumulated experience of knowledge and achievements. Time itself becomes the movement of thought. “Time is nothing more than the tracing of our thought” (Karamzin 1862, 196). Even before he derived it, Karamzin was guided by this philosophical formulation of time in his work on the *History*. He attempted to find the succession of past historical thought in written sources of various genres from Russian antiquity. The national tradition passed on to Karamzin by his ancestors is a living link to the Russian chronicles, conveying not only their letter but also their spirit.

In that context, it is worth noting that the dialectic of aggregating the cultural tradition of Rus'/Russia and the historical tradition of interpreting it can be traced to the very first chronicles in the *Tale of Bygone Years*. The path of creating a cultural and historical narrative on whose basis the national consensus was constructed stretches from the ancient Russian authors to the German historiographers of Imperial Russia (Gottlieb Beyer, Gerhard Müller, and August Schlözer) and onward to the creators of national history (Mikhail Lomonosov and Vasilii Tatishchev). It was Karamzin, however, who succeeded in transforming a work dedicated to the history of the fatherland into a cultural event at the national scale,

making it *a fact of public consciousness*, a kind of new intellectual discursive practice, even as he manifested, as his contemporaries believed, loyalty to the empire and recorded the state and dynastic history in the tradition of his predecessors. For Karamzin, all of Russian society should be imbued with a historical sensibility and a conscious attitude toward the history of the fatherland.

Raised on the classical texts of ancient and modern history, and having absorbed the spirit and values of the Enlightenment during his experience of communicating with European culture in his earlier *Letters of a Russian Traveler*, Karamzin lamented the lack of a literarily crafted, philosophically constructed, and at the same time scientifically reliable domestic history. Karamzin reasoned as he traveled around Europe:

It is painful ... that to this day we have no good Russian history, that is, one written with a philosophical mind, with a critical eye, with noble eloquence ... Only taste, intelligence, and talent are needed. One can then select, animate, and paint ... The genealogy of princes, their quarrels, rivalries, and Polovtsian raids are not very interesting, I agree, but why fill whole volumes with them? Curtail whatever is unimportant ... But all the features signifying qualities of the Russian people, the character of our ancient heroes, our figures of excellence, and truly interesting events should be described vividly, strikingly. We had our own Charlemagne in Vladimir, our own Louis XI in Tsar Ivan, our own Cromwell in Godunov, and yet another sovereign whose likes are found nowhere else: Peter the Great. The eras of their rule constitute the most important epochs in our history, even the history of mankind; one has only to imagine it as a painting, and the rest can be depicted, just as Raphael or Michelangelo did in their drawings. (Karamzin 1984, 252–53)

With an eye toward the images of heroes of European history, he used his literary instinct and philosophically structured mind to assess the artistic potential and historical scale of the cultural tradition from Ancient Rus' to modern Russia.

The taste, intelligence, and talent Karamzin mentions are the aesthetic criteria inherent in genius, which, according to Kant, supplies new rules to art. Karamzin's genius defined new cultural horizons for Russian literature and for the humanities, setting a high ethical level for scholarly work and a measure of the artist's spiritual responsibility. It is no accident that Pushkin esteems Karamzin not only as a great writer but also as a man who, in his work as historian and philosopher, accomplished "the deed of an honest

man” (Pushkin 1990, 287). In his literary work, Karamzin radically changed the status of Russian letters, making the emergence of a Russian reading public possible, and thereby preparing it for the reception of his grandiose historical poem. As Yuri M. Lotman, author of *The Creation of Karamzin*, has noted: “Anyone who studies the readership of the 1780s and 1800s gets the impression that a miracle occurred over those twenty years: the reader emerged as a culturally significant category” (Lotman 1997, 221). After Karamzin, literature and history as an artistic, ideological, and semantic source for cultural and political life became *socially significant phenomena*.

