

**Engaging the Difference. Multiperspectivist Themes in the Soviet History of Ideas / *Envolvendo-se com a diferença. Temas multiperspectivistas na história soviética das ideias***

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**ABSTRACT**

The goal of the present paper is to trace a line between different authors of the Soviet history of ideas in order to show how they can be seen as all contributing to the development of a new epistemological approach which I will call “multiperspectivist,” a notion elaborated to describe the epistemological approach of G. W. Leibniz. By analysing the decolonial critique of Eurocentrism and Eurocentric science, I will try to show how similar themes, albeit from a different origin and with different intent, can nonetheless be found within the “Soviet semiosphere.” In particular, I will trace a line from the Russian Cosmists to V. I. Vernadskij, to N. I. Konrad to Ju. M. Lotman, to show how the multiperspectivist themes were in each author elaborated, adapted to their research needs, and ultimately developed towards a more and more integrated approach. **KEYWORDS:** Multiperspectivism; Soviet History; History of Ideas; Semiosphere; Decoloniality

**RESUMO**

*O objetivo do presente artigo é traçar uma linha entre diferentes autores da história soviética das ideias para mostrar a contribuição deles todos para o desenvolvimento de uma nova abordagem epistemológica a que chamarei de “multiperspectivista”, uma noção elaborada para descrever a abordagem epistemológica de G. W. Leibniz. Ao analisar a crítica decolonial ao eurocentrismo e à ciência eurocêntrica, tentarei mostrar como temas semelhantes, embora de origens diferentes e com intenções diferentes, podem ser encontrados na “semiosfera soviética”. Em particular, traçarei uma linha que vai dos cosmistas russos a V. I. Vernadskij, a N. I. Konrad e a Ju. M. Lotman, para mostrar como os temas multiperspectivistas foram elaborados em cada autor, adaptados às suas necessidades de pesquisa e, por fim, desenvolvidos em direção a uma abordagem cada vez mais integrada.*

*PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Multiperspectivismo; História soviética; História das ideias; Semiosfera; Decolonialidade*

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## Introduction

The idea for the present paper was conceived after a series of works (Gherlone; Restaneo, 2022; 2024), where the ideas of decolonial authors, and especially of Walter Mignolo, are explored and compared with that of Soviet semiotician Jurij M. Lotman. The goal of those papers was to explore the possible contribution of ideas originating from Soviet semiotics to the contemporary debate on coloniality. By comparing Mignolo's idea of *pluriversality* with Lotman's idea of the bilingualism as the minimal semiotic structure, the notion of multiperspectivism was introduced to describe the latter's approach to the theory of knowledge.

In the present paper, I will further explore the notion of multiperspectivism, and I will try to show how it came into being throughout the development of Russian, first, then Soviet, intellectual history. As an unspoken and undefined idea, as a general approach to knowledge and science, multiperspectivism belongs to what Sériot (2014 [1999], pp. 17–18) calls the *esprit du lieu* and the *esprit du temps* of the Soviet semiosphere.

### 1 How Many Knowledges? The Decolonial Option

One of the fundamental critiques of the decolonial movement to “Western” knowledge rests on the notion of the so-called “zero-point”: the assumption by Western science and philosophy that “the universal language of science has no specific place on the map but is instead a neutral observation platform from which the world can be named in its essentiality” (Castro-Gómez, 2021, p. 4). The “zero-point” is strictly connected with the colonial project:

By way of this strategy, scientific thought positions itself as the only valid form of producing knowledge, and Europe acquires an epistemological hegemony over all the other cultures of the world (Castro-Gómez, 2007, p. 433).

In other words, by claiming to speak for the “Universal,” European science also claimed the right to declare any non-European “otherness” as false, primitive or outright non-existent (Gherlone; Restaneo, 2024). Western mode of knowledge production, in this way, continuously reproduces what Mignolo calls the “colonial difference,” described,

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quoting British philosopher Robert Bernasconi, as the “double bind” in which each non-Western knowledge (or, as discussed in Bernasconi’s case, philosophy) is trapped: either being “so similar to Western philosophy that it makes no distinctive contribution and effectively disappears,” or being “so different that its credentials to be genuine philosophy will always be in doubt” (Bernasconi *in* Mignolo, 1999, pp. 37–38).

This double bind also involves, in a way, the same decolonial thinkers, often trained and then employed in Western academic institutions: should they critique Western knowledge with the same concepts that Western knowledge produced, at the risk of being ineffective, or should they employ new concepts from non-European traditions, thus risking not being understood at best and marginalised at worst?

This issue has been tackled through different strategies (for an overview see Harding, 2018). All the decolonial authors, and the strategies they employ, share one fundamental premise: that knowledge has an “epistemological correlation with the sensing body, perceiving the world from a particular locale and history” (Tlostanova, 2011, p. 44). While the European *zero-point* science sees itself as an ultimately disembodied thought, thus also justifying its right to expel from true science the problems of the “body” (i.e. racism, violence, exploitation, etc.) the various decolonial projects all share the fundamental assumptions that different *places* produce different *knowledges*. The *who* and the *where* of the production of knowledge are relevant,<sup>1</sup> and each view on the world, including the self-proclaimed Universal canon of Western science, can only be partial, never managing to explain fully by itself (Reiter, 2018, p. 4).

There is a risk, that decolonial authors acknowledge, to endorse “a sort of epistemological relativism, where one approach to explaining the world is as good as the next” (Reiter, 2018, p. 2). Some decolonial thinkers oppose the notion of universalism and relativism alike with the idea of *pluriversality*, whose meaning oscillates in different authors between a more general “embracing [of] a mosaic epistemology” in order to “search for alternative and place-bound epistemologies” (Reiter, 2018, p. 2), and a more radical notion of the “pluriverse as a universal project,” as the project to end all “universal global designs” (Mignolo, 2021, p. 188).

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<sup>1</sup> It is also worth mentioning that there is also a *temporal* dimension in the decolonial idea of knowledge, see (Gherlone; Restaneo, 2022).

