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J.S. Mill's *System of Logic* in Russia
The Debate on Empiricism in Russian Philosophy, 1860s–1890s

by Julia Berest

Abstract

J.S. Mill's *System of Logic* (1843)—the book that brought him both fame and controversy in Britain—reached Russian readers during the pivotal decade of the 1860s when Russia experienced an unexpected jolt into scientific modernity which came with a renewed influx of Western ideas. As a work that received recognition in Europe for its contribution to the development of scientific methods and the theory of knowledge, the *Logic* found an enthusiastic reception among the Russian intelligentsia who embraced empirical science and its attendant skepticism towards religion. For their opponents on a conservative side, Mill's naturalist explanation of the world and of human cognition epitomized the positivist worldview which they held responsible for an erosion of religious foundations of life and knowledge. Such contrasting reactions to Mill's empiricism in Russia reflected the same ideological divide that emerged in Europe around the question of empirical science. However, many Russian critics also exhibited a Slavophile mindset, seeing Mill as a symptom of Western spiritual decadence antithetical and pernicious to native Russian culture. Towards the end of the century, the European debate on empiricism began to show signs of cultural compromise between the two sides, whereas in Russia the divide remained sharp and focused on the question of Russia's response to Western influences.



Keywords: Russian philosophy, science, religion, J.S. Mill, debate on empiricism and logic, Westernizers, Slavophiles



J.S. Mill's *System of Logic* in Russia

The Debate on Empiricism in Russian Philosophy, 1860s–1890s

Julia Berest

John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) became known to Russian readers in the 1860s, two decades after his fame rose in Britain following the publication of his first book-length work, *A System of Logic* (1843). A controversial figure from the start owing to his liberal views in politics and utilitarian stance in ethics, Mill's philosophy of radical empiricism was bound to attract attention in Russia, no less than in his home country. For the Russian educated public, the 1860s was a time of unprecedented intellectual revival after thirty years of Nicholas I's reactionary rule and isolationist policies which impeded the development of philosophical studies in Russia. With the start of liberal reforms under Alexander II, it became possible for Russian readers to catch up on the latest Western publications in the field of philosophy and science during the crucial years when the pace of scientific modernization and its attendant cultural change began to intensify in the West.

Once Mill was discovered in Russia, his popularity and influence remained strong up until the end of the tsarist period (and was especially notable throughout the 1860s–90s), as evidenced by the number of Russian editions of his works and the amount of commentary they generated on both sides of the ideological spectrum.¹ *The Principles of Political Economy*, for instance, was published seven times, in addition to a serialized publication in the journal *Sovremennik*, which introduced the book to the Russian public in 1860; *The Subjection of Women* underwent six editions, becoming staple reading for Russian feminists and, by necessity, for their opponents who had to familiarize themselves with the most famous

1. See J. Berest, "The Reception of J.S. Mill's Feminist Thought in Imperial Russia," *Russian History* 43 (2016): 101–41; Julia Berest, "J. S. Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* in Imperial Russia: Publication and Reception," *Modern Intellectual History* 14 (2017): 67–97; J. Berest, "John Stuart Mill and his *Autobiography* in Imperial Russia," *Journal of Modern Russian History and Historiography [JMRHH]* 10 (2017): 28–70; J. Berest, "J. S. Mill's *On Liberty* in Russia: Modernity and Democracy in Focus," *Slavonic and East European Review* 97 (2019): 266–98; J. Berest, "The Theme of Happiness and British Utilitarianism in Russian Thought, 1860s–80s," *JMRHH* 14 (2021): 5–68; J. Berest, "Scientific Modernity vs. Cultural Tradition: N. N. Strakhov, F. M. Dostoevskii and J. S. Mill's *A System of Logic*," *JMRHH* 16 (2023): 5–49.

European champion of women's rights; the *Logic* too gained long-term popularity and was published in six editions between 1865 and 1914.² The fact that the first translations of Mill's major works were published by radical and left-leaning writers—N. G. Chernyshevskii, N. K. Mikhailovskii, P. L. Lavrov and G. E. Blagosvetlov—was indicative of the reputation that Mill acquired in Russia. He was commonly viewed as a philosopher whose works had practical value and could be useful for Russia's renewed effort at modernization. The *Logic* was no exception despite its recondite language and subject matter seemingly removed from day-to-day concerns.

Unlike logic as we know it today—a highly specialized discipline which holds more use for computer scientists than philosophers—logic in the nineteenth century enjoyed wider popularity and was defined more broadly, as a foundational discipline designed to improve one's reasoning abilities and the art of communication. In early nineteenth century Britain, logic was deemed a necessary part of the liberal education popular with the upper classes.³ Its practical significance rose even further when logic was transformed, later in the century, into "the science of science itself," as Mill called it, with a subject matter that now included the methods of scientific inquiry and the theory of knowledge.⁴ Mill was a major figure who affected this momentous change by developing the inductive logic (as opposed to the traditional logic of the syllogism) in an effort to improve the methodological apparatus of empirical sciences. The latter, in his view, included not only the natural sciences but also the sciences that study society (or the social sciences, in today's terminology)—an unconventional position in Mill's time, when the nature, methods and scope of science were still the subject of debate.⁵ Although Mill eschewed any explicit commentary on religion in the *Logic*, he was well aware that his book, which adhered to the principle of a naturalist explanation of the world, implicitly undermined the foundations of the religious worldview and was later used by some of his followers in Britain to challenge theological orthodoxies.⁶

By 1865, when the *Logic* became available in Russian translation, Mill was at the peak of his fame in Britain and the practical impact of his "uncompromising empiricism"⁷ was in

2. Dzhon Stuart Mill, *Sistema Logiki*, trans. P. L. Lavrov (St Petersburg: Tip. M. Vol'fa, 1865; 2nd ed. 1878); Dzh. S. Mill, *Sistema logiki sillogicheskoi i induktivnoi* (Moscow: I. N. Kushnerev, 1897–98); Dzh. S. Mill, *Sistema logiki*, trans. V. N. Ivanovskii (Moscow: Knizhnoe delo, 1900; 2nd ed. 1914). There was also an abridged edition for novice readers published in 1897. See below.

3. James W. Allard, "Early Nineteenth-Century Logic," in W. J. Mander, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 29.

4. Quoted in Antis Loizides, "Introduction," in A. Loizides, ed., *Mill's A System of Logic: Critical Appraisals* (New York: Taylor and Francis Group, 2014), 15. See also W. J. Mander, "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy*, 2–5.

5. D. Cobb, "Mill's Philosophy of Science," in Christopher Macleod and Dale E. Miller, eds., *A Companion to Mill* (Southern Gate, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), 234; Loizides, "Introduction," 1, 16.

6. See, James Livingston, "Sceptical Challenges to Faith," in Thomas Baldwin, ed., *The Cambridge History of Philosophy, 1870–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 323–4; Richard Reeves, *John Stuart Mill: Victorian Firebrand* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007), 167–8.

7. W. J. Mander, *A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 125.

full display, pointing to the ambivalent intellectual atmosphere in which Mill's ideas operated. On the one hand, it was widely recognized that Mill's methods of scientific inquiry helped to move the natural sciences forward, including the field of medicine.⁸ On the other hand, Mill's epistemological challenge to religion was one of the factors that plunged Britain into "the crisis of faith" deeply unsettling to those of his countrymen who worried about the diminishing role of religion in a world increasingly defined by science.⁹ It was in reaction to the dominance of Mill's empiricism in British academia that a strong Idealist movement arose in Britain in the 1870s, (so unusual for a culture steeped in empiricist tradition¹⁰), as a way of addressing what one Victorian commentator called "the most anxious thought of our time."¹¹

In Russia, where the discipline of logic itself was relatively new but growing in popularity, Mill's book became a staple of university courses by the early 1880s, generating a significant amount of commentary in specialized monographs and textbooks on logic and psychology (which was part of philosophy curriculum at that time). As this essay will show, similarly to Mill's reception in his home country, the *Logic* in Russia became a subject of debate between those who subscribed to Mill's empiricism (often with great enthusiasm) and their opponents, who viewed empirical science as inadequate or fundamentally flawed in its explanation of the world and of the way we cognize it. Given the scope of the topic and the scarcity of studies on the history of logic and epistemological discourse in Russian philosophy,¹² this examination will focus on select thinkers whose engagement with Mill's book illustrates the contrasting reactions that his empiricism engendered in Russia. For the majority of them, Mill's conception of causality was the main subject of interest, as it involved broader philosophical questions concerning the origin of the world and the nature of human cognition.

Examining the reception of Mill's empiricism in Russia sheds light on epistemological debates that arose in Russian philosophy with the (abrupt) arrival of modern science in the 1860s. In a recent study of Russian theological academies, Thomas Nemeth has argued that philosophy instructors at the academies proved ill-prepared to meet the challenge of modernity due to the isolationist and dogmatic stance adopted by the Orthodox Church as way of warding off "the pernicious 'subjectivism' of modern Western philosophy." "Whereas in the West the Roman Church confronted the rise of the empirical science and thereby the role of reason in affirming the religious tenets, ... similar conflicts were largely absent from

8. Loizides, "Introduction," 25; Reeves, *John Stuart Mill*, 168.

9. W. J. Mander, "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy*, 17; James Allard, "Idealism in Britain and the United States," in Thomas Baldwin, ed., *The Cambridge History of Philosophy, 1870–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 45.

10. W. J. Mander, "Hegel's Thought in Europe," in Lisa Herzog, ed., *Hegel's Thought in Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2013), 168.

11. Quoted in Allard, "Idealism in Britain," 44.

12. There are no monographic studies on the history of Russian logic in Western (English-language) scholarship. The only specialized work available is V. A. Bazhanov, *Istoriia logiki v Rossii* (Moscow: Kanon, 2003). On the questions of epistemology in Russian philosophy, see Thomas Nemeth, *Kant in Russia* (Springer, 2017) and Nemeth, *Philosophy in Imperial Russia's Theological Academies* (De Gruyter, 2023)

the Orthodox Church in Russia."¹³ It is instructive to see how secular Russian philosophers responded to the same challenge. Although their reaction to Mill's *Logic* had much in common with the reception of his work in Britain, the specific intellectual context to which his ideas were transplanted—the presence of censorship, the belatedness with which empiricism reached Russia, as well as the impact of anti-Western sentiments emanating from conservative circles—inevitably influenced the nature of the debate. The story of Mill's reception in Russia is best understood against the background of European intellectual developments that reveal the historical significance of Mill's work but also the inherently controversial nature of the questions involved in the debate on scientific modernity.

A System of Logic in Britain: Transformative Influence and Controversy

A System of Logic was the work that brought Mill widespread recognition not only in academic circles, but also, to his surprise, among the wider British audience. A six-part treatise with a long and rather formidable title—*A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive, Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation*—this massive study was not an easy read, as Mill himself acknowledged. "I don't suppose people will read anything so scholastic," he wrote shortly after the *Logic's* publication.¹⁴ It was a pleasant surprise when the book turned out to be a great success. Looking back on those years, Mill wrote in his *Autobiography* (1873): "How the book came to have, for a work of its kind, so much success, I have never thoroughly understood."¹⁵ On this, Mill's recent biographer commented, with a touch of humor, that "the *Logic* was one of those works which became a vital addition to the bookshelves of all self-respecting educated households."¹⁶

Within Mill's lifetime, the *Logic* went through eight editions, contributing to the revival of academic logic in Britain and establishing itself as "a decisive work in the historical development of the philosophy of science," according to modern assessments.¹⁷ The growing interest of the general public in the subject of logic was noted by many contemporaries: "Not a month passes which does not bring us new publications on logic," wrote a British commentator in 1854.¹⁸ One of the reasons for that was the role that logic came to play in the development of modern science and philosophy of science. With his focus on methods of scientific investigation, Mill was almost guaranteed to find a large audience in Britain, a country where the scientific revolution made the biggest advancements in his lifetime.

13. Nemeth, *Philosophy in Imperial Russia's Theological Academies*, xiii.

14. Quoted in Loizides, "Introduction," 5.

15. J. S. Mill, *Autobiography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), 190.

16. Richard Reeves, *John Stuart Mill: Victorian Firebrand* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007), 163.

17. Cobb, "Mill's Philosophy of Science," 234; See also, Loizides, "Introduction," 1, 16.

18. Quoted in *ibid.*, 16.

The foundation stone of Mill's philosophy of science was the idea that "all knowledge" "consists in generalization from experience." For Mill, "there is no knowledge *a priori*; no truth cognizable by the mind's inward light, and grounded on intuitive evidence."¹⁹ Sense perceptions supply the "original data," which are then processed through inductive reasoning—a mode of reasoning that, according to Mill, is the most natural to human beings, something that we employ spontaneously.²⁰ Long before science emerged, mankind was capable of applying primitive inductions to observed phenomena, thereby learning of causal connections between phenomena. In this manner, early humans discovered that "food nourishes, that water drowns, or quenches thirst, that the sun gives light and heat."²¹ These primitive generalisations laid the foundation for more complex scientific induction. Thus, sense impressions constitute the raw material out of which the mind fashions both empirical generalizations and abstract concepts.

