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Western Reason and Russian Spirituality

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How Dostoevsky and Solzhenitsyn Sought an Alternative to the West's Paradigm of Reason

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4. Introduction

1.1 The making of Russia’s cultural identity

“У меня порою мелькает глупенькая и грешная мысль: ну что

будет с Россией, если мы, последние могикане, умрем?”

F.M. Dostoevsky, in a letter to K.P. Pobedonostsev

At least since the beginning of Peter the Great’s political and social reforms in the eighteenth century, Russia has been intrinsically interwoven with the philosophical, political, and ideological fluctuations in Western countries. It can even be said that every major ontological, political or social dilemma expressed by Russian thinkers in the last two centuries was either a product of Europe’s grip on the mindset of Russian intellectuals or an antithetical reaction to the perceived theoretical and conceptual inconsistency. Russia’s engagement with the Western way of understanding and seeing the natural world, the pursuit of scientific knowledge or the history of humanity can also be seen with regards to its advocacy of moral, ethical, and spiritual matters. For many Russian thinkers believed they could detect a fallacious and harmful emphasis on the material world, on egoism rather than on altruism, on reason and logical thinking rather than on spiritual and religious insights etc. Briefly put, the evolution of modern Russia and its ‘unique’ cultural entity was to a large extent instigated by its contact with the European civilization.

It would of course go beyond the scope of this dissertation to go into every detail of the philosophical, ecclesiastical, and political opposition between the West, i.e. Western Europe, and Russia. Such a methodical limitation can be explained by the complexity of the intercultural relations between Russia and the West, for the roots of the Russia-West antinomy dates back to the tenth century. However, it is important for the sake of the methodological and theoretical accuracy to give a short and systematic illustration of this historical relation. In so doing, I’m intending to show not only the historical evidence of a philosophical, religious, and political polarity between Russian and the West but also the academic legitimacy and the methodological and theoretical importance of choosing this research objective.

The starting point of the cultural and political dichotomy between Russia and the West has to be seen in the context of the Christianization of the Slavic people. By accepting the Biblical canon of the Eastern Orthodox Church in the tenth century, Kievan Rus’ (and thus Russia) stepped into a tradition which significantly formed its cultural character and set the spiritual and political contrast between Russia and the Western world in motion. Especially the adaptation of the Byzantine disposition of ecclesiastical and secular power, which put much emphasis on concord between the state and the church, subsequently affected the cultural and political course of Russia. In opposition to the Western world, where a disagreement, a conflict of interests between the secular and ecclesiastical authority led to the formation of intellectual and political pluralism, Russia did not participate in this important process. The result was, on the one side, a submissive, disempowered Russian Church and, on the other side, an authoritative, oppressive state which undermined divergent and pluralistic thinking. Apart from the unwitting implementation of the Byzantine political structure, Russia’s spiritual and ‘philosophical’ development was also closely interwoven with the world-view of the Eastern Orthodox Church. In a sense, Orthodox Christianity foregrounded Russia’s perception of life, humanity, and the world. In contrast, for instance, to Scholastic reasoning and conceptual analysis, Russian intellectual rendition put much emphasis on spiritual and mystic insights. The process of gaining knowledge was not perceived by means of logical thinking; the exegesis of the Bible happened not in connection with science and reason – the Russian mind captured life and men’s existence rather by way of the Eastern Orthodox Church’s emphasis on mysticism and spirituality. An illustration of this particular approach into the realms of life can, for instance, be seen in the mystical inclination of Russian (religious) philosophers to reconcile the ‘tragic’ fragmentation of subject and object.

In view of the fact that the Eastern Orthodox Church’s spiritual and mystic teachings played a pivotal role in Russia’s cultural and intellectual formation, it is no wonder that throughout its modern intellectual history Russian thinkers were attracted to philosophical or social ideas which posit fundamental spiritual, religious, and mystic insights. The proclivity for the realm of the immaterial world even engulfed the academic *landschaft* of Russia’s universities at the beginning of its formation in the nineteenth century. It was particularly the metaphysics of the German philosopher Friedrich W. Schelling (1775-1854) that was taught and appreciated at the departments of philosophy. The leaning towards Schelling’s metaphysics can, for instance, be explained by his notion of the ‘Absolute’ as the key to understanding absolute knowledge. In addition, Schelling laid emphasis on “cosmic harmonies and world historic predictions”, which to a certain point encapsulated Russia’s cultural understanding and suited the mindset of Russian intellectuals.[[1]](#footnote-1) Scholars like Mikhail Pavlov, Ivan Davydov, and Dmitry Vellansky who taught Schelling’s metaphysics at Russian universities were at the forefront of this development. According to Alexander Herzen, it was particularly Pavlov’s intellectual prowess in explaining Schelling’s philosophy that led to the acceptance of him not only within the universities in Moscow and St. Petersburg, but also engulfed Russian intelligentsia.[[2]](#footnote-2) Thus it was Pavlov’s exposition of Schelling’s metaphysics and German idealism which had a lasting effect on Russia’s intellectual history and to a significant degree on the formation of Russian literature.

The notion that nature and the human mind are interrelated, that absolute knowledge is possible led to the belief that everything in the world can be known. Based on this precept, Pavlov discerned that every human being has the ability, the cognitive and psychological make-up, and even the inner drive to seek absolute knowledge. With regards to this notion, Pavlov espoused the idea that mentality, not matter, is the force which lies at the core of understanding the world. In his influential book *The Basis of Physics* (published in 1836) Pavlov established an opposition between materialism and idealism, between the organic world and the “arbitrary, man-made rules” of Western kind.[[3]](#footnote-3) This dualistic view was also advocated by another adherent of Schelling’s metaphysics – Dmitry Vellansky. Vellansky is even considered to be the initiator of the Romantic revolution and the founder of Schellingism in Russia. The importance of Vellansky’s explanation of Schelling for the development of Russia’s intellectual history is explained in an entry in the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* of 1971: “Vellansky expressed the dialectic thesis concerning the general connectedness of phenomena, their binary nature and the struggle of polar opposites as the source of development.”[[4]](#footnote-4) From this position the “Russian Schellingism at its most general, in dialectical materialism at its most opaque, was the link that would carry Russian thinkers on from Schelling to Hegel, and thence to Marx and to Lenin.”[[5]](#footnote-5) In sum, Schelling’s metaphysics and German idealism not only offers a unique portrait of Russia’s philosophical and literary history, but also illustrates how Schelling “laid the foundation for an unlimited appetite for German Idealism over the next two centuries.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

An interest in Schelling’s metaphysics and German idealism was especially expressed by Slavophile thinkers. They relied significantly and ‘systematically’ on Schelling’s notion that mystical and religious insights surpass reasoning and logical thinking in terms of understanding and explaining humanity and its history. The attention Schelling’s metaphysics experienced happened at a time when Russia set out to define its cultural ‘uniqueness’ in the nineteenth century. Schelling’s metaphysics offered Russia the conceptual and theoretical basis for seeing itself differently and to create an epistemic and spiritual gap between itself and the Western civilization. In contrast to the instrumental reason and logical analysis of the West, Slavophile thinkers such A.S. Khomiakov championed a model of knowledge based on the notion that all “human beings had an essential knowledge of reality prior to any logical analysis.”[[7]](#footnote-7) Khomiakov’s point of view is that human beings possess an immediate, intuitive, and ‘integral’ knowledge which enables them to see the world unreflectively, i.e. “without reflection whether our idea of an object coincides with the object itself.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

The next generation of Russian thinkers (the two decades of 1830-1850) was driven by a moral zeal in bettering humanity and life itself and the first generation to theorize in pre-Marxist terms about Russia’s future. At the forefront of this generation were Alexander Herzen (1812-70) and Vissarion Belinsky (1811-48), who threw body and soul into the struggle to abolish serfdom and free Russia from autocracy. Their means of resisting the autocratic state were philosophical ideas which they used in order to foster protest and reform.

