Soviet Modernity: Stephen Kotkin and the Bolshevik Predicament

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Introduction: the paradoxically familiar face of Stephen Kotkin's socialist modernity

'Modernity' has long been a working category of historical analysis in Russian and Soviet studies. Like any established category, it bears a history of its own characterised by founding assumptions, conceptual possibilities and lasting interpretive habits. Stephen Kotkin's work has played a special role in framing the kind of scholarship this category has enabled and the kind of modernity it has assigned to twentieth-century Russia. Kotkin's 1995 *Magnetic Mountain* introduced the concept of 'socialist modernity'. His continued work with the concept in his 2001 *Kritika* article 'Modern Times' and his 2001 *Armageddon Averted* marked crucial moments in the history of the discipline and have positioned the author as a pioneering and dominant voice on the subject for nearly two decades.[1] Given the defining nature of Kotkin's work, a critical discussion of its impact on the way the discipline conceives of Soviet

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[1] Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995); Stephen Kotkin, 'Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Conjuncture', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 2, 1 (2001), 111–64; Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001; 2008).

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modernisation and presents it to non-Russian fields is perhaps overdue.[2] Here, I approach Kotkin's work on modernity as the field's collective property in need of a critical, deconstructive reading for its underlying assumptions, prescribed master narratives, and resultant paradoxes.[3]

The main paradox that I examine is how the pioneering comparative approach to the study of the Soviet Union that Kotkin called for – that is the approach that aimed at integrating the Soviet experience into transnational history and argued for the indispensability of this intellectual move for a better understanding of both Soviet and Western trajectories – ended up with a vision of Soviet modernity as the familiar radical other of the West: anti-capitalist and anti-individualist. This tenacious vision is traceable to the founding decades of American Soviet studies. At its core, I argue, is the unquestioned status of this stubborn and seemingly indivisible constellation of anti-capitalist and anti-individualist characteristics of Soviet socialism.[4] Starting with *Magnetic Mountain*, Kotkin has defined these co-dependent anti-aspirations of the Soviet non-market industrial experiment as 'fixed ideas' or 'basic tenets'.

These 'tenets', as scholars know too well, resonate throughout the field of modern Russian history. They are summarised in the Bolshevik infatuation with the making of the collectivist man, this ultimate goal behind the socialist agenda to build an economic alternative to capitalism and, in the process, liberate human nature from its individualistic degradation. The Soviet experiment in non-market industrial modernity, as a result, is held to be a priori antithetical to individualising discourses of modernity. Consequently, the very discourse on the individual as a non-subversive

[2] For a critical historiographical discussion of the 1990s-era scholarship on Russian modernity, see Michael David-Fox's seminal essay that analyses academic narratives of modernity by contrasting what he calls modernist and neo-traditionalist approaches to thinking about Russia in twentieth century, Michael David-Fox, 'Multiple Modernities vs. Neo-Traditionalism: On Recent Debates in Russian and Soviet History', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 54 (2006), 535–55.

[3] In the field of European history, analytical limitations and possibilities of the term 'modernity' have been subject to continuous scholarly scrutiny, see, for example, Geoff Eley, 'German History and the Contradictions of Modernity: The Bourgeoisie, the State, and the Mastery of Reform', in Geoff Eley, ed., *Society, Culture, and Politics in Germany, 1870–1930: New Approaches* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 67–104; also Eley's paper 'What was German Modernity?' presented at the German Studies Association, Washington, DC, Oct. 8–11, 2009, that offers an analysis of the 'multifarious usages of the language of "the modern" and "modernity" both in the work of historians today and in the contemporary discourse of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries'. For a recent discussion of the concept and its limitations, see *AHR* Roundtable on 'Historians and the Question of "Modernity" ', esp. Mark Roseman's contribution on the limited explanatory capacity of the category when applied to the historical case of Nazism Mark Roseman, 'National Socialism and the End of Modernity', *American Historical Review*, 116, 3 (2011), 688–701.

[4] See, e.g. Carl J. Friedrich's and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski's *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956) which relied on the neo-liberal (Friedrich Hayek's) identification of the autonomous and rational individual with conditions of free market competition as a core presupposition in their analysis of the Soviet Union, in Anna Krylova, 'The Tenacious Liberal Subject in Soviet Studies', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 1, 1 (2000), 121–4.

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cultural practice is de facto reserved to market, that is, capitalist experiences with the modern.[5]

In what follows I will demonstrate how, in applying the notion of fixed fundamentals as categories of analysis to Soviet realities regardless of the decade, Kotkin and scholars who draw on his work, equate the *longue durée* of the Soviet modern project with Bolshevism and its system of anti-individualist values. As a result, Kotkin in particular inscribes the complexity of Russia's development in the twentieth century into what I will call here a master narrative of stagnation. According to this narrative, the Bolshevik political-cultural formation arrives on the Russian revolutionary scene between the 1900s and the 1920s, is put into practice in the 1930s, and continues to define the economic and cultural parameters of the Soviet modernity project after the war, eventually causing its collapse. The most troubling aspect of this master narrative is not only Kotkin's assertion that the Soviet Union's post-war economy, culture and ideology were fatally set into pre-war Bolshevik patterns but that they stagnated in tandem. In striking contrast with the prevalent academic understanding of capitalist modernity as the antithesis of stability, Kotkin's socialist modernity ends up being consumed and eroded by inertia.[6] As a result, the only cultural language that Kotkin could possibly make available to his modern Soviet subject is, of course, 'Bolshevik'. Since the early 2000s Kotkin's characterisation of Soviet culture as a whole as the culture that 'speaks Bolshevik' has become an academic interpretive trope of enviable popularity.

My goal here is to begin to disassemble the paradigm of 'fixed ideas' that informed Kotkin's work and to question the stubborn disjunction within and outside academia between non-market industrial societies and individualising discourses of modernity. Thus, this essay questions: first, whether the 'fixed [anti]ideas' of Bolshevism constitute a comprehensive analytics applicable to the Soviet Union's cultural development in the long term; and, second, whether the Soviet cultural

[5] In order to rely on this image of the capitalist West as the harbour of modern individuality, Kotkin had to disregard, in the manner of cold war Soviet studies, a prolific, multifaceted, and ongoing intellectual critique within critical theory of capitalist modernity as the locus of the individual's demise. This critique is hardly reducible to Marxist thought. Critics of the fate of the individual under conditions of capitalist production, accumulation and mass society come from different intellectual milieus, such as romantic, liberal, socialist, Catholic, Fascist, post-Marxist, and postmodern, and could fill up volumes with just the names and titles of the works.

[6] One of the most canonical treatments of modernity that underlines permanent instability and tension between the impulse toward order and regulation, on the one hand, and inherent ambiguity and changeability, on the other hand, in the modern condition, is, for example, Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982). Field-shaping scholarship on modern Russia, on the other hand, has stressed ordering, regulatory, and surveillance impulses of Russian and Soviet path toward modernity, see, e.g. Peter Holquist's landmark article '"Information is the Alpha and Omega of Our Work": Bolshevik Surveillance in its Pan-European Perspective', *Journal of Modern History*, 69, 3 (1997), 415–50; David Hoffmann's *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914–1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011). A rare exception to this approach to modernity studies in the Russian context is Mark Steinberg's fundamental study of ambivalences and ambiguities of modern life, *Proletarian Imagination: Self, Modernity, and the Sacred in Russia, 1910–1925* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002).

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formation is adequately captured by academic explications which treat modern individualising discourses as outside formal socialist culture.[7]

To begin this critical conversation about Kotkin's script for Soviet socialist modernity I invite scholars to reflect whether the Bolshevik 'basic tenets', which undoubtedly informed the imagination of a new type of modern industrial society in the 1920s and the early 1930s, could indeed become the actual language of the industrial (even if non-market) society once it came into being. How was this anti-individualist cultural paradigm of Bolshevism to address the profound social transformation brought about by the 1930s industrialisation, namely, the appearance of an urban and professionally differentiated middle class defined by the alienating and self-centred character of intellectual labour and the expectations of urban privacy? How historically viable is the notion of 'fixed ideas' that implies that such profound structural changes in the lives of millions of Soviet people had no effect on Soviet official culture?

This essay consists of three parts. Part one offers a critical reading of Kotkin's work on Soviet socialist modernity as well as his defining impact on the constitution of the subfields of cultural history and subjectivity studies. Part two explores the methodological ramifications of Kotkin's study through the recent scholarship on post-war Soviet society where the limitations of his analytics of 'fixed ideas' and 'speaking Bolshevik' are particularly revealing. In part three, I complete my critical reading of Kotkin's work from the angle of the socio-demographic transformation of everyday Soviet routines of work, leisure and private life.