In the decolonial critique of Western knowledge, however, there is at least one fundamental issue that, in my opinion, needs to be addressed. In their efforts to construct a coherent and comprehensive narrative of “European” history - often by lining up the “usual suspects” from Bacon to Descartes to Kant to Hegel, as successors of Plato and Aristotle, and recounting their deeds made “in the name of ‘reason’, of science and knowledge” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 228) – the decolonial accounts follow along the lines that certain Hegelian historiography (or, rather, its popularised version) imparted on the history of (European) philosophy, construed as one long, progressive path towards the “abstract,” walked by a series of great figures, passing the testimony one to another.<sup>2</sup> This view of the history of European philosophy was further solidified, also in the decolonial’s accounts, by the critique from Heidegger and his followers towards the previous tradition, where the positive teleology of Hegel is simply replaced with the negative teleology of Heidegger. A (slightly different) series of fundamental figures is now seen as committed to further distancing mankind from its true condition, plunging it instead more and more towards a “forgetfulness-of-being” (Gadamer, 1981). The fundamental scheme of the Hegelian historiography is reversed but otherwise unaltered.

It is rather paradoxical that when analysing – and criticising - the history of European knowledge, decolonial studies uncritically rely on the same paradigm that they aim to disarticulate (delink) when it is imposed on the colonised. It is also a missed opportunity, because this paradigm hides from view the heterogeneity of European intellectual history and its *borders* (in a semiotic sense, see Lotman, 1989 [1984], pp. 46–47). All the authors, currents, and intellectual networks that do not fit the narrative are ignored. At the same time, European history is presented as a self-sufficient, quasi-spontaneous development of the self-conscience of man, and accounting for its interconnection with the “outside” is not necessary, as the outside does not disrupt the continuity of the narration. Influences from the “borders” are irrelevant:

In spite of certain exotic influences exercised on this [Western-Christian] society by such cultural elements as Russian literature, Chinese painting and Indian religion [...] it remains true that all of these

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<sup>2</sup> An example is the *Geschichte der neuen Philosophie* (History of Modern Philosophy) by Bruno Fischer (1824-1907). Written between 1852 and 1893, each of its 8 volumes is dedicated to one philosopher: Bacon, Descartes, Leibniz, Kant (2 volumes), Fichte, Hegel and Schopenhauer.

are outside the cultural world to which we belong (Toynbee; Somervell, 1947, p. 7).

In the rest of the paper, I wish to explore an intellectual current that emerges precisely in one of the great cultural borders of Europe, the “Eastern” border.

## **2 Between Asia and Europe**

Within the Russian Empire, and then the Soviet Union, European culture was felt and conceptualised through a similar “double bind” as that used to describe the “colonial difference.” Many Russian intellectuals divided themselves between “Westernizers,” who proposed to embrace the calling of Western culture and reform, and “Slavianophiles,” who wanted to reject European Culture and embrace the “Slavic” tradition (Horujy, 2010, pp. 50–51).

A similar debate arose in the Soviet Union after the October Revolution, this time around the issue of the relationship between “bourgeois” and “proletarian” science (Biggart, 1987; Tompsett, 2021), between those who considered science as a neutral force, that could be wielded by communists and capitalists alike, and those that regarded the connection between science and power as running much deeper:

Science can be bourgeois or proletarian by its very nature, specifically in its provenance, point of view, methods of work and narrative. In this basic sense, not only the social sciences, but also all other sciences, up to mathematics or logic, can have, and in fact do have, a class character (Bogdanov, 1918, p. 21).

In the present paper, I will try to argue that, parallel to those arguments, and often subterraneously, some intellectuals in the Soviet Union developed a different epistemological approach, one that tried to avoid and surpass the “double bind” of culture by completely turning on its head the mode of production of knowledge.

### **2.1 “Soviet” World?**

Even after the fall of the Soviet Union, Western scholarship still struggle to understand what, for scholars living in post-Soviet countries, is an almost

commonsensical fact: that the monolithic unity of thought that the USSR attempted to project on the outside was, in reality, a mere façade trying to hide the fact that, like any other semiosphere, the Soviet Union was a heterogeneous space. It was comprised of numerous structures, texts, and languages functionally divisible in a “centre” and a periphery,” animated by contradictory tendencies, and ideas that were in time forgotten but not lost.

This is the sense in which I will talk about “Soviet” scholars or “Soviet” history of ideas. Not in the sense of people or ideas that are “Soviet” in character, i.e. conforming to a Soviet ideological orthodoxy, but in the sense of authors and currents operating within the “Soviet” cultural space-time, limited by its institutional constraint and subject to the ideological pressure of the centre. The same can also be said of the adjective “Russian,” in the sense of belonging to the semiosphere of the Russian Empire. This will also mean that, for example, V. I. Vernadskij, born in Kyiv, trained in Russian schools and working in Soviet institutions, could be referred to as a “Ukrainian,” “Russian” or “Soviet” author, according to the context taken into consideration.

At closer inspection, the Soviet world is much more porous than often imagined, and subterranean dialogues with other semiospheres emerge constantly. At the same time, this world did indeed develop unique theories and points of view, that have the potential to imbue current debates with new ideas and fresh perspectives.

In the present paper, I will consider the Russian and Soviet history of ideas as a part of the European history of ideas, albeit in a very specific way. First, being at the *border* of Europe, Russia is *also*, as per the very definition of a “border,” part of the territory that the border encircles. Second, the very fact that the debate of whether Russia is culturally part of Europe has been going on for so long determined that its (unstable) relationship with the Russian world became a part of Europe’s definition (Weller, 2021a). Third, all the authors discussed in our paper, *began* their journey from European sources and perspectives, only to successively depart from or critique them.

Under these premises, I will explore the history of one tradition which, I will argue, is rather peculiar to the Soviet semiosphere. I will follow this history through the life and work of three different authors, who, each in his own respect, had a profound influence on the Soviet, and world, culture.

The three authors that I will follow are Vladimir I. Vernadskij, Nikolaj I. Konrad and Jurij M. Lotman as representatives of a current that, starting from a critique of Eurocentric science, worked towards constructing a new epistemological approach, which I will call “multiperspectivist.”

### 3 What Is Multiperspectivism?

The term “multiperspectivism” is derived from the works of Marcelo Dascal, where it is used to describe one of the two “epistemological strategies” (2000, p. 20) employed by German philosopher G.W. Leibniz. The first, “self-centered” strategy, consists of “the in-depth study of a single monad” (Dascal, 2000, p. 20). Since, according to Leibnizian philosophy, “each monad expresses the totality of the universe” (Dascal, 2000, p. 20), this strategy would allow one to acquire knowledge on the rest of the universe.

According to the second, “multiperspectivist” strategy,

[i]nstead of focusing on its own point of view and attempting to disclose its inner law [...] the monad striving for knowledge would attempt to elevate itself above the ground view by incorporating from the outset as much as it can from the experiences of its fellows (Dascal, 2000, p. 26).