It is fair to say that the literary critic and journalist Belinsky characterizes the moral emphasis of his epoch best. He spent his entire life in trying to implement values of “honesty, dignity and justice” in Russian society.[[9]](#footnote-9) Belinsky’s endorsement of moral issues and progressive humanity found its full expression in an influential school of literary criticism, which “yoked the cause of literature to social improvement in a bond that lasted two centuries.”[[10]](#footnote-10) Herzen shared Belinsky’s view on the burden of serfdom and distaste for autocracy. Like Belinsky, and perhaps even more, he wrote extensively about moral topics, the cause of social betterment and political liberalization in Russia. Disappointed by European socialism’s failure to achieve political and social reforms in the aftermath of the social revolution in 1848, Herzen came to the conclusion that before societal improvements can occur people had to become truly individuals. As a Russian Nietzsche, who champions moral individualism, Herzen for the first time defined the good man in Russia partly by contrasting him with the “European-style petty bourgeoisie.”[[11]](#footnote-11) In Herzen’s mind the good man is individual and not provincial, and the good man detests egoistical behaviour. The bourgeois, however, is “provincial, self-centred, morally petty, and aesthetically clumsy.”[[12]](#footnote-12) With regards to the history of Russia’s intellectual thought, these two Russians set the standard for the moral life, established a Russian idealism in contrast to a European way of living, and represent the “imprint of Kantian moral idealism on the Russian intelligentsia which it never lost.”[[13]](#footnote-13) In this context it is also important to mention that the Russian concept of the good man did not merely stop at the moral-aesthetic sphere – it also established a link between goodness and knowledge. Russian idealism connected the spiritual with the material, the mind with the heart; in their understanding values and facts, being and knowing are inseparably linked. Apart from Russia’s emphasis on morality and its specific understanding of knowledge, the meditation on the good man by Herzen and Belinsky illustrates that Russia had begun to see itself as a unique culture different from Europe. But above all, Herzen’s and Belinksy’s intellectual activity has to be seen with regards to the theoretical elaboration of a ‘Russian’ truth which reverberated throughout Russia’s intellectual and political history for at least the next two centuries.

Bearing in mind that the all-pervading influence of Western civilization on the historical course of Russia, it is thus not surprising that Russia’s literary and intellectual development occurred in close relation with the West. At the same time European influences not only determined the philosophical and cultural evolution of Russia, but – more important of this dissertation – laid the foundation for ontological insight into life itself. Given the importance and impact of Western ideas, it is consequently not difficult to relate the *weltanschauung* of Russian intellectuals to Western civilization. Not only is the Russian perception of human nature, society and the world shaped in a European context but also the strong desire, the drive to change mankind and the entire world for the better. Russian thinkers in the nineteenth century and beyond embraced once again the romantic doctrine of German kind by which man’s mission in this world has to be fighting for a better life for everyone, to bring to light social injustice and give a voice to those people who cannot speak for themselves. Briefly put, the ambition to champion the cause of human rights by means of altruistic deeds and without “selfish purposes of material existence” is without doubt a direct impact of Western thoughts on the mindset of Russian intellectuals.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Since Western intellectual history played a significant role in shaping and influencing the Russian mind, it can be argued that even the national conceptualization of Russia emerged in line with the intellectual rendition of the West; the close relation of Russia to Western civilization profoundly illustrates that Russia’s national identity was formed and affected by the Western way of understanding political or social phenomena. It, however, not only gave impetus to a national self-awareness and the perception of the Other but, in addition, illustrates that the interplay with Western civilization even led to the creation of a national entity, of the invention of a Russian *narod* and even the conceptualization of a historical singularity. The German philosopher and art critic Boris Groys argues that, through cultural and political interactions with the Western world, Russia in fact set out to elaborate its (fictional) national characteristics.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Aware of the constitutive element of Western civilization in terms of Russia’s literary, political and ‘philosophical’ development and national formation, many political and literary figures in Russia expressed a strong feeling of apprehension about Europe’s political and, more importantly, spiritual condition. Russian intellectuals generated not only a national consciousness at the time of Europe’s nationalistic tendencies in the nineteenth century, but also love and affection for what they believed to be the cradle of Russia’s modern history. Their deep concern for Europe’s fate stems largely from a feeling of reverence and, in particular, gratitude, for the Russian cultural elite recognized the fact that the literary and philosophical traditions of the West significantly broadened Russia’s intellectual and cultural horizons. This feeling of indebtedness and veneration is, for instance, manifestly (and to some degree sarcastically) encapsulated in Lev Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* where the count Rostopchin in the face of Napoleon’s invasion of Moscow wonders how the Russians can even considering of fighting against their cultural gods:

И где нам, князь, воевать с французами! - сказал граф Ростопчин. - Разве мы против наших учителей и богов можем ополчиться? Посмотрите на нашу молодежь, посмотрите на наших барынь. Наши боги - французы, наше царство небесное - Париж.[[16]](#footnote-16)

In defiance of this admiration for Europe’s civilizing and cultural merits, many Russian thinkers expressed in the same way an ontological antinomy; they recognized an intellectual, political and, most of all, spiritual opposition between Russia and Western civilization. As pointed out above by means of the Slavophile movement, the imprint of the Western mind on Russian society fostered the formation of an anti-Western stance. In engaging with the Western world Russian thinkers developed a feeling, an instinct for moral and ethical anomalies permeating the philosophical, social, and political ambition of the West. Russian thinkers not only wanted to define itself as an ethical category – as pointed out by the nineteenth-century philosopher and sociologist Pyotr Lavrov (1823-1900) – but to carry the message that human qualities and moral principles are crucial in men’s existence. The allusion to morality and the sensibility for the True, the Beautiful and the Good rather than to the Western trust in reason and rationality provided the framework, the starting point of any literary, political or philosophical activity in Russia:

The endeavours of the Russian intelligentsia are generally held together by centripetal force of moral zeal, faith or conviction in some system, ideal or idea. […] Russian thinkers, like Marx, tend to want not only to understand the world but also to change it: they aspire to translate utopian dreams into reality, and desire – at their most millenarian – to realize the kingdom of heaven on earth.[[17]](#footnote-17)

The quintessential expression of a world-view based on moral and ethical principles is, for instance, shown in F.M. Dostoevsky’s masterpiece, *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879-80). In the behaviour and thought patterns of the main protagonist, Alyosha Karamazov, Dostoevsky, on the one hand, attacks the Western paradigm of reasoning and points out its destructive implication and, on the other hand, illustrates a “quasi-religious figure”[[18]](#footnote-18), a beautiful soul armed with distinguished features such as compassion, kindness or love, which men needs in order to withstand the impasse of the modern world. In this sense, Dostoevsky not only espouses his religious persuasion in the tender-mindedness of Alyosha’s character and the criticism of the West – he makes also clear that Russia’s and Europe’s fate and future relies on the internalization of spiritual and religious qualities: “Вся будущность, по Достоевскому, в душе человека, в том, что он сам из нее, из души своей вылепит.”[[19]](#footnote-19) Thus one of the central topos in Russia’s fictional and non-fictional rendition is based on the pursuit of a moral and ethical ideal which can help to overcome the erroneous course of Western style reasoning and the positivist and scientific approach to life.

As Alyosha’s example illustrates Russian literary figures expressed an intense anxiety over the spiritual condition of their *motherland*.[[20]](#footnote-20) Not only did they attach much significance to showing the philosophical and moral inconsistency and distortion of Western civilization but they also articulated in the same manner a deep concern about the dramatic effects the “ideas of Westernism in its extreme radical form” could have on Russia.[[21]](#footnote-21) Their fear was based on the assumption that Russia is at the mercy of Western ideas. The main reason for Russia’s intellectual weakness is based on its cultural condition. On one hand, the intellectual elite lack psychological and spiritual stability and, on the other hand, Russia’s society does not have the necessary political and social institutions in order to withstand Europe. Once Russia has embraced – given the assessment of such conservative thinkers like Dostoevsky – the Western way of thinking and behaving this will necessary lead to the destruction, to the disintegration of Russia’s society. In a sense, the resistance is directed towards the progressive elements pervading the Western world and thus negatively affecting the societal and spiritual ‘harmony’ of Russia:

Their striving for integrity or wholeness and purpose is partly defensive, as response to the fear that the centre cannot hold, an attempt to create a bulwark against the social fragmentation and ontological disintegration threatened by rapid economic and social change and the influx of Western values.[[22]](#footnote-22)

This dissertation, however, not only aims at shedding light on the cultural polarity, on the intellectual and existential schism dividing the West and Russia. Of particular importance will also be the reflection on a solution, on a remedy for the intellectual and moral bankruptcy Russian thinkers detected in Western civilization. This endeavor was fueled by the conviction that the West and, especially, Russia are on the brink of a catastrophe. The motivation to find a mechanism that can reverse the moral distortion and decomposition of life in Russia and the West, and provide a new understanding, new knowledge for improving man’s fate always lay at the core of Russia’s intellectual activity. Through its entire modern history Russian intellectuals tried to elaborate an idea which can counterbalance the Western paradigm of reason. In order to understand the theoretical concept behind the desire to change the way people think and act, it is important to ask: why did Russian thinkers in the last two centuries think that they can give the right answer or even a new insight and thus change the course of Western history? Perhaps the most conclusive answer to this question has to be seen with regard to the self-awareness of Russian intellectuals. The determination by which Russians tried to advocate an alternative path has at its core the assumption that Russia is different and based on this difference can prompt a “model of knowledge distinct from latest Western theories.”[[23]](#footnote-23) Their desire to apply a new concept is thus permeated with the conjecture that Russia is able to utter something different which can then prevent the disintegration of Russia and the West.