In a move that earned Mill the appellation of "radical" empiricist, he famously applied this principle of cognition to explain the nature of mathematical knowledge, going against the widely shared view that mathematics and geometry are *a priori* sciences.²² He wrote: "it is customary to say that the points, lines, circles, and squares which are the subject of geometry, exist in our conceptions merely ... [that] minds, by working on their own materials, construct an *a priori* science ... which is purely mental, and has nothing whatever to do with outward experience." For Mill, in contrast, geometric definitions reflect real facts about objects amenable to sense perception: "Our idea of a point, I apprehend to be simply our idea of the *minimum visible*, the smallest portion of surface which we can see."²³

Since knowledge, according to Mill, ultimately derives from experience, the limits of the knowable are set by the limits of our senses and cognitive abilities as humans. "Of nature, or anything whatever external to ourselves, we know ... nothing, except the facts which present themselves to our senses, and such other facts as may, by analogy, be inferred from these."²⁴ Mill, therefore, acknowledged that there might be things in the world simply inaccessible to human faculties but he did not view this limitation as a serious obstacle to the progress of

19. Quoted in R. F. McRae, "Introduction," in John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic Ratiocinative and Inductive. Collected Works*, 33 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), VII: xxii; see also Christopher Macleod, "Mill on Epistemology of Reasons: A Comparison with Kant," in *Mill's a System of Logic: Critical Appraisals*, 152.

20. David Godden, "Mill on Logic," in *A Companion to Mill*, 185.

21. J. S. Mill, *A System of Logic* (London: Longmans, 1882), 1: 392.

22. See W. J. Mander, *The Unknowable: A Study in the Nineteenth-Century British Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2020), 110.

23. Mill, *A System of Logic*, 1: 280.

24. Quoted in Rae, "Introduction," xxii.

knowledge.²⁵ As W. J. Mander aptly put it, Mill's key epistemological claim amounted to a simple proposition: "empiricist knowledge is all we have, but it is also all we need."²⁶

At a time when the nature and scope of science was a contestable subject, Mill's commitment to pure empiricism entailed a crucial argument that the goal of science is to explain the world naturalistically, through the discovery of causal laws that operate in nature.²⁷ "An individual fact is said to be explained," Mill wrote, "by pointing out its cause, that is by stating the law of causation" and by "cause" he meant nothing more than a "physical cause" "in that sense alone in which one physical fact is said to be the cause of another."²⁸ By contrast, Mill's major opponent, William Whewell, maintained that causation involves more than merely an unconditional succession of phenomena in which the cause is a set of invariable antecedent conditions; rather, causation requires an agent that has productive power. Thus, in keeping with the more traditional understanding of the aims of scientific inquiry, Whewell argued that science ultimately has to lead to an explanation of the First Causes of things. This could be achieved through a combination of inductive reasoning and what he called "a colligatory inference—an inference uniting diverse observed phenomena according to an *a priori* conception." The concept of causality itself, according to Whewell, is not an inference from experience but an *a priori* idea that connects the human mind to that of God.²⁹ Mill, however, was convinced that the theory of *a priori* knowledge (which he more commonly called "intuitivist") lacked objectivity, operating with mental conceptions that may not be amenable to independent verification. From Mill's standpoint, abstract conception is something implicit in the facts themselves, so the mind only discovers rather than constructs it: "there is in the facts themselves something of which the conception itself is a copy."³⁰

Based on his commitment to the empiricist theory of knowledge, Mill formulated the structure of scientific inquiry as a three-stage process: inductive reasoning (which includes five methods of causal investigation), ratiocination (or syllogistic reasoning) and verification. This was the most famous part of the book.³¹ Although he drew on the insights of the English empiricist school, his account of the methods of induction was original enough for some of his contemporaries to view it as "a kind of revolution in the science of logic."³²

25. Ibid., xxii; Mander, *The Unknowable*, 108.

26. Ibid, 105.

27. Cobb, "Mill's Philosophy of Science," 236; William Stafford, *John Stuart Mill* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 56.

28. Quoted in Cobb, "Mill's Philosophy of Science," 236.

29. Quoted in *ibid.*, 244–5. See also, Geoffrey Scarre, "Mill on Induction and Scientific Method," in John Skorupski, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Mill* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 115.

30. Mill, *CW*, VII: 296. See also David Godden, "Mill on Logic," 184.

31. Cobb, "Mill's Philosophy of Science," 239.

32. Quoted in Loizides, "Introduction," 19. Of the earlier methodological explorations, David Hume's "Rules by which to judge causes and effects" was the most well-known, but as Richard Fumerton notes, "Mill's statement

In the debate between "the defenders of the syllogistic theory and ... its assailants," as Mill put it—a controversy of much significance at a time when syllogistic logic (invented by Aristotle) continued to dominate the academic curriculum—Mill assumed a middle-ground position by arguing that inductive, rather than deductive, reasoning is a major tool of knowledge acquisition while syllogism remains useful as a form of reasoning that explicates inductive generalizations. Some sciences, according to Mill, have greater reliance on the deductive method because of the problem of possible multiple causes and difficulty conducting controlled experiments and observations. Political economy, for instance, deduces its laws from the foundational principles supplied by experimental sciences, such as psychology, which postulates the universal principle of self-interest in economic behavior.³³

Despite Mill's reluctance to comment on matters of religion in the *Logic*, his book became, in the words of James Livingston, a "principal guide" to Victorian critics of religious tradition.³⁴ More than anything, it was Mill's general epistemological position—the idea that any belief requires sufficient evidence and critical inquiry—that his empiricist disciples in England employed in their attempts to challenge established theological doctrines.³⁵ Mill was well aware of the *Logic's* implicit anti-theological message, and when advising his young followers on how to approach the book, he wrote half-jokingly: "whoever does read any of it must know that she does it at her own risk and responsibility."³⁶

The *Logic's* controversial reputation also had to do with the fact that Mill declared in it his support for August Comte's positivist principles which elevated the scientific mode of inquiry to the level of preeminence (over religious or metaphysical thinking) in all branches of human knowledge, including sociology—a term that Comte invented. In later years, Mill developed fundamental disagreements with Comte over the latter's socio-economic and anti-feminist ideas which appeared dangerously authoritarian to Mill—the liberal reformer. However, his commitment to positivism as a methodological stance remained unchanged.³⁷

Already by the end of the 1860s, Mill's book dominated British universities to such a degree that some contemporaries found its influence overpowering and exclusionary. John Mozley, a lecturer of history and literature at King's College wrote in 1872: "[W]e must lament that one of the most useful and distinguished of English universities, the university of London, should have almost formally excluded from the examinations any other philosophy than that of

of the methods is perhaps the clearest, most comprehensive and certainly, most influential." See R. Fumerton "Mill's Epistemology," in *A Companion to Mill*, 202.

33. Allard, "Early Nineteenth-century Logic," 26–8; Scarre, "Mill on Induction," 112; Godden, "Mill on Logic," 180–1.

34. James Livingston, "Sceptical Challenges to Faith," in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy*, 323.

35. *Ibid.*, 324.

36. Quoted in Reeves, *John Stuart Mill*, 168.

37. Michael Singer, *The Legacy of Positivism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 51–74. Nicholas Capaldi, *John Stuart Mill: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2004), 171–75.

Mr. Mill and Mr. Bain [Mill's follower and protegee]."³⁸ By contrast, others credited Mill with bringing about "quite a revolution in the education of Oxford," the highest-ranking university in Britain, which, according to this assessment, was finally in the process of relinquishing "its old ecclesiastical conservatism," owing to Mill's influence, among other factors.³⁹ Mill's own opinion of the book, as expressed in a letter to a friend, was that it gave him "a certain capital," i.e. an intellectual capital which he intended to use for promoting other, more radical ideas: "I fully expect to offend and scandalize ten times as many people as I shall please," he wrote.⁴⁰ In this case, he specifically had in mind his *Principles of Political Economy* which he was writing at that time. Apparently, the *Logic's* ideas were not that scandalous by Mill's standards.

Logic as a Philosophic Discipline in Russian Universities

Mill's works were slow to reach the Russian readers. In the 1840s and 50s, when Mill gained recognition in Britain for his *Logic* and *The Principles of Political Economy* (1848), Russian intellectual life languished under the iron rule of Nicholas I, who sought to restrict intellectual contact with Western Europe as much as possible. The government Instruction required that logic, as well as other philosophic disciplines (including psychology), be taught according to the principle that philosophic truths were only "relative" compared to the "absolute" truths preserved in Christian religion.⁴¹ In this restrictive atmosphere, the quality of instruction suffered and it was often difficult to find suitable instructors for courses in logic. Boris Chicherin left in his memoirs a vivid description of how he and his classmates at Moscow University felt about their course on logic taught by Mikhail Katkov. Later known for his journalism and a memorable flip from liberal sympathies to conservatism, Katkov was appointed to teach logic in 1845 even though his academic training was in philology rather than philosophy. Chicherin, a very diligent and talented student, remembered Katkov's course with utmost puzzlement:

I have never seen anything like this at the university. I have, on occasion, had courses that were vulgar, stupid, empty, but I have never had a course in which nobody could understand anything. And this was not something unusual, accidental. Katkov was teaching this course for a second year in a row. In the previous class ... nobody could understand a word of what the professor was saying ... I diligently went to each lecture, took notes in the most assiduous

38. Quoted in Loizides, "Introduction," 24.

39. Quoted in *ibid.*, 24–5.

40. J. S. Mill, *The Earlier Letters, 1812–1842*, in *Collected Works*, XIII: 708–9.

41. Quoted in Pustarnakov, *Universitetskaia filosofiiia v Rossii* (St. Petersburg: Izd-vo Russkogo Khristianskogo Gumanitarnogo Instituta, 2003), 112; see also, V. A. Bazhanov, *Istoriia logiki*, 21.

manner but decidedly did not understand anything, and all my classmates were in the exact same position.⁴²

Government interference in academic life grew even more oppressive after the European revolutions of 1848–49. In 1850, the importation of books was severely curtailed, Russian students were forbidden to study abroad and, as an additional precautionary measure, the teaching of philosophy in Russian universities (already much limited) was abolished altogether. In the memorable words of the Minister of Education Count Shirinskii-Shakhmatov, "the benefits of philosophy are not proven but the harm from it *is* possible (*pol'za ot filosofii ne dokazana, a vred ot nee vozmozhen*)."⁴³ The courses on logic survived, but their teaching was now entrusted to professors of theology with special supervision from the Department of Spiritual Affairs.⁴⁴ Since qualified instructors were hard to find, logic as an academic subject, fell into "the most pitiable state," according to contemporary accounts.⁴⁵ Alexander Skabichevskii noted in his memoirs that the atmosphere of demoralization, which reigned in academia in those years, was the reason for many students losing all interest in serious study and abandoning themselves to a life of "epicureanism." The authorities, according to Skabichevskii, did not only look the other way, but "even encouraged" this sort of behavior in students "if only to get [their minds] off politics" ("*lish' by ne kasalis' politiki*").⁴⁶

The situation began to change after Russia's disastrous defeat in the Crimean War (1853–56) which compelled the new tsar Alexander II to embark upon a series of modernization reforms accompanied by a relaxation of censorship. Many contemporaries on the intelligentsia side described the decade that followed as a time of unprecedented intellectual fervor and optimism, comparing it to "the spring of renewal" after "the endlessly long and harsh winter" of the Nicholaevan years.⁴⁷ The sudden influx of Western European literature was extremely exciting for the intelligentsia but deeply concerning for their conservative opponents. Imported publications were under the purview of the Foreign Censorship Committee, then chaired by the highly educated and accomplished poet Fedor Tuitchev, who became known for his "liberal" views on censorship. In 1867 he wrote in an official letter to his superior: "if there is one truth ... which has emerged ... from the harsh experience of recent years, it is surely this: ... a too absolute, too prolonged repression cannot be imposed on intellects without resulting in serious damage to the whole organism."⁴⁸ It was under

42. B. N. Chicherin, *Vospominaniia*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Izd-vo Sabashnikovykh, 2010), 1: 177.

43. Quoted in Pustarnakov, *Universitetskaia filosofiiia*, 157.

44. Bazhanov, *Istoriia logiki*, 25.

45. Quoted in *ibid.*, 32.

46. A. M. Skabichevskii, *Literaturnye vospominaniia* (Moscow: Agraf, 2001), 111, 75.

47. A. P. Pypin, "Belletrist narodnik shestidesiatykh godov. Sobranie sochinenii A. I. Levitova," *Vestnik Evropy* (August 1884): 649. See also Skabichevskii, *Literaturnye Vospominaniia*, 125; N. V. Shelgunov, L. P. Shelgunova, M. L. Mikhailov, *Vospominaniia*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1967), 1: 92–4.

48. Quoted in M. Choldin, *A Fence Around the Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), 58.

Tiutchev that the first editions of Mill's books were published in Russia, some of them after heated debates in the Committee and with considerable excisions.⁴⁹ The disagreements within the Committee reflected the deepening divide in the Russian educated public over the question of intellectual borrowings from the West.⁵⁰

With the reopening of philosophy chairs in December of 1859 and the new university statute of 1863, academic philosophy in Russia experienced a freer and more vibrant phase of its history than ever before. The statute made it possible for universities to attract a new generation of instructors, some of whom received additional training in Germany and were eager to reignite students' interest in philosophical studies. As we shall see, one of these newcomers, the professor of logic and psychology at Moscow University, Matvei Troitskii (1835–1899) was an enthusiastic follower of Mill who succeeded in attracting crowds of students to his lectures. However, it is important to note that despite the relaxation of censorship and more liberal university statute, the government continued to keep an eye on courses in philosophy and natural sciences in an effort to guard the traditional religious teaching from the encroachment of materialistic ideas.⁵¹

Compared to the profound epistemological changes and revitalization that the field of logic underwent in Britain beginning in the 1820s (when the empiricist school supplanted the traditional Aristotelian logic in British universities), in Russia the revival of academic logic was belated and modest, with few changes in later decades. British logicians went on to develop mathematical logic which led to the emergence of computer science in the twentieth century.⁵² Although Mill's emphasis on inductive logic put him in the camp that stood in opposition to mathematical treatments of logic (which derived from syllogistic reasoning), his famous dispute with Sir William Hamilton, a proponent of the logic of quantification, contributed to the mutually simulating dynamic of ideas in British thought that generated innovations in logic and the philosophy of science. The same can be said of the controversy that developed between Mill and Whewell over the method of concept building in the natural sciences.⁵³ In Russia, the process of catching up to Western developments in logic and epistemology continued to lag behind. By the time Mill came to occupy a prominent place in Russian academic philosophy, empiricism had already been thoroughly challenged

49. A. Nikitenko, *Dnevnik*, 3 vols. (Moscow, 1955), 628, n. 307; Berest, "John Stuart Mill and His *Autobiography* in Russia," 39–42; Choldin, *A Fence Around the Empire*, 56.