My agenda here is twofold. First, I want to disrupt the assumption of incompatibility between non-market industrial societies such as the Soviet Union's and individualising discourses of modernity that foreground personal and private aspects of the self and presuppose a differentiation between the self and its social milieu. Second, I propose an alternative account of Soviet socialist modernity by rethinking the dynamics of social and cultural change in twentieth-century Russia. I argue that, as early as the mid 1930s, Soviet industrial society began speaking more than one—still socialist—language of modernity right at the centre of its political and popular culture. I also contend that the Soviet cultural formation is larger than the Bolshevik tradition. In fact, as long as we continue to assume that Soviet modernity had only one formal language – Bolshevik – we choose to disregard in advance the

[7] One aspect of Kotkin's definition of Soviet modernity that is not investigated here is his unproblematised reliance on the term 'non-market industrial economy'. This notion has been a topic of much academic debate. For a field-defining rethinking of Soviet non-market economy as inevitably a mixed economy, i.e. as a peculiar Soviet combination of plan and market (both illegal and legal), see Elena Osokina, esp. her analysis of Soviet black economy and the phenomenon of state entrepreneurship in E. A. Osokina, *Za fasadom "stalinskogo izobiliia": raspredelenie i rynok v snabzhenii naseleniia v gody industrializatsii, 1927–1941* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1998), tr. Greta Bucher as, *Our Daily Bread: Socialist Distribution and the Art of Survival in Stalin's Russia, 1927–1941*, ed. Kate S. Tranchel, New Russian History Series (Armonk, NY: Sharpe, 2001); and *Zoloto dlia industrializatsii: TORGSIN* (*Gold for Industrialization: TORGSIN*), (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2009). Following Osokina, I use the term 'non-market' to mean that the development of Soviet market relations was hindered, deformed, and did not exist in the forms familiar from Western examples.

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rise of new socialist cultural forms.[8] I call these new cultural forms of Soviet socialism post-Bolshevik.[9]

What set post-Bolshevik cultural developments apart from their Bolshevik predecessor was not only the emerging language, which operated with formerly castigated and under-articulated categories of identity such as 'individuality' and the 'personal'. This new language enabled a public conversation that carried meanings of the 'individual' and its relationship to the 'social' away from the Bolshevik collectivist agenda which aimed at eliminating the very difference between the two. In accordance with the Bolshevik vision of alternative modernity, the new humanity was to 'merge' (that is, see no difference in) its personal and collective interests—in contrast, the post-Bolshevik Soviet discourse on the modern socialist individual posited a new task of learning how to 'connect' (that is, relate) individual predispositions and goals with the social good. I treat these new developments which provided Soviet citizens with a formal language to present individual and social dimensions of their lives as distinct entities, in need of relation but not identification, as the epistemic beginning of a new socialist discourse on the individual and his or her non-market industrial society.

The two notions – the individualising discourse and the discourse on the individual – that are rarely well articulated in academic literature are in need of an explication here. I do not use the two concepts interchangeably. In fact, the focus of this article is not a discourse on the individual, individuality or individualism per se which, in academic literature, tends to mean a cultural conversation that focuses on personal and private aspects of the self. Instead, I explore individualising discourses which, in my definition, encompass the individual and the social (be it community, collective, society, or common good) and articulate a relationship between the two. As a result, I privilege neither the individual nor the social but rather focus on the way a relationship between the individual and the social is conceived in different historical settings. I hold that an individualising discourse enables its users to draw, in

[8] On developments within Soviet legal culture, and mainstream artistic and literary conversations away from the Bolshevik and the Socialist Realist traditions, see Benjamin Nathan's, 'Soviet Rights-Talk in the Post-Stalin Era', in Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, ed., *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 166–90; and 'The Dictatorship of Reason: Aleksandr Vol'pin and the Idea of Rights under "Developed Socialism" ', *Slavic Review*, 66, 4 (2007), 630–63; Susan E. Reid's path-breaking essay, 'Toward a New (Socialist) Realism: The Re-engagement with Western Modernism in the Khrushchev Thaw', in Rosalind P. Blakesley and Susan E. Reid, eds, *Russian Art and the West* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), 217–39; Anatoly Pinsky, 'The Diaristic Form and Subjectivity under Khrushchev', *Slavic Review*, (forthcoming).

[9] The kinds of new cultural forms I explore here go beyond neo-traditionalist interpretations which treat the 1930s discontinuities in the Bolshevik discourse on class as a return to pre-Bolshevik systems of signification (either 'nationalist' or 'bourgeois'), implying that no new socialist cultural forms came to life as a result of the accelerating transformations of Soviet society. For an elaboration of this critique, see my discussion in section three of this essay. See also Michael David-Fox's critical discussion of the neo-traditionalist school of thought, in particular, the work by Sheila Fitzpatrick, Matthew Lenoe and Terry Martin, in David-Fox, 'Multiple Modernities', 544–8; also see David Hoffmann's critique of the 'great retreat' paradigm in his 'Was there a "Great Retreat" from Soviet Socialism? Stalinist Culture Reconsidered', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 5, 4 (2004), 651–74.

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a constructive manner, on notions of differentiation and distinction between the self and society.[10]

Given these parameters of my analysis, I intentionally avoid equating modern individualising discourses exclusively with the liberal Western tradition. I hold instead that debate about the individual and his or her relationship with society is an ongoing historical conversation and the liberal tradition (far from being a uniform tradition itself) provides only one commentary on the problem, however privileged.

In conclusion, I ponder whether, having disrupted Kotkin's vision of Soviet modernity as a totality of synchronised economic, cultural, ideological stagnation we are positioned to pose a question about Soviet modernity as no longer reducible to one historical form and to reconsider its status as a radical alternative to post-1945 European experience. To answer these questions one needs to approach the post-Bolshevik moment in modern Russian history on its own terms. The amount of work in store for scholars working on the Soviet Union from the mid 1930s onwards, I contend, is comparable with the decades of work that have been devoted to the Bolshevik formation. The task before historians today is nothing less than mapping out a new set of analytical categories, discursive logics, and historical problematics—an undiscovered country of post-Bolshevik Soviet socialist modernity.

New directions and 'fixed ideas' of Kotkin's Soviet modernity

The anti-capitalist and anti-individualist socialist concept of Soviet modernity that Kotkin developed in *Magnetic Mountain* was complex and multi-layered. It was intricately contextualised across Russia's century-long historical predicaments and resolutely tied to transnational destinies of the capitalist world. For Kotkin, 'Russia's obsession with socialism' was hardly an accident of history. It was rather a historically over-determined choice that promised a resolution to a complex amalgam of long-standing problems that revolved around Russia's social and economic backwardness. It also addressed a cherished national fantasy about Russia's historical and national distinctiveness and moral superiority. The post-1917 pursuit of a socialist future, Kotkin observed, allowed Russia simultaneously to ally with the Western tradition and to differentiate from it. The socialist choice firmly situated Russia aboard the Enlightenment project with its promise of a scientifically planned, developed and ordered society. At the same time, it allowed Russian intellectuals to indulge themselves in imagining a distinctively Russian modernity without the evils of capitalism. In Kotkin's words, socialism in its Bolshevised version enabled

[10] Recently, historians of Nazi Germany have begun to recover discourses on individuality and interest in personality in the Nazi era. For an innovative analysis of culture of individualism in Nazi Germany and effective critique of prevalent interpretive paradigms applied to modern German history, see Moritz Föllmer, 'Was Nazism Collectivistic? Redefining the Individual in Berlin, 1930–1945', *The Journal of Modern History*, 82, 1 (2010), 61–100; also Moritz Föllmer, *Individuality and Modernity in Berlin: Self and Society from Weimar to the Wall* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); also Per Leo, *Der Wille zum Wesen* (Berlin: Matthes und Seitz, 2013).

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a 'historically conditioned merger of long-held geopolitical objectives and potent social concerns' and thus made perfect sense in the Russian historical context.[11]

Conceptualised this way, Kotkin's study of Soviet socialism was predicated on serious rethinking of some resilient academic presuppositions, most immediately about Soviet Russia's relationship with the West. The proposition that Soviet socialism could be thought of as a modern 'antiworld of capitalism' exploded the singularity of the conventional understanding of modernity. Four years later, in 'Modern Times', Kotkin reformulated this intervention with a concept of 'multiple modernities'. 'Modernity' became a plural and inherently comparative category, the discipline's ticket into transnational and global history.[12]

No less momentous for the field was Kotkin's undertaking to vindicate the 'cultural dimension' of Soviet modernity, that 'powerful cluster' of Marxist-Bolshevik symbols, concepts, attitudes, languages, even forms of speech that irrupted into political culture in the 1920s and 1930s. Kotkin's approach differed from the preceding schools that had studied Marxist-Bolshevik ideology as a cultural layer largely estranged from the Soviet people. In *Magnetic Mountain*, the 'cultural dimension' constitutes a 'crucial' venue of exploration when the analysis moves from macro-levels of global and geopolitical dynamics to micro-worlds of lived socialism at the construction site of Magnitogorsk.[13] Having presented his Soviet subjects as having historically conditioned stakes in the socialist project, Kotkin made it difficult for himself and the field to dismiss Soviet people's participation in the socialist project as the coercion of personally and emotionally uninvolved individuals. The vindication of the cultural dimension of this socialist project was thus tantamount to putting yet another urgent item on the agenda of the field: a need to conceptualise the relationship between the Bolshevik modernity and the individual. Thus, the beginning of cultural history and subjectivity studies was summoned by the refusal to view the cultural realm as an alienated façade of representations.

The de facto 'cultural turn' that *Magnetic Mountain* called for without using these exact words did not originate with the book, of course. It belonged to the much larger general turn within the historical profession of the 1980s and 1990s toward cultural theory and critical reconceptualisations of the viable subject matters of historical analysis.[14] In the mid 1990s, *Magnetic Mountain* was among the first monographs in which the dominant intellectual and methodological trends of the period were

[11] Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 12, 23, 364.