Relevant History: Karamzin’s Discoveries

Karamzin’s efforts to enlighten laid the “foundation for a national historical education” (Shmidt 1991, 11). Beginning in 1803, he devoted himself to his colossal project, having become the lead historiographer of Imperial Russia. He accepted this mission, which combined the functions of scholar, chronicler, artist, and philosopher, and in doing so, to use Petr Viazemskii’s apt description, he “took the tonsure of a historiographer.” However subsequent generations of Russian historians may have assessed Karamzin’s historical creativity, the consistency of his research, and his philosophical and political program, and we can safely say that Karamzin’s work is both a civic feat and a feat of research. The culturally significant category of reader whose appearance is owed to Karamzin, as Lotman justly says, is a new reading and thinking Russian society, albeit one with marked boundaries. It is citizens of the Russian fatherland who should know and read History, and they are Karamzin’s main audience. The Tsar’s Historiographer took an important step toward enlightenment and intellectual freedom, creating a foundation for future cooperation between historians and society; that is, the entire nation.

Karamzin succeeded in fundamentally changing the relationship of the Russian people to the history of their fatherland. Essentially, Karamzin had rediscovered domestic history and presented it to educated society through a variety of events and characters. After Karamzin, Russian history began to be perceived as a national tradition with deep moral and civic meaning. The aesthetics of citizenship, which goes back to the classical idea of the ideal citizen, provided extraordinary moral weight to Karamzin’s historical research and turned the reading and discussion of his multivolume work into a common act, *a public event of spiritual, moral, and political dimensions*.

Publication began in 1816. In a February 18, 1816, letter to I.I. Dmitriev, Vasily Zhukovsky reported:

It's celebration after celebration over here. For me, the best celebration of all is the presence of our venerable Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin ... We had the most pleasant evening at his place recently. He read me a description of the taking of Kazan! What perfection! And the appearance of this History—what an epoch for Russians! Such a treasure for the language and for poetry, not to mention the activity that must be awakened in their minds. We could call this History a resurrection of the centuries of our people's past. (Pogodin 1866, 141)

Pushkin provides us with the greatest evidence of the effect that the initial publication of *History of the Russian State* had on Russian society:

This was in February 1818. The first eight volumes of *Russian History* were published in 1818. I read them in bed, greedily and attentively. The appearance of this book (as well it should have) caused a lot of noise and made a strong impression: 3,000 copies distributed in one month (which Karamzin himself didn't expect), a unique event in our land. Everyone, even worldly women, rushed to read the history of their fatherland, which they knew nothing about until then. It was a new discovery for them. It seemed as if Karamzin had discovered Ancient Rus', just as Columbus discovered America. For a while no one talked about anything else. (Pushkin 1990, 286)

For the radically inclined “young Jacobins,” as Pushkin called them, Karamzin was an apologist for autocracy. Pushkin rightly responded that the Tsar exempted the Historiographer from censorship, which “imposed the duty of all kinds of modesty and moderation on Karamzin” (Pushkin 1990, 286). This measure of personal restraint, with full responsibility for his remarks and the ultimate absence of any political conditions, was greatly appreciated by Gogol, who openly admired the inner freedom of Karamzin the writer, scholar, and thinker. Gogol wrote:

Karamzin was the first to show that our writers could be independent and do us honor as the state's most distinguished citizen. He was the first to declare solemnly that the writer could not be restricted by the censor, and if he was already filled with the purest desire for the good to such a degree that this desire took hold of his entire soul and became his body and his sustenance, then no censorship would be too strict for him, since he finds spaciousness everywhere. He said this and demonstrated it. Nobody other than

Karamzin spoke so boldly and nobly, hiding none of his opinions and thoughts, even though they were not entirely in accordance with the then-administration, and you can't help but hear that he alone had the right to do so. What an example to our brother writer! (Gogol 1984, 233)

Primarily as a product of Russian letters, *History of the Russian State* continued to foster a civic sensibility and inspire further study and creative rethinking of the significant events and stories from the fatherland's cultural tradition. Also significant is the fact that the Karamzin-initiated process of shaping a national historical consensus was reinforced by Russia's military and political success in winning victory over Napoleon. The patriotic feeling that swept society also prompted art and scholarship. The younger generation was particularly sensitive to the moral component of Russian history. For example, the young Nikolai Stankevich, who became an ideological and spiritual leader for a whole generation of Russian Europeans, penned his 1829 tragedy *Vasilii Shuiskii* in patriotic and romantic tones. The sixteen-year-old author used iambic pentameter to express his patriotic feelings and to condemn the "schemes and seditions" of the fatherland's enemies, which "corrupt the people through base envy and malice" (Stankevich 1890, 128).