Endowed with the intelligence and persuasion of being able to convey a new insight into the intellectual and spiritual development of Russia and the West, Russian thinkers set out to formulate what they thought were the ‘right’ theoretical criteria. Although this intellectual and ‘philosophical’ rendering of a specifically Russian kind lacks an analytical approach, Russian thinkers nonetheless put much effort in deducing, in elaborating an *ersatz*. As pointed out earlier, Russia’s cultural enterprise has to be seen in the light of its opposition to the Western emphasis on reason, analytical thinking or scientific ideas. From this view, they tried to find something which can replace reason. In doing so, they came up with the idea that only ethical and moral principles can provide the necessary instrument for coping with not just the intellectual uncertainty of the modern era but also saving Russia and the West. At variance with logical analysis, scientific determinism, and reason, Russian intellectuals engaged in the precept of simple truth. In order to overcome, to recover from the conceptual fallacy and ontological uncertainty pervading Russia and Western civilization mankind must acknowledge the fact that only moral and ethical growth function as a panacea for the problems of modernity:

But what Russia set in reason’s place – even from the early nineteenth century – was a moral quest, and this ethical gain has to be offset against the rational loss. Russian thinkers wanted to find a moral way of being, what philosophers would call a moral ontology, and this is what above all marks out Russia’s ‘long tradition’. The Soviet experiment was only part of that quest.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Given that Western civilization gave rise to Russia’s national conceptualization and its intellectual activity, my dissertation seeks to explore the literary and philosophical response (conservative) intellectuals in Russia set out to enunciate in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In doing so, I wish to draw attention to the fact that a gap, a missing link in the academic community with regards to Russia’s ‘philosophical’ and political reaction towards the conceptual fallacy of the West overshadows the literary rumination about the intellectual performance of Russia. This scholarly omission needs, however, to be pointed out and elaborated on, for the Russian reaction to the Western reflection of mankind and the world has, according to the British scholar Lesley Chamberlain, “made an eccentric, poetic, and original contribution” to the intellectual process of Western civilization (plus Russia).[[25]](#footnote-25) Thus I am assuming that Russia has made a contribution and is not merely an empty space devoid of any cultural merits, as pointed out by the Russian philosopher Petr Chaadaev (1794-1856) in his *First Philosophical Letter* (written in 1829, published in 1836).[[26]](#footnote-26)

* 1. The structure of the dissertation

In intending to show the scheme for showing the complex relationship between Russia and the West, this dissertation will focus on two of Russia’s most influential and interesting literary and political figures, F.M. Dostoevsky (1821-1881) and A.I. Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008). It can be agreed that at some point every pattern of thinking, every major philosophical and literary movement or intellectual active person in Russia was either directly or indirectly shaped by the Western paradigm. Yet no other writers were to such a degree affected and formed by Western ideas and their influence on Russia’s development more than Dostoevsky and Solzhenitsyn. And perhaps nobody else except Dostoevsky and Solzhenitsyn reacted with such a denial of Western ideas and their participation in the development of Russia. What is even more intriguing is the fact that, by using Dostoevsky and Solzhenitsyn, I am able to cover the last two centuries of the relationship between Russia and the West. In so doing, I also hope to highlight a consistency in the cultural interplay between Russia and the West.

To begin with, I will give attention to the key factors which gave impetus to Russian thinkers to write about their attitude towards the West. In pointing out the main factors, I hope to set the framework for my dissertation and, simultaneously, outline the pivotal point of the ‘philosophical’ and ideological clash between Russia and the West. Although a different psychological motivation in dealing with the West between Dostoevsky and Solzhenitsyn can be detected, for Dostoevsky’s criticism of the West stems to a large degree from a national feeling of inferiority, there is, however, common ground. Both authors, in the course of engaging with Western civilization, were driven by a deep affection for Russia: “Clearly, the important ties between Solzhenitsyn and Dostoevsky lie not in literary style and device but elsewhere, in realms crucially important to both: their love for Russia.”[[27]](#footnote-27) Fundamental to this love for Russia was the anxiety and apprehension about the “огромные перевороты” on the horizon of the European and modern civilization.[[28]](#footnote-28) Dostoevsky as well as Solzhenitsyn feared that Russia cannot withstand the ideological turmoil pervading Russian society. Solzhenitsyn’s emphasis, for instance, on the importance of the free word in (Soviet) Russia or the threat of censoring writers especially reveals that Russia’s political and, particularly, spiritual condition was near and dear to him. He devoted his entire life as well as his literary and political activity to the question of how Russia can be saved from the ideological and political ferment of the twentieth century.

By showing the desire of Dostoevsky and Solzhenitsyn to rail against the ‘philosophical’ and ideological bankruptcy of the West and its grip on Russia, I go on to expound those factors and intellectual developments which led to the spiritual and political endangerment of Russia. According to Dostoevsky, the ontological fallacy of the West is interwoven with the perception that human society can be build upon scientific and materialistic principles. Dostoevsky saw the embodiment of this naïve faith in the tenets of revolutionary socialism. His opposition was, on the one hand, based on the assumption that the moral and ethical aspect of socialism and its implication on scientific determinism contradicts human nature and, on the other hand, Dostoevsky feared the consequences that the revolutionary ideas of socialism might have on Russia. At variance with the position that the ideal human order is subjected to a materialistic realization of society, Dostoevsky drew attention to the fact that man’s complex and irrational nature prevents him from establishing a human order based only on logic.

In the same manner as Dostoevsky set out in his journalistic and literary writing to denunciate revolutionary socialism and its emphasis on materialism, scientific methods, and rationality, Solzhenitsyn also leveled criticism at Marx’s thought. Just as Dostoevsky refused to accept the main political and ideological movements of the nineteenth century, Solzhenitsyn analogously expressed a strong disapproval of the main intellectual discourse of the twentieth century, i.e. Marx’s ideology and Communism. First of all, he railed against the Marxist premise by which social order is determined by how people organize and structure their materialistic life. The belief that material conditions lay at the core of man’s entire existence is, according to Solzhenitsyn, corrosive, for it leads, on the one hand, to the false assumption that in order to implement change a transformation of the structural foundation is the only possible way and, on the other hand, to the belief that moral and ethical behaviour is merely an insignificant by-product of economic conditions. Taken these two concepts together, Solzhenitsyn saw in the implementation of this ideology the cause of Russia’s painful experiences in the twentieth century. Marx’s thought on class struggle, human relations or the teleological process of history (towards communism) engendered, given Solzhenitsyn’s analysis, the belief in moral relativism and arbitrary political decisions. Briefly put, Solzhenitsyn believed that Marx’s thoughts paved the way for Stalin’s dictatorship and, consequently, the atrocities in twentieth-century Russia.

With regard to the philosophical and ideological distortion penetrating Russia and the West, Dostoevsky and Solzhenitsyn conceptualized a set of principles and human qualities which could function as a counterweight to the intellectual and spiritual impasse of Western civilization. Dostoevsky, for instance, saw such qualities in the Russian *narod*. He hoped that these inward qualities could function as a shield or buffer against the intellectual and political fallacy running through the nineteenth-century Russia and Europe. The assumption that the Russian people are morally and spiritually superior is based on Dostoevsky’s belief that the ‘true’ Russian people are not corrupted and defiled by Western ideas. In showing Dostoevsky’s affection with the Russian people, I will also draw attention to his intentions. He used the Russian *narod* not only as a spiritual counterbalance to the intellectual bankruptcy of the West but also for his own purposes. Bearing in mind that the *kulturträger* of Russia in the nineteenth century tried to reunite with the Russian people by conceptualizing their role within Russia’s society, Dostoevsky’s preoccupation with the Russian *narod* bears testimony to a national identification process.

Along with the elaboration of a Russian identity, Dostoevsky expounded on the importance of, what he called, *pochvennichestvo*. The elaboration of this concept is, on the hand, aimed at establishing a national idea different form the West and, on the other hand, directed against Western civilization. At variance with the decadent and materialistic West, Dostoevsky espoused the concept of *pochvennichestvo* which expresses the true nature of the Russian people. The quintessential expression of Russian qualities is an organic and living entity. By showing the Russian youth’s alienation from this concept, Dostoevsky hoped to encapsulate the overriding importance of a living life based on ‘true’ Russianness and devoid of Western influences.