50. I am grateful to Susan McReynolds for her insightful questions to the earlier draft of this paper which led me to develop the sections below.

51. See Alexander Vuchinich, *Science in Russian Culture, 1861–1917* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970), 56, 62; Daniel P. Todes, *Ivan Pavlov: A Russian Life in Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 22.

52. See Peter Simons, "Logic: Revival and Reform," in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy*, 119.

53. Allard, "Early Nineteenth-century Logic," 31, 37; Elliah Millgram, "Mill's and Whewell's Competing Visions of Logic," in *Mill's A System of Logic: Critical Appraisals*, 101–2.

(though by no means replaced) by idealist philosophy in Britain.⁵⁴ The belatedness of Russian philosophical revival is a factor that should be kept in mind as we assess the Russian reception of Mill's *Logic*.

It is also important to remember that Russian secular philosophy received little stimulus from its theological counterpart at the Ecclesiastic academies. Unlike the secular institutions of higher education, the theological academies were allowed to keep philosophy courses in their curriculum throughout the 1850s, but their freedom of expression remained severely constrained. Thomas Nemeth who recently examined the philosophical output of Russian theologians in the nineteenth century has noted that their publications were marked by "*intended* unoriginality" as one of the consequences of the Orthodox Church's determination to protect Russian thought from the "corrupting influence of modernism and Western Christianity."⁵⁵ "We find within the academies," Nemeth writes, "an incessant distancing of their philosophies from modern Western thought. ... All philosophical writings emanating from there as a rule had to be harshly critical of Western ideas even while explicitly absorbing many of them."⁵⁶ When some theologians did attempt to step out of the prescribed conceptual frameworks, the result was usually negative for their teaching career.⁵⁷

The works analyzed by Nemeth suggest one more striking feature regarding the philosophical position adopted by the academies: While in Britain the ideas of Kant and Hegel served as a major source of inspiration for philosophers who sought to defend the religious worldview from the impact of empiricist thinking,⁵⁸ theologians in the Russian academies attacked German idealism even more fiercely than they did the empiricist school.⁵⁹ The reason for this seemingly paradoxical reaction could have been the fact that Kant's "religion based on reason alone" and the Hegelian Absolute were far removed from the traditional concept of God but as philosophies that retained the idea of the Divine they presented competition to the Orthodox teaching, whereas Mill's empiricism, as a secular school of thought, held no appeal to religiously-minded audience.

What little the academies produced on Mill, their publications had no notable impact on Russian secular philosophy.⁶⁰ The lack of "philosophical vitality" at the academies (to

54. See W. J. Mander, "Hegel's Thought in Europe," 168; David Godden, "Mill's *System of Logic*," in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy*, 66–7; Philip Perreira, "Idealist Logic," in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy*, 115.

55. Thomas Nemeth, *Philosophy in Imperial Russia's Theological Academies* (De Gruyter, 2023), X.

56. *Ibid.*, xi.

57. *Ibid.*, 39, 182, 252.

58. See James Allard, "Idealism in Britain and the United States," 43–5.

59. For the theologians' response to Mill, see Nemeth, *Philosophy in Imperial Russia's Theological Academies* 84, 194. Hegel was frequently accused by Russian theologians not only of pantheistic but also of "atheistic" tendencies. See *ibid.*, 111, 134, 142.

60. Nemeth notes that "there was little communication between the theological and the secular communities" in Russia (320).

use Nemeth's characterization⁶¹) at a time when secular institutions were prohibited from teaching philosophy altogether was a missed opportunity for Russian thought, delaying the wider dissemination of Mill's *Logic* by at least a decade. Throughout the 1850s, logic in the academies remained "deeply mired in the Aristotelian categories with no hint of the advances" that were taking place in the West.⁶²

Nikolai Strakhov on Mill's *Logic*

Unusually for Mill's reception in Russia, the first commentary on the *Logic* appeared in the press five years before the book was translated into Russian. It came from the pen of Nikolai Strakhov (1828–1896), who would become the most frequent and severe critic of Mill on the conservative side.⁶³ A graduate of St. Petersburg University with a Master's degree in biology, Strakhov abandoned his unassuming career as a schoolteacher in 1860 to devote himself full-time to publicist work which he pursued with exceptional enthusiasm until his death in 1896, producing a large number of philosophical and literary pieces as well as articles on the question of Russia's quest for national identity that appealed to conservative readers.⁶⁴ Throughout those years, Strakhov's intellectual mission was determined solely by the Slavophile agenda—he sought to promote authentic Russian culture and to counter the 'pernicious' influence of Western ideas (philosophical and political) which he called, rather inaccurately, "the European nihilism."⁶⁵

It was Mill's writings (along with Darwin's) that preoccupied Strakhov the most for many years. Following in the footsteps of Ivan Kireevskii, Strakhov took up the question of the relationship between modern science (and more generally, the scientific worldview) and traditional religion—a question that had received ample attention from religious apologists in the West but was still new in Russia, where scholastic tradition was absent and the Ecclesiastic academies were slow to respond to the rise of modernity.⁶⁶ With his background in science, Strakhov developed a special interest in epistemological problems, focusing on the question of the origin and limits of knowledge, which he discussed in a series of articles later collected into two monographic works: *On the Methods of the Natural Sciences and their Significance*

61. *Ibid.*, 319.

62. *Ibid.*, 116.

63. See, Berest, "The Reception of J. S. Mill's Feminist Thought," 127–30; Berest, "The Theme of Happiness and British Utilitarianism," 28–31.

64. For Strakhov's intellectual biography, see Linda Gerstein, *Nikolai Strakhov* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971). Although Gerstein's monograph is still useful, there is much in Strakhov's philosophical legacy that is not discussed in the book, including his response to Mill's *Logic*. Moreover, Strakhov appears in this biography much less of a contentious and contradictory figure than he was.

65. N. Strakhov, *Bor'ba s Zapadom v nashei literature*, 3d ed. (Kiev: Tip I. Chokolov, 1897–98), 2: xxii.

66. See Berest, "Scientific Modernity vs. Cultural Tradition," 18–26; Nemeth, *Philosophy in Imperial Russia's Theological Academies*, ix–xiv.

in the *System of Education* (1865), and the more abstract philosophical work, *The World as a Whole* (1872).

Strakhov's commentary on Mill's *Logic* was published in the journal *Vremia*, which belonged to Mikhail Dostoevsky and was edited by his brother Fedor Mikhailovich who shared Strakhov's interest in epistemological questions.⁶⁷ In June of 1861, *Vremia* published the Russian translation of Hippolyte Taine's article, "*Philosophie Anglaise*," in which the French philosopher and literary critic analyzed Mill's *Logic* in a form accessible to non-specialized readers.⁶⁸ The translation was apparently made by Strakhov who later translated Taine's work *On Intelligence* (1872) and wrote critically on his positivist ideas.⁶⁹ Attached to the translation (in consecutive pagination) was Strakhov's commentary which addressed both Mill's *Logic* and Taine's response to the book. Although relatively brief, the commentary was significant in that it contained the core ideas of Strakhov's critical view of empiricism that he would develop in more detail over the next two decades.

"John Stuart Mill," Strakhov wrote, "is already well known to Russian readers as one of the progressive English thinkers (*odin iz peredovykh myslitelei Anglii*) and readers, undoubtedly, will become interested in his logic."⁷⁰ It was not, however, Strakhov's intention to promote the *Logic* as something worthy of following. On the contrary, the message that he intended to convey was that empiricist epistemology provided a limited and unsatisfactory picture of the world. Mill's book, Strakhov wrote, "is remarkable to an utmost degree as an extreme expression of a certain worldview. A thought developed to its logical conclusion necessarily exposes its own truth or falsehood."⁷¹ Apparently, Strakhov deemed Mill's errors so self-obvious that he did not spend much time proving his criticism. He then asserted that Mill's pure empiricism was not only false but also extremely negatory in its epistemic scepticism: "Mill's system leads directly to the denial of reasoning (*otritsanie myshleniia*) [that is, *a priori* reasoning] and thus to complete scepticism. He almost regrets that we have reason and not just memory. ... The world for him is a *chaos* in the full sense of the word, and he goes as far as calling an insanity any other understanding of the world," i.e. an understanding that presupposes the harmony and interconnectedness of phenomena beyond the mechanistic (as Strakhov saw it) force of cause and effect operating in nature.⁷²

67. On Strakhov's philosophical influence on F. M. Dostoevsky, see Donna Orwin, "Strakhov's *World as a Whole*: A Missing Link between Dostoevsky and Tolstoy," in Catherine O'Neil, Nicole Boudreau, Sarah Krive, eds., *Poetics, Self, Place: Essays in Honor of Anna Lisa Crone* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2007), 475–7; Berest, "Scientific Modernity vs. Cultural Tradition," 29–42.

68. Ten, "Sovremennaia angliiskaia filosofia. Dzhon Stuart Mill' i ego Sistema logiki," *Vremia* 3, no. 6 (1861): 356–92. Taine's essay was originally published in *Revue des Deux Mondes* 32 (1861). In 1864 Taine included this article into a book which was translated into English under the title *History of English Literature* (1865).

69. Strakhov, "Zametki o Tene," in *Bor'ba s Zapadom*, 2: 95–123.

70. Ten, "Sovremennaia angliiskaia filosofia," 391.

71. *Ibid.*, 392.

72. *Ibid.*, 392. Italics are Strakhov's. Where exactly Mill expressed such regrets regarding human reason, Strakhov did not specify.

Although Strakhov ultimately disagreed with Taine on the question of empiricism, it is easy to see why he used Taine's article as a way of introducing Mill to Russian readers. The French philosopher presented Mill's ideas in the form of a Socratic debate, which allowed him to play the role of a critic, asking heuristic, sometimes provocative questions, while his friend from the Oxford university was cast in the role of Mill's follower who defended his theory of knowledge from an empiricist position. With this format, Taine's article provided some of the criticisms against Mill and empiricism in general that aligned with Strakhov's position. Moreover, Strakhov helped his case by taking liberties with the translation—in some places he rendered Taine's tone more sarcastic and sceptical than it was in the original text.⁷³

What Strakhov wanted readers to notice in Taine's article was the discussion of the limitations of empiricist science, which were acknowledged even by Mill's defender. "The major efforts [of science]," the English interlocutor argues, "are focused on adding one fact to another or on finding the connection between facts." "What we call the essence of a phenomenon is nothing more than the connected set of facts which constitute that being."⁷⁴ Mathematical "axioms"—such as "two straight lines cannot enclose in a space"—do not derive from pure reason but from "experience, of sorts," even though we do not need to actually experience two straight lines running parallel to one another ad infinitum; at certain point we can use the "imagination" just as we use the telescope to extend our vision. Taine, however, responds by expressing doubt that this mental operation can be called "experience," but the defender explains that the imagination produces "impressions" which are, strictly speaking, sensations observed by the mind.⁷⁵

Moving on to Mill's notion of causality, the defender admits that empiricists are content with the idea that the realm of the knowable is limited to physical causes while "permanent causes" should be set aside as lying beyond science. According to Mill, whose words were cited by Taine's interlocutor, "the Sun, the Earth, the planets, their motion, their chemical composition" belong to those elemental causes which empirical science is unable to explain. "Why ... these particular agents appeared originally, why they exist in a certain proportion..." — this is the question that we cannot answer. ... Even astronomy ... is an example of limited science."⁷⁶ "We understand a million facts but ... hundreds of other facts ... remain inexplicable to us." Taine's friend then admits that "even if the theory of the universe is complete, there will remain in it two big voids: one at the commencement of the physical world and the other at the beginning of the moral world."⁷⁷

73. See, for instance, *ibid.*, 362. Cf. Hippolyte Taine, *History of English Literature*, 3 vols. (New York: Colonial Press, 1900), 3: 368.

74. Ten, "Sovremennaia angliiskaia filosofia," 362, 363.

75. *Ibid.*, 367–8. The last part of the argument was shortened in Strakhov's version. Cf. Taine, *History of English Literature*, 3: 377.

76. Ten, "Sovremennaia angliiskaia filosofia," 376.

77. *Ibid.*, 377.