[12] Kotkin, 'Modern Times', 156–7. For an analysis of the history of the concept of 'multiple modernities' in the social sciences and history see David-Fox, 'Multiple Modernities', 537–8.

[13] Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 14, 152.

[14] For the recent critical conversation about conceptual currency of the 'turn talk' in the field of history and methodological innovation, under the rubric of the cultural and linguistic turns, see an *AHR* Forum titled 'Historiographic "Turns" in Critical Perspective', esp. the contribution by James W. Cook, in *American Historical Review*, 117, 3 (2012); see also Gabrielle Spiegel's Presidential Address, 'The Task of the Historian', *American Historical Review*, 114, 1 (2009), 1–15; Ronald Grigour Suny, 'Back and Beyond: Revising the Cultural Turn?', *American Historical Review*, 107, 5 (2002), 1476–88; Carla Hesse, 'The New Empiricism', *Cultural and Social History*, 1, 2 (2004), 201–7; Joan Wallach Scott, 'Against Eclecticism', *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 16, 3 (2006), 114–37.

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applied to the study of Stalinism. For this reason the book ended up redefining much more than the study of Stalinism.

New analytics were especially badly needed to study mutually constitutive interactions between individuals and the socialist project in what Kotkin referred to as micro-worlds of lived socialism. Drawing on Foucault and other critical and cultural theorists, Kotkin introduced into the field of modern Russian history a new analytical language of socialist 'habitat', 'identification games', and 'subject formation'. This allowed him to study Bolshevism as an 'ongoing experience' of everyday speech, behaviour, dress, thought – the activities that exemplified the practice of 'speaking Bolshevik'. The very 'problem of subjectivity', its formation and expression, under socialism was redefined as a 'productive process' – at once demanding, empowering and dangerous – which included '[a study of] not only what was repressed or prohibited but what was made possible and produced'.[15] As a result, Kotkin helped to reorient a whole cohort of scholars toward a culturally and theoretically informed study of Soviet modernity and laid the conceptual ground work for the subjectivity studies.

Given such an ambitious intellectual agenda, one needs to pay special attention to the layer of Kotkin's analysis that the author himself characterises as 'fixed' or 'basic' and which, by definition, proves to be not open for questioning in his otherwise critical conversation with the field. It is the notion of 'fixed ideas of the Soviet regime's official ideology' and the role it plays in Kotkin's discussion of socialist modernity, to which I now turn.[16] A critical examination of this 'fixed' layer of supposedly underlying fundamental principles of Bolshevik thought and political culture is crucial for several reasons. The fundamentals of Kotkin's analysis form the field's conceptual property the roots of which lie in the pre-1990s scholarship. They guide not only Kotkin's but also our own scholarly encounters with Soviet materials, influencing the questions we ask and the interpretations we produce. Shared fundamentals must not remain unexamined, however much they may appear simply given.

What follows is thus not another contribution to the prolonged debate on Soviet subjectivity which began in reaction to the publication of *Magnetic Mountain* and in which the author of this article herself participated.[17] Here I propose to take a step back to look at the larger picture. Having debated Kotkin's stand on the Soviet subject since the mid 1990s, cultural historians, I argue, together with the rest of the discipline, forgot to examine the synthesis of underlying fundamental principles of Bolshevik thought that Kotkin assigned to his concept of alternative socialist modernity. It is this basic cultural layer that served Kotkin as the basis for thinking about the Soviet subject and that, as I now understand it, should have been examined first.

[15] Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 22, 149–51, 215, 220–1, 223, 236. A similar intellectual move toward a study of totalitarian subjectivity as a productive process was also made in scholarship on Nazi Germany, see Föllmer, *Individuality and Modernity*, 63–4.

[16] Ibid. 152.

[17] See Krylova, 'The Tenacious Liberal Subject'.

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In striking contrast with the call for conceptual and theoretical innovation which defined *Magnetic Mountain*'s modus operandi, Kotkin presents his discussion of tenets of Soviet socialism as neither original nor controversial. Rather, it is a non-contentious summing-up of core ideas that the author borrows from the decades of focused scholarly work on Marxist-Bolshevik ideology. We might guess that *Magnetic Mountain* registers for us the state of the general consensus about the fundamentals of Soviet ideology because core ideas of socialism in this otherwise meticulously footnoted manuscript are explicated without extensive footnoting.

The author whose work on Bolshevik ideology Kotkin does reference is Leszek Kolakowski whose 1978 monumental three-volume *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Rise, Growth, and Dissolution* was a crowning conclusion to the three decades of the totalitarian school's effort to grasp the nature of Soviet Communism and German Nazism.[18] Kolakowski's volumes along with his preceding work thus belonged to an outstanding scholarly community that included the philosopher Hannah Arendt, the intellectual historian Alfred G. Meyer, the social scientist Raymond A. Bauer, the writer Arthur Koestler, the political theorist Carl J. Friedrich, the political scientist Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, to name just a few. For Kolakowski and the totalitarian school in general, the concept of the 'communist idea', that is ideology as a logical conceptual system with 'basic values' and 'permanent components' (to use Kolakowski's terminology), played the principal role in explaining the phenomenon of twentieth-century totalitarian regimes and the psychological power they exerted over their populations. The Soviet regime, for example, was understood as a resolute ideology carrier, consumed by its own ideological content while imposing it on the Soviet society. Continuously undergoing multiple revisions in the course of its history, the Marxian-Bolshevik-Soviet ideological project never gave up its fundamental concepts.

The making of this intellectual credo which used ideology as its privileged category of analysis can be traced through several foundational works. Hannah Arendt's 1951 *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was, of course, one of the most influential books of the post-war period. Explaining the phenomenon of totalitarianism, Arendt relied on the concept of 'inherent logicality' of totalitarian doctrines. The reason why totalitarian regimes managed to exercise such an overwhelming power over individuals' minds and to impose ideology into social reality, she argued, lay in logical and consistent structures of their belief systems. Once such an ideological system happened to overtake the mind of an individual, it ruled it by means of a 'self-coercive force of logical deduction'. What preoccupied Arendt however was less the permanency of specific Bolshevik ideas than the role of ideas in an environment of total terror.[19]

To identify an essential core of Marxist ideas, and then trace their multiform-yet-inevitable unfolding into Stalinism, was a common strategy. One monumental work

[18] Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Rise, Growth, and Dissolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

[19] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism, Part III: Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1951; citations from 1968 edn), 170–2.

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of the 1950s, Alfred Meyer's *Marxism: The Unity of Theory and Practice*, published in 1954, supplied the 'communist idea' with such a genealogy. Meyer, too, attributed the lasting capacity of Marxism and Bolshevism to captivate people's minds to their 'over-all synthesis' and to the coherence of its thought structure. He traced this feature back to Marx and then back to Lenin across Marxist controversies and disagreements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The story that Meyer retrieved from his sources was one of repeated disintegrations and re-integrations of the Marxist and Bolshevik tradition. What was immutable, Meyer's work demonstrated, was the meaning of core Marxist notions and the persistent striving among Marxists towards setting them into logical conceptual systems.[20] Another classic, *The New Man in Soviet Psychology* by Raymond Bauer, published in 1952, extended the applicability of Bolshevik basic 'postulates' into the post-war period. In his detailed analysis of 'shifting' debates that took place around definitions of human nature and society in official ideology, science, philosophy and literature, Bauer, like Meyer, demonstrated that the essential content of Marxism as well as its imperative to produce a logical whole out of its ideas were preserved at every new shift.[21]

More than two decades later—during which an avalanche of publications appeared devoted to Soviet ideology and the Soviet state's unwavering dependence on it – Kolakowski offered one of the most extended analyses of 'basic values of Marxian socialism' which underlay 'general tendencies of Bolshevism'.[22] His intricate articulation of the Bolshevik project stressed the intention to model a new anti-individualist human nature after the 'historically privileged proletarian consciousness' under the conditions of a non-market and collectivist society that strove to 'nationalise' the individual itself (that is to erase the difference between the individual, the collective and the state). Like scholars before him, he treated central aspects of communist ideology as immutable and traceable to (though not identical with) Marx's thought.[23]

[20] Alfred G. Meyer, *Marxism: The Unity of Theory and Practice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954; citations from 1970 edn), 144, 137–9.

[21] Raymond A. Bauer, *The New Man in Soviet Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952), in Robert V. Daniels, ed., *The Stalin Revolution: Foundations of the Totalitarian Era* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1997), 39–45.

[22] The quotes come from 1977 'Marxist Roots of Stalinism' in which Kolakowski offers a dense summary of the totalitarian school's position. Leszek Kolakowki, 'Marxist Roots of Stalinism', in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation* (New York: Norton, 1977), 284, 299. For core works preceding Kolakowski's 'Marxist Roots of Stalinist' and *Main Currents of Marxism* (1978), see Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezniski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956); Alexander Erlich, *The Soviet Industrialization Debate, 1924–1928* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960); Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1962; Westport: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1976); Robert Daniels, *The Nature of Communism* (New York: Random House, 1962); Robert Hatch McNeal, *The Bolshevik Tradition: Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963); Bertram D. Wolfe, *An Ideology in Power: Reflections on the Russian Revolution* (New York: Stein and Day, 1969); Leszek Kolakowski, *Marxism and Beyond: On Historical Understanding and Personal Responsibility* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1969).