At the pinnacle of this new artistic interpretation of Russian history in the spirit of moral and political philosophy were Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*, with its dedication to the author of *History of the Russian State*, and Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar*, from a composer who accomplished an aesthetic revolution in Russian art in terms of the traditions, artifacts, and vehicles of national culture. This type of patriotic work also includes "Borodino," which served as the beginning of Mikhail Lermontov's literary fame. Of course, that work was based on stories from those who participated in the battle, including the poet's own relatives. Printed in the pages of Pushkin's *Sovremennik*, young Lermontov's poem was clearly programmatic in nature, as if continuing the historical and philosophical line of Pushkin and Karamzin. Without the Karamzin-created *need* for knowing and studying Russian history, which expanded the format of public discourse for discussing it and fostered a taste for the national tradition, these masterpieces of Russian literature and music could not have appeared.

The patriotic upsurge produced by Russian victory in the Patriotic War briefly united all the estates of the Russian Empire: its ruling class, the military and aristocratic elite, and the people, urban and peasant alike. This moment of unity provided a colossal creative impulse to Russian society, prompting them to ask *historical questions about themselves*. Not by

chance did Alexander Herzen, author of *My Past and Thoughts*, perhaps the most significant literary and philosophical memoir of the nineteenth century, begin his biographical account by weaving it into a narrative of national memory about the war with the French. Emotionally experiencing his existential and providential participation in events that were epochal for Russia, the illegitimate son of the wealthy and noble Yakovlev family “smiled proudly, pleased that [he] took part in the war” as he listened for the hundredth time to his nanny’s tale about the family evacuating with the infant Sasha (Herzen 2003, 10).

However, this emerging spiritual unity and rallying together of people and power, aristocracy and taxpayer, did not lead to a dramatic shift. After experiencing the heavy “embrace” of Nicholas’s regime, Herzen left Russia in 1847. He belonged to a generation that was awakened by the spirit of great victory, but young Russian intellectuals, the heirs to this glory, felt that the historical consensus after December 1825 had to be created anew. After the Decembrist tragedy, the author of *My Past and Thoughts* believed that Russia’s political development had been interrupted, and “everything forward-looking and energetic was struck from life” (Herzen 2003, 369–70). A frightened nobility continued to curry favor, and the people continued to remain silent. Only the children, stuck between “the roof and the foundation,” raised their heads. For Herzen, it was “through these children that a stunned Russia began to recover” (Herzen 2003, 369–70).

For Herzen, as for most educated societies, history and literature remained a space of freedom. In the absence of political freedoms, literary gatherings became the soil for cultivating civic self-consciousness. According to Herzen:

Moscow was then in an era of animated intellectual interests, when literary questions, due to the impossibility of political ones, became the questions of life. The advent of a remarkable book [Gogol’s *Dead Souls*] constituted an event; critics and anti-critics read and commented with the kind of attention that the English or French might follow parliamentary debates. The suppression of all other spheres of human activity forced the educated sphere of society into the world of books, and there one could really hear, however muffled and half-spoken, the protest against Nicholas’ oppressions, a protest we heard more openly and loudly the very day after his death. (Herzen 2003, 473)

The limitation of public space in Russia to literary salons and a few intellectual coteries was evidence that the question about Russian history

posed by Karamzin was closely tied to the urgent issues of *Russian power* and *Russian freedom*. The varying ideological coteries that Russian youth formed as a way of self-determination was a response to the curtailment of political freedom in Russia. Nicholas's administration "handled" student troublemakers, including Herzen, by turning them into political prisoners and exiles. The paths of Russian youth in their understanding of Russia's past, present, and future began to diverge at this dramatic crossroads. Their split now took place along the line of Russia's historical self-determination, a civilizational choice of developmental path in the spirit of Rus'/Russia's Slavonic originality on the one the hand, and the universalism of Western European culture as the basis for Russian civilization on the other.