Taine's own view of the empiricist theory of knowledge appears very critical at first. Empiricism, he argues, signifies an "abyss of chance and abyss of ignorance (*nevedenie*)." "By excluding from science the knowledge of first causes, that is divine causes," he tells his opponent, "you reduce man to scepticism, positivism, utilitarianism, if he has a dry mind [a hint at Mill himself] or you turn him into a mystic, an enthusiastic Methodist, if he is endowed with lively imagination." "In this void of the unknown, which you place beyond your little world ... man of cold judgment must all sink down to the search for the improvements of material life, having no hope for achieving something more elevated."⁷⁸ In Strakhov's later works, this was one of the key charges against the intelligentsia, who adopted, as he believed, a strictly utilitarian approach to science. He viewed this tendency as an undue influence of Western, especially English, thought in Russia, which impacted even government education policies.⁷⁹ In Taine's view, both features—practicality and religiosity tending towards mysticism—characterized "the English mind" in contrast to German philosophy, which found, according to Taine, a better way "of reconciling religion and science." In the original text, however, Taine's criticism of the utilitarian nature of British thought is softer; the point about "more elevated" goals supposedly lacking in the empirical mind was Strakhov's own embellishment.⁸⁰

It was disappointing to Strakhov that Taine's criticism of empiricist theory did not go far enough. Having noted all the limitations of relying on experience alone (and here too, Strakhov took the liberty of adding his own words—"you distort the human mind"—when translating Taine's point about the "incomplete[ness]" of the empiricist system⁸¹), Taine surprises the reader with the following statement: "We believe that there are no essences (*sushchnosti*) but only systems of facts. We regard the idea of essence as a psychological illusion ... the remnant of scholastic doctrine. ... [T]here exists nothing but facts and laws, that is phenomena and the relations between them, and all knowledge consists of adding facts to facts."⁸² As Taine goes on to explain, the only difference between his position and that of Mill is the latter's unwillingness to remedy the limitations of pure empiricism with more abstract reasoning that would go beyond factual data. Taine, therefore, proposed to supplement Mill's empirical methods with what he called "abstraction" ("*otvlechenie*"), the mental operation that allows "to isolate elements of facts and consider them separately." As he further explained, using a specific example, "[m]y eyes follow the outline of a square and abstraction isolates its two properties, the equality of its sides and angles."⁸³

78. *Ibid.*, 379.

79. See Berest, "Scientific Modernity vs Cultural Tradition," 19–20.

80. Cf. Taine, *History of English Literature*, 394.

81. Ten, "Sovremennaia angliiskaia filosofia," 380. Cf. Taine, *History of English Literature*, 395.

82. Ten, "Sovremennaia angliiskaia filosofia," 381.

83. *Ibid.*, 381.

Whether Taine's method was in fact distinct from Mill's inductive reasoning, Strakhov did not consider. He noted that Taine's "abstraction" was an improvement on the empiricist methodology since it supplied "an organizing, connecting" element of reasoning. "Abstraction indeed brings Taine to [the recognition of] some connection between phenomena; the world is no longer broken into numberless disparate facts as in Mill." "But in the end," Strakhov added with disappointment, "Taine agrees with Mill." "The world" in Taine's system, "has neither the center nor the boundaries," it is still the world in which "chance" (the notion which Strakhov decried in Darwin) plays the dominant role. "Taine's thoughts" he concluded, "suffer from some vagueness and incompleteness."⁸⁴

With the briefness of Strakhov's commentary, he offered too little argument to support his conclusions on the supposed flaws of empiricism, but readers whose interest was piqued by the topic could refer to his book, *The World as a Whole*. Although the book consisted of previously published articles (the earliest one dated 1858), they were apparently little known until Strakhov compiled them together into a book in 1872. Lev Tolstoy read it and left an interesting comment: "My general impression: 1) I learned much that was new. ... 2) Many questions which had vaguely occurred to me before were posed and resolved clearly, freshly and forcefully. ... 3) Many, terribly many questions are not resolved ... and the reader wants to know how the author will resolve them."⁸⁵ Tolstoy's last point is especially curious given the fact that Strakhov confidently assured readers that his book is "the easiest to comprehend of all [the books] devoted to philosophical questions (*predlagaiu chitateliam samuii poniatnuii iz knig posviashchennykh filosofskim voprosam*)."⁸⁶

The article in which Strakhov offered to "show the powerlessness of empiricism" was written three years before his commentary on Mill's *Logic*, but its claim was fundamentally the same—empiricists are unable to resolve "certain questions," including, most importantly, the question of "the essence of phenomena" and the nature of "the connection between spiritual and material substances."⁸⁷ In the article from 1860 he also charged that "the naturalists subsume all their notions about the world under the conception of causality. ... [F]or them ... the world is nothing more than the endless game of causes and effects."⁸⁸ Contra the empiricist position, which removed any spiritual meaning from the notion of causality, Strakhov adhered to the view that "the world is a connected whole (*mir est sviaznoe tseloe*) and all its parts ... are mutually dependent." "[It] is an organic whole ... or rather, a hierarchy of beings and

84. *Ibid.*, 392.

85. Quoted in Orwin, "Strakhov's *World as a Whole*," 480. Tolstoy's comment also suggests that he did not pay attention to Strakhov's articles until the book came out because "nothing was heard" of them. *Ibid.*, 480.

86. Strakhov, *Mir kak tseloe: cherty iz nauki o prirode* (St. Petersburg: Tip. Zamyslovskogo, 1872), iii.

87. *Ibid.*, 323–25.

88. *Ibid.*, 107.

phenomena" in which "man is the apogee of nature, the hub of the universe (*uzel bytia*). He is the greatest mystery and the greatest creation of the world."⁸⁹

As Strakhov noted in the introduction, his conception of the world was inspired by two sources: one was "mathematical and natural sciences," and the other derived from "Hegelian philosophy," but "not any of its specific ideas," Strakhov added, only "its method, which I consider to be ... the expression of the scientific spirit."⁹⁰ With this disclaimer, Strakhov apparently sought to distance himself from Hegel's philosophy of religion, which could be interpreted as a form of pantheism, but it is clear that he owed more to Hegel than just his method.

Strakhov was in fact an early exponent of the idealist current that was yet to emerge in Russia but was already discernable in Britain. His reasons for turning to Hegel in battling the empiricist conception of nature were the same ones that drove his British counterparts to Hegelian idealism. A historian of British philosophy notes that the rising popularity of idealism was a remarkable phenomenon for a country whose philosophical fame rested on its contribution to the empiricist philosophy and "distrust of anything abstract and metaphysical."⁹¹ Originating in the mid 1860s, "the initial trickle of idealist writings grew during the 1870s into an absolute flood of publications."⁹² Among the intellectual factors that triggered the surge of idealism in Britain, W. J. Mander lists "the rapid growth of materialistic science and the advent of evolutionary theory which together constituted a profound challenge to traditional senses of religion, self and morality"⁹³—the same developments that propelled Strakhov into the discourse on the philosophy of science and fuelled his interest in Hegel. Like Strakhov, British idealist philosophers were searching for "the larger whole" endowed with a "spiritual dimension" in a world that appeared increasingly fractured by clashing ideas and myriad new facts emerging from specialized sciences.⁹⁴

However, despite adopting the same conceptual foundations, Strakhov, unlike his British counterparts, devoted more energy to attacking the opposing view than to creating his own epistemological theory.⁹⁵ Rather ironically, *The World as a Whole* was not a unified

89. Ibid., vii-viii.

90. Ibid., vi.

91. W. J. Mander "Hegel and British Idealism," in L. Herzog (ed.), *Hegel's Thought in Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 165.

92. Ibid., 166. See also Mander, "Introduction," 7–8; John Hedley Brooke, "Evolution and Religion," in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy*, 212.

93. Mander, "Hegel and British Idealism," 173–74.

94. Ibid., 169, 173; see also W. J. Mander, *British Idealism: A History* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 5

95. In considering the epistemological writings published by Russian theologians, Nemeth noted that one of the most talented of them, Mikhail Karinsky, produced extensive commentary on the theory of knowledge in several of his works but "came to a few positive conclusions of his own and certainly to no all-encompassing system." See Nemeth, *Philosophy in Imperial Russia's Academies*, 150. Vucinich made a similar argument about Russian idealist philosophers of the nineteenth century, such as Vvedenskii, Lopatin and Losskii. Although, unlike Strakhov, they were professional philosophers, Vucinich argued that "they spent far more time in pointing out the intrinsic

philosophical exploration but a loose collection of articles (over five hundred pages long) united only by the preface, which gave a strangely confused explanation of the nature of the book, as though Strakhov could not decide whether he had written it from the viewpoint of a philosopher or "a naturalist": having assured readers that the book is "philosophical," he immediately qualified his statement by saying that there are, in fact, "few philosophical terms" in it and "it is written almost completely in the language of a naturalist rather than philosopher"; yet he also insisted that it is not a work seeking to popularize ideas from the natural sciences. "I am almost an unconditional opponent of popularizations," Strakhov wrote, despite the fact that he had previously published in *The Journal of the Ministry of Public Education* a number of articles that did precisely that—explain some of the latest scientific discoveries in more layman language.⁹⁶

Throughout his long writing career, Strakhov indeed tried to speak both as a scientist and a philosopher, but the voice of a feisty publicist driven by a political agenda, was often much louder in his articles, especially in later years. The end result was not very convincing for either side: for Russian scientists who engaged with Strakhov in a polemic on Darwinism, his position was too hostile, lacking in substance yet confident in its truth to the point of unbending dogmatism (the latter criticism, ironically, was the same that Strakhov commonly hurled at his empiricist opponents).⁹⁷ In an article entitled "The Helpless Anger of an Anti-Darwinist" (1889), Kliment Timiriazev, a prominent Russian scientist, responded to Strakhov by hinting, rather uncharitably, that his "bitterness" stemmed from his failure to make a career in science: It is the "type of person," Timiriazev wrote, who "believes that it [science] stopped when he abandoned his books, trying to convince himself and others that science is moved not by scientific works but by a scholastic dialectic."⁹⁸ Timiriazev also charged that Strakhov's judgment of the Darwinian theory was based on his prejudicial view that "the English," "as empiricists," were "incapable of sound reasoning." "Mr. Strakhov," Timiriazev wrote, "tries to convince the reader that [Darwin's] theory cannot be anything but weak just because ... it is the work of an Englishman," and he takes this view as an "axiom."⁹⁹

Tolstoy reacted to this exchange by noting in his diary: "I read Timiriazev's article. He is wrong, but ... it would be a pity to miss it."¹⁰⁰ In another comment, Tolstoy acknowledged that personal recriminations came from both sides in this heated polemic. With some exaggeration but not inaccurately, he summed it up as follows: "You are a fool; no it is you who is a fool.

limitations of science than they did in actually building a philosophy that might reveal the ultimate nature of the universe." See Alexander Vucinich, *Science in Russian Culture*, 251.

96. Strakhov, *Mir kak Tseloe*, [i.] The preface was unpaginated. See, for instance, Strakhov, "Proizvol'nye zarozhdeniia," *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshchenia* (1859): 118–21.

97. K. A. Timiriazev, *Bessil'naia zloba antidarwinista* (Moscow: I. Kushnerev, 1889), 6–7.

98. *Ibid.*, 7.

99. *Ibid.*, 38. The ellipses were Timiriazev's, employed for stronger rhetorical effect.

100. Lev Tolstoy, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 22 vols. (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1978–85), 21: 389. This entry was made on June 24, 1889.

(*Durak, ty sam durak.*)"¹⁰¹ He also remarked, however, that Strakhov's position on the "limits of knowledge (*predely poznaniia*)" remained "vague."¹⁰²

As a journalist with good marketing skills, Strakhov was certainly successful in drawing attention to his writings and stirring up controversies. However, his epistemological explorations were not original and indeed, not coherent enough to have a positive impact on Russian religious philosophers later in the century. The most prominent of them, Vladimir Solov'ev, engaged in a protracted polemic against Strakhov in the 1880s, which came as an unpleasant surprise to the old Slavophile.¹⁰³ He was especially hurt and puzzled when some of Solov'ev's accusations were approvingly cited by Timiriazev.¹⁰⁴ As often, Strakhov sought consolation from Tolstoy but received the following answer: "both of you are right and wrong (*i pravyy i ne pravyy vy oba*)."¹⁰⁵ Although the novelist strongly disapproved of what he saw as a layer of "pernicious Hegelian phraseology" in Solov'ev's religious thinking, he had, from the beginning, disliked the idea of public dispute between these two thinkers and asked Strakhov to abstain from writing critically of Solov'ev—to no avail, as it turned out.¹⁰⁶

Over the years, despite the rise of empirical science in Europe and Russia, Strakhov remained committed to his view that empiricism provided nothing more than a superficial, "mechanistic explanation" of the workings of nature which did not solve "the mystery of life." He conceded that experimental science had made some important discoveries, pointing, as one example, to the works of Pasteur that revealed the role of microbes in organic nature. But Strakhov insisted that an element of "mystery which wraps around all phenomena of life" persisted in the world of microbes, as elsewhere: "Pasteur and other scientists of this school, only put to us new puzzles (*zagadki*)" of nature. A fuller explanation of the natural world can only be achieved, according to Strakhov, if science is anchored in "philosophy" by which he meant religiously grounded metaphysics.¹⁰⁷ "[U]nfortunately," he lamented, "the lack of

101. Ibid. 388.

102. Ibid.

103. One of their disagreements concerned Strakhov's Slavophile views and the manner in which he brought them to bear on broader cultural issues, including what he called "*nauchnaia samobytnost'*" (scientific originality), i.e. the impact of national culture on science. See N. Strakhov, "Nasha kul'tura i vseмирное единство," in Strakhov, *Bor'ba s Zapadom*, 2: 234; Strakhov, "Poslednii otvet g. Solov'evu," in *ibid.*, 2: 235–59; Strakhov, "Novaia vykhodka protiv knigi Danilevskogo," in *ibid.*, 3: 124–52 (a reply to Solov'ev's last article in this dispute entitled "Mnimaia bor'ba s Zapadom," in *Russkaia Mysl'* (1890).