[23] Kolakowski, 'Marxist Roots of Stalinism', 285, 291, 293–4.

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In the late 1970s, the author considered his work as part of the totalitarian school's tradition. Despite all the criticisms that had by that time been directed at the totalitarian school, according to Kolakowski, the conceptual foundations it had provided for thinking about the ideological premises of the Soviet project had not been surpassed. [24]Kolakowski was right in the sense that the school's idea of Bolshevism's 'permanent components' proved to be one of the most influential contributions to the field of modern Russian history. Numerous challengers did criticise the totalitarian approach for either overemphasising the significance of ideology at the expense of society or reducing its role in ordinary people's lives to an intrusive and yet estranged force. Despite their different generations and different methodological traditions, critics did not question the totalitarian account of the 'communist idea's' underlying fundamentals.[25]

In Kotkin we find a cluster of characteristics of Bolshevik thought, familiar from Kolakowski and authors before him, functioning as the established knowledge of the field of modern Russian history. Why should one footnote the established? Soviet anti-capitalist modernity – the world without markets and private property – promised 'transcendence of selfish individualism' in the everyday life of Soviet citizens, did it not? The constitution of the new unselfish socialist person was guided by an imperative to re-centre personal identities around labour and the much admired working-class collectivist world-view, not so? This alternative way of being which Kotkin so concisely summarises in his conclusion as 'a rejection of individualism and a commitment to collectivism' rested on 'Marxist class analysis' which divided the world into antagonistic classes and treated the proletariat as the 'universal class' – the living prototype of new humanity. To complete Kotkin's sketch of the essential features of socialism, one needs to add that the mode of operation of the socialist system under construction in Magnitagorsk is defined as 'mobilisational' and 'heroic' and the temporal perception of the Soviet society as 'revolutionary' and future-oriented.[26] As such, the Soviet doctrine of modernity is derived from and identified with the Bolshevised version of Marxism which, in the 1930s, materialises into

[24] Kolakowski, 'Marxist Roots of Stalinism', 288.

[25] The revisionist challenge to the totalitarian school, for example, first took place in political science in the late 1960s. It drew on an alternative stream in the 1950s scholarship that remained on the margins of Soviet studies for two decades. Its pioneers – a cohort of outstanding social scientists such as Barrington Moore, Merle Fainsod and Adam Ulam – started their explorations of the Stalinist phenomenon with a premise that the power of the communist idea needs to be explained not through its innate qualities, but through social forces and historical circumstances peculiar to Russia. Jerry Hough's 1969 *The Soviet Prefects*, for example, made a strong case for Barrington Moore's model that posited an eventual retreat of communist ideology all together in reaction to new social circumstances of industrialised society. See, Jerry F. Hough, *The Soviet Prefects: The Local Party Organs in Industrial Decision-Making* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1969); Adam B. Ulam, 'The Historical Role of Marxism and the Soviet System', *World Politics*, 8, 1 (1955); Barrington Moore, *Terror and Progress USSR: Some Sources of Change and Stability in the Soviet Dictatorship* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954); Merle Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953). Most recently, Sheila Fitzpatrick and Michael Geyer with a group of scholars have offered a critical comparative exploration of the totalitarian school's legacies, Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick, eds, *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[26] Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 18, 150–1, 158, 202, 215, 355.

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'Stalinist civilization'. 'Speaking Bolshevik' in *Magnetic Mountain* is much more than a helpful metaphor. It functions as an analytical trope capturing the essence of the Bolshevik project – the process of 'Bolshevization' of individuals' lives.[27]

Kotkin addresses directly the question of how the political cultural credo of socialism that he works out for the 1930s happens to constitute a permanent package for the rest of the Soviet period. The retention and adoptability of core principles was, according to Kotkin, a result of purposeful and tireless 'management' of official ideology and culture. In Kotkin's scenario, socialist ideology is continuously adaptable and at the same time recyclable. 'The Soviet regime's official ideology', states Kotkin, 'adaptable as it was, did in fact contain certain fixed ideas that shaped both the course of state action and popular interpretations of state action.'[28]

The Bolshevik socialist ideology predicated on certain fundamental tenets ended up playing a central and lasting explanatory role in Kotkin's scholarship; and yet he never made that ideology the subject of critical examination in and of itself. In *Magnetic Mountain* Kotkin was already treating his view of Bolshevik-speaking, anti-individualist and anti-capitalist modernity as a comprehensive script of relevance for the Soviet twentieth century as a whole. Having made a 'quick leap' into modernity under Stalin, Kotkin argued, the Soviet Union acquired economic and cultural principles that proved eventually to be frozen in their particular 1930s form.[29] In 'Modern Times' and *Armageddon Averted*, this vision of a stagnating Soviet modernity stuck in the 1930s, struggling to reform itself, failing to do so, and finally collapsing, was sharply contrasted with the dynamic twentieth century of the West. Unlike the Soviet Union that, after the Second World War fell back on its pre-war economic and cultural patterns, the West went through at least two cycles of economic, political, and cultural remaking: from Depression-era capitalism to welfare capitalism, and from the welfare stage of capitalism to post-Fordist capitalism.[30] The notions of the 'basic tenets of the system' and 'the [stable] official socialist ideology' of Soviet socialism, established in *Magnetic Mountain*, were indispensable for making this argument.[31]

'Modern Times' also added a new term to describe the Soviet Union's stagnating modernity which was always implicit – the 'anti-liberal'. Devoted to a study of the 'interwar conjuncture', the article situated the Soviet Union with its Bolshevik-speaking modernity within the transnational context of mass production, mass culture, mass consumption and aspirations for a social welfare mode of governance. The Soviet Union and the West, argued Kotkin, travelled essentially the same path of development while retaining an 'enormous' liberal versus anti-liberal 'divide'.[32] What this argument means is that a rapid expansion of mass entertainment, consumption and education in the Soviet Union did not fundamentally change the basic values of Soviet Bolshevism. Or in other words, no matter what forms Soviet modernity

[27] Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, see Ch. 5 'Speaking Bolshevik', 198–237.
[28] Ibid. 151–2, 356.
[29] Ibid. 360.
[30] Ibid. 115, 119; also see Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*, xii, 23–5.
[31] Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*, 5, 47, 69.
[32] Kotkin, 'Modern Times', 113–14.

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replicated or appropriated from the West, its core content remained the same. Thus, for example, socialist mass culture did not shy away from 'light entertainment' but continued to be framed by mobilisational, heroic and revolutionary values, which Bolshevik content was best illustrated by the familiar imperative of the collective's supremacy.[33]

An unsettling conclusion one might derive from Kotkin's treatment of Soviet modernity is that, at the epistemic level, the Soviet Union did not have a post-war period as a historically distinct cultural formation. The perpetuation of Bolshevik-speaking modernity in the Soviet Union is perhaps best captured in Kotkin's interchangeable use of the notions 'Soviet', 'Bolshevik', 'Marxist' either in relation to the 1930s or the 1970s.[34] This stylistic convention embodies the presumption of a fundamentally static system of Soviet socialist values.

Several paradoxes accompanied the turn to cultural and transnational history in Kotkin's conceptualisation of the Soviet Union's alternative journey to modernity. Having vindicated the cultural dimension of the socialist project, Kotkin, I suggest, simultaneously contributed to fixing its terms and the terms of the new cultural history of the Soviet Union. In the field of Soviet history, the methodological innovation, the opening up of new venues of research, and the influx of new categories of analysis, stopped short of a critical examination of core characteristics of Bolshevik-identified Soviet modernity and their applicability across the century. Using a single cultural key to the whole Soviet history, Kotkin merged the pre-war period into the post-war period. He also ended up reproducing a new version of the old antithesis of 'Bolshevism' and 'the West'. This time, the binary was located inside (rather than outside) the master category of the modern under the rubric of an alternative modernity.

Methodological ramifications

Over the last decade and a half, Kotkin's interpretation of Soviet alternative modernity has had a deep impact on the field of modern Russian history in the US and British academies. It has contributed to the solidification of a general academic presumption that the nearly century-long Soviet experiment, no matter how dynamic, ambiguous, contradictory and changing, operated nevertheless with static underlying basic principles. 'Fixed ideas' or 'cherished ideals' or 'fundamental tenets' have become stable tropes and casual invocations in scholarly work on modern Russia. The perpetuation of the disciplinary belief in basic principles of Soviet modernity thus has a history of its own. The constitution of the discipline's subfield of post-war studies and its reliance on Kotkin's work and several other seminal texts in cultural history is a case in point. My intention here is not to offer a comprehensive review of the growing scholarship on the post-war Soviet Union. Rather, the goal is to pose

[33] Kotkin, 'Modern Times', 124, 132–3, 139; see also, Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*, 47.

[34] For Kotkin's commentary on the official usage of such terms of Soviet ideology as 'Soviet', 'socialist', 'Bolshevism' as synonyms, see Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 225.