After the December 1825 insurrection and the subsequent, reactionary era of Nicholas's politics, a crack appeared in the patriotic Karamzinian consensus of history. Nevertheless, Karamzin's history served as a source of the development of sociophilosophical thought and political ideas throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, influencing the views of many Russian historians and philosophers. Among the Russian intellectuals of the mid-nineteenth century, the most important line of philosophy of history and culture inherited from Karamzin and Stankevich to manifest itself was the line of Russian Europeanism, which aimed at a universalizing synthesis of national cultural and European Enlightenment values. One distinguished representative of Russian Europeanism, the historian Timofey Granovsky, inherited this from his friend and teacher Stankevich. Viewing history as a grand book of peoples, in which capacity he undoubtedly continued Karamzin's main idea, Granovsky influenced an entire generation of thinkers who used their work to address the entrenched illnesses of Russian society, an opportunity afforded them by the reforms of the Tsar Emancipator. It would be fair to say that Granovsky, a professor at the Moscow Imperial University, became the epoch's ideological leader and communicator through his public historical lectures, as his texts and speeches impressed his contemporaries no less than Karamzin's literary and philosophical work had once impressed his. Granovsky expanded his predecessor's history into a general history, thereby emphasizing the common historical destiny of Russia and Europe. Granovsky was a pioneer of a new type of public communication, continuing Karamzin's work in shaping *public space* in Russia, bringing intellectual debates out of the confines of salons and circles of friends. In terms of educational and discursive practice, Granovsky remained true to his inner principles and his promise to give all his energies to the enlightenment of Russia as he transformed the university department into a public forum, which he and Ianuarius Neverov gave before Stankevich (Granovsky 2010, 653). In thus staging the moral issue of history as a grand

book of moral examples capable of responding to the present, he was faithful to Karamzin's philosophy of enlightenment.

In the logic of enlightenment as a "pledge to liberate the Russian people" (Granovsky 2010, 653), the role of historical science and the role of the historical scholar and teacher consist of bringing human and social consciousness to an understanding of historical laws. This goal was fully adopted and creatively embodied by Vasily O. Klyuchevsky, who fully felt the main problem of national history, the rift between the enlightened Russian mind and the reality of national and cultural life due to the radicalism of Peter's Europeanization and modernization. Seeking to understand the course of Russian dislocation, Klyuchevsky formulated a *religious and sociopolitical question of Russian history*. The scholar approached it from the interrelationship of the three most important cultural components: *appeals to the past* (cultural memory), *identity* (cultural, civilizational, political), and *cultural continuity* (formation and transmission of tradition), which allowed him to read and interpret national history as a holistic cultural tradition. In fact, we already find these issues in Karamzin's heroic epic, but Klyuchevsky was the first to stress the question of how social institutions form against the backdrop of competing group interests and individual influence in a way that clearly manifests in Russian history. Turning to the church and state history of Rus'/Russia, Klyuchevsky essentially attempts to write a *history of the birth of Russian civil society*, the history of a full-fledged European cultural and political nation that shares common Christian roots with Western Europe. In this, Klyuchevsky seems to fulfill the precepts of Karamzin, who wanted the historical tradition of the West to be supplemented by yet another national tradition that was in no way inferior to European cultural narratives. It was this historiosophical concept of Klyuchevsky's that served as the source of development for sociophilosophical thought and political ideas at the turn of the century, influencing the views of distinguished Russian philosophers, historians of culture and the church, and political figures from Miliukov and Struve to Fedotov, Florovskii, and Kartashev, a range that did not always represent a unified set of political convictions.