In highlighting the moral and spiritual qualities of the Russian *narod* and the concept of *pochvennichestvo,* Dostoevsky outlines his world-view. The Russian writer was, however, not only concerned with intellectual and existential problems negatively affecting the West and Russia but he also set out to describe the basic principles of an ideal social order. The remedy for existential uncertainty rests, according to Dostoevsky, upon the implementation of the ‘right’ idea. According to Dostoevsky only religion or, in this case, the teaching of Christ can set the framework for an ideal society and not, for example, a materialistic and rational approach favoured by revolutionary socialism. Thus Dostoevsky supports a spiritual entity in order to rail against scientific progress or the new humanism pervading the Western world of the nineteenth century.

Closely intertwined with Dostoevsky’s assertion that spirituality and religious teaching will set the framework for a better social order is Solzhenitsyn’s reflection on the world. Just as Dostoevsky expressed the fatal flaws of the prevalent views in the nineteenth century, Solzhenitsyn set out to attack in his oeuvre one of the most prevailing political and social ideology of his time, Marxism. In Solzhenitsyn’s mind Marx’s philosophy not only jeopardizes political and social institutions but also has a negative effect on people’s thinking and, especially, their world-view. This endangerment is basically based on the perception that men’s existence is merely determined by material factors. According to Solzhenitsyn, the ‘gullible’ belief in the universal constituent of environmental factors ignores, on the one hand, the complicated and contradictory nature of men and, on the other hand, the spiritual and religious side of every human being. Facing the ‘fallacious’ ideology of Marxism, Solzhenitsyn thus not only condemns its political and philosophical implications but expressed the importance of living according to the ‘right’ idea. Just as Dostoevsky pointed to the religious idea of Christianity, Solzhenitsyn came to the conclusion that spirituality in line with compassion for the suffering of others can provide the insight and the right human characteristics for improving the world and mankind. In describing the misery and deprivation of people in the *Gulag* Solzhenitsyn, however, not only hoped to fan compassion but to diffuse moral and ethical principles. At some point, though, Solzhenitsyn acknowledges the insufficiency of compassion and sympathy. In order to make a moral stand against ideology-induced hatred Solzhenitsyn pointed out several stabilizing factors such as family ties or the importance of large communities or nations – both can provide a sense of responsibility and care for individuals. When put, however, in the historical context of modern times, families or a national spirit are too weak to cope with relativist views and divergence of political or ideological opinions. What can, though, lay the foundation for a better world is, according to Solzhenitsyn, belief in god. Just the concept of religion and faith in god possess the ability, the power to strengthen the character in times of political and social ferment.

Fundamental to Solzhenitsyn was also to point out the spiritual condition of Russia. He not only set out to demonstrate that religion and spirituality are inevitable in the modern world but engaged with the political situation of Russia. Disagreeing with Russia’s political and intellectual involvement in Marxist doctrine by Russian thinkers in the twentieth century, Solzhenitsyn rather advocated spiritual and religious renewal. Countering the idea of constant economic progress or the involvement in foreign affairs by Russian politicians, he makes clear that Russia’s spiritual and political well-being is intertwined with the meaning of Christianity. Only a Christian foundation in a nation, given Solzhenitsyn’s assertion, can give Russia the right perspective when dealing with fallacious ideas of the Western kind and establish a functioning political and social order.

1.3 Literature Review

Having mapped out the research goal and explained the methodological and theoretical blueprint for this dissertation, it is important to include a proper description of the right selection of primary and secondary literature, for the ‘right’ and convincing choice of literature not only facilitates the understanding and methodological process of the research objective but also lays the foundation of the right conceptual outcome. Thus my intention is to conduct a thorough and methodical examination and to engage with relevant scholarly sources in order to avoid a lack of coherence. Apart from that, I am aiming to adduce enough textual evidence of the methodological and academic legitimacy of this piece of work.

The first necessary step towards a coherent and systematic analysis of this dissertation will be a concise and brief illumination of the key ideas which left a mark on Russia’s cultural and political development. In so doing, my intention will be, to elucidate the zeitgeist, the cultural and historical context of Dostoevsky’s and Solzhenitsyn’s age. It will also be crucial to include those sources which give a short overview of the biographical context of the two Russian writers. For references to Solzhenitsyn’s and Dostoevsky’s life not only shine a light on the zeitgeist of the last two centuries, but help to explain Dostoevsky’s and Solzhenitsyn’s literary and ‘political’ endeavour and thus their anti-Western sentiments and conservative or even reactionary views. In sum, by giving a detailed depiction, an analysis of Dostoevsky’s and Solzhenitsyn’s psychological makeup, I am seeking to portray their literary, social, and political cause.

In order to outline the key ideas of Dostoevsky’s age and thus his intellectual and literary activity, I will predominantly rely on W.J. Leatherbarrow’s and Lesley Chamberlain’s interpretation of Dostoevsky’s literary and political writing as well as on their illustration of Russian thought in the nineteenth century. With regards to Chamberlain’s academic work, a special emphasis will be laid on her book *Motherland* (2007) that, in my opinion, pools ideas from the nineteenth century in a coherent and understandable order. Aside from describing the emergence and development of ideas in nineteenth-century Russia, Chamberlain frames a conceptual and theoretical similarity between Dostoevsky and Solzhenitsyn, between the nineteenth and twentieth century by showing the effects of nineteenth-century ideas on twentieth-century (Soviet) Russia. The decision to rely on *Motherland* can also be seen with regards to the methodological format of this dissertation, according to which Russia and the West occupy two different cultural entities. Such cultural divergences are, for instance, shown in a different understanding of life, society (community), freedom, or even the ‘right’ approach to knowledge. The decision to use Leatherbarrow’s academic expertise is based on his rigorous analysis of Russian thought in the nineteenth century with a close view on Dostoevsky’s cognizance of his age. In the volume *The Cambridge Companion to Dostoevskii* (2002) Leatherbarrow gives, for instance, an explicit and systematic account of the interaction between nineteenth-century ideas such as materialism or utilitarianism and Dostoevsky’s response to it.

With regards to Dostoevsky’s mindset, his intellectual evolution, I will give an account of recent research material by examining sources from German, English, and Russian academia. The German scholar Andreas Guski, for instance, thoroughly identifies in his article *Die Konstruktion Westeuropas in Dostoevsykijs ‘Winteraufzeichnungen über Sommereindrücke’* (published 2010) Dostoevsky’s ‘spurious’ arguments and ‘biased’ sentiments towards the political and social situation in Western countries.[[29]](#footnote-29) Guski’s emphasis on Dostoevsky’s critical stance on the Western civilization thus underpins the methodological and theoretical approach of my dissertation. The bulk of secondary literature regarding Dostoevsky’s weltanschauung and literary engagement, however, will be drawn from the English scholar W.J. Leatherbarrow. The enormous number of books and articles published by Leatherbarrow on Dostoevsky’s political, social or philosophical views include, for instance, the short but insightful biography *Fedor Dostoevsky* (1981) or a monograph about the anti-nihilist novel *The Devils: A Critical Companion* (1999). Apart from using English or German literature, I will to a large extent focus on Dostoevsky’s well-known and controversial diary. Mainly because Dostoevsky’s world-view as well as the psychological impulse of his literary activity can most of all be detected in *A Writer’s Diary* (published periodically between 1873 and 1881). A considerable part of this non-fictional work conveys a picture of Dostoevsky’s antithetical stance and critical attitudes towards Western countries such as France, Germany or England where he lived between 1860 and 1870. Apart from opposing Western civilization Dostoevsky similarly conceptualizes in *A Writer’s Diary* an ideological and political alternative embodied by the Russian *narod* and its emphasis on piety and spirituality. Especially the essay *Winter Notes on Summer* *Impressions* (Russian: Зимние заметки о летних впечатлениях) illustrates some of Dostoevsky’s key political and social concepts on the subject of the intellectual bankruptcy of Western civilization and Russia’s spiritual and religious nature. Dostoevsky’s anti-Western world-view is also shown in *Notes from the Underground* (1864). In this short story Dostoevsky rails against the (Western) belief according to which an ideal human order can be built on the precepts of science, rationality and logic. The most striking attack on ideological and political principles of the Western kind is, however, delineated in the anti-nihilist novel *Besy* (1872).[[30]](#footnote-30) The point of departure in this novel is the actualization of revolutionary socialism and its cataclysmic consequences. Dostoevsky shows in the characters and plot of *Besy* the potential menace of rationalism, materialism, and positivism to the individual and society when put into practice. Accordingly, *Besy* reveals Dostoevsky’s anti-Western stance.