104. Strakhov to Tolstoy, June 21, 1889 in L. N. Tolstoy i N. N. Strakhov, *Polnoe sobranie perepiski*, vol. 2, http://az.lib.ru/s/strahov_n_n/text_1878_02_perepiska.shtml

105. Strakhov to Tolstoy, March 12, 1887; Tolstoy to Strakhov, June 28, 1888, in *ibid.* Strakhov often complained to Tolstoy about his opponents. In 1888 he wrote that positivist Vladimir Lesevich accused him of showing too much vanity in his articles while Strakhov retorted that Lesevich was apparently incapable of speaking respectfully of anyone other than "Darwin and Mill." See, Strakhov to Tolstoy, February 5, 1888, in *ibid.*

106. Tolstoy to Strakhov, December 23, 1874; March 16, 1878, in *ibid.*, vol. 1. Strakhov agreed that Solov'ev's religious views led him to "pantheism closely resembling that of Hegel's." See Strakhov to Tolstoy, April 9, 1878, in *ibid.*

107. Strakhov wrote: "The rejection of metaphysics, that is, philosophy, proclaimed by Comte, has attracted many minds for whom philosophy was an unbearable burden." Strakhov, *Bor'ba s Zapadom*, 3: 10.

philosophical guidance is the reason for those flaws in the development of the natural sciences that we are talking about."¹⁰⁸ "If man and the universe are divine creations, this force must be reflected in everything. But does science strive to discern the imprint of this force?" Strakhov asked in 1891. As a general line of criticism against empirical science, he continued to argue until the end, that by setting aside the question of the ultimate causes and essences of things, empiricists do not make the problem go away.

Strakhov's opinion on Mill's *Logic* also remained unchanged. In one of his last essays, "The Outcomes of Modern Science" (1891), Strakhov reiterated the assessment he had made thirty years earlier: "Mill gave the theory of knowledge a distinct and clear formulation, but it only resulted in the denial of knowledge, not in a new step towards it."¹⁰⁹ Expressed in this generalized form, Strakhov's verdict was strikingly simplistic and severe compared to the criticism that Mill sustained in Britain from even the most exacting of his opponents on the idealist side—T. H. Green. The latter, like other British idealists, adhered to the view that "conceptions," which allow us to have a unified picture of the world, are "immanent in the human mind" and "constituted by the act of conceiving" rather than acquired through inductive reasoning as was Mill's position.¹¹⁰ He judged that Mill's empiricist approach was unable to explain *how* knowledge was possible, but Green's critique never amounted to the kind of reductivism adopted by Strakhov.¹¹¹

There was also in Strakhov's pronouncements on Mill and European thought a heavy admixture of the anti-Westernist bias that detracted from his judgement as a philosopher, at times resulting in simplistic characterizations of a sensationalist type. Describing the state of the European mind in *The World as a Whole*, Strakhov wrote:

in present times ... empiricism reigns almost unchallenged. Natural sciences attract both youth seeking enlightenment and the so-called educated people ... Balzac has written a novel entitled *The Quest for the Absolute*. With the utmost artfulness ... he tells the story of a character who searches for the Absolute. But what do you think it is?—It is only some kind of chemical substance. ... Dickens in his touching story *Contract with Ghosts*, presents the professor of chemistry as a sage and describes how reverently the audience is listening to his every word.

108. Strakhov, *Bor'ba s Zapadom*, 3: 84–6. Gerstein argues that Strakhov favored the "separation of metaphysics and scientific knowledge," but no textual evidence is provided in support of this claim. See Gerstein, *Nikolai Strakhov*, 151, 154.

109. *Ibid.*, 29. See also *ibid.*, 101.

110. Thomas Hill Green, *Philosophical Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 2: 196. (It was originally published in 1886, posthumously, on the basis of Green's lectures delivered at Oxford university in the 1870s.)

111. According to a historian of British idealism, Green was "so concerned ... to come to terms with the philosophers he criticized, especially with Hume and Mill, ... that he is found qualifying his own affirmations." See H. D. Lewis, "The British Idealists," in Ninian Smart et al, eds., *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 276.

Such dreams are understandable in England, the classic country of empiricism where even physics and chemistry pass for philosophy.¹¹²

In "The Outcomes of Modern Science," Strakhov reaffirmed his claim that the European mindset was characterized by a fixation on experimental sciences and the scientific mode of thinking, which aspired to offer "solutions to all kinds of questions," pushing aside and, in effect, trying to replace religion.¹¹³ On its own, this was a valid concern but Strakhov failed to mention that many European theologians and idealist philosophers had long raised such concerns and sought to redefine the role of religion in the modernizing world. They "felt that modern men could do neither without religion nor with it as it was."¹¹⁴ And while they rejected philosophical materialism, there was a good measure of respect for empirical science among idealist philosophers.¹¹⁵

Strakhov, however, assured his readers that "philosophy" (i.e. metaphysical inquiry) had entirely lost its footing in Europe already in the 1840s. "Afterwards, some thinkers achieved ... great popularity and were widely read ... Among them were Schopenhauer, Mill, Spencer and Hartmann. ... But the success of these writers did not bring about the rise of philosophy." The empiricism of Mill and Spencer, according to Strakhov was "nothing more than the logical development ... of the ideas of Kant and Hume," which yielded "no new steps" forward in debates on epistemology or ethics.¹¹⁶

Strakhov's conclusion was bleak—disengaged from philosophy and religion, the European mind had become impoverished morally and intellectually, despite all the material improvements brought about by modern science. He ended the review with a quote from the Russian poet Dmitrii Venevetinov, who had written back in 1827 that Russia would need to "isolate [itself] from the current influence of other peoples" in order to build its own authentic culture. Strakhov deeply regretted that this solution was no longer feasible. Now that European "books were streaming" into Russia "one after another," he wrote, Russians "are bound to experience all the ills and downfalls of European thought."¹¹⁷

112. Strakhov, *Mir kak tseloe*, 326.

113. *Ibid.*, 10–11.

114. James C. Livingston, "British Agnosticism," in *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought*, 232.

115. Christopher Adair-Totef, "Neo-Kantianism: The German Idealist Movement," *The Cambridge History of Philosophy*, 28; see also, Livingston, "British Agnosticism," 232.

116. Strakhov, *Bor'ba s Zapadom*, 3: 28–9. Drawing a direct line of continuity between Mill and Kant was a strikingly inaccurate characterization. It is unlikely that Strakhov was unaware of the differences between them but in a manner typical of his publicist style he allowed himself such overgeneralized statements when talking about Western thinkers. See also Berest, "Scientific Modernity vs. Cultural Tradition," 25, 40.

117. *Ibid.*, 33.

Peter Lavrov's Translation of Mill's *Logic*

A much different view of Mill's *Logic* and its significance for modern intellectual culture was presented by Peter Lavrov (1823–1900) who published the first Russian translation of the *Logic* in 1865.¹¹⁸ Lavrov's introduction assessed Mill's book by situating it in the history of logic and the philosophy of science. Already in the ancient world, Lavrov noted, syllogistic reasoning presented not much more than the gymnastics of the mind, divorced from the "real world" and devoid of any "real content." "There was," he admitted, a "share of pedagogical benefit" in practicing syllogistic exercises as a form of "verbal argumentation"; however, without connection to "the real world," "the scientific value" of formal logic was "negligible," for "it did not ... explain all of the theory of reasoning."¹¹⁹ The treatment of logic by Kant and Hegel, although insightful, took logic, in Lavrov's view, further down the path of metaphysical development and away from the world of natural science. By contrast, English adherents of the empiricist school tended "to deny any scientific value of syllogism and deduction."¹²⁰ Lavrov credited Mill for attempting to "build the theory of knowledge" which combined the best of the two methods. "He [Mill] became convinced that in many sciences induction and deduction are intertwined" and that "in some sciences the inductive method is not applicable." "As a theory of knowledge," Lavrov asserted, "this work is virtually unsurpassed in Europe (*edva li etot trud imeet drugoi ravnyi emu v Evrope*)."¹²¹

At the same time, Lavrov noted "some shortcomings in Mill's work" which he attributed to Mill's "strict adherence to positivism." These shortcomings, as Lavrov saw them, specifically had to do with Mill's unwillingness to venture into the realm of metaphysics to expand the scope of logic as a tool of knowledge. "Mill did not solve the problem of creating a science of human reason as objectivizing [i.e. interpreting] everything that exists (*vse sushchee*)."¹²² Such a grand task, Lavrov admitted, was never and could never be Mill's aim by virtue of his empiricist position, but even within this limited scope, "Mill could have and perhaps, should have explored more closely the psychological processes" involved in the formation of belief as a cognitive instrument. "This discussion would have tied together ... the theory of knowledge with the theory of things-in-themselves." As a mathematician (Lavrov taught mathematics at two Military Academies in St. Petersburg), he also found objectionable Mill's empiricist approach to mathematics, which was in fact the most criticized aspect of Mill's book in Europe.¹²³

118. Dzhon Stuart Mill, *Sistema Logiki*, trans. P. L. Lavrov (St Petersburg: Tip. M. Vol'fa, 1865).

119. [P. Lavrov], "Predislovie redaktora," in Mill, *Sistema Logiki*, x.

120. *Ibid.*, xx.

121. *Ibid.*, xxii.

122. *Ibid.*, xxiii.

123. *Ibid.*

Nevertheless, Lavrov's overall assessment of Mill's contribution to logic was more than positive. "What can be said about his [Mill's] critics?" he wrote in conclusion. "The majority of them are not even worth mentioning, ... [e]specially the Germans who stand firmly on their idealistic ground, refusing to even think deeper of Mill's book" merely because he shifted the focus of logic to "the theory of knowledge" instead of the "theory of thinking." "They simply do not understand each other," speaking, as it were, in different epistemological languages. The only critique he could recommend was the one offered by Taine, which "Mill himself acknowledged ... as the best critique of his book." In Lavrov's view, constructive criticism of Mill's logic could only be made from the same epistemological position and not from the position of idealism.¹²⁴ "One can say," he remarked in conclusion, "that Mill's book belongs to the best literature on logic that has ever been written." He ranked him alongside Aristotle, Descartes, Bacon, Kant and Hegel, emphasizing the fact that Mill tackled "the practical side" of logic.¹²⁵

Mill's *Logic* at Moscow University: M.M. Troitskii and Evgenii Trubetskoi

Unlike Mill's other works published in Russian translation, the *Logic* did not get much attention from the popular "thick" journals, apparently because of its specialized nature.¹²⁶ The book's influence, however, was evident in academic publications on logic and psychology as both disciplines acquired a larger degree of professionalization in Russia by the 1880s.¹²⁷

Within academic philosophy, the influence of Mill's empiricism was especially pronounced in the Moscow University, where Matvei Troitskii, an enthusiastic follower of the British school of empiricism, taught courses on logic and psychology from 1875 to 1899. A graduate of Kiev Spiritual Academy, Troitskii was one of the first beneficiaries of the study-abroad program for graduate students, which resumed under Alexander II. From 1862 to 1864 Troitskii took philosophy courses in Heidelberg, Leipzig, and Jena, including the lectures of the Hegelian follower Kuno Fischer.¹²⁸ However, unlike many other Russian students in Germany who returned home converted to German idealism, Troitskii came to the conclusion that modern German philosophy had not moved far beyond

124. *Ibid.*, xxiv.

125. *Ibid.*, xxv.

126. Only *Vestnik Evropy* offered an article on the *Logic*, as part of the comprehensive review of Mill's thought a year after his death. See Iu. Rossel', "Dzhon Stuart Mill," *Vestnik Evropy* (July 1874): 132–68.

127. The majority of Russian publications in the field of logic appeared only in the 1880s: M. I. Vladislavlev, *Logika* (SPb.: Tip V. Dimakova, 1872); P. F. Kapterev, *Istoriia logiki. Lektsii* (SPb.: Tip Kurochkina, 1880); N. Ya. Grot, *K voprosu o reforme logiki* (Nezhin: Istoriko-filologicheskii institute, 1882); M. Troitskii, *Logika* (Moscow: Tip Pustoshkina, 1884); M. I. Karinskii, *Logika* (SPb.: Tip Eleonskogo, 1884); E. Radlov, *Logika. Lektsii* (SPb.: Tip Dabizha, 1880). See also, V. A. Bazhanov, *Istoriia logiki v Rossii*, 32–8.

128. V. A. Volkov, M. V. Kulikova, V. S. Loginov, *Moskovskie professora XVIII-nachala XX vekov* (Moscow: Ianus, 2006), 241–42.

medieval scholasticism.¹²⁹ He presented this bold claim in his doctoral dissertation, "German Psychology in the Present Century," which he defended at the St. Petersburg university in 1867, after it had been rejected for defense at the Moscow university by the chair of philosophy Pamfil Iurkevich. When Iurkevich passed away, Troitskii assumed his position, drastically altering the direction of philosophical studies in Russia's oldest university.