In Leibniz, the monad is notoriously described as a mirror of the universe, one that does not passively reflect the surrounding universe but is instead “*actif et vital*” (Marras, 2010, p. 75): not only reproduces but also creates images of the world, through “an autonomous act, an *action interne*, that offers its own point of view” (Marras, 2010, p. 77).

Leibniz’s multiperspectivist strategy, according to Dascal, has both theoretical and practical implications (Dascal, 2000, pp. 30–32). Not only it forces the researcher to a comparativist and relational approach, shattering the illusion of being able to derive truths and absolute laws from one single origin (culture, language, etc.), but also compels them to incorporate as many points of view as possible. The research effort itself becomes open to, and requires, a cooperative and dialogical dimension, as the heuristic value of debates, disputes, criticisms and cooperative efforts is recognised.

Multiperspectivism is therefore not only an epistemological strategy, but also the foundation of a political programme. As Marras (2023) suggests, Leibniz's multiperspectivism develops along various dimensions: there is a "public" dimension, relative to the organization of science from a very concrete point of view, including the creations of shared spaces (e.g. institutions, journals) and languages in order to foster the cooperative and dialogical approach that multiperspectivism entails. This dimension can be seen embodied in Leibniz's efforts towards "institutionalizing the research in the form of scientific academies" (Marras, 2023, p. 110). A second dimension is the comparative one: "[d]ifferent points of view provide different visions of the same phenomenon/object/issue, and it is through their comparison that we can discover order, invariance and, ultimately, truth and unity" (Marras, 2023, p. 111).

A third dimension is the ethical-pragmatic principle of seeing things "from the 'place of the other' (*la place d'autrui*)" (Marras, 2023, p.111): only by shifting one's perspective it is possible to obtain an otherwise unreachable understanding of (scholarly, but also political and moral) matters.

To recognise the different points of view means to recognise "the other," to renounce any privileged point of observation upon the universe, and to recognise the limits of any solipsistic scholarly, but also political, enterprise. The very idea of point of view "encompasses both an ethical and political, as well as an epistemological and metaphysical dimension" (Marras, 2023, p. 166).

I will now try to show how this approach can be found, quite surprisingly, within the Soviet semiosphere, and that its foundations were laid – among others – by Vernadskij, developed by Konrad and, finally, conceptualised by Lotman. The use of the term outside its field of origin is justified due to a typological similitude between the approaches of the German philosopher and the three Soviet intellectuals discussed. It is important to note, however, that from a historical perspective, the figure of Leibniz is not extraneous at all in the picture I am trying to paint.

As for the three individual scholars I will discuss, their relationship with the ideas of Leibniz varies. While an extensive study of Vernadskij's relationship with Leibnizian philosophy is missing, he was certainly aware of his works (see e.g. Vernadskij, 2022, p. 38), but seems to be lacking a deep awareness of Leibniz's ideas as a philosopher

Konrad, probably also due to the nature of his scholarly works, never engages in his writings or letters with Leibnizian philosophy.

Lotman, instead, was well acquainted with the writings and ideas of Leibniz, as was already shown elsewhere (see also Gherlone, 2014, pp. 89–92; and especially Restaneo, 2018).

Outside these three authors, however, Leibnizian philosophy had, in general, a relevant influence on Russian intellectual history, as well as an important following, so much as to warrant the coinage of the terms “Russian Leibnizianism” or “Russian Neo-Leibnizianism” (Tremblay 2020, 166). In particular, the Russian reception of Leibniz has put the accent on the most vitalistic aspects of his philosophy, influenced by French Leibnizian philosophers such as Jean-Baptiste René Robinet (Zen’kovskij, 2003, pp. 87–88, 92). This peculiar Russian reception of Leibnizian ideas can be considered a background to our following discussion.

#### **4 Life, the Universe and Everything – Russian Cosmism and the Noosphere**

In our path towards the definition of a multiperspectivist current in the Soviet history of ideas, of the three authors mentioned, the most important – not only for his scientific achievements and for the international relevance he still has today, but also for the influence he had on the Soviet intellectual environment – is without a doubt the biogeochemist Vladimir I. Vernadskij (1863-1945), and his fundamental ideas of the *biosphere* and *noosphere*.

Vernadskij is often regarded as the most prominent member of the “scientific” current of the movement known as “Cosmism” (*Kozmizm*), which developed in Russia in the XIX and XX centuries. The Cosmist ideas, even when censored during the Soviet times, especially those of the “religious” current, had nonetheless a profound impact on the Soviet intellectual environment, either directly or indirectly. Cosmist philosophy often appears, to the Western intellectual point of view, as a somewhat “alien” or “exotic” philosophy. However, also thanks to this distance from European science, Cosmist philosophers began to develop unique and original ideas that would contribute to creating the new epistemological approaches I will discuss in the present paper.

In the introduction to her anthology of Cosmist texts, Svetlana Semenova offers an overview of the difficulties in defining Cosmism. Most of the authors traditionally recognised as “Cosmists” shared views such as the ideas that the Universe, including life and mankind, is a unitary whole; that man is a microcosm expressing in itself all the contradictions of the cosmos; that it is necessary to adopt a holistic approach to knowledge and to transcend disciplinary boundaries. However, these ideas so broadly defined can also be found in the most different places of human history, in Eastern religions, in myth and folklore, in many philosophical currents such as the Ancient Greeks to Hinduism to European philosophy of nature, and even in utopian writers and novelists of the XVII century (Semenova, 1993, p. 3).

To avoid indefinitely expanding the definition of the term, Semenova proposed to isolate a central, defining idea of Russian Cosmism in the notion of *active evolution* [*aktivnaja evoljucija*]: “the necessity for a new conscious stage of development of the world, when humanity directs it on a course which reason and moral feeling determine, when man takes, so to say, the wheel of evolution into his own hand” (Semenova, 1993, p. 4).

Scientific knowledge, for Cosmists, is but one of the paths towards their final goal, the “common task” that each person must join to lead humankind towards “salvation,” which could be peace, free from scarcity (as seen in Vernadskij, 1993 [1925]), religious salvation, or even immortality (as in Fedorov, 1990). Even the most religious cosmists “reduced the mystical, transcendent dimension of Christianity to a natural, immanent one” (Obolovitch, 2019, p. 148). The Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the bodies, for example, was intended by Nikolaj Fedorov (perhaps the most important representative of cosmism) as a very concrete task: “resurrection will not be the work of a miracle but of knowledge and common labour,” and will be achieved thanks to “the knowledge of the matter [*veschestva*] and of its forces,” that will allow us “to reconstruct the bodies [of the previous generations] from the primary elements” (Fedorov, 1995, pp. 202–203).