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methodological questions that have not been raised so far about scholarly approaches to the study of Soviet society after the Second World War. [35]

For example, the two field-shaping cultural studies of Bolshevik-Soviet modernity that followed the publication of *Magnetic Mountain* – Igal Halfin's *From Darkness to Light: Class, Consciousness, and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia* (1999) and Oleg Kharkhordin's *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (1999) did not treat the terms, that is the content, of the Bolshevik creed and subsequent Soviet ideology as a problematic question of analysis.[36] Instead, what the two contributions had in common with Kotkin's methodological approach was their agenda to study Bolshevik ideology as *practice*. Or in other words, the known fundamentals of Bolshevik modernity were not questioned but applied. The parallel exploration of fundamental affinities between Bolshevik politics and western and eastern religious and philosophical traditions that the two books undertook as well also did not offer a reinterpretation of the familiar terms of the Bolshevik-Soviet cultural project.[37]

Kharkhordin's approach to Bolshevism, in particular, featured the proletarian collectivist imperative as the governing constant of the Soviet non-capitalist modernising mission from the Russian Revolution to Gorbachev's perestroika. Analysing the processes through which the Bolshevik agenda became the Soviet people's spoken and lived reality, he offered a close reading of 'practices of collective formation and collective self-examination'. His interpretation invariably equated the official realm of Soviet cultural production with the rule of the collectivist ideal. Especially during the post-war years, argued Kharkhordin, the 'collectivization-of-life campaign' aimed at 'spotting and forcing into a *kollectiv* those rare individuals who still somehow existed on their own in the interstices of the system'. Those individualising practices that Kharkhordin's study did discover were explained as unintentional and ironic by-products of the collectivist agenda. In *The Collective and the Individual*, they existed in 'informal', that is not Soviet, spaces and subcultures of the Soviet society.[38]

The controversial birth of the subfield of subjectivity studies in the late 1990s and early 2000s also happened to skip a critical step of pointed examination of the core terms of the Bolshevik Marxist creed and its applicability to the Soviet period as a whole. Its pioneers did not question Kotkin's *longue durée* narrativisation of

[35] For a historiographical review of scholarship on the post-war Soviet Union, see Mariam Dobson, 'The Post-Stalin Era: De-Stalinization, Daily Life, and Dissent', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 12, 4 (2011), 905–24.

[36] Igal Halfin, *From Darkness to Light: Class, Consciousness, and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999); Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia. A Study of Practices* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).

[37] Halfin, for example, invited his readers to 'move Marxism from the status of subject to the status of object of historical analysis'. Treating the Bolshevik world-view as a discursive practice that, among many things, aimed at proletarianisation of Soviet state and identity politics, he investigated 'how historical figures interpreted their historical present and located themselves along the temporal continuum ranging from capitalism to communism'. After focusing on the decade of the 1920s in *From Darkness to Light*, he later extended his analysis into the 1930s and beyond: Halfin, *From Darkness into Light*, 2.

[38] Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual*, 279–80, 320, 337–9; see also 294–8.

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Soviet history or his implicit presumptions. As a result, pioneers of the subfield were preoccupied not so much with questioning the accepted anti-individualist, that is 'illiberal', to use Jochen Hellbeck's term, core of the Soviet Bolshevik agenda but with exploring how deeply the Bolshevik world-view was internalised by Soviet subjects. Hellbeck's seminal contribution was devoted to a thorough analysis of existent continuities between official languages of Soviet illiberal modernity and intimate conversations and self-interrogations that Soviet people conducted on the pages of their diaries. The modern subject that Hellbeck retrieved from 1930s diaries displays a great deal of apprehension about traces of what might be construed as individualist inclinations and spends much time policing himself or herself against them.[39]

Perhaps the most problematic appearance of Kotkin's Bolshevik-identified script of Soviet modernity has occurred in the scholarship on post-war Soviet society. During the last fifteen years, this subfield has undergone an exciting boom that manifested itself in a steady stream of publications, conferences and talks—particularly edited volumes bringing together scholars of different generations united by the goal of rethinking the post-war period.[40] The most striking feature of this new scholarly effort is not even the fact that the scholarly narratives and analytical categories developed for the period from 1900 to the 1930s were applied to the post-war period but that this transfer took place without a critical discussion. How much explanatory currency should the academic language developed to analyse the Bolshevik dream about Russian modernity be given in research on a society that actually became modern? This question has not been posed.

Instead, scholars of the post-war Soviet Union took it for granted that there existed a fundamental affinity between the Bolshevik vision of alternative 'modern times' and what they referred to as post-war 'key Soviet values', 'official values', 'Soviet ideology', 'official Soviet normative code', and 'normative statements'.[41] The presumption of stable 'key values' of Soviet modernity has become the subfield's shared starting point. As a result, 'key values' /or 'Soviet ideology' /or 'Bolshevik ideology' are routinely used interchangeably and do not always enjoy an explicit articulation of the meanings they contain. Indeed it has become an accepted practice in academic literature on the Soviet post-war period to provide, where necessary,

[39] Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on my Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[40] See Lewis Siegelbaum, ed., *Borders of Socialism: Private Spheres of Soviet Russia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Polly Jones, ed., *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era* (London: Routledge, 2006); Melanie Ilic and Jeremy Smith, eds, *Soviet State and Society Under Nikita Khrushchev* (London: Routledge, 2009); Melanie Ilic and Jeremy Smith, eds, *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: Policy and Government in the Soviet Union, 1953–1964* (London: Routledge, 2011); Susan E. Reid and David Crowley, eds, *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 2000).

[41] See, e.g. Dobson, 'The Post-Stalin Era', 918; Lewis Siegelbaum, 'Introduction: Mapping Private Spheres in the Soviet Content', in *Borders of Socialism*, 5; Juliane Fürst, 'Friends in Private, Friends in Public: The Phenomenon of the *Kompaniia* Among Soviet Youth in the 1950s and 1960s', in Siegelbaum, *Borders of Socialism*, 232.

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a formulaic summing-up of the 'key values' of Soviet socialism and then to direct interested readers to texts by Kotkin, Kharkhordin, and Hellbeck.

In the mid 2000s, a new book was added to this list of citable works – Alexei Yurchak's 2005 *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*. Undertaking an innovative anthropological study of the last Soviet generation, the book heavily relied on what the author called an 'authoritarian discourse' to situate his historical subjects in the last three decades of Soviet socialism. Reminiscent of Kotkin's work but not influenced by it, Yurchak presented his readers with a historical narrative about how a multivalent, dynamic, and contradictory revolutionary language(s) of the 1910s–1920s got reduced to a highly 'formulaic,' 'standardized', 'predictable,' and 'fixed' language of Marxism–Leninism in the 1960s–1980s. What was left of the revolutionary discourse was a fixed repertoire of 'predictable ideas' traceable to original Bolshevik articulations which the author briefly (and without references) discussed in the introductory chapter. He invoked familiar 'fundamentals' of the Bolshevik socialist creed 'such as equality, community, selflessness, altruism, friendship, ethical relations, safety, education, work, creativity, and concern for the future'. A few pages later, the author pointed to the Bolshevik ideal of the New Man to clarify tenacious meanings of aspired socialist subjectivity in the Soviet Union. In accordance with this ideal, the Soviet citizen, Yurchak sooner reminded than informed his readers, was 'called upon to submit completely to party leadership', to 'cultivate a collectivist ethic', to 'repress individualism' as well as to 'become an enlightened and independent-minded' member of socialist society. A presence of individualising currents or undercurrents within Soviet mainstream culture that would allow a person to reflect on his/her individuality and his/her relationship with socialist society was consistently missing from Yurchak's concise definitions. In *Everything Was Forever*, the 'authoritarian discourse' is found in formal celebratory speeches, party and komsomol official documents, routine bureaucratic reporting, public rituals, posters, and slogans. Attached to core Bolshevik fundamentals and occupying a rather narrow place within the giant of Soviet post-war cultural production, the 'authoritarian discourse' nevertheless served the author as the privileged background through which he analysed the making of the last Soviet generation.[42]

As a result, the reader of *Everything Was Forever* does find out how the last Soviet generation positioned itself in relation to the 'fixed and normalized discursive system' of Marxism–Leninism. What is left unexplored is the question of how Yurchak's historical subjects related to those vast terrains of post-war Soviet culture that did not make it into the book. The varied worlds of Soviet journalism, literature, film, popularised social sciences did not speak the language of the 'authoritative discourse' while they did inform the way Soviet citizens got to know themselves and their socialist contemporaneity.

Not by accident then, the subfield of post-war Soviet history shares its analytical language with scholarship on the preceding period and with scholars who invoke

[42] Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 8, 11, 13–14, see also Ch. 2.