Students remembered Troitskii as an inveterate critic of Kant whose philosophy presented, in his view, nothing more than a refurbishing of old scholastic ideas with the help of more "abstract" "nebulous terminology."¹³⁰ The future of "the science of the mind (*dukha*)," according to Troitskii, belonged to the English school of empiricism which commenced with Bacon and culminated with Mill: "Apart from its own original qualities, [Mill's] *Logic* presented in a coherent manner all criticisms of the syllogism since the time of Bacon." Troitskii credited Mill for laying down the empirical foundations of the inductive method of reasoning with "superior" clarity, fully agreeing with the British philosopher that induction rather than syllogism should be the primary mode of reasoning in science.¹³¹ In his later works, including the monumental, three volume *Uchebnik Logiki* (1885–88), Troitskii reiterated his view that Mill was "the creator of modern logic" which helped to move the natural sciences forward.¹³²

Among Troitskii's students in the 1880s was Evgenii Trubetskoi (1863–1919), future Moscow University professor and prominent religious thinker who left in his memoirs a vivid account of his intellectual journey from Mill's empiricism to Kantian-inspired idealism.¹³³ Remembering his philosophy classes in Moscow university, Trubetskoi wrote that Troitskii's rejection of German metaphysics in favor of British empiricism stemmed from his inability to comprehend the more intellectually taxing Kantian philosophy: "Troitskii ... was extremely ignorant of the history of philosophy. He peppered his lectures with cheap and vulgar ridicule of the German philosophers while it was clear to me that ... the foundations of the German philosophy were entirely unknown to him." "Having insulted 'metaphysics' with his vulgar jokes, Matveika [a diminutive from Matvei] then lectured either on Mill's logic or on modern psychological teachings, mainly English ones, which was all he knew."¹³⁴ Trubetskoi admitted that "[y]outh ... flocked to his classes" and "accompanied each of his lectures with

129. See Thomas Nemeth, *Kant in Imperial Russia* (New York: Springer, 2017), 157.

130. M. Troitskii, *Nemetskaia psikhologiia v tekushchem stoletii* (Moscow: Tip. T. Ris, 1867), 628. For student recollections, see E. Trubetskoi, *Vospominaniia* (Sofia: Rossiisko-Bolgarskoe izdatel'stvo, 1921), 72.

131. Troitskii, *Nemetskaia psikhologiia*, 20–23. It is curious that despite his empiricism, Troitskii still used the Russian term "*dukh*" for "the mind." Lavrov also occasionally (but not consistently) translated "the mind" in Mill's *Logic* as "*dukh*," while in later translations the more correct term "*razum*" was used with proper consistency.

132. M. Troitskii, *Uchebnik Logiki*, 3 vols. (Moscow, 1885–88), 3: i. He also published *Nauka o Dukhe* (Science about the Mind) in 1882.

133. For more on Trubetskoi's philosophy, see Teresa Obolevich and Randall Poole, eds., *Evgenii Trubetskoi: Icon and Philosophy* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2021).

134. Trubetskoi, *Vospominania*, 73–4.

a thunderstorm of applause." Trubetskoi, however, was greatly "annoyed" by these scenes, being convinced that Troitskii did not deserve such high regard in the least.¹³⁵

Trubetskoi wrote this with the air of a person who was intensely proud that he had outgrown his own youthful fascination with British philosophy and moved on to a higher stage of his philosophical maturation, as he later saw it. "Already in grade six," Trubetskoi recalled, "being only fifteen years old I managed to read and even take summary notes of Mill's *Logic*, along with his *Political Economy*."¹³⁶ That year Trubetskoi also read Mill's *Auguste Comte and Positivism*, Spencer's *Psychology* and Darwin's *The Origin of Species*. "I remember," he added, "that during that period I lived and thought by Buckle, Mill, Spencer; getting out of this hypnosis was then completely out of question."¹³⁷ The result of Trubetskoi's reading, perhaps too intense for his early age, was the onset of what he called a period of "boundless doubt," which gripped him to such a degree that he felt mentally disturbed at times. The young Trubetskoi came to doubt Mill's postulate of the uniformity of nature and with that, doubts crept in about the existence of physical reality and even his own existence as a self-conscious cognitive agent. "I was frightened and haunted by those thoughts," Trubetskoi remembered, "sometimes I felt close to insanity."¹³⁸

What ended this "hypnosis" for Trubetskoi was Kuno Fischer's *History of Philosophy* (available in Russian translation since 1861), the same reading that had, ironically, led Troitskii away from German idealism. After reading the book, as Trubetskoi recalled, "all of a sudden so much of what seemed to be the irrefutable truth in the teachings of Mill and Spencer turned out a long-refuted error! I used to think of Mill's empiricism as the 'last word' [in philosophy] and suddenly I discovered that this empiricism had been refuted already by Leibnitz in his polemic against Locke. ... When I got to Kant, I made even greater discovery." "In short," Trubetskoi concluded, "all those formulas in which I believed blindly, dogmatically, were shattered to pieces." He became convinced that Kant's teaching and "all of German metaphysics" had simply escaped the minds of Mill and Spencer.¹³⁹

It is curious that Vladimir Solov'ev, a fellow religious philosopher, did not share Trubetskoi's harsh opinion of Troitskii despite the fact that Solov'ev considered himself a student of Iurkevich (Troitskii's former opponent) and had expressed some criticism of Mill's positivist ideas.¹⁴⁰ In a review article which showed a greater spirit of intellectual tolerance towards diverse philosophical "schools," Solov'ev pondered on the intellectual legacy of three academic philosophers—Iurkevich, Troitskii and Nikolai Grot, "so different

135. *Ibid.*, 73.

136. *Ibid.*, 56.

137. *Ibid.*, 57.

138. *Ibid.*, 59.

139. *Ibid.*, 57.

140. See Thomas Nemeth, *The Early Solov'ev and His Quest for Metaphysics* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer Intl. Publishing, 2014), 30.

from each other," who nevertheless, had one thing in common—they had all helped to advance Russian philosophical studies at a time when philosophy was a neglected field. Solov'ev noted that Troitskii's *German Psychology* was a product of Russia's peculiar cultural circumstances in the 1860s—the need to catch up to the latest European developments in philosophy. "It goes without saying that the European reader would not learn anything from the three works which he [Troitskii] wrote ... but to the Russian people, the first of these works [*German Psychology*] which appeared in the sixties, taught ... the foundations without which one could not move any further."¹⁴¹

Solov'ev admitted that Troitskii got carried away by his enthusiasm for English empiricism and that in later years his teaching acquired "a dogmatic form," a form of "absolute truth" in which he came to believe uncritically. "However," he added, "Troitskii ... made and helped others make the first step towards serious philosophical studies." In Russia, where "philosophical education" was a noble but "unappreciated activity," Solov'ev thought it important to give credit to Troitskii's devotion to philosophy. He also noted, with a sense of sympathy, that Troitskii's philosophical views almost cost him his position at the university when the suspicion arose that was spreading atheism through his courses. He was forced to go to St. Petersburg and defend himself before the educational authorities. Whether Solov'ev actually believed Troitskii's assurances of his piety is not entirely clear but he certainly made it clear that government interferences into academia remained an impediment to philosophical pursuits in Russia.¹⁴²

Mill's Logic at St. Petersburg University: M.I. Vladislavlev

At the St. Petersburg University, M. I. Vladislavlev (1840–1890), professor of logic, psychology and philosophy, also wrote a popular textbook on logic—*Logic. An Overview of Inductive and Deductive Methods of Reasoning* (1872), the first of its kind in the post-reform era, in which he discussed Mill's empiricism in a historical and philosophical context. Relatively unknown today, Vladislavlev was an important figure in Russian academic philosophy who contributed to the rise of neo-Kantian studies by producing in 1867 the first Russian translation of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.¹⁴³ His student and successor at the St. Peterburg University, A. I. Vvedenskii, credited Vladislavlev with raising the status of philosophy as a scholarly discipline after the difficult years of Nicholaevan restrictions. Vladislavlev was also known to contemporaries as a thinker close to Dostoevsky, whose journal *Vremia* published Vladislavlev's article on psychology and the question of free will that became a subject of

141. V. Solov'ev, "Tri kharakteriskiki. M. M. Troitskii. N. Ia. Grot. P. D. Iurkevitch," *Vestnik Evropy*, no. 1 (1900): 321.

142. *Ibid.*, 322.

143. See Nemeth, *Kant in Russia*, 154; Nikolas Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy* (New York: International University Press, 1969), 163.

interest in Russian thought during this period.¹⁴⁴ Married to Dostoevsky's niece, Vladislavlev enjoyed close proximity to his famous relative even after the closure of Dostoevsky's journal. According to Joseph Frank, Vladislavlev "frequently invited his eminent uncle-in-law to meet the luminaries of the learned world" at his St. Petersburg parties.¹⁴⁵

In contrast to Troitskii, whose attitude towards English empiricism Vladislavlev deemed lacking in "proper impartiality,"¹⁴⁶ his own textbook on logic offered a more balanced approach and a chance for readers to judge for themselves the merits of other schools of epistemology, including the Kantian one.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Vladislavlev found much in Mill's theory of knowledge that he was willing to accept without objection or with only minor criticism. Regarding the use of syllogism, for instance, Vladislavlev's position was fully consonant with Mill's: "One must admit," he wrote, "that syllogism is not the kind of tool by which we arrive at new knowledge as we do by means of induction."¹⁴⁸ "Induction, by contrast, leads to the discovery of new general truths. By means of [induction] we learn of the connection between cause and effect."¹⁴⁹ However, he found more use for syllogistic reasoning in the art of argumentation than Mill had.¹⁵⁰

On the question of the scope of modern science, Vladislavlev endorsed Mill's view that the primary task of scientific inquiry is to uncover the laws of nature by tracing causal connections between phenomena through inductive reasoning.¹⁵¹ Considering that Vladislavlev was a religious person, as evidenced by his comments on Kant's *Critique*,¹⁵² his thoroughly empiricist approach to science and nature was one of the earliest attempts in Russian philosophy to find a compromise between the religious and empiricist worldviews by delineating their respective spheres as two different but compatible forms of human activity. It was also a sign of seismic changes in Russian academic philosophy, which now manifested a greater diversity of views.

In a chapter entitled "The impossibility of metaphysical explanation of the law of causality," Vladislavlev sided with Mill's empiricist notion of causality against different versions of

144. A. I. Vvedenskii, *Nauchnaia deiatel'nost' M. I. Vladislavleva* (St. Petersburg: Tip. V. S. Balasheva, 1980), 14. On the theme of free will in Russian thought see, T. Nemeth, *The Later Solov'ev* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2019), 45–71.

145. Joseph Frank, *The Mantle of the Prophet, 1871–1881* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 22.

146. M. I. Vladislavlev, "Zavisimost' nemetskoi filosofii ot angliiskoi. (Po povodu sochineniia g. Troitskogo 'Nemetskaia psikhologiiia v tekushchem stoletii.),' *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia*, v. 135 (1867): 179.

147. M. I. Vladislavlev, *Logika. Obozrenie induktivnykh i deduktivnykh metodov myshleniia* (St. Petersburg: Tip Demakova, 1872). The book contained an appendix over two hundred pages in length, in which Vladislavlev presented the historical development of various schools of logic and their main ideas.

148. *Ibid.*, 204.

149. *Ibid.*, 213.

150. *Ibid.*, 207–8.

151. *Ibid.*, 223.

152. See Nemeth, *Kant in Russia*, 155.

metaphysical explanation, such as Leibniz's theory of pre-established harmony or Spinoza's notion of the boundless and endless Entity.¹⁵³ "The question of interconnectedness of bodies or the causal connection between them is not amenable to metaphysical *a priori* analysis," Vladislavlev argued. "It remains to turn to experience and accept it as a fact."¹⁵⁴ He then cited Mill's definition of causality with a caveat that "[Mill] does not claim to explain the origin of causality," that is, the First Causes, but this limitation, according to Vladislavlev, is consonant with the level of knowledge in the natural sciences which only makes "empiricist generalizations" from facts. "We have to be content with that" because metaphysical analysis of causation presents "insurmountable difficulties, whereas ... the connection between cause and effect in nature is a fact which we have no right to deny despite being unable to explain it."¹⁵⁵

Vladislavlev was even more explicit, albeit diplomatic, in handling the question of religious implications arising from the empiricist theory of causality. This approach, he admitted, "has its thorny side. Apparently, it goes against some necessary religious and moral presuppositions."¹⁵⁶ His own answer to this dilemma was an exemplar of intellectual tolerance that conceded some merit to the materialists' point of view but pondered the possibility of drawing the line between religion and science, between empirical evidence and faith:

Looking from their own viewpoint, materialists have some logic in their denial of the idea of the Creator ... they do not accept any proof of knowledge other than experience. However, they mistakenly believe that their viewpoint is the only one that exists ... and every other view makes no sense. By asserting that the world originated from the will of Creator out of nothing ... we step outside the boundaries of experience and, apparently, cannot test this supposition through the law of causality.¹⁵⁷

However, the conclusion that Vladislavlev made after stipulating this concession did not flow entirely from the premises of the argument and was expressed, somewhat awkwardly, through analogical reasoning that would not have convinced the empiricists and might have been too rationalist for more traditional religious readers: "Therefore," Vladislavlev wrote, "we are warranted to believe that a number of physical causes originate in absolute, all-perfect cause which contains in it everything necessary for producing the material world (*bytie*)" in the same way as our free will is the cause of our moral actions.¹⁵⁸ Vladislavlev left open the question of

153. Vladislavlev, *Logika*, 248–49.

154. *Ibid.*, 250.

155. *Ibid.*, 251.

156. *Ibid.*, 251.

157. *Ibid.*, 252–53.

158. *Ibid.*, 253.

how science would be able to accommodate the conception of the divine mind if he himself acknowledged that scientific explanation admits only verifiable knowledge.