As to the intention of examining literature on the subject of Dostoevsky’s spiritual and religious alternative to the Western way of thinking and acting, I will refer to the *Pushkin Speech* (1880).[[31]](#footnote-31) In this speech to the best known Russian intellectuals at that time, he encapsulates the notion that Russia’s spiritual and moral salvation lies within the reanimation of the Russian soil, i.e. *pochva*. In addition to the *Pushkin Speech*, a special emphasis regarding the intention of showing the spiritual and religious alternative will be laid on Dostoevsky’s novel *The Brothers Karamazov*. The decision to include *The Brothers Karamazov* is based on the fact that this novel encapsulates Dostoevsky entire world-view, his anti-Western position, and his belief in Russia’s cultural capability of saving the world.

It is widely agreed that The Brothers Karamazov represents the ‘synthesis’ and culmination of Dostoevsky’s work, in which we are presented with the latest and richest development and combinations of themes and types which have evolved through his earlier writings.[[32]](#footnote-32)

On the one side, this epic allegorically describes in a monologue between Christ and the Great Inquisitor (the chapter is called *The Legend of Great Inquisitor*) the threat of a paradigm shift embodied by revolutionary socialism and its emphasis on rationalism and materialism. On the other side, *The Brothers Karamazov* frames a vision of a conceptual *ersatz*. In the wording of Father Zosima, Dostoevsky conveys the idea that the belief in Christ and his teaching are the only force which can withstand the disintegration of modern and society.

At variance with Dostoevsky, Solzhenitsyn, living in Soviet Russia, did not have the opportunity to actively participate in multifarious forms of intellectual, political, and artistic life. The political situation in twentieth-century Soviet Russia basically prevented a free and open engagement with political, social or philosophical ideas (with few exceptions of course). Behind the emergence of this intellectual amaurosis was the triumph of Marxism-Leninism in Soviet Russia as the only legitimate ideology. With the implementation of Marxism-Leninism Soviet Russia banned officially all views incompatible with Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. In a sense, the modest engagement with ideas in the nineteenth century (Dostoevsky’s age) and at the beginning of the twentieth century was abandoned to make way for a compulsory monolithic ideology, i.e. Marxism-Leninism.

In contrast to Dostoevsky’s intellectual engagement, which directly appertain to the political and philosophical discourses of nineteenth-century Russia and Western Europe, Solzhenitsyn could not directly partake in a diverse environment of intellectual and political discourse. Given this political and intellectual situation in Soviet Russia, I will propound a slightly different approach when dealing with secondary literature on Solzhenitsyn’s writing. Generally speaking, I will focus on those sources which provide evidence for Solzhenitsyn’s subjective perception and interpretation of the political and philosophical landscape of Soviet Russia. This includes, for instance, James F. Puntuso’s book *Assault on Ideology* (2004) which systematically and intelligibly illustrates Solzhenitsyn’s subjective (and to some degree polemic) perception of Marxism and its consequences for society, politics, freedom, human relations, etc. For that reason Puntuso’s book will constitute the bulk of Solzhenitsyn’s view on Marxism. Apart from highlighting Solzhenitsyn’s perspectives on the conceptual and philosophical ‘fallacy’ of Marxism, Puntuso’s monograph can also be used as an account for Russia’s history of thought, for it illustrates that Solzhenitsyn’s attack on Marxism as immoral, inhuman or conceptually wrong is consonant with the tradition of Russian philosophy on the West. To sum up, *Assault on Ideology* underpins my research objective by showing the anti-Western tendencies in Solzhenitsyn’s writing as well as the notion that Russia encompasses moral and spiritual issues. The value of *Assault on Ideology* can also be seen as an instrument for criticizing Solzhenitsyn’s world-view and, especially, his analysis of Marx’s philosophy. Puntuso’s book illustrates Solzhenitsyn’s one-sidedness in seeing only the mechanical view of Marx’s philosophy ignoring thereby the humanistic view of Marx’s philosophy. In conclusion, it must be pointed out that the overemphasis on Puntuso’s examination is also due to a scarcity of literature written on the topic of Solzhenitsyn’s criticism of the Western mind.

There is, however, a large number of sources dealing with Solzhenitsyn’s Christian faith (Russian Orthodoxy), his struggle with the Soviet nomenklatura, and of course literature on Russia’s fate. Solzhenitsyn’s Christian faith is encapsulated in N.C Nielsen’s book *Solzhenitsyn’s religion* (1976). With regards to my research objective it is essential to include Solzhenitsyn’s religious evolution, for it outlines Solzhenitsyn’s connection to Russia’s cultural tradition and thus to its moral, spiritual, and ethical emphasis. In addition, Solzhenitsyn’s perspective on religious and spiritual issues reveals an anti-Western position. An insightful interpretation of Solzhenitsyn’s faith and spirituality, his attack on Marxism and thus materialism and atheism – in Solzhenitsyn’s mind Western ideas – are also shown in Andrej Kodjak’s book *Alexander Solzhenitsyn* (1978) and in a collection of essays published by J.B. Dunlop, R. Haugh, A. Klimoff and titled *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: critical essays and documentary materials* (1973). These two sources not only give an accurate analysis of Solzhenitsyn’s literary writing but also show that religion, spirituality, anti-Western sentiments permeate Solzhenitsyn’s writings.

The elucidation of Solzhenitsyn’s Christian world-view, his relation to Russia and the West will also particularly be deduced from his literary (fictional and non-fictional) texts. To begin with, I will focus on Solzhenitsyn’s multivolume narrative *The Red Wheel*. The ‘red wheel’ stands for the catastrophic circle or the fatal historical movement of the February and October Revolutions. According to Solzhenitsyn, these two revolutions and the subsequent catastrophic course of events dislocated Russia from its ‘true’ spiritual and religious origin. Thus Solzhenitsyn makes clear that Russia’s cultural entity is conceptualized on spiritual and religious foundation. Along with *The Red Wheel*, Solzhenitsyn’s published letter to the fourth Congress of Soviet Writers (on May 22, 1967), his famous Nobel Lecture of 1970 deal with the same issue. Closely intertwined with Solzhenitsyn’s understanding of Russia’s cultural layout in these free sources, is his attack on the West. Solzhenitsyn tries to show that the erroneous course, the ‘historical anachronism’ of Soviet Russia and Communism happened mainly due to the influences and imitations of Western ideology.

As to the analysis of Solzhenitsyn’s life and his world-view, I will lay emphasis on Michael Scammell’s detailed biography *Solzhenitsyn* (1984) and Joseph Pearce’s book *Solzhenitsyn: A Soul in Exile* (1999). From the point of view of Solzhenitsyn’s post-Soviet life and his meditation on Russia’s new political and social position after the fall of the Soviet Union, I will refer to Joseph Pearce, who personally met and interviewed Solzhenitsyn. In addition, Pearce’s biography gives a closer look at Solzhenitsyn’s moral, religious, and spiritual evolution.[[33]](#footnote-33) It also gives an illustration of Solzhenitsyn’s opinion on the reasons for Russia’s ‘fall into a political and social abyss’. According to Pearce’s biography, the cataclysm Russia experienced in the twentieth century happened due to the fact that men had forsaken God. With regards to this account, Pearce’s book underpins my research objective and provides insightful information by showing a moral and spiritual explanation of Soviet atrocities. A thorough and insightful illustration of Solzhenitsyn’s life is also given in Michael Scammell’s biography. The choice to rely on Scammell’s analysis is largely due to his interest in examining Solzhenitsyn “from the outside.”[[34]](#footnote-34) Scammell aspires to highlight less the psychological aspects of Solzhenitsyn’s personality than the “biographical and historical facts” of Solzhenitsyn’s life.[[35]](#footnote-35) His methodological approach is to examine the society, the political and social situation in Soviet Russia “through the prism of one exceptional man’s life and career.”[[36]](#footnote-36) By analysing the twentieth century through Solzhenitsyn’s perception, Scammell seeks to underline the fact that Solzhenitsyn himself has added significant and invaluable insights to the nature of society in which he was born and lived. On the basis of Scammell’s analysis, I will try to highlight the motives for Solzhenitsyn’s political and literary engagement. Scammell, for instance, points out that the one important intention behind writing *The Gulag Archipelago* was a moral and spiritual rebirth. According to Scammell, Solzhenitsyn hoped to achieve this goal by displaying the cruel and inhuman environment in the camps (gulag) and thus to impel “the Russian people to repent their sins.”[[37]](#footnote-37) In addition, Scammell’s book gives information with regards to Solzhenitsyn’s stance on the West and Marxism.