This “projectuality” is perhaps the most defining trait of cosmism, that all the other authors we will encounter inherited in one way or the other. However, what interests us the most here is the shift of the object of study, that the cosmists fostered, from the individual - organism or person - to the whole cosmos, seen as a unity of interconnected parts. This change of point of view towards the whole and its interconnectedness

fascinated Vernadskij and brought him to elaborate his notions of *biosphere* and *noosphere*. He saw our planet as a system that constantly exchanges matter and energy within itself and with the rest of the universe. The planetary system can be functionally divided into various layers by the types of transformations that occur within them. Each layer of our planet, from the core to the deepest strata to the mantle to the crust, due to its specific physical characteristics, transforms the matter it receives from the outside and expels the transformed matter into the other layers. The region of the Earth inhabited by life, the *biosphere*, is also defined by its function: it “can be regarded as a region of the Earth’s crust occupied by transformers that convert cosmic radiation into active terrestrial energy - electrical, chemical, mechanical, thermal, etc. etc.” (Vernadskij, 2004, pp. 42–43). The “transformers” are the living organisms, considered in their totality, as a single layer of organic or *living matter* (*živoe vešestvo*).

For Vernadskij, organic and inorganic matter represent a fundamentally diverse organization of space and time. The space of the biosphere occupied by living beings is intrinsically characterised by dissymmetry between a “left” and a “right” – in stark contrast with the Newtonian idea of “absolute space” (Vernadskij, 2022, p. 99). Its space is therefore always characterised by a position, and every (living) movement by a direction, just as “every vector has an arrow” (Vernadskij, 2022, p. 29). As space forms a continuum with time, also the time of the living is characterised by a direction, and is therefore irreversible, again in opposition with an absolute, mathematical idea of time (Vernadskij, 2022, p. 138). Within its space-time (directed, asymmetric and irreversible), living matter is determined by a series of functions. It can be described by a series of variables - e.g. speed, density (Vernadskij, 1998, p. 67), and pressure (Vernadskij, 1998, p. 62). Life can expand, colonising spaces previously uninhabitable (for example, due to a change in climate or orography) with a quantifiable speed. As it expands, life applies a certain pressure on the environment, in terms of applying energy on it that is derived from cosmic energy: it is to counteract that pressure, for example, that we must constantly expend energy and work, least our infrastructure is overrun by vegetation.

In the last centuries, the history of the biosphere has become more and more the history of a new geological force that is changing the composition of the biosphere: the human intellect. So much so that the biosphere can be regarded as entering a new phase of its evolution, that he denominates the *noosphere*, where the human intellect, and its

scientific and technological advancement, become the dominant geological force of the biosphere (Vernadskij, 2004, pp. 250, 252, 256), thus establishing a direct connection, and a substantial continuity, between the “ideal” world (the scientific thinking), the world of life and the world of matter.

Unlike other Cosmists, Vernadskij does not leave the boundaries of “traditional” (European) science, while calling for reform from within. His call for a shift in the approach to the study of Nature, considered as a global, interconnected unity in all its manifestations, including mankind and his cultural history, was perhaps less radical than other Cosmists. However, and probably also due to that fact, it was without a doubt the most influential within Soviet academia, influencing a very wide host of disciplines and specialists, for example by founding bodies such as the interdisciplinary *Kommissija historija znanij* (KIZ) [Commission for the History of Knowledge] (Ienna; Rispoli, 2023, p. 172).

The contribution of Vernadskij in laying down the foundation for the epistemological approach I am attempting to describe in the present paper can be summarised in two points.

First, he popularised and gave scientific credibility to the idea of the interconnected “sphere” of life, of which humankind is just a part, interconnected with the whole. Second, he introduced the idea that the *space* of life is *meaningful*. Unlike the absolute space of physics, defined by a set of coordinates, the space of life is always determined by a *position* and a *direction*. The Aristotelean category of *where?* (*ubi?*) is not, in Vernadskij, an *accident*, but is instead part of the *substance* of the thing: life does not have meaning outside the biosphere.

Both these ideas had certainly profound impact on the intellectual development of Jurij Lotman. Between Vernadskij and Lotman, however, there are several scholars who assimilated the same ideas, rethinking them within their fields, in an attempt to destroy the traditional barriers between disciplines towards a harmonic and unitary vision of knowledge. Among these thinkers there are P. Florenskij with his idea of the *pneumatosphere*,<sup>3</sup> and M. M. Bakhtin with his *logosphere*, as other representatives of this

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<sup>3</sup> Lotman, also through the work of his colleague B. A. Uspenskij, was quite familiar with Florenskij. For example, we know from his letters that he assisted in the reprint of the article *Obratnaja perspektiva* [Inverted perspective] by Florenskij as it appeared in issue 3 of *Trudy po znakovym sistemam* (1967 [1919]).

“spherical view of reality,” that “have sought to shatter the fragmentary and compartmentalising vision characteristic of modern (and Soviet) science, in favour of a recovery of the harmonious and living wholeness of knowledge” (Gherlone, 2014, p. 87).

Vernadskij was also deeply interested in Oriental knowledge, and he was in contact with some of the most important Orientalists of his time. In particular, he was friend with Sergej F. Olden’burg,<sup>4</sup> who then introduced him to Fedor I. Ščerbatskoj.<sup>5</sup> Vernadskij was involved with Olden’burg in numerous institutional efforts, such as the founding and the works of KIZ<sup>6</sup>, while he was involved with Ščerbatskoj in an epistolary exchange on a series of topics. Of particular note is a letter by Ščerbatskoj where he offers Vernadskij some suggestions on different conceptions of the essence of space-time in Indian and Buddhist, philosophy that could offer new perspectives to his Biogeochemistry (Ščerbatskoj in Rosov, 1993, pp. 57–60). These “Oriental” contacts certainly left an impression on Vernadskij, who would cite for example Indian philosophy many times in the papers that compose his “Philosophical Thoughts of a Naturalist” (Vernadskij, 1988).

This connection is relevant to our discussion as the next author encountered in our search for this “multiperspectivist” current belongs to the field of Soviet Oriental Studies.

## 5 Konrad and the Critique of Eurocentrism

Nikolaj Iosifovič Konrad (1891-1970) was a Soviet orientalist, specialised in the history of Japan and China, and a central figure in Soviet Oriental Studies.