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characteristics of Bolshevik modernity. These characteristics include (1) the ambition to 'merge' individual and collective interests and/or to 'transcend' the private–public distinction and/or to 'subordinate' the former to the letter; (2) perpetual anxiety over private and personal aspects of individuals' lives and continuous failure to treat the realm of privacy as private; (3) the general goal of raising a 'community-minded and mobilised', 'revolutionary' and 'heroic' population, even though scholars acknowledge that this goal increasingly lost momentum after the war.[43]

Since it was assumed that what the Soviet ideological-cultural project had in store for the Soviet population did not change at the fundamental level after the war, the emergent subfield concentrated its research efforts on Soviet society and its interactions with that seemingly known ideological project. One aspect of this research was devoted to the study of Soviet everyday life which produced many novel research agendas such as citizens' interactions with Soviet local and central authorities, popular reactions to de-Stalinisation reforms, readers' response to Thaw publications, manifestations of rudimentary civil society, the rise of professional subcultures, socialist consumption, individual single-family housing. Explicating the conceptual grounding of this research in her 2011 historiographical essay 'The Post-Stalin Era' in *Kritika*, Miriam Dobson, for example, explained that one of the subfield's guiding questions was to find out 'how citizens who had, in Stephen Kotkin's terms, started to "speak Bolshevik" negotiated the sudden shift in rhetoric introduced when Khrushchev attacked the "cult of personality" '. This question asked on behalf of the subfield and by one of the subfield's leading scholars captured precisely what pioneering scholars of the post-war Soviet Union considered to be already known and what they intended to find out. What was known was that the language of post-war Soviet society via which Soviet citizens made sense of things was 'Bolshevik'. What was not known was how it was applied onto new political developments that did not undermine the core continuities of the Bolshevik project. Such self-positioning of the subfield assumed direct relevance of Kotkin's research to Russia after the Second World War.[44]

This choice of turning the Bolshevik-identified framework into an a priori working paradigm of post-war Russia has had serious methodological ramifications

[43] The compilation of characteristics of Soviet ideology of modernity was drawn from multiple scholarly monographs. For a comprehensive discussion of Bolshevik-Soviet ideology applied to the post-war Soviet Union, see, for example, Siegelbaum, 'Introduction', 1–21.

[44] Dobson, 'The Post-Stalin Era', 905. The subfield's critical engagement with Oleg Kharkhordin's work in particular underlined scholarly investment in the general association of Soviet modernity with the anti-individualist cultural script of Bolshevism. Scholars' critique of Kharkhordin's work, for example, was directed at his argument about the successful effort of the post-Stalinist state to instil the collectivist principle into the lives of ordinary Soviet citizens. This attempt to 'collectivise' post-war Soviet society, argued such scholars as Steven E. Harris, Susan E. Reid, Christine Varga-Harris, Mark B. Smith, Deborah Field, and Mariam Dobson, was not as successful as Kharkhordin implied. They pointed to Soviet people's resourcefulness in avoiding and subverting the campaign as well as to the emergence of non-formal (i.e. outside the official ideological framework) professional, civic, and private cultures. Thus, the very terms of their critique did not question Kharkhordin's identification of Soviet modernity with the collectivist imperative, but rather explored its limited impact on individuals' lives. For an analysis of the field's engagement with Kharkhordin's work, see Dobson, 'Post-Stalin era', 913–16.

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for the kind of interpretive work the subfield has engaged in. My contention is that, having become the subfield's principal language of analysis, Kotkin's anti-individualist and collectivist categories do not match the riches of materials that scholars working on the post-war Soviet Union have presented for analysis. What remains outside scholarly attention, under-interpreted and insufficiently attended to, is the proliferation of concepts and notions in post-war political and popular culture the relationship of which to the Bolshevik project is yet to be established. The concepts and notions that I have in mind are the ones that scholars come across in their research, even incorporate into their writings, but whose meanings they do not explore. They are multiple derivatives of the 'individual' (*individualnost, individuum, individualnyi*), of the 'person/personal' (*lichnost, lichnyi*), of the 'intimate' (*intimnyi*). The sheer prominence and variation of this apparent public preoccupation with the individual, unprecedented in the Bolshevik tradition, deserve close scholarly attention. Moreover, post-war public discourse on the individual needs to be explored not only in relation to the Bolshevik project but also in relation to an arguably novel social language that discussed the individual in terms of the 'social good' or the 'social' (*obshchestvenno poleznyi, obshchestvennyi*, not necessarily identical with the 'collective') and, in the context of 'contemporary Soviet society' (*Sovetskoe sovremennoe obshchestvo*), not necessarily identical with the Bolshevik-derived academic concept of 'modern Soviet society'.

An example is in order here to explicate the limiting impact that the Bolshevik-identified socialist framework had on the interpretive practice of the subfield. One of the most thought-provoking pieces published about Soviet conceptualisations of the individual and the public after the war is Juliane Fürst's 'Friends in Private, Friends in Public: The Phenomenon of the *Kompaniia* Among Soviet Youth in the 1950s and 1960s'. Fürst engages her subject matter through a study of new forms of post-war socialisation among young people, in particular the thriving culture of semi-private gatherings of friends. Her analysis reveals a complexly structured mindset in the post-war generation. In her words, post-war youth consciousness encompasses a 'desire to contribute to the collective good' and simultaneous belief 'in the existence of individual and societal perfection'. To explain the rationale behind the first part of this consciousness does not present Fürst with a difficulty. In fact, one of the article's goals is to demonstrate that the youth's consciousness was far from a complete escape from the Bolshevik paradigm but, on the contrary, was inflected by its values of 'communality' and 'equality'. What presents a problem is the youth's belief 'in the existence of individual and societal perfection', the belief which features the 'individual' and the 'societal' as distinct (not a priori identified or merged) entities and creditable experiences. However, the possibility of treating 'individual' perfection as a distinguishable and credible dimension in the life of an individual remains unexplored and unexplained by Fürst. If the author can tell us exactly where the young people's communal aspirations come from, she cannot explicate where the idea of the self-righteous individual perfection comes from. The author however assumes that it exists outside the conventional paradigm of Soviet

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overtly collectivist modernity, that is outside the 'official Soviet normative code'.[45] In the following section I will explore the following possibility: what if the centring of public attention on the individual in the context of 'Soviet contemporary society' constituted a post-Bolshevik, but nonetheless Soviet, and not necessarily subversive cultural project in the Soviet Union?

A post-Bolshevik agenda for a non-market industrial society

Contrary to the persistent academic reliance on the notion of Bolshevik fundamentals, I argue that, over the course of the twentieth century, the Bolshevik discourse on alternative anti-individualist modernity gradually lost its central position in what scholars call the 'formal' or 'official' realm of Soviet culture. It could hardly have been otherwise as ever accelerating processes of urbanisation and social and professional differentiation that came out of the jump-started industrialisation of the 1930s continued to produce new structures of work, study, leisure and private life that did not fit the Bolshevik dream. It is my contention in this section that the arrival of modern industrial society to Soviet Russia announced itself with a novel public conversation in the centre of mainstream culture about the modern individual and society on terms formerly unavailable in Bolshevik discourse constrained, according to academic literature, to anti-individualism and collectivism. As I will show below, the discourse on modern individuals and 'contemporary society' was constituted by a new language that operated out of synch with Kotkin's account of Bolshevism. It calls for a re-conceptualisation of Soviet modernity in its post-Bolshevik stage and questioning of a seemingly unproblematic association between the 'Bolshevik' and the 'Soviet', the socialist and the anti-individualist. One way to begin the process is to question Kotkin's master narrative of stagnation.

Just a quick glance at available socio-demographic analyses of Soviet society before and after the war should immediately raise questions over whether or not

[45] Fürst, 'Friends in Private', 242–4, 232. For similar interpretive choices, see, e.g. Steven Harris, 'In Search of Ordinary Russia: Everyday Life in the NEP, the Thaw, and the Communal Apartment', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 6, 3 (2005), 583–614; Ann Livshchiz, 'De-Stalinizing Soviet Childhood: The Quest for Moral Rebirth, 1953–1958', in Jones, eds, *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization*, 117–34. For Harris as for other scholars working on post-war single family housing and the 'quest for privacy', individuality continued to be seen as being at odds with the post-war socialist project. See also his '"I Know All the Secrets of my Neighbours" : The Quest for Privacy in the Era of the Separate Apartment', in Siegelbaum, *Borders of Socialism*, 171–89. See also Deborah Field's path-breaking work on understanding and practices of private life in the post-war Soviet Union in which she tends to privilege the account of the Soviet public discourse on private life that proclaims 'private interests' as being 'identical to public goals' and thus frames it in reductive Bolshevik terms. Deborah A. Fields, *Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchev's Russia* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 6. One of the most prolific and innovative directions of the subfield dealing with socialist consumer culture has yet to directly address the relevance of Bolshevik sensibilities and anxieties to individualising discourses and practices of Soviet consumption, see Susan E. Reid, 'The Meaning of Home: "The Only Bit of the World You Can Have to Yourself"', in Siegelbaum, *Borders of Socialism*; David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, eds, *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010); Susan E. Reid and David Crowley, *Style and Socialism*.

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this stagnation-narrative can serve the discipline as a comprehensive account for all aspects of Soviet modernity. If one assesses the post-war development of the Soviet Union from a sociological and social demographic point of view, one can hardly characterise it as falling back on its 1930s patterns, as Kotkin proposes. Rather, according to this other account, the post-war years that figure in Kotkin's study as years of unrealised opportunities for change experience nothing less than a profound social transformation.

In striking contrast to the tale of stagnation that Kotkin derives from Soviet economic development, the socio-demographic account assigns watershed events to the post-war period in the social history of the Soviet Union. It is, for example, only by the 1970s that the pre-war and post-war urbanisation booms produce a dominantly urban society with 58% of the population living in new urban spaces and entertaining specifically urban expectations of quality and style of living. The post-war years also see the expansion of the professional middle class into a mass class, growing at a rate surpassing that of workers – increasing from 11 million in 1941 to 35 million in 1983.[46] Instead of a stagnating modernity stuck in the pre-war decade, one encounters a modernity the history of which only begins in the 1930s.