The primary source from which Solzhenitsyn’s stance on the West and examination of Marxism can be adduced will, however, be his major historical opus, the three volume narration *The Gulag Archipelago* (written 1958-1968.) In *The Gulag Archipelago* Solzhenitsyn rails against Marx’s precepts of societal structure, economic theory or the importance of materialism. Furthermore, he believed that Marx’s doctrines ignore moral and ethical responsibility and do not take into account the ambiguous nature as well as the psychological make-up of men who do not always act according to a rational and logical pattern. In so doing, Solzhenitsyn propounds Marxism as an alien element emerging from Western Europe and corrosively changing Russia’s political and societal structure. Thus, according to Solzhenitsyn, the roots of Russia’s political and social maladies in the twentieth century stem from the adaptation of Marxism by the Russian intelligentsia. Considering Solzhenitsyn’s analysis, it is essential to expound on *The Gulag Archipelago*, for it supports the research objective of this dissertation.

In order to underpin or to counterpoint Solzhenitsyn’s reading of Marx’s thought with what Karl Marx actually said, I will refer to Marx’s early writings, i.e. treatises composed before 1848. Marx’s early writings reveal his characteristic positions and “is at least a prerequisite to grasping the compass of his thought.”[[38]](#footnote-38) It can also be said that Marx’s early work “became the core of Marx’s mature thought and the leading thread of all his subsequent writings.”[[39]](#footnote-39) In treatises such as *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (1844) and *The German Ideology* (1844-46) Marx theorizes on the development of historical processes, on the concept of class (human relations), on God (religion), the overcoming of human alienation through communism, moral matters (humanism) etc. Thus I will refer to these treatises in order to illustrate, on the one hand, Marx’s thought and, on the other hand, to underpin my research objective. I will also rely to Marx’s post-1848 writings such as *The Communist Manifesto* (1848). In this short publication Marx’s more radical position towards historical development or the revolutionary movement is illustrated. Given the illustration of this radical position, I will try to establish a conceptual connection between Solzhenitsyn’s criticism of Marx’s thought and Marx’s actual writings.

On the subject of Solzhenitsyn’s intention to establish a conceptual and ideological alternative to Marx’s philosophy he also relies on his account in the Gulag. Based on his experience Solzhenitsyn arrived to the conclusion that Marx’s view on human nature or even on economics and class is fatal and fallacious. In *Matryona’s dvor* Solzhenitsyn, for instance, postulates the existence of different understanding of life. In this piece of writing Solzhenitsyn champions a spiritual and moral counterforce, a different concept of life. Rather than pursuing the accumulation of goods, Solzhenitsyn shows in the embodiment of *Matryona* a character devoid of any egoistic or materialistic propensity. Moreover, she is the epitome of ‘true’ Christian belief. The emphasis of morality and spirituality over materialism and egoism has also to be seen in light of Solzhenitsyn’s concern about Russia’s wellbeing. In the Letter to the Soviet writers and *From under the Rubble* Solzhenitsyn points out the importance of implementing a political and social policy by which moral and religious teaching becomes part of the educational system in the Soviet Union. In addition, Solzhenitsyn advocates in his writings the reanimation of family values and the abolition of authorial rule as well as centrally planned economy. In sum, I will focus on Solzhenitsyn’s *The Gulag Archipelago*, *Matryona’s dvor* and *From under the Rubble* to highlight Solzhenitsyn’s idea of life which, given Solzhenitsyn’s examination, differentiates form of Marxism and thus from the West.

II. The literary impulse of Dostoevsky’s and Solzhenitsyn’s writing

2.1 Dostoevsky’s pursuit of a Russian entity

Пусть наша земля нищая, но эту нищую землю

в рабском виде исходил благословляя Христос.

F. M. Dostoevsky

When confronted by their country’s cultural and political irrelevance, nationalists tend to invent new national or cultural qualities which are then used to juxtapose their nation favourably with another. The cultural and intellectual elite begin to search for a spiritual anchor, a safe haven where national pride and self-respect can be restored. In the process of finding one’s place in the world, the illustration of the other or the foreign is a recurrent feature which is used in order to determine one’s own national and social demarcation. Often, behind the formation of the *Other* lies the desire to upgrade one’s own cultural and historical status.

This psychological reflex triggers a paradigm shift in terms of self-awareness and, especially, the perception of the Other. The reorientation is often based on a Manichean view of good and evil, divine and profane or spiritual and materialistic. On the one side the self is associated with spirituality, piety and a genuine religious yearning. Becoming part of this Manichean world-view, people of a particular nationality perceive themselves as embodiments of virtues such as compassion, love, altruism or morality. From this perspective, the self is thus not only saved from the power of evil but claims to have a vocation for saving humanity from its intellectual and spiritual wrong-doing. In contrast to that the other is characterized by its immorality, its one-sidedness or illusive existence. More importantly, this separate entity has lost its grip on the true nature of man. By putting emphasis on rationalistic thinking and a scientific exegesis of the world a decomposition of life and cultural and moral degeneration has found its way into every aspect of the *живая жизнь*.[[40]](#footnote-40)

In explaining Dostoevsky’s attitude towards Europe, it is essential and inevitable to take this psychological mechanism into account. Dostoevsky’s polemic criticism of Europe has to be read against the background of a narcissistic wound, of a national inferiority complex. The most revealing illustration of Dostoevsky’s wounded national pride and its psychological consequence can be drawn from *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*. Appearing in the Russian journal *Vremja* in 1863, this non-fictional writing is not only a work of major importance but is also considered to be a crucial fountainhead of Dostoevsky’s programmatic and ideological position towards Europe. Travelling for the first time through: “страна святых чудес”[[41]](#footnote-41), as he had called it in his youth, he lays out his political stance and philosophical view of Europe’s civilization.[[42]](#footnote-42) His travels took him also to Cologne where he visited a newly constructed bridge. This apparently imposing edifice – which can also be seen as a symbol of Europe’s civilization – must have left a strong impression on Dostoevsky because he projected his humiliated nationalistic thoughts onto a German representative whom he met during a visit of this bridge: "Ты видишь наш мост, жалкий русский, - ну так ты червь перед нашим мостом и перед всяки немецки человек, потому что у тебя нет такого моста".[[43]](#footnote-43) His reaction proves thus the psychological reflex behind Dostoevsky’s inner feelings: "Черт возьми, - думал я, - мы тоже изобрели самовар... у нас есть журналы... у нас делают офицерские вещи... у нас...".[[44]](#footnote-44)

Facing thus a higher stage of cultural and economic development in Europe, Dostoevsky seeks to devalue it by constructing a metaphysical and spiritual anomaly. According to Dostoevsky, Europe’s society has lost its humaneness, its natural way of living and behaving. Instead of harmony or genuine love, Dostoevsky makes clear that superficiality and affected mannerisms form a key part of Europe’s inter-human relations: “Вся эта фантасмагория, весъ этот маскарад…”.[[45]](#footnote-45) In his *Winter Notes* Dostoevsky uses a *guidebook* as a symbol for the hollowness and the intellectual and spiritual bankruptcy of European society. In Dostoevsky’s opinion an existence based on the rules and instructions of a *guidebook* reduces human freedom and human relations to absurdity. At variance with this way of being Dostoevsky points out that the Russians live according to the ‘right’ moral and spiritual principles:

Das Motiv des ‚Reiseführers‘ nimmt dabei ein Schlüsselmotiv slavophiler Ost-West-Typologie vorweg: nämlich die These von der Abhängigkeit des Westeuropäers von externen (heteronomen) Vorgaben, also von Regeln, Vorschriften, Gesetzen (dafür steht symbolisch der ‚Reiseführer‘, also der Baedeker), während die Russen ihr Handeln auf der Grundlage freier und autonomer (sittlicher) Entscheidungen treffen.[[46]](#footnote-46)

Another symbol for the decomposition of life can be drawn from the Western capitals London and Paris. Dostoevsky presents Paris to the Russian audience as particularly emblematic of Europe’s current cultural and spiritual decay.[[47]](#footnote-47) Dostoevsky’s concern refers to the bourgeois ideology. The centerpiece of his criticism is the commitment to money. In Dostoevsky’s opinion the god Mammon has taken over the lives of the French bourgeoisie. Dostoevsky illustrates this cold-hearted devotion to money by the fact that a Frenchman can without any hesitation sell his own father: “У самого подлого французика который за четвертак продаст вам родного отца, да еще прибавит вам что-нибудь в придачу…”.[[48]](#footnote-48) Aside from the capitalistic nature of the Frenchman, Dostoevsky was fascinated and at the same time felt ill at ease with the regulation of life in Paris. The order permeating every aspect of life had a negative effect on French society. According Dostoevsky, it constrains the freedom of choice and even eliminates hope in life:

И какая реглементация! Поймите меня: не столько внешняя реглементация, которая ничтожна, а колоссальная внутренняя, духовная, из души происшедшая.[[49]](#footnote-49)

…и в Париже: такое же отчаянное стремление с отчаяния остановится на status quo, вырвать с мясом из себя все желания и надежды, проклясть свое будущее, в которое не хватает веры, может быть, у самих предводителей прогресса, и поклонится Ваалу.[[50]](#footnote-50)

If Paris stands for the adoration of Mammon, superficiality and a strict organization of life, London presents the anarchical opposite: “…deren anarchischer Kehrseite: dem moralischen Untergrund, der Welt der Laster, des Alkohols, des Verbrechens und der Prostitution”.[[51]](#footnote-51) But London was not just the other side of Paris. During Dostoevsky’s visit of London, he went to see Joseph Paxton’s Crystal Palace which was build for the Great Exhibition in 1851. Designed to display examples of the latest technology developed in the Industrial Revolution to thousands of exhibitors from around the world, Dostoevsky interpreted his experience in biblical terms. He arrived to the conclusion that the Crystal Palace can be compared to the Tower of Babel:

Да, выставка поразительна. Вы чувствуете страшную силу, которая соединила тут всех этих бесчисленных людей, пришедших со всего мира, в едино стадо; вы сознаете исполинскую мысль; вы чувствуете, что тут что-то уже достигнуто, что тут победа, торжество. Вы даже как будто начинаете боятся чего-то. Как бы вы ни были независимы, но вам отчего-то становится страшно. Уж не это ли, в самом деле, достигнутый идеал? - думаете вы; - не конец ли тут? не это ли уж, и в самом деле, едино стадо. Не придется ли принять это, и в самом деле, за полную правду и занеметь окончательно? Все это так торжественно, победно и гордо, что вам начинает дух теснить. Вы смотрите на эти сотни тысяч, на эти миллионы людей, покорно текущих сюда со всего земного шара, - людей, пришедших с одною мыслью, тихо, упорно и молча толпящихся в этом колоссальном дворце, и вы чувствуете, что тут что-то окончательное совершилось, совершилось и закончилось. Это какая-то библейская картина, что-то о Вавилоне, какое-то пророчество из Апокалипсиса, вочию совершающееся. Вы чувствуете, что много надо вековечного духовного отпора и отрицания, чтоб не поддаться, не подчиниться впечатлению, не поклониться факту и не обоготворить Ваала, то есть не принять существующего за свой идеал…[[52]](#footnote-52)

Given this apocalyptic scenario, Dostoevsky even dares to forecast that this “*едино стадо* or *муравейник*” is excluded from Christian teleology.[[53]](#footnote-53) Dostoevsky’s prophetic annunciations point out that the people gathered in London will not be part of the Christian salvation:

Тут уж вы видите даже и не народ, а потерю сознания, систематическую, покорную, поощряемую. И вы чувствуете, глядя на всех этих париев общества, что еще долго не сбудется для них пророчество, что еще долго не дадут им пальмовых ветвей и белых одежд и что долго еще будут они взывать к престолу всевышнего: доколе, господи.[[54]](#footnote-54)

It can be thus argued that by using Europe as a reference point, Dostoevsky’s key intention in the *Winter Notes* is to develop a concept of an *enemy*. He uses this concept in order to juxtapose it with the *живая жизнь* of Russian spirituality. At the base of this perception, lies Dostoevsky’s wish to conceptualize a national and cultural identity.

2.2 Solzhenitsyn and his deep affection for Russia

Behind Solzhenitsyn’s literary and political dedication stands basically his love for Russia; his entire work can be virtually summarized as: “I pity Russia”.[[55]](#footnote-55) His attachment to Russia’s fortune and deep concern about its well-being stems largely from the profound changes his native country underwent in the course of the twentieth century. Solzhenitsyn considered Russia’s political and social appearance after the Russian Revolution in 1917 as a historical anachronism alien to Russia’s ‘true’ national and spiritual manifestation. Given this historical explanation, Solzhenitsyn sets out to expound the political and social landscape which led to Russia’s ‘downfall’. Thus fundamental to Solzhenitsyn’s ambitious literary endeavour was to adduce factors by which Russia’s historical maldevelopment could be explained; he devoted his entire life to the work of elaborating the major contributing causes which led to Russia’s political and spiritual ‘malaise’.

The literary and semi-fictional articulation of this devotion found its expression in a nexus of complicated narrative cycles (*The Red Wheel*) displaying the course of Russia’s historical and political development. Although traces of Solzhenitsyn’s aspiration to bring to light Russia’s cultural and spiritual condition engulf virtually every piece of his literary production, the gravity of this issue is evidently foregrounded in the effort of writing the multivolume epic *The Red Wheel*. Encompassing ten volumes and totaling almost six thousand pages in the Russian edition, Solzhenitsyn considered it to be “the most important book of his life” which outranked the importance of his previous works.[[56]](#footnote-56) The life-long effort and amount of work Solzhenitsyn put into his *magnum opus* highlight, on the one hand, the significance it played for the Russian writer’s historical reflection on his native country and, on the other hand, his deep concern for Russia: “Central to the cycle [that is *The Red Wheel*] is the question whether one loves Russia”.[[57]](#footnote-57) Some Western critics even consider it to be Solzhenitsyn’s “most emphatically patriotic literary work”.[[58]](#footnote-58) No other work illustrates best Solzhenitsyn’s motivation to shed light on the cataclysmic events of the February and October Revolution and the subsequent Soviet repression. Thus the subject is the history of the Revolution in conjunction with his love for Russia. His intention was to reveal the causes and consequences of the Russian Revolution and “to delve into what he […] viewed as a malevolent and calamitous rupture in Russian history”.[[59]](#footnote-59) Thus Russia’s spiritual, political and historical development formed a key part in Solzhenitsyn’s life; in addition it bears testimony to his patriotic affection for Russia.

Along with Solzhenitsyn’s overriding concern of Russia’s political and spiritual condition, the Russian writer was in the same way worried about the development of the Russian language under the influence of the Main Administration of Literary and Publishing Affairs (Russian: *Glavnoe upravlenie po delam literatury i izdatel’stv*), the official censorship and state secret protection organ in the Soviet Union. Solzhenitsyn’s understanding of the significance of the Russian language has to be seen in accordance with his longing to restore Russia to its initial state; he considered Russia’s cultural and spiritual recovery to be in line with the restoration of the richness of the Russian word such as Russian proverbs. In a sense, he hoped to reanimate the cultural and religious tradition of Russia by means of reintroducing the old-Russian language:

It is as if he is single-handedly trying to restore to Russia not only her history but also her happier heritage, her vivid ever-creative spoken language, and her subtly expressive language, which, since 1930, have been buried under layers of pompous bureaucratese, clumsy prudishness, cloying Pecksniffian sentimentalism, and falsifying euphemisms – buried and also ossified into reactionary syntactic forms strongly ‘influenced’ by Stalin’s literary style.[[60]](#footnote-60)

In a letter to the fourth Congress of Soviet Writers on May 22, 1967, Solzhenitsyn expounds his views on the overriding significance of the ‘free word’. His determination to address the issue of free speech springs to a great extent from his desire to improve Russia’s political and social situation. In his letter to the Congress he begins by stipulating the illegitimate and corrosive nature of censoring the Russian language, for, Solzhenitsyn points out, it “weighs heavily on our literature and permits individuals unversed in literary matters to hold unchecked power over writers”.[[61]](#footnote-61) Comparing this practice with an old-fashioned and ephemeral “Methusalah-like existence”[[62]](#footnote-62), Solzhenitsyn enunciates the intrinsic danger it has for the social and spiritual development of his country:

The right of our writers to voice judgements which are ahead of their time concerning the moral life of man and society, their right to an independent elucidation of social problems or of the historical experience of our country, gained at the cost of such great suffering – these rights are neither presupposed nor recognized. Works that might have given expression to a national sentiment whose time had come, which might have exerted a timely and salutary influence within the realm of spiritual values or which could have fostered the growth of social consciousness – such works are banned or mutilated by the censorship out of consideration that are petty and selfish, as well as shortsighted from the national point of view.[[63]](#footnote-63)