While never mentioning Vernadskij in his works or his letters, nonetheless he can be rightfully included among the abovementioned representatives of the “spherical thinking:”

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P. A. Florenskij was a fundamental figure of Russian Cosmism. See, among others, (Pyman, 2010, in English) and (Tagliagambe, 2021, in Italian).

<sup>4</sup> Sergej Fedorovič Oden’burg (1863-1934) was a Russian Orientalist, and a key figure in Russian Academia both before and after the revolution.

<sup>5</sup> Fedor Ippolitovič Ščerbatskoj (1866–1942), Russian Orientalist, mostly known for his studies on Buddhism that, in English translation, had a profound impact on western Buddhology.

<sup>6</sup> “The permanent secretary of the Academy of Sciences S. F. Olden’burg was mandated to convene the first meeting of the Commission, which took place on 1 June (Saturday) 1921, at 1 o’clock, in the Small Conference Hall of the Academy. The meeting was attended by the leaders of the Academy of Sciences: President A. P. Karpinskij, Vice-President V. A. Steklov, Permanent Secretary S. F. Olden’burg, Academicians V. V. Bartol’d, V. I. Vernadskij, V. M. Istrin, P. P. Lazarev, N. Ja. Marr, and F. I. Uspenskij.” (Akademija Nauk SSSR, 2003, p. 8)

There was a time - and it has not yet passed - when man and nature were seen as two opposing forces. Their relationship was regarded as a struggle, as the eternal struggle of man against the forces of nature. On this ground two opposite conceptions were formed: the conception of man's total dependence on nature and the conception of man as the king of nature. There were, however, thinkers with a different judgement: they did not subordinate man to nature, nor did they oppose nature to man; they saw them as two forces coexisting in the same sphere - the sphere of life: forces not only coexisting, but also interacting. At the present time man has come to master the innermost, greatest forces of nature, and this has put him before an urgent question - the question of his very self. Who is he, the man who is mastering the forces of nature? (Konrad, 1974, p. 320).

According to this vision, human history can be seen as a unity, much as the *living matter*, that follows certain laws and regularities. Konrad himself described his work as “the research (and the attempt to outline the contour) of this *metasystem*” (Konrad, 1996, p. 395). From the point of view of the metasystem, the development of mankind can be seen as a unitary process. At the same time, however, within it, each culture develops in a unique way. Though the comparison of these different paths is to glimpse a general outline of a regularity of a higher order, the abovementioned *metasystem*.

A clear example can be found in Konrad's idea of humanism, as expressed in a lecture delivered at Tartu's faculty of oriental studies in 1962. *Humanism* is a central idea in Konrad's works: it is seen as a movement, as a process where man<sup>7</sup> puts himself at the centre of his reflection. It is difficult, however, to give more than a general outline of what “humanism” is, because

humanism is not something given once and for all. Like all ideas, the idea of humanism is not only formed by social life, history, but also follows the path of history. Therefore, the humanist idea in the course of historical life changes - both in its content and in its scope [...] even in a humanist complex that, for a given time, is unitary, one moment something comes to the fore, and the next moment, something else... (Konrad in Badaev, 2008, p. 246).

Perhaps one of the most relevant aspects of Konrad's research is his study of the “Renaissance” as developed for example in the paper “*Ob Epohe Vozroždenija*” [The

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<sup>7</sup> I will often use the word ‘man’ to translate the Russian term *čelovek*, which has a more gender-neutral connotation and could also be translated with ‘human’. However, I will adopt here the term ‘man’ in continuity with the translation of Konrad's writings that was published in his lifetime (Konrad, 1967).

Renaissance Epoch] (Konrad, 1966, English translation in 1967, pp. 101–135) – quoted also by Lotman (Lotman, 1985 [1984], p. 134). In the paper, the author discusses the use, in Oriental studies, of a terminological vocabulary developed in “Western” historical science (Konrad, 1967, p. 103). On one hand, one could argue that the term Renaissance should be employed only to describe a specific historical period in Italy and a few other European countries. On the other end of the spectrum, many authors use instead the term in a very broad and unspecific way “to describe any period of intensive cultural activity (most often in art and literature), especially when this activity is associated, to some degree, with a heightened interest in antiquity” (Konrad, 1967, p. 101).

It is possible, however, to compare two analogous moments in the history of Italy and China, the former around the 16<sup>th</sup> Century and termed “*Rinascita*” by Vasari, and the latter around the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries termed as “*Fu-ku*” (“return to antiquity” or “return of antiquity”) by Han Yu (Konrad, 1967, p. 105). From this comparison is possible to extrapolate some common typological features: authors of the Renaissance individuated a period of their history regarded as their “antiquity,” regarded as “the period when all the foundations of culture and education were laid” (Konrad, 1967, p. 104). The scholars of the Renaissance felt that they were separated from this antiquity by a period of decadence of culture, the “Middle Ages” or “Dark Ages” – which is in this sense a term employed to describe the attitude of an epoch towards another epoch. This was true both for Italian scholars and for Chinese philosophers who, albeit never using a comparable term, saw their immediately preceding epoch as a time where “learning and enlightenment were ‘plunged into oblivion’” (Konrad, 1966, p. 108). The reaction against the previous times, seen as an epoch of dogmatism and pedantry, of laws “from outside,” generated a revival of humanistic thinking in both Italy and China, that emphasised a “secular” view on man:

Renaissance humanism consisted of the individual’s assurance of his own value from every aspect; of the value of his own reason, senses and willpower. Furthermore, this value was associated with the autonomy of the human personality, its freedom and independence. [Renaissance humanism] assumed its form in categories that were philosophical rather than mythical or religious (Konrad, 1967, p. 124).

This comparative analysis of the typology of Renaissance allows us then to discover similar epochs in other cultures: “Among the peoples of Western Turkistan and

Iran the term ‘Renaissance’ is not encountered, but an epoch characterised by Renaissance features is observed between the 9th and the 13th centuries” (Konrad, 1967, p. 104).

The study of the separate “Renaissance epochs” allows us to formulate questions that pertain to the “metasystem” of history, its regularities and its inner workings:

We are dealing here not only with the discovery of “Renaissance epochs” in the history of different peoples (that is to say, with a new interpretation of the historical process), but with far more. It is a question involving the historical meaning of such an epoch, the historical conditions leading up to it and determining it, its historical significance and, lastly, its inevitable appearance in the history of certain peoples, and, in the final analysis, in the history of all mankind (Konrad, 1967, pp. 104–105).