Two years after publishing his *Logic*, Vladislavlev wrote a review of Mill's *Autobiography* in which he weighed in on the most controversial aspect of Mill's self-characterization—his admission that he was raised without any religious education and that his father, the philosopher James Mill, had lost his faith early in life.¹⁵⁹ Regarding this startling confession, Vladislavlev commented, with a sense of sincere compassion, that Mill might have embraced religion had he been given the chance for proper religious instruction in childhood: "Mill hardly had a proper knowledge of Christianity. ... There is no mention [in his *Autobiography*] that he ever held ... the New Testament in his hands. ... If this book had come to his attention in his youthful years, as a person who was impressed by heroes and humanity's benefactors, he would have certainly been impressed by the personality of Christ."¹⁶⁰

K.P. Pobedonostsev contra J.S. Mill

It is curious how much Vladislavlev's sympathetic comment contrasted with the harsh verdict that Konstantin Pobedonostsev, a top government official and prominent conservative thinker, delivered upon reading Mill's revelations. In 1873 he published a review of Mill's *Autobiography* in the journal *Grazhdanin* which was owned by the arch-conservative Prince Meshcherskii and edited at that time by Dostoevsky.¹⁶¹ "Mill's *Autobiography*," Pobedonostsev wrote, "expresses the clearest and the most decisive rejection of religious truth and religious feeling, especially Christian one. But it is instructive to see from this book ... the degree of spiritual deformation which [human] nature can experience when the mind makes this rejection." For Pobedonostsev, unlike Vladislavlev, the story of Mill's life was one of emotional and spiritual "castration" (*skopchestvo*) which he read with "horror" and "disgust."¹⁶²

In 1878, in an essay titled, "The Ultimate Purpose of Life," Pobedonostsev once again brought "the life of the most ... influential atheist—John Stuart Mill" to readers' attention as "an instructive example." This time the focus of his critique was the ethics of utilitarianism, but similarly to Strakhov, Pobedonostsev saw a close epistemological connection between the utilitarian and empiricist thinking. He posed the familiar question: What is "truth (*istina*)"

159. The *Autobiography* was published in 1873, a few months after Mill's death. The Russian translation appeared the next year.

160. M. Vladislavlev, "Dzhon Stuart Mill". *Avtobiografiia*. *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia*, 175 (1874): 122–23.

161. Considering that Pobedonostsev's article was published several months before the Russian translation of Mill's *Autobiography*, he must have read the English, and thus, uncensored version of the book. Censorship cuts pertained primarily to Mill's revelations of how his father arrived at religious scepticism. See Berest, "J. S. Mill's *Autobiography*," 38–40.

162. Pobedonostsev, "Kartina vysshego vospitania. Avtobiografia Dzh. Stuarda Millia," *Grazhdanin*, no. 45 (November 1873), 1193.

for men like Mill? "They call truth the knowledge of facts and phenomena, causes and effects of the natural order of things based on observation and experience—in other words, the knowledge of nature. But what is nature from their point of view?" Pobedonostsev was convinced that by deconstructing nature into a set of "chemical and mechanical processes" devoid of religious meaning, scientific thought stripped the world of nature of its sacredness, thereby creating a profound dissonance between nature and human beings as moral creatures: "Mill tells us that nature is a force unworthy of our worship or approval."¹⁶³ Pobedonostsev agreed that "[f]rom a purely human point of view, nature is a monster. ... It knows neither a sense of justice nor compassion." He found it hard to understand how "atheists" might find happiness and a sense of moral satisfaction in studying nature if their conception of the natural world revealed nothing but nature's cruelty. By contrast, "the believer can see beyond nature to all-merciful God who mysteriously resolves through his person all contradictions."¹⁶⁴

"Nobody denies," Pobedonostsev admitted, "that there are many facts [of nature] which everybody needs to understand correctly" but this quest for factual knowledge driven by utilitarian goals has nothing to do with "devotion to truth for its own sake," which derives from religious devotion. It appears however, that Pobedonostsev viewed all scientists as "atheists" by default, with no hope that empirical science and religion might be reconciled. Certainty in the existence of divine truth in this world is achieved, according to Pobedonostsev, "only through faith and nothing else. No observation, no experience can provide it. One can even say that without faith observation and experience can only weaken or destroy this certainty." By the same principle, Pobedonostsev asserted that empirical methods of studying human behavior and morality can never yield a moral ideal that would lead to us to happiness. At most, experiential knowledge provides a guide to material conditions required for the pursuit of happiness, but the essence of happiness is to be found in religion alone. From this Pobedonostsev drew a conclusion that sounded more extreme than the premises of his own argument warranted: "Thus, reason takes away our faith (*razum otnimaet nashu veru*), and with it our moral sense."¹⁶⁵

Boris Chicherin's "Universalism" vs. Mill's Empiricism

The most extended discussion of Mill's empiricism came from Boris Chicherin (1828–1904) in his book *Science and Religion* (1879). It addressed the question of the relationship between modern science and religious faith by contextualizing it within the historical-philosophical

163. Pobedonostsev's assumption regarding Mill's attitude towards nature was inaccurate. Mill was an armature botanist, an admirer of nature and something of an early environmentalist. See Reeves, *John Stuart Mill*, 233.

164. Pobedonostsev, "Konechnaya tsel' zhizni," https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Konstantin_Pobedonostsev/konechnaya-tsel-zhizni/.

165. Ibid.

dispute between empiricism and rationalism concerning the nature of knowledge.¹⁶⁶ Similar to Strakhov, Chicherin was not content with the epistemological limits of empirical science, which focused, as he believed, exclusively on "the particulars" (*chastnostnoe*), providing only "mechanistic" explanations and moving "from one mystery to another" (a slightly modified quote from Mill's *Logic*), being unable to resolve questions concerning First Causes and "the inner essence of things."¹⁶⁷

Chicherin was also uncomfortable with the idea that science and religion should be treated as separate fields of knowledge in the manner proposed by Herbert Spencer and many other positivists. Such an idea, he argued, was nothing but an attempt to guard experiential knowledge from the influence of religion, relegating the latter to the realm of feelings and dreams unguided by reason.¹⁶⁸ At the same time, Chicherin emphasized that, in tackling these questions, he was speaking from a viewpoint of "science" rather than "theology": "Theological studies and contemplations (*razmyshleniia*) can satisfy only those who are already convinced of religious truths but not those who have left the religious grounds." "Faith," he added, "is not to be taken blindly"; rather, "it is an objective principle" that itself needs to be rationally examined. However, Chicherin's concept of science differed principally from one shared by empiricists such as Mill. Much like Strakhov, Chicherin wrote that "true science (*istinnaia nauka*)" should be able to discern the expression of "the Spirit" in the world's phenomena. Only then can science and religion, which had "drifted apart further than ever before," be reunited into a more holistic system of knowledge, which he called "universalism."¹⁶⁹

What Chicherin proposed was a synthesis of empiricist and rationalist epistemologies, i.e. an attempt to integrate "experiential knowledge" with what the rationalist philosophers traditionally called "innate" concepts, such as time, space, mathematical notions and the absolute, which derive, as Chicherin argued, from "the laws of cognition" "immanent in human reason" ("*korennoe svoistvo razuma*").¹⁷⁰ Taken separately, both methods are "one-sided" and unsatisfactory. Knowledge obtained through the senses does not reach beyond concrete phenomena, as they appear to us. "We can go from one observation to another, from one discovery to another, we can even explore the composition of the Sun" (and Chicherin noted that the natural sciences had indeed achieved "brilliant results" in terms of factual discoveries); however, by relying exclusively on empiricist thinking, "we only add one particular to another, never achieving a general principle that would satisfy our mind" in its

166. For the role of religion in Chicherin's philosophical outlook, see Gary Hamburg, "Boris Chicherin: Christian Modernist," in Paul Valliere and Randall A. Poole, eds., *Law and the Christian Tradition in Modern Russia* (London: Routledge, 2022), 132–50.

167. Boris Chicherin, *Nauka i religiiia* (Moscow: Tip. Martynova, 1879), xiv. The quote to which he refers is contained in a passage where Mill writes that science is unable to explain the "why" questions when it comes to the "general course of nature," only exploring *how* it works. Mill, *A System of Logic*, in *CW*, VII: 471.

168. Chicherin, *Nauka i religiiia*, 4–5.

169. *Ibid.*, xiii, 88.

170. *Ibid.*, 17.

quest for "the absolute." To the sceptics who doubted not just the need but the capacity of the human mind to go beyond the limits of experiential knowledge, Chicherin retorted that the very presence in our minds of questions about the origin and the meaning of phenomena suggests that "[the human] mind is meant for cognizing the absolute," in contrast to animals whose intellectual abilities are limited to the concrete and physical.¹⁷¹

Mill's version of empiricism served Chicherin as a major foil against which he expounded his vision of a "synthesis" between the spiritual and material worlds. Expectedly, his critique was concentrated on Mill's empiricist conception of knowledge, including his notion of causality, which Chicherin, similar to Strakhov, held to be purely mechanistic and narrow, focusing on "how" but not "why" various phenomena occur. He scored the most by attacking Mill's explanation of mathematical thinking, but had some difficulty refuting his view that analytic propositions (such as the law of contradiction) are propositions based in physical reality, which the mind is capable of formulating by means of observing its own mental activity (introspection). Chicherin offered the following example to prove his argument that the empiricist conception of the mind as a mere receptor and processor of experiential data was deeply mistaken:

Following Locke, the proponents of pure experience insist that logical propositions derive not from the laws of logic but from immediate introspection. ... [F]or instance, when we conclude that AB is equal to CD because both are equal to EF, anyone will agree with that, even though they might have never heard of the general law, according to which two lines equal to a third one are equal among themselves. But why is it that anyone will agree with that? ... It is because ... this law has always been immanent in his [man's] mind.¹⁷²

According to Chicherin, when empiricists claim that they infer the laws of logic and mathematics by observing the mind's operations, they fail to recognize that the very ability of the mind to discern an instance of some general law in the physical world is possible because this law, in "its pure form," is already present in our minds. In other words, logical laws are innate and exist prior to the mind's experiential activity, not the other way around. The same goes for the "law of contradiction" which is "entirely obvious to us without any observation."¹⁷³ However, a page earlier Chicherin had noted that "in children" "reason acts unconsciously" (*razum deistvuet bezotchetno*), being unaware of its own laws. The question then arises of how and when exactly the mind becomes conscious of its innate concepts. Contrary to Mill's position that all knowledge is learned rather than innately given, Chicherin's insistence on the self-obvious nature of logical laws implied the equal ability of

171. *Ibid.*, xiv, 2, also 87. A similar argument (save the comparison with the animal world) had been previously expressed by theological philosopher Ivan Kedrov (1811–1846). Chicherin made no references to either Russian theologians or more recent Western literature on the issue at hand. On Kedrov, see Nemeth, *Philosophy*, 46.

172. *Ibid.*, 18.

173. *Ibid.*, 18–20.

"anyone" to understand and utilize the laws of the mind in practical experience, but this is far from convincing. Even such a strong believer in innate knowledge as Whewell argued that *a priori* conceptions are "innate ... [but] not self-evident."¹⁷⁴

In the same manner, Chicherin's argument for the innateness of "the absolute" was vulnerable to the objection already made by John Locke two centuries earlier. "It is well known," Chicherin wrote, "that positivism rejects any possibility of knowing the absolute. ... Yet it does not explain where our notion of the absolute comes from. If experience is the only source of human knowledge, it is obvious that this notion could never have appeared in human head"; the relative (as opposed to absolute) knowledge that we are able to derive from experience, "can never lead us to the notion of the absolute" or to the notion of "the infinite" since all objects that we observe are spatially defined. "The very existence of the notion [of the absolute] demonstrates the failure of positivism." The latter cannot explain "why [even] a little child is concerned with the deepest questions of existence, so far removed from all his sense-experiences."¹⁷⁵ To this line of reasoning, long familiar in rationalist discourse, Locke had answered in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* that the "Idea of God [is] not innate" because it is not present in atheists and certain other cultures, as evidenced by pre-Columbian American peoples in which "no notion of a God or religion" was observed upon their discovery.¹⁷⁶

Despite Chicherin's aspiration to reunite the empiricist and rationalist epistemologies, it is hard to imagine how he could have convinced both sides. Looking at Chicherin's theory of knowledge from an idealist point of view, Nicholas Lossky criticized it for lacking "the suprarational" element that lies "outside the rational and the irrational." "In Hegel, due to his pantheism and his exaggeration of the wholeness of the world linked with it, there is a preponderance of universalism. ... In Chicherin, who was insufficiently aware of the world's organic wholeness, we find an exaggeration of individualism."¹⁷⁷ From an empiricist standpoint, the fact that Chicherin's system ultimately terminated in a theistic explanation of the world presupposed that empirical science would have to relinquish its major epistemological principle—the idea that only provable and verifiable knowledge qualifies as scientific. Chicherin must have been aware of that, but he never addressed this issue explicitly, focusing instead on the supposed deficiencies of the empiricist picture of the universe. "For those who limit themselves to the realm of the material," he wrote, "the only force connecting

174. Cobb, "Mill's Philosophy of Science," 244.

175. Chicherin, *Nauka i religia*, 92, 94.

176. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 2 vols. (New York: Dover Publications, 1959)1: 95–7; See also Markie, Peter and M. Folescu, "Rationalism vs. Empiricism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rationalism-empiricism/> accessed November 20, 2021.

177. N. O. Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy* (New York: International Universities Press, 1972), 140–41. Lossky also notes that Chicherin's understanding of the process of intuiting ideas resembles Descartes' theory of knowledge, which "after Kant ... can no longer be accepted," as it lacks proof that man is endowed with the faculty of intuition. *Ibid.*, 139.

the world ... is the general law of gravity," but this position leaves "entirely unexplained" why material particles have a tendency towards gravitation. This mystery becomes entirely intelligible, Chicherin argued, if we adopt the view that "all this visible universe is permeated by God's essence (*Bozhestvennaya sushchnost'*) which reaches out on all sides and connects it with invisible ties."¹⁷⁸ His proof for God's existence was purely metaphysical and well familiar from Western speculative tradition: "if there is being, there must be absolute being (*esli est' bytie, to est' i absoliutnoe bytie*)," "the contingent necessarily presupposes the absolute (*otnositel'noe nepremenno predpolagaet absoliutnoe*)." From this Chicherin concluded, that the concept of "self-existing being (*bytie samosushchee*)" is the starting point of all reasoning and all being without which the search for causality would continue *ad infinitum*.¹⁷⁹ The last argument was apparently directed at such sceptics as Mill who wrote defiantly in his *Autobiography* that the question "who made God?" (along with the problem of evil) had led him away from religion, because his mind was not satisfied with the traditional answers.¹⁸⁰ It is not clear how Chicherin hoped to convince men with mindsets like Mill's to accept metaphysical arguments for God's existence.