The arrival of this urban and middle-class-inflected socialist modernity naturally came with individualising routines of urban living, and the alienating and the allegedly individualist self-centredness of intellectual labour that the Bolsheviks had sworn to overcome. On the contrary, as many scholars have demonstrated, individualising habits were inherent to socialist modernity, regardless of its non-market orientation. Scholars, however, tend to assume that in the case of the Soviet Union individualising practices of modernity were not accompanied by individualising culture. In the midst of socialist industrialisation in the 1930s subtly differentiated groups (and later an army) of workers had already begun to appear, workers engaged in so-called intellectual labour – the technical, scientific, managerial and artistic middle class. Their career choices and the very principle of professional preparation relied on the presupposition of individual aptitude and innate predispositions. Their professional modus operandi at school, university, office and lab desks relied on numerous individualising routines of studying and problem solving, that is activities requiring solitude and time with oneself. The full package of Soviet modernity, as is also well known, encompassed expectations of different forms of privacy inside a single family apartment, this eagerly sought-after space for private leisure time and romantic intimacy.[47]

[46] Moshe Lewin, *The Gorbachev Phenomenon: A Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989), 31, 46. By 1985, the Soviet population became predominantly urban by 1985 and constituted 65% of the total population, Lewin, *Gorbachev Phenomenon*, 31; see also Basile Kerblay, *Modern Soviet Society* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).

[47] For the best and most comprehensive analysis of Soviet post-war industrial society with its modern professionally differentiated social structure, individualising practices of intellectual work, and accompanying discourses on the individual in social sciences, see Lewin, *The Gorbachev Phenomenon* and *Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates: From Bukharin to the Modern Reformers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974). Lewin's core ideas about post-war Soviet society can be already found in his essay, 'Society and the Stalinist State in the Period of the Five Year Plans', *Social History*, 1, 2 (1976), 139–76; also Ronald Grigour Suny, 'Living in the Soviet Century: Moshe Lewin, 1921–2010,

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According to the standard way of understanding this story of a dramatic social transformation, the familiar modern individual – torn away from tangible experience of labour and inserted into a myriad self-focused routines of work and leisure – turns out to be no less structurally necessitated by the demands of a socialist non-market industrial society than by its capitalist counterpart. Or in other words, the Bolshevik dream of collectivist proletariat-like non-alienated modernity appears to be doomed the moment the Bolshevik leadership decided to go ahead with its industrialisation plan in the late 1920s.

The point of this very brief socio-demographic detour is not however to point out, one more time, the striking structural affinities between socialist and capitalist patterns of industrialisation and modernisation. It is to ask what happens to the discursive cultural realm of Soviet modernity when the modern alienated and self-focused individual becomes a mass social phenomenon? According to the master narrative of stagnation which Kotkin models after the stagnating logic of Soviet economy, nothing reminiscent of a qualitative change happens. In Kotkin's key publications, Soviet ideology and culture replicate de facto the historical fate of Soviet economy.

Another possible plot, one drawing on the dramatic transformation of Soviet society's routines of socialisation and individualisation, has, so far, enjoyed at best a subsidiary role in the subfield of cultural history. Neither Kotkin nor cultural historians who rely on his work treat the social dimension of Soviet modernity as a consequential context for rethinking core cultural parameters of the Soviet socialist imagination. Instead, they use it as a background which challenges the Bolshevik systems of values but does not change it. In the case of Kotkin, as we have seen, his attention to the rise of a Soviet mass society does not disturb the story of the fixity of Bolshevik-Soviet ideology.

The main problem with this scholarly account of synchronic stagnation of the economic and the cultural realm is that it asserts that the dramatic transformation of Soviet routines of work, leisure and private life somehow managed to unfold without affecting the key values of Soviet socialist imagination. It is thus assumed that the strikingly non-Bolshevik face of modern Soviet society was stubbornly

History Workshop Journal, 74, 1 (2012), 192–209 for an analysis of Lewin's study of social transformation in Russia from the late 19th c. into the 1980s. For a different interpretive approach to post-war Soviet society as a society of disenchanted, de-politicised and passive resisters see Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Public and Private Life of the Soviet People: Changing Values in Post-Stalin Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Vladimir Shlapentokh, *The Politics of Sociology in the Soviet Union* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987); Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Evolution in the Soviet Sociology of Work: From Ideology to Pragmatism* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh, 1985). For an overview of pre-1980s scholarship on patterns of social change within post-war Soviet society which approached the question through paradigms of modernisation and convergence theory, see, e.g. reviews by Bertram Wolfe, 'Russia and the USA: A Challenge to the Convergence Theory', *The Humanist* (Sept.–Oct., 1968); Alfred G. Meyer, 'Theories of Convergence', in Chalmers Johnson, ed., *Change in Communist Systems* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1970), 313–42; Donald R. Kelley, 'The Soviet Debate of the Convergence of the American and Soviet Systems', *Polity*, 6, 2 (1973), 174–96. See also David C. Engerman, *Modernization From the Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

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discussed and criticised through the Bolshevik cultural mantra of anti-individualism and collectivism.

To begin to challenge the academic convention, I turn to a historical example which I have explored elsewhere and which falls outside the scholarly explication of the modern Bolshevik credo of anti-individualism and collectivism. This is the crisis of the Bolshevik world-view that began to unfold as early as the mid 1930s in the Soviet press and the initially modest appearance of what I propose to consider as a new post-Bolshevik Soviet language and system of values. The crisis ensued when Komsomol and Party activists of the revolutionary generation together with Soviet journalists encountered the novel social reality of industrial modernity, that is the first post-revolutionary generation of Soviet high school and university graduates who began joining the thin but growing ranks of the Soviet middle class in the mid 1930s. In the 1930s press, public discourse made sense of these young people heading for white-collar jobs and white-collar life styles in at least two distinct ways.[48]

One mode in which this phenomenon was addressed is familiar to scholars of modern Russia. Using it, actual historical subjects addressed the new face of Soviet industrial modernity by drawing on the Marxist-Bolshevik accusatory narrative of embourgeoisement, providing de facto a Marxist-Bolshevik critique of emerging non-Bolshevik modernity. In *Pravda*, such a critique was, for example, personified by a stunned Komsomol worker-activist writing to the newspaper about the uncanny resemblance of the young post-revolutionary generation – supposed to be a collectivist 'New Man' generation – to 'bourgeois' classes of the former regime. Such a Komsomol activist was certainly 'speaking Bolshevik' when complaining about educated professional youth. To him, instead of being 'new', young people appeared to lack proletarian class consciousness and to exhibit alarming individualist habits such as a need of privacy and seeming inconsistency between their public and private personas. As a result, in the eyes of the older revolutionary generation, they looked bourgeois, non-collectivist, individualist.[49]

Since the 1940s, a similar critique of the Soviet Bolshevik project has been deployed by scholars examining the changing socio-political terrains of Stalinist Russia. In her 1976 landmark study, Vera Dunham, for example, interpreted changes in popular representation of Soviet society under Stalin, including a new attention to the individual and his or her private needs, in terms of the system's retreat from Bolshevik socialist values and subsequent embrace of the pre-revolutionary 'bourgeois' sensibilities of the middle classes that had miraculously survived the Bolshevik rule. What Dunham and Kotkin, who otherwise is an ardent critic of the Retreat paradigm share, is an assumption that there was nothing more to the Soviet socialist project than Bolshevism. Or in other words, that Soviet socialism was

[48] For a full explication of the crisis of Bolshevism during the second half of the 1930s, see Anna Krylova, 'Identity, Agency, and the "First Soviet Generation"', Stephen Lovell, ed., *Generations in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 101–21.

[49] See, e.g. A. Koroteev, 'Nabolevshie voprosy Komsomolskoi raboty' ('Urgent Questions of Komsomol Work'), *Pravda*, 7 June 1940 and S. Obraztsov, 'Kto vinovat?' ('Who is to Blame?'), *Pravda*, 11 Aug. 1940 cited in Anna Krylova, 'Identity, Agency', 106, 110.

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identical with Bolshevism. Following this rationale, Dunham equated disruptions and marginalisation of the Bolshevik master language in Soviet popular literature with the end of the socialist project itself. For her, the new attention to the individual and his or her small world in Soviet literature was not socialist. Kotkin, on the other hand, insisted that core Bolshevik values continued to inform Soviet politics, economy and culture both before and after the war. The underlying consensus of these two approaches is that Soviet society did not generate any other socialist cultural forms besides Bolshevik ones. Caught in between these two dominant academic traditions, Soviet modernity de facto has but two options: to betray—necessarily Bolshevik—socialist values or to stay within their parameters.[50]

Although scholars investigating official culture in the 1930s tend to look through the lens of a Bolshevik critic, the press coverage of disturbing features of emerging socialist industrial modernity was carried well beyond the limits of Bolshevik sensibilities. In fact, as my current research shows, it was around the mid 1930s that a novel language (formerly missing from the official realm) had to be invented by Soviet journalists to overcome the poverty of the Bolshevik collectivist vision of the proletariat-styled 'New Man'. The Bolshevik project simply did not have a language to address a modern society that was more and more defined by complexly differentiated social and professional groups, and structurally dependent on societal attention to individual aptitude and the inclinations of its citizens. Using the Bolshevik canon journalists could only critique the resultant Soviet modernity. Gradually constructing what I call the post-Bolshevik and nevertheless Soviet language, they began to cover cultural phenomena of socialist non-market modernity that did not fit the collectivist paradigm.