It is becoming clear why the Bolsheviks, who destroyed historical Russia and proclaimed the construction of a "new world" with a clean slate, did not so much subject historical knowledge to radical revision as castrate and emasculate it. Art was also involved in the formation of the new historical consciousness and was constructed in the ideological format of the Soviet state. That said, it is impossible to deny the significant scholarly achievements of the Soviet historical school and the preeminent creations of Soviet literature and art that addressed historical themes. Even

today, the brilliant union of Eisenstein and Prokofiev in *Alexander Nevsky* and *Ivan the Terrible*, Gerasimov's saga *Quiet Flows the Don*, Bondarchuk's epoch-making adaptation of *War and Peace*, and the psychological realism of films about the war, shot by a talented galaxy of Soviet filmmakers, remain powerful aesthetic means of fostering historical self-awareness.

Among the vivid examples of the new Russian renaissance of Karamzin's historical epic are the interactive exhibitions and forums "Orthodox Rus.' Romanovs," dedicated to the four hundredth anniversary of the Romanov dynasty (2013), and "My History. Rurikids" (2015) at the Manezh Central Exhibition Hall. The success of these exhibitions helped contribute to the idea of thematic, multimedia representations of Russian history and resulted in the opening of the "Russia is My History" park in the renovated Pavilion 57 at Vystavka Dostizheniy Narodnogo Khozyaystva (VDNKh) [The Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy] in early 2016.

As we call attention to the growing interest in Karamzin as a thinker and historian and welcome the large-scale, televised public reading of his main work on the Culture channel, we should nevertheless emphasize that the primary task when creating a relevant version of the national tradition remains the non-partisan study of Russia's spiritual, cultural, and political experience. Only then will a new version of history, as Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin's *History of the Russian State* once did, be able to assume the role of cultural tradition around which a public agreement could form, a national consensus about the past, present, and future of Russia. Only then would the work toward understanding national history, as initiated by Karamzin, allow the past to become a living part of the nation's cultural experience.

Note

1. The author refers to *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* [*Encyclopedia, or a Systematic Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts, and Crafts*] that was edited by Denis Diderot and published in France in 1751–1772. - Ed.

References

- Aksakov, I.S. *U Rossii odna-edinstvennaia stolitsa...* Moscow: Russkii mir, 2006.
 Eikhnenbaum, B.M. "Karamzin." In *O proze. Sb. Statei*, pp. 203–13. Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1969.

- Gogol, N.V. "Vybrannye mesta iz perepiski s druž'iami." In *Sobranie sochinenii: v 8 t.* T. 7. Moscow: "Pravda," 1984.
- Granovsky, T.N. *Publichnye chteniia. Stat'i. Pis'ma.* In T.N. Granovsky, ed. A. Levandovskii and D.A. Tsygankov. Moscow: Rossiiskaia politicheskaiia entsiklopediia (ROSSPEN), 2010.
- Herzen, A.I. *Byloe i dumy.* Moscow: Zakharov, 2003.
- Kara-Murza, A.A. "Karamzin, Shaden i Gellert. K istokam liberal'no-konservativnogo diskursa N.M. Karamzina." *Filologiiia: nauchnye issledovaniia*, vol. 21, no. 1 (2016), pp. 101–6.
- Karamzin, N.M. *Neizdannye sochineniia i perepiska, Ch.1.* St. Petersburg: Tip. N. Tiblena, 1862.
- Karamzin, N.M. *Pis'ma russkogo puteshestvennika*, ed. Yu. M. Lotman, N.A. Marchenko, and B.A. Uspenskii. Leningrad: Nauka, 1984.
- Karamzin, N.M. *Istoriia gosudarstva Rossiiskogo: v 6 knigakh. Kniga 1/t. I-II.* Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Knizhnyi sad," 1993.
- Lotman, Yu. M. *Karamzin.* St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo, 1997.
- Pogodin, M.P. *Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin po ego sochineniiam, pis'mam i otzyvam sovremennikov: V 2 ch.* St. Petersburg: Tipografiia A.I. Mamontova, 1866.
- Pushkin, A.S. *Pushkin ob iskusstve: V 2 t.* T. 1. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1990.
- Shmidt, S. "Istoriia gosudarstva Rossiiskogo." In *Krug chteniia*, pp. 10–2. Moscow: Politizdat, 1991.
- Stankevich, N.V. *Stikhotvoreniia. Tragediia. Proza.* Moscow: Tipografiia i slovolitnia O.O. Gerbeka, 1890.