Konrad found an echo of this idea of the two “layers” of historical study through his engagement with Chinese Philosophy, and in particular with the “Sung school”<sup>8</sup> (Konrad, 1967, p. 69):

“There is one law, but its parts are diverse.” In this formula [...], as we have already pointed out, Ch’eng I wanted to stress, on the one hand, the unity of all that exists and, consequently, of man and natural objects, and, on the other hand, the concrete, physical diversity of all that exists (Konrad, 1967, p. 84).

According to Konrad, Sung philosophers thought that knowledge of the *law* can be attained only through the study of its parts, i.e. of the “things” (the worldly affairs): “in order to attain cognition of the law of a thing one must first concentrate on it and proceed in this state of concentration from one thing to another”(Konrad, 1967, p. 84).

In his writings, Konrad is not only studying Chinese philosophy as a historical or anthropological object, but he’s also *engaging* with it.

According to Konrad, European science on history and society, including the Marxist socio-economical theory, has been mostly developed from the observation of a sample of humanity that is, after all, very small (Konrad, 1967, p. 16). Their general

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<sup>8</sup> The Sung (or Song) school, regarded as belonging to the wider current of Neo-Confucianism, was a school of philosophy active during the eponymous Sung dynasty (960-1279). Their main goal was to recover the original teachings of Confucius (c. 551 – c. 479 BCE) and Mencius (c. 371 – c. 289 BCE), opposing the mysticism of Buddhism and Taoism, and develop a social and ethical philosophy founded on rationalism and on the (humanist) belief that the universe could be understood by human reason.

categories and systemic laws are highly idiosyncratic: claiming their universality, their applicability to all the other parts of the world, is not only scientifically inexact, it also causes all the other countries to be excluded from world history (Konrad, 1967, p. 45) – in a very similar manner to the process of ‘colonial difference’ described by Mignolo.

The goal of science, and in particular of Oriental studies, is what he calls “the surmounting [*preodolenie*] of Europocentrism” (Konrad, 1967, p. 23), by engaging with different cultures and different knowledges.

If, through a mental experiment, one were to interrogate Konrad and his fellow Orientalists, in the wake of Mignolo (1999), on whether non-Western knowledge is (or at least, can be) regarded as a philosophy, they would decidedly give a positive answer. Given “philosophy” as a general category of the human sphere, they would have no issue in considering Greek philosophy and its following (European) tradition as only *one* of its concretizations, among others.

This is very clear, for example, in one of the most important representatives of the Russian, then Soviet, Oriental studies, Fedor I. Ščerbatsoj, already mentioned in relation to Verndaskij. In the preface of his monumental work *Buddhist Logic*, the author addresses its philosopher readers:

In addressing itself to the philosopher this work claims his consideration of a system of logic which is not familiar to him. It is a logic, but it is not Aristotelian. It is epistemological, but not Kantian. There is a widely spread prejudice that positive philosophy is to be found only in Europe (Ščerbatsoj, 1962 [1930], p. XII).

As Konrad, Ščerbatsoj does not regard the study of Buddhist logic as a mere anthropological exercise, but rather recognises its relevance for the contemporary debate:

There is as yet no agreed opinion on what the future logic will be, but there is a general dissatisfaction with what it at present is. We are on the eve of a reform. The consideration at this juncture of the independent and altogether different way in which the problems of logic, formal as well as epistemological, have been tackled by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti will possibly be found of some importance (Ščerbatsoj, 1962 [1930], p. XII).

The same position is expressed with clarity by Konrad. Non-European science needs not only to be *studied* but also *incorporated, dialogued with*:

[w]here [non-European science] is noticed and even studied, this is mainly in the sphere of the history of culture, education and science in those lands, while its importance for the general theoretical principles of scientific knowledge does not receive, as a rule, the attention it deserves (Konrad, 1967, p. 26).

We find in Konrad another, fundamental step towards multiperspectivism. Vernadskij's idea of the interconnected sphere, and of localised space, is now transposed in the realm of human culture. The problem of knowledge comes at the forefront: the fundamental contradiction of the *unity* and *diversity* of humankind can then be solved only if we accept and engage with the different, localised knowledges. While the idea European scientific tradition is still the point of departure, it certainly can be said that, according to Konrad, it would always remain partial and incomplete, if it were not to engage on an equal level with other sciences, other knowledges, other histories.

## 6 Culture Mirror of the World: Lotman and the Semiotics of Monads

The last figure I will discuss in the search for the “multiperspectivist” approach is that of semiotician, historian and literary scholar Jurij M. Lotman (1922-1993).<sup>9</sup>

After Vernadskij made the attention of a part of the Soviet academic world focus on the question of the interrelation of man and nature, and of the necessity to break the barrier between disciplines and fields of knowledge, Konrad refocused the issue, within the same framework, centring it around the humanistic question of the world of man [*čelovek*], his self and his role within the sphere of life. Moving the focus on man brought the issue of the *diversity* of the self of the human individuals: their different voices, their different points of view, and their heterogeneity within their unity.

Re-focusing the *sphere* around the notion of *mankind* also introduces another important question, that will be central to the reflection of Lotman: the question of the *self*.

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<sup>9</sup> To avoid excessively burdening the paper, I will give for granted a certain basic acquaintance with the fundamental ideas of Lotman. For an introduction to the author, see the *Companion to Juri Lotman* (Tamm; Torop, 2022).

The objects of the biogeochemist, including the noosphere, exert a certain *pressure* around them, including, in a way, the researcher who studies them. However, they do not *speak* to the researcher – at least not in the literal sense of the world.

Instead, any researcher in the history of human culture, in any of its manifestations – the literature, philosophy, society – must begin their enquiry from the undeniable fact that each individual – person, social group, culture – affirms and projects on the outside (including the researcher itself) a claim for the existence of their *self*. The *question of man* that Konrad evokes is but a generalization of the question of *whose story* the researcher is telling.

Konrad approaches this issue when discussing, in a letter to British historian Arnold Toynbee, what are the essential “units” of history, the “monads” of historical science:

It seems to me that monadism exists, but it is not given, once and for all, in a determined sum of attributes; it changes through the course of history and is itself deeply historical. Incidentally, this idea is convincingly supported by the very history of world civilizations [...] that you describe in great detail [in your works]. So, wouldn't it be better for us to look for these historical monads, which are also changing, precisely in this changing history? But if something changes, it means that there is also this “something” [*sto-to*]. (Konrad; Toynbee, 1974, p. 276).