In the Soviet press in the 1930s, journalists covered schoolchildren and university students who investigated their *individual* predispositions and talents, explored the growing maze of modern professions in relation to *themselves*, and feared to discover that they were talentless and mediocre *individuals*. They personified, I argue, the post-Bolshevik person of Soviet modernity. Contrary to the Bolshevik discourse on the New Man who was to *merge* with the collective and to *derive* himself from it, the post-Bolshevik discourse posited a modern socialist individual as consisting of distinct personal (*lichnoe*) and social (*obshchestvennoe*) dimensions.[51]

Far from being synonymous with the 'Bolshevik', the post-Bolshevik discourse, I contend, was used to resolve the conceptual crisis of how to address the generation which modern professionalisation had clearly removed from the idealised collectivist practices of the working class. Already in the mid 1930s, the influx of new terms,

[50] See Vera Dunham, *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); see also Nicholas S. Timasheff, *The Great Retreat: The Growth and Decline of Communism in Russia* (New York: Dutton, 1946). For Kotkin's critique of the 'retreat paradigm' as well as Moshe Lewin's and Sheila Fitzpatrick's arguments that Stalinism constituted a 'reversal' of the Bolshevik project, see Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 2–6.

[51] For a full analysis of the emerging post-Bolshevik discourse in the mid 1930s, see Anna Krylova, 'On "Being Soviet" and "Speaking Bolshevik": Disentangling Histories and Historiographies of the Socialist Self', under revision.

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which persevered and flourished after the war and await a researcher, is clearly visible. Opening a conversation over such new issues as the actual face of Soviet industrial modernity, Soviet journalists steered away from the militant 1920s critique of 'bourgeois individualism' by introducing elements of a new post-Bolshevik cultural language. There appeared a positive notion of the Soviet word for 'personal' (*lichnyi*) and many derivatives of the 'individual' (*individualnyi*) next to 1920s 'individualism' (*individualism*); the 'social' (*obshchestvennyi*) gained cultural currency next to the 1920s 'collective'; the 'intimate' (*intimnyi mir*) came back into Soviet reporting as a necessary part of the 'personal'.[52]

New official clichés of 'connecting' and 'combining' the personal with the social began to compete with Bolshevik ideals of 'merging' oneself or deriving oneself from the collective. The social imperative to 'connect' one's personal life with the life of Soviet modern society implies a differentiation and a relationality between the two realms. It is a conceptual break from the Bolshevik ideal which, in accordance with the academic analysis explicated here, explicitly rejects a differentiation between the individual and the collective. This new language, I believe, captures for us a new face of Soviet modernity and opens a new research agenda.

Conclusion: a post-Bolshevik modernity and the fate of the multiple modernities thesis

My contention here is that what was under way in the cultural realm of 1930s Soviet society was the making of a new post-Bolshevik language of Soviet modernity. Having begun in the centre of Soviet national press in the mid 1930s, this development constitutes a precursor to the post-war preoccupation with the modern socialist individuals and their new social surroundings in press, literature, film and social sciences.[53] Accommodating individualising discourses, this emerging language signalled the beginning a fundamental restructuring of the relationship between individual and society away from the Bolshevik collectivist imperative.

Two aspects of my argument should be emphasised. First, I do not see the mid 1930s as a Bolshevik/post-Bolshevik divide. Rather, it was a *launching point* in a long and uneven process of cultural change that took half a century to unfold and expanded the boundaries of Soviet culture and modernity. The post-Bolshevik language and new system of values that accompanied it did not wipe out Bolshevik sensibilities

[52] See for example, E. Kononenko, 'Mechty o slave' ('Dreams about glory'), *Komsomolskaia Pravda* (*KP*), 5 Aug. 1937; A. Konev and L. Kara-Stoianova, 'Obyvateli s diplomom' ('Philistines with Diplomas'), *KP*, 24 July 1938; 'Po-bolshevitski podderzhat zamechatelnyi pochin' ('Bolshevik Support for the Remarkable Undertaking'), *KP*, 11 July 1938, cited in Anna Krylova, '"On Being Soviet" and "Speaking Bolshevik"'. See also, V. Goldberg, 'Bliustiteli "nravstvennosti"' ('Policemen of Morality'), *KP*, 3 Mar. 1937; E. Kononenko, 'Iunoshi i devushki' ('Young Men and Young Women'), *KP*, 22 June 1938.

[53] For an analysis of both individualising practices of Soviet industrial society and the discourse on the individual in Soviet social sciences, see Lewin, *The Gorbachev Phenomenon* and *Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates*.

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overnight. Rather than evoke the historical metaphor of a 'divide', I suggest that of a gradual and never complete 'de-centring' of the Bolshevik cultural formation with the post-Bolshevik one. Second, my argument about the expanding boundaries of Soviet culture is not about the rise of the individual in place of the collective but about a shift in conceptualisations of the *relationship* between the socialist self and society (or collective) away from the Bolshevik refusal to differentiate between the two. What I posit here is *a modern socialist discourse that encompasses the individual and the social*. I also propose the 'post-Bolshevik' as a new periodisation marker.

The larger agenda of this essay is to invite an epistemic interpretive shift in our approaches to Soviet non-market industrial modernity. I contend that Kotkin's stagnation model of Soviet modern society as a totality synchronised in its post-war non-development of economic, cultural, ideological and political spheres is insufficient to capture the complexity of historical change in the Soviet Union. The account of Soviet modernity proposed here is that of uneven development, which in fact encompasses several visions and practices of modernity. It puts a new approach to the study of Soviet modernity on the field's agenda, one which suggests that social, cultural, economic, ideological and political dimensions develop along trajectories that are not automatically synchronised and offer different narratives of change and continuity.[54]

Before we revisit the thesis of multiple modernities that Kotkin uses to present Soviet industrial modernity as a solid (though failed) twentieth-century alternative to capitalism, new venues of research into the uneven Soviet socialist experiment need to be pursued.[55] The historically specific terms of post-Bolshevik socialist culture – its discourses on the individual and this individual's relationship with the 'social' (*obshchestvennyi)*, not necessarily identical with the 'collective', in the context of the 'contemporary Soviet society' (*Sovetskoe sovremennoe obshchestvo*) not necessarily identical with the academic concept of 'modern Soviet society' – are among the urgent issues to be explored by intellectual and cultural historians.

Moreover, the 'fixed ideas' of the Soviet project cannot be successfully questioned without an engaged conversation with current scholarship on Eastern Europe.[56] Nor

[54] On new direction in Soviet economic history, see Oscar Sanchez and Andrew Sloin 'Economy and Power in the Soviet Union, 1917–1939', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 15, 1 (2014).

[55] In his forthcoming collection of essays, Michael David-Fox continues his investigation of the concept of 'multiple modernities' with a special attention to 'the cultural or civilizational particularities that lie at the heart of the theory of "multiple modernities" ', see Michael David-Fox, 'The Intelligentsia, the Masses, and the West: Particularities of Russian-Soviet Modernity', forthcoming in Michael David-Fox, *Crossing Borders: Modernity, Ideology, and Culture in Soviet Russia, 1921–1941* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, forthcoming).

[56] Scholars working on Eastern Europe have begun to question the essential parameters and fixed values of allegedly opposing systems of socialism and capitalism. In *The Currency of Socialism: Money and Political Culture in East Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Jonathan Zatlin, for example, offers a complex relational analysis (informed by methodologies of economic and cultural histories) of intertwining developments of East Germany's financial, economic, political and popular cultures. Paul Betts in *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) makes a welcome intervention in the issues of socialist privacy and private spaces by working out

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can it be done without a parallel questioning of the assumed formulaic parameters of the Soviet Union's conceptual other – twentieth-century liberalism and market capitalism. An integration of the complex and variegated history of the twentieth-century liberal and economic thought that was preoccupied with the question of the individual and the social, and with encompassed positions varying between welfare liberalism and neo-liberalism seems to be paramount for producing a rethinking of Soviet socialism.[57]

To conclude, the alternative modernity claimed on behalf of the Soviet Union needs to be opened up to new and counter-intuitive questions about dynamically and unevenly developing Soviet society and its participation in (rather than rejection of) the twentieth century's conversation about modern individuals' complex relationship to their industrial society. Regardless of our conclusions at the end of this questioning, the history of socialism in twentieth century will acquire a new chapter.

an interpretive approach that allows him to treat 'privacy' of socialist subjects as established entitlement, existing in a dialectical tension with state power and public sphere. Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, eds, *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008) explores notions and practices of East German modernity as 'viable' difference (not a categorical oppositional reality). Kyrill Kunakovich's 2013 Princeton PhD thesis, 'In Search of Socialist Culture: Culture and Politics in Krakow and Leipzig, 1945–1970', uncovers histories of qualitative change in party and popular approaches to socialist culture and consumption in the People's Republic of Poland and the GDR. See also, Josie McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics of Everyday Life in the GDR, 1945–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Eli Rubin, *Synthetic Socialism: Plastics and Dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

[57] The literature on these subject matters is vast. Most recently, for example, James Hinton uncovered a fascinating map of imaginable and enactable subject positions in wartime Britain that encompassed and combined ideals of social solidarity and autonomous individuality, anti-social individualism and expectations of self-realisation in the public sphere. James Hinton, *Nine Wartime Lives: Mass Observation and the Making of the Modern Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

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