Later in the book Chicherin's discussion of the science of psychology also showed that his promised synthesis of methods was in fact heavily tilted towards rationalist and theological reasoning, which leading psychologists of his time had already left behind. The year Chicherin published his book, Europe saw the establishment of the first psychological laboratory as a culmination of the intellectual ideas that had their origins in seventeenth century empiricists. By the mid-nineteenth century, "the question on the minds of psychophysicists" was whether "an emerging field of psychology [could] divorce itself from purely metaphysical speculations about the working of the mind by adopting rigorous measurement and methodology," the same ones that "had worked so well in Newtonian physics, chemistry and other natural sciences."¹⁸¹ By the late 1870s the works of Gustav Fechner and Wilhelm Wundt transformed psychology into an empirical science, just as Mill had hoped, but Chicherin remained convinced that "purely experiential psychology" "relegates human being to the level of an animal by denying what makes him human and what explains the whole world of human relations," that is, the spiritual principle, which makes possible the existence of free will and morality.¹⁸²

Chicherin's remarks about psychology closely echoed Strakhov's apprehensions about the cultural effect of the deterministic tendencies implicit in modern science. He read the famous

178. Chicherin, *Nauka i religia*, 113.

179. *Ibid.*, 104–5, 102.

180. J. S. Mill, *Autobiography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 36; see also Berest, "John Stuart Mill and his *Autobiography* in Imperial Russia," 39.

181. Daniel J. Danis and Briana Young, "Methodology in psychology," in Robert J. Sternberg and Wade E. Pickren, eds., *The Cambridge Handbook of the Intellectual History of Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 33. Gustav Fechner's *Elements of Psychophysics* was published in 1860.

182. Chicherin, *Nauka i religia*, 147.

book by Ernst Renan *The Future of Science* wherein the French thinker confessed that his newly found faith in science had led him to abandon his Hegelian-inspired anthropocentric beliefs. Far from being the center of the Universe, Renan wrote, humanity is perhaps as insignificant in the order of nature as "mold or mushrooms"¹⁸³ Taking this analogy rather too literally, Strakhov responded by arguing that in Europe the ideas produced by the natural sciences have the effect of diminishing the status of man not only in the world of nature but also in society, going against the once cherished principles of Enlightenment:

Not only the successes of political and social sciences are weak, the very foundations of these sciences are being destroyed. The abstract notions of justice, equality, freedom, which have long ignited the minds, are losing their strength, giving place to ... the ideas of the lower grade. The source of this lowering is the same: the conclusions emanating from the natural sciences. People lowered themselves to the level of animals ... and even ... mushrooms.¹⁸⁴

This may seem a startling argument for a political conservative who never advocated the principle of rights and freedom in Russia or elsewhere; it is clear, however, that Strakhov's only reason for mentioning it was the desire to pile up as many criticisms against the West as he could possibly think of, disregarding the fact that the rights of the individual in European countries, including the right to vote, continued to grow steadily during the period when the scientific mode of thinking was gaining ascendancy.

By contrast, Chicherin, coming from the camp of the westernizers, tried hard to find something positive to say about the West, pushing the blame to Russia instead. "Having immersed themselves exclusively in the study of particulars (*chastnosti*), Western European communities," he wrote, "retained at least one redeeming feature—there the intellectual decline (*upadok mysli*) is, to some extent, compensated by the [results of] the intellectual labor directed towards the study of factual material."¹⁸⁵ This soothing conclusion fit awkwardly into Chicherin's general line of criticism against empirical science according to which the accumulation of factual data (if unaided by the proper metaphysical frameworks) presented little benefit to humanity and could even be detrimental, as in the case of empirical psychology. More surprising, perhaps, was Chicherin's further claim that Russia could not boast even these meagre results. "If a Western European can be compared to a miner (*rudokop*) who tirelessly works for the future wellbeing ... we [the Russians] are content with waiting for the fruit of somebody else's [work]." "Russian thought has turned into an intellectual desert. ... [S]incere respect for science has almost disappeared" and "[n]ever before has Russian literature stood so low."¹⁸⁶ As Chicherin wrote this, we might recall, Dmitrii Mendeleev had already made his

183. Strakhov, *Bor'ba s Zapadom*, 3: 13.

184. *Ibid.*, 27.

185. Chicherin, *Nauka i religia*, xii.

186. *Ibid.*, xi-xii.

transforming discovery in chemistry, Ivan Sechenov had impressed the scientific community with his achievements in physiology, and Russian literature produced such giants as Tolstoy and Dostoevsky.

The *Logic's* New Editions in the 1890s

Mill's *Logic* remained in high demand in Russia until the end of the tsarist period. In 1892, a group of Moscow professors undertook the publishing of a bibliographic index for the benefit of readers seeking to enhance their education through self-study. The index provided guidance on the best scholarly literature in "all major branches of knowledge," including logic, which listed Mill's book, both in Russian and in English. The editorial note stated: "[It is] a classic work on inductive logic as well as the exposition of the basic principles of empiricist philosophy. It is a book necessary for anyone wishing to acquire philosophical education."¹⁸⁷ To make Mill's *Logic* more accessible to novice readers, a new, abridged edition was issued in 1897. The modified and shortened title of this edition was apparently meant to attract the attention of beginners: Mill, *Polozhitel'naia logika: obshchedostupnoe izlozhenie (Positive logic in accessible exposition)*.¹⁸⁸

The 1897 edition was followed in 1900 by a new unabridged translation published by the Moscow professor of philosophy V. N. Ivanovskii. In the introduction, he summed up Mill's contribution to the field in the most laudatory language: "A *System of Logic* by J. S. Mill," he wrote, "made an epoch in the development of logical theories and this merit is recognized by all scholars regardless of their philosophical school."¹⁸⁹ Ivanovskii was convinced that the book "can be and should be used by any scientist, indeed by any thinking person, whatever his profession."¹⁹⁰ Ivanovskii himself used Mill's book in his courses and publications on psychology.¹⁹¹ The 1900 edition was reissued in 1914.

As an indication of the *Logic's* prominence in academic philosophy, an Instruction issued in 1899 to a graduate student at Kazan' University warned against focusing too much on Mill's inductive logic in preparing for final examinations. The student was urged to familiarize

187. I. I. Ianzhul, P. N. Miliukov, P. V. Preobrazhenskii, L. Z. Morokhovtsev, *Kniga o knigakh. Tolkovyi ukazatel' dlia vybora knig po vazhneishim otrasliam znanii* (Moscow: Tip. Inozemtseva, 1892), 25.

188. D. S. Mill', *Polozhitel'naia logika v obshchedostupnom izlozhenii*. S predisloviem A. P. Fedorov (SPb.: Ia. Kutenko, 1897). If anecdotal evidence can serve as an illustration of Mill's popularity among the general public during this period, Anton Chekhov's collection of aphorisms published in 1883 mentioned Mill's *Logic* as the book that one opinionated "okolotochnyi" (policeman) was reading (while on duty, apparently). See A. Chekhov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, 30 vols (Moscow: Nauka, 1975), 2: 253.

189. V. N. Ivanovskii, "Ot redaktora perevoda," in Dzhon Stuart Mill', *Sistema logiki. Sillogicheskoi i induktivnoi*, trans by V. N. Ivanovskii (Moscow: Delo, 1900), iii. This edition was reissued in 1914.

190. *Ibid.*, iv.

191. See V. N. Ivanovskii, *Assotsiatsionizm v psikhologii i gnoseologii* (Kazan, 1905); V. N. Ivanovskii, *K vorposu o genezise assotsianizma* (Kazan, 1910)

himself with more recent developments in logic, specifically mathematical logic, in addition to reading Mill's book which remained a staple university textbook.¹⁹²

Conclusion

In many ways, the reception of Mill's *Logic* in Russian thought is a story of Russia's intellectual response to the challenges of scientific modernity which arrived in a land of autocracy and Orthodoxy with abruptness unseen in the West. Weakened by the years of Nikolaevan isolationist policies and continuously hedged around by censorship, Russian fledgling philosophy was confronted, in the 1860s, with the daunting task of responding to the questions that had preoccupied its Western counterpart for some decades. One of the most contentious of these questions concerned the nature and limits of modern science which no longer stood in a "cozy dovetailed alliance" with religion unlike its pre-modern version, including Newtonian physics, that presupposed the presence of the divine hand behind the laws of nature.¹⁹³

The response in British thought was complex and dynamic: after a period of empiricist hegemony spearheaded by Mill, the Idealist movement provided a robust philosophical alternative which initiated the process of reconfiguring the role of religion in the modern world. By the early 1900s British Idealism began to fade away as new varieties of realist and empiricist philosophies reasserted themselves, some claiming direct lineage to Mill.¹⁹⁴ At the same time, the purely empiricist paradigm of science received a major correction in the early twentieth century with new developments in physics, especially Einstein's theory, which disproved Mill's claim that scientific knowledge can only be gained through empirical methods of inquiry.¹⁹⁵

In Russia, Mill and Darwin came to represent major intellectual authorities that challenged the traditional religious worldview. Compared to Britain, the Russian response to Mill did not exhibit the same degree of originality and was more ideologically charged, not least of all because Mill's ideas were commonly perceived through the lens of Russia's cultural relationship with the West. On the one side of the debate there were largely uncritical followers of British empiricism who saw no need to look beyond Mill as late as the 1890s. In

192. Bazhanov, *Istoriia logiki*, 48–9.

193. See Mander, "Introduction," 9; see also Singer, *The Legacy of Positivism*, 19; Lynn S. Joy, "Scientific Explanation from Formal Causes to Laws of Nature," in Katherine Park and Lorraine Daston, eds., *The Cambridge History of Science*, 5 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3: 103.

194. Christopher Hookway, "Pragmatism," in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy*, 74–5. The idealist tradition in Europe, while already in decline by the start of World War I, suffered a major blow as a result of the war, which undermined the belief in the concept of harmonious universe. See Leslie Armour, "The Continued Idealist Tradition," in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy*, 428.

195. See Reeves, *John Stuart Mill*, 167; Nancy Cartwright, Stathis Psillos and Hasog Chang, "Theories of Scientific Methods: Models for the Physical-Mathematical Sciences," in Mary Jo Nye, ed., *The Cambridge History of Science*, 5: 22.

the opposite camp, the critics refused to acknowledge Mill's role in advancing the progress of empirical sciences, nor did they have much respect for empiricist methodology itself (if decoupled from religious metaphysics), even while acknowledging recent advances in experimental sciences. It is striking that despite political differences between Chicherin and Strakhov, both of them painted a deeply pessimistic picture of the cultural effects of modern science, pointing to the West as a source of intellectual decline and discordance. Fueling their pessimism was an anxiety that positivistic attitude widely accepted by adherents of empiricism would lead to the complete replacement and diminution of religion by science. This sentiment was shared by many religious apologists in the West throughout the 1860s but as time went on more of them opted for the separation of science and faith in hopes of preserving religion as a spiritual domain. An emerging line of argument held that science and religion were grounded in fundamentally different but equally valid epistemic positions that required different forms of evidential proof and certitude. What counts as evidence in science cannot be applied to religious belief, just as scientific explanation cannot admit arguments that require a leap of faith.¹⁹⁶ In Russia among those who engaged with Mill's *Logic*, this line of reasoning was discernable in Vladislavlev, if very cautiously (perhaps for reasons of censorship), whereas Chicherin maintained an unrealistic expectation that science should reunite empirical methods with the search for the divine in external reality. Nevertheless, Chicherin's attempt at the "universalist" theory of knowledge was noteworthy for its new epistemological perspective, which provided an alternative to Mill's empiricism, in a manner that resembled Western philosophical developments. His *Nauka i religiia* was also the most systematic and detailed treatment of the question of religion in its relation to science that appeared in Russian pre-revolutionary thought.

With the arrival of the Soviet regime, the long-awaited maturation and diversity of philosophical views in Russia came to a sudden halt. In the first post-revolutionary years, academic philosophy experienced what Bazhanov called "Bolshevik '*filosofitsid*' (philosophicide)"—the purges of university instructors and exile of famous thinkers in an effort to create new cadres of "red professors" willing to serve the ideological goals of the Soviet power. Since Lenin had a low opinion of Mill's agnostic position on the question of Matter (*materia*), the *Logic* was tossed aside and the discipline of logic itself went into a steep decline in the 1920s.¹⁹⁷



196. See Livingston, "The Defense of Faith," 331–5; Livingston, "The Sceptical Challenges to Faith," 323–27; Harvey, "Challenges to Religion," 535–6.

197. Bazhanov, *Istoriia logiki*, 97–120.

JULIA BEREST

Julia Berest is Adjunct Assistant Professor at Western University (Canada). She received her PhD in history from Western University and her BA from Zaporizhzhia State University (Ukraine). Her major field is Russian and European intellectual history with a focus on reception studies. She is the author of a series of articles on the reception of J.S. Mill in pre-revolutionary Russia, and of an intellectual biography of Alexander Kunitsyn, one of the earliest Russian liberals and a champion of Kantian ideas in Russia: *The Emergence of Russian Liberalism: Alexander Kunitsyn in Context (1783–1840)* Palgrave, 2011.