To formally define this “something that changes” will be the focus point of the work of last two decades of Lotman’s life. This effort started, in its most complete and conscious form, when Lotman, inspired by Vernadskij’s idea of the biosphere, welcomes in the sciences of language a change in perspective that puts as the starting point of the semiotic enquiry, not the isolated unit (language, text, sign), but the whole (of culture), in its interconnected unity, and thus conceives the *semiosphere* as the space “outside which even the mere existence of semiosis is impossible” (Lotman, 1989 [1984], p. 44). The semiosphere is a continuum of texts and languages, infinitely crossed by borders and marked by an infinite heterogeneity. Within this continuum it is possible to isolate certain *semiotic individualities* – a semiotic monad *sui generis* (Lotman, 2019 [1989], p. 85), according to their function: the production of *new* meaning.

A text, according to Lotman, is *new* if it is not possible to derive it from another through a finite algorithm. An element of unpredictability is thus necessary, and this element is introduced by difference – a partial untranslatability by two structures.<sup>10</sup>

For this reason, the fundamental meaning-generating unit, the semiotic monad, is at its core bilingual – in the sense that a bilingual structure is a *minimal* structure capable of producing new meaning. Bilingualism is thus, in general, the minimal condition needed to produce knowledge:

The idea of the possibility for a single ideal language to serve as an optimal mechanism for the representation of reality is an illusion. A minimally functional structure requires the presence of at least two languages and their incapacity, each independently of the other, to embrace the world external to each of them. This incapacity is not a deficiency, but rather a condition of existence, as it dictates the necessity of the other (Lotman, 2009 [1992], p. 2).

Semiotic monads are immersed in a semiotic space that, as the space of life in Vernadskij, is *meaningful*. The position of the monads changes their fundamental characteristics: they can be in the centre or in the periphery, they can be “outside” or “inside,” and this determines their internal dynamics and how they relate with the outside. Each monad thus produces knowledge according to its determined location, i.e. from a point of view.

Similarly to Leibniz, the question of the “point of view” in Lotman unites the gnoseological dimension with the epistemological and the practical (ethical and political).

From the methodological standpoint, Lotman warns us, that for the researcher to identify one singular language as a universal language, and to forget that they are themselves but a single (semiotic) monad, reflecting the universe from its partial point of view, would make it impossible to understand any culture and to uncover the nature of historical development:

Without forgetting the monadic structure of the semiotic field and understanding oneself as a monad within that field, the historian of culture turns out to be in a position that is more complicated than before but one that is probably more closely aligned with reality (Lotman, 2019 [1989], p. 93).

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<sup>10</sup> For a discussion on the notions of unpredictability and untranslatability in Lotman I refer to (Deltcheva; Vlasov, 1996; Gherlone, 2022).

As for Leibniz and Konrad, the epistemological dimension is closely related to the ethical and political ones. In the case of Lotman, the “multiperspectivist” semiotics and its various dimensions emerge in the last monograph, where he reflects upon the differences between binary and ternary models of culture (Lotman, 2009 [1992]). Albeit dialogue is the fundamental mode of production of knowledge, a culture projects on the outside certain “models” of dialogism that affect its dynamics. A binary model brings the culture to configure dialogue as an exclusion of the other: the “inside” and the “outside,” the “us” and the “them” are treated as homogeneous units, that represent incompatible alternatives. A ternary model, or in other words a mediated model, would instead allow for a space in between the *us* and the *them* where the plurality that both terms represent can be unfolded, and is the only way towards genuine multiperspectivism. In binary models historical changes become catastrophic and tend to the annihilation of the other. In ternary–mediated - models, the complexity of the culture where different layers and points of view coexist (in a multiperspectivist fashion) allows for changes where the other is incorporated and enriches the I.

In a true cosmist fashion, Lotman believes that the way out of strife and conflict is to change our culture, through knowledge, and embrace a mediated model. With tragic foreshadowing, Lotman reveals the ethical and political dimension of his “multiperspectivism” when commenting on the events he was living, immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union:

The radical change in relations between Eastern and Western Europe, which is taking place before our very eyes may, perhaps, provide us with the opportunity to pass into a ternary, Pan-European system and to forego the ideal of destroying “the old world to its very foundations, and then” constructing a new one on its ruins. To overlook this possibility would be a historical catastrophe (Lotman, 2009 [1992], p. 174).

Numerous similarities can be found between Lotman’s multiperspectivism and the decolonial ideas: first, the idea of a semantically charged space, in which the *where* counts just as the *what* of knowledge. Second, the notion that *one* tradition of knowledge cannot, by itself, “contain the tools that are necessary to understand the whole world” (Reiter, 2018, p. 4). Third, an impulse to engage with the other that transcends a mere

epistemological consideration, but that is also at the same time an ethical and political imperative. And finally, Lotman and all the authors mentioned share with the decolonial scholars the idea that knowledge is always aimed towards a *projectuality*.

The multiperspectivist mode differs from the decolonial tradition, and especially from Mignolo's *pluriverse*, in a variety of ways, primarily because it does not abandon a universalist project. It, however, transfigures its meaning.

All the Soviet authors discussed above started from the idea that reality - and human culture in particular - must be studied as a collective whole and that as such it has certain, definite characteristics that are our task to understand. Konrad and Lotman also believed that human culture constantly and inevitably develops and grows, through the dialogue of its parts, fuelled by its internal contradictions, the primary of which is the contradictions between its tendency towards unity and its need for internal heterogeneity. Their universalist project resides thus in the idea that it is possible to understand – or at least get closer to – the general “laws” of development of the cultural whole, and through that knowledge foster the process of dialogue and reciprocal understanding, with the ultimate, ethical goal to enrich human potential, in the case of the humanist ideas of Konrad, or to decrease the instances of destructive encounters, of binary oppositions and processes of exclusion, in the case of Lotman. This result, however, can only be achieved through a *multiperspectivist* approach, i.e. through recognising and considering one's own situatedness, its belonging to a point of view, and most of all by engaging with the *other*. Following in the footsteps of cosmist thinkers, their approach is not a way of “navigating” diversity: it is, rather, the only viable pact for truly involving the whole of humanity in the grand project of understanding our universe and expanding our potential.

## **In place of conclusions**

A dialogue between the decolonial movement and the ideas I presented is certainly desirable and, in my opinion, potentially very proficuous. It is not my intention, however, to begin it in the present paper, as my main goal was simply to present a possible interpretative line in the history of Soviet ideas centered around the concept of *multiperspectivism*.

This account, however, can serve another purpose, this time directly related to the decolonial issue. The ideas I presented moved constantly back and forth from the “centre” of Europe, for example with Leibniz, to its borders and beyond, with the Cosmists and Konrad’s Chinese influences, then again to the “centre” through the reception of Vernadskij and Lotman. As I tried to express in the first chapter, the too often repeated unitary narration of European history of philosophy hides a *de facto* heterogeneity, multilingualism, internal contradictions and numerous border-zones. Of course, the idea of challenging the very idea of Europe is not new and certainly predates the decolonial movement, and was tackled both by non-European<sup>11</sup> and European scholars.<sup>12</sup> However, I include in this effort also those studies that recognise – and uncover – the *polylinguisticity*, the heterogeneity and, in the end, the *reserve of dynamics* (Lotman, 2009 [1992], p. 115) of European culture, in a way that is often obscured by the same self-description of Europe. Any work that explores – and explodes – this plurilinguism and polivocality is contributing to create a *new* idea of Europe, including, for example, the works discussed above on Leibniz’s multiperspectivism.

In the words of Jurij Lotman:

The meta descriptions of culture are in and of themselves not a skeleton or a foundational layer but rather one of the structural axes of culture; for the historian, they are not a self-evident fact but material for study, one of the mechanisms of culture, situated in a constant struggle with other cultural mechanisms (Lotman, 2019 [1983], pp. 80–81).

This approach has a very important consequence for those issues raised by decolonial authors. When faced with the *decolonial difference*, with the *double bind* described by Bernasconi, any non-Western subjectivity has a third option: to question the very idea of Europe that is presented and instead relate to a different kind of “Europe,” conceived as a semiosphere among others, as a place of heterogeneity and contradictions, of borders that become territories and territories that become borders. A semiosphere where radically different ideas of *time* and *space* coexist, for example, or where different kinds of logic (non-Aristotelian) can be conceived.

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<sup>11</sup> On the topic see the (Miller, 2023) and its comprehensive bibliographical references.

<sup>12</sup> See the already mentioned (Weller, 2021b)

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## **Research Data and Other Materials Availability**

The contents underlying the research text are included in the manuscript.

## **Reviews**

Due to the commitment assumed by *Bakhtiniana. Revista de Estudos do Discurso* [*Bakhtiniana. Journal of Discourse Analysis*] to Open Science, this journal Only publishes reviews that have been authorized by all involved.

## **Review I**

This article is dedicated to multiperspectivism in the history of Russian ideas, particularly during the Soviet period. I must begin by saying that reading and evaluating this text is a true gift. It is written in excellent English, as far as I can tell, and is at least completely comprehensible. If it is so understandable, it is probably because the argumentation is particularly careful, clear, and progressive. The author knows the authors he analyzes very well, and his analyses are penetrating and original, pushing the boundaries, especially for understanding Vernadsky and Lotman.

Considering the different criteria listed on the evaluation platform, I consider that this text meets all of them. I will therefore content myself with just a few elements of discussion that the author could use to eventually complete or improve his text.

The first observation concerns the gap between the initial statements or references and what follows in the analysis of the three authors. At the outset, the author evokes an epistemological critique of the sciences, with the notion of “point zero” (universality), which allows him to denounce the supposed universality of European science as a mask of intellectual imperialism. Then there is the question of “proletarian science” and “bourgeois science.” Finally, multiperspectivism is mentioned as a metaepistemological solution, which would allow maintaining a universalist perspective while accepting the

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specific determination of the sciences by the culture in which they are produced. The reasoning is easy if we limit ourselves to the level of general epistemology and the history of philosophical ideas, but we cannot maintain that all sciences are sensitive to cultural and ideological variations. To take a provocative current example: I do not see how one could defend the idea that the science of the atom and the technology of the atomic bomb in Russia differ profoundly, culturally and ideologically, from the same science in the USA or in France. This point deserves some nuance.

The second observation concerns multiperspectivism itself. The article, limited to Russian culture but reinforced by Leibniz, seems simultaneously metaepistemological in nature and reserved for the semiotic sciences. However, it would not be excessive to recall that multiperspectivism is today a leading paradigm in anthropology (Viveiros de Castro, Descola, Latour, etc.), and that, for these anthropologists, the advantage of the method lies precisely in the inversions and navigation between points of view. And some add that this “navigation” is determined by the mode of anthropic identification: it differs depending on whether we are in an “animist” world (variations in point of view between living and nonliving species), a “naturalist” world (variations between “human cultures”), or an “analog” world (variations in scale, such as between microcosm and macrocosm). The author could easily deduce that “cosmism” itself is marked by an anthropological perspective.

Finally, an essential point deserves clarification or more precisely enunciated. If Lotman's dialogism between THEM and US doesn't lead to multiperspectivism, but only to biperspectivism, the article suggests this is because at least three instances would be necessary. We don't really understand why THEM couldn't be a true plural, rather than a unitary collective, or why the thickness of the border wouldn't be a possible third. These aspects are mentioned at the end of the article, but they are the least explicit part, which could be clearer and firmer. ACCEPTED

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## Review II

The article intitled “Engaging the difference. Multiperspectivist themes in the Soviet history of ideas” presents an interesting insight on three Soviet theoreticians whose main point of convergence lies in what the author calls multiperspectivism, “a notion elaborated to describe the epistemological approach of G. W. Leibniz.” He/she based the reflections on three Russian and later Soviet scholars, “Vladimir I. Vernadskij, Nikolaj I. Konrad and Jurij M. Lotman as representatives of a current that, starting from a critique of Western (Eurocentric) science, worked towards constructing a new epistemological approach, which I will call ‘multiperspectivist.’” The author starts his/her discussion putting into evidence the possibility of nearing the scholars’ ideas to a decolonial thought. He/she claims that the way those scholars present their theoretical perspectives surpasses the circulating views of the period. According to the author, “Within the Russian Empire, and then the Soviet Union, European culture was felt and conceptualized through a similar ‘double bind’ as that used to describe the ‘colonial difference’”. Many Russian intellectuals

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divided themselves between “Westernizers”, who proposed to embrace the calling of Western culture and reform, and “Slavianophiles,” who wanted to reject European Culture and embrace the “Slavic” tradition.” The scholars highlighted by the article, according to the author, “turn on its head the mode of production of knowledge,” approaching the decolonial thought. The article is well written, the references are totally in connection with the discussion, and the findings are worth presenting.

I would only suggest some proofreading as there are minor spelling and grammar inconsistencies.

Considering the quality of the paper and expecting that the author may proofread his/her text, I consider the work ACCEPTED for publication.

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### **Editors in Charge**

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