At the same time the silencing of a writer’s conscious by a state-controlled censorship cannot warn a society against an ideological or political misapprehension; the premonition of conceptual irregularities could thus not be conveyed to the adherents of political or social ideologies. Bereft of the freedom of expression the writer cannot, given Solzhenitsyn’s assertion, point out the moral and political morbidity permeated, for instance, by ideology-induced hatred, what happened in Russia after the *coup d’état* of the Bolsheviks. At the end of his letter Solzhenitsyn encapsulates the consequences Russia experienced as a result of a restricted Soviet policy towards literary freedom:

Our literature has forfeited the leading position in world literature that it occupied at the end of the last century and the beginning of the present one; lost, too, is the brilliant experimentation that distinguished it in the 1920’s. To the entire world the literary life of our country appears immeasurably more pallid, bland, and inferior than it is in reality, and than it would have become, had it not been constricted and isolated. The loss is to our country in world public opinion, and to world literature; were the latter to avail itself of the unhampered fruits of our literature, and were it to be enriched by our spiritual experience, then the entire evolution of the arts would not be proceeding along its present course; art would have attained a new stability and would even have risen to a new artistic level.[[64]](#footnote-64)

To a certain degree Solzhenitsyn addressed the same issue in his Nobel Lecture of 1970.[[65]](#footnote-65) However, the Nobel Lecture lays emphasis on a slightly different precept. From the content of Solzhenitsyn’s piece it can be discerned that the Russian writer was not merely occupied with the political and social condition of his native country. Accordingly, Solzhenitsyn was not simply an insular or even nationalistic character, as often claimed by Western critics. In a sense, the lecture does not only reveal his commitment to Russia’s well-being by freeing the literary process but it shows, in addition, his attachment to a universal cause: “Could not art and literature in a very real way offer succor to the modern world”.[[66]](#footnote-66)

Fundamental to Solzhenitsyn was thus not only the spiritual recovery of his beloved Russia. Analogous to Dostoevsky’s vocation to find an all-human social formula, Solzhenitsyn’s literary work reveals the same concern about the universal condition of humanity. His writing bears all the hallmarks of someone who felt deep anxiety about the course of human history. Solzhenitsyn as well as Dostoevsky were, on the one hand, determined to highlight the political and spiritual development the twentieth century and, on the other hand, to elaborate an alternative to the ‘maladies’ of the nineteenth and twentieth century.

The main target of Solzhenitsyn’s criticism is the dominant political philosophy of the last century. In his writing he set out to illustrate the conceptual fallacy of the main progressive doctrine, i.e. Marxism, permeating all levels of society in Soviet Russia, for the fate of Russia is, given Solzhenitsyn’s interpretation, intrinsically intertwined with ‘spurious’ Marxist ideology. In the same way as Dostoevsky set out to highlight the political and ideological bankruptcy of the scientific determinism, nihilism and new humanism of the nineteenth century, Solzhenitsyn’s oeuvre takes aim at demonstrating the theoretical misapprehension of Marx’s philosophy when put into practice. By showing the political and social inconsistency of Marxist ideas, Solzhenitsyn hoped to find a way of overcoming the communist ideology framing the cultural and historical development of Russia in the twentieth century. In a sense, Solzhenitsyn’s political rendition and literary motivation was directed towards the end of the communist rule in Soviet Russia. The terrible experience of inhuman totalitarianism and, especially, of the Gulag give Solzhenitsyn the authority to render a report on Marx’s understanding of the concept of class or human nature.

III. The Ascent from ‘Modernity’

3.1. The intellectual maladies of the West

Truth is a noun only for God; for people it is always a verb.

Franz Rosenzweig

Given Dostoevsky’s pursuit of conceptualizing a cultural and national entity amidst European nations, he set up a metaphysical and philosophical demarcation line between Europe and Russia. In outlining this opposition he went on to attack those features which were in his world-view emblematic of the mindset of European nations and thus different or even dangerous to his native country. Agreeing with the generalizations made by nineteenth-century Slavophile thinkers such as Ivan Kireevsky or K. Aksakov that Europe was morally and socially bankrupt, Dostoevsky also set out to demonstrate the rootless, decadent, deracinated cosmopolitan living in Western cities, cut off from the roots of a spiritual and healthy society. In overcoming Europe, he railed against its soulless, egoistic and mechanic existence.

Dostoevsky saw Europe’s rapid moral and spiritual distortion in the aftermath of the political upheavals (revolution) of 1848 in France and Germany. According to Dostoevsky these events paved the way for the “rise of capitalism and the industrialization of bourgeoisie morality”.[[67]](#footnote-67) He framed his thoughts on the political and social ferment of Europe’s civilization in his journalistic piece *Winter Notes of Summer Impressions*:

In this work he drew particular attention to social unrest, the alienation of the individual, the rise of revolutionary socialism, and the growth of a pecuniary morality, all of which he considered symptomatic of developing capitalism. Above all he was struck by the penetration of egoism into all aspects of European life…[[68]](#footnote-68)

Given this criticism of Western civilization, Dostoevsky took aim at a particular ontological and metaphysical condition of Europe. The devaluation of Western ethics and morality was accompanied by a definitive rebuttal of its materialistic and rationalistic aspiration. Regarding Europe thus “as a decaying culture”[[69]](#footnote-69), Dostoevsky insinuated in *Winter Notes* that “Western civilization was decadent and materialistic”.[[70]](#footnote-70) Despite the fact that traces of his anti-materialistic and anti-rationalistic positions can be identified before he actually travelled to Europe, the encounter with the West in 1863 functioned as the shaping factor of Dostoevsky animosity towards the Western world: “In his attack on the West, he again repeated the theme […] the pointlessness of a life based only on the rational”.[[71]](#footnote-71) In *Winter Notes* he categorically rejects any belief in pure reasoning. Moreover, he points out that reason alone contradicts mankind:

Доводов чистого разума? Да ведь разум оказался несостоятельным перед действительностью, да, сверх того, сами-то разумные, сами-то ученые начинают учить теперь, что доводов чистого разума, что чистого разума и не существует на свете, что отвлеченная логика неприложима к человечеству, […] а чистого разума совсем не бывало.[[72]](#footnote-72)

Another example of the discrepancy between radically deterministic ideas and individuality is presented in *Notes from Underground*. According to Diane Oenning Thomson “*Notes from Unterground* is the most concentrated and sustained exploration in Dostoevsky’s oeuvre of the problems science posed for the individual person, and by implication, for society”.[[73]](#footnote-73) The consequential implication of science and reason on man’s life is highlighted in the main character. The anti-hero’s behavior provides a framework for Dostoevsky’s thoughts on irrational and illogical behavior. Using the psychology of this protagonist in order to show the “test of a morally complex individual who dodges and weaves through challenges posed by contingency, rationality, and physical necessity”[[74]](#footnote-74), Dostoevsky presents his understanding of man’s nature. Moreover, Dostoevsky clearly demonstrates that the behavior of the *Underground Man* is very symptomatic of the nineteenth-century, which he describes as the age of negation. In striking contrast to the affirmative character and ideals of the Enlightenment, the Underground Man personifies “the dangers of consequentiality, contingency, and necessity, which in ordinary life prevent man from acting freely, consciously, and capriciously.”[[75]](#footnote-75)

In the face of this pattern, Dostoevsky saw crucial consequences of upholding rationalistic and materialistic principles over man’s unpredictability and irrationality. In his *Winter Notes* he attacked the notion that “rationalism [can be considered] as the best philosophy for mankind”*.[[76]](#footnote-76)* In contrast to this point of view, Dostoevsky espoused the notion of the irrational nature of man. Accordingly, human society cannot be founded on a rationalistic and logical foundation alone. The utopian faith in human reason, the position that “the future could be engineered according to clear and unassailable principles of logic” was at variance with Dostoevsky’s view of man[[77]](#footnote-77); he discerned that man’s illogical nature prevents him from establishing a self-controlled entity. Perhaps the most serious attack was directed towards the perception that man is by nature good and acts only according to his nature.

The manifestation of these perceptions of a rationalistic world-view, the utopian belief in man and materialistic morality saw Dostoevsky deeply embedded in ideological and programmatic tenets of revolutionary socialism, which took root in Russia in the nineteenth century. With anxiety and concern Dostoevsky observed the increasing influence of European ideas in Russia. He evinced that Europe lacked a governing principle, that “violent convulsion in the social and political fabric of the Continent” endangers Russia’s life and future.[[78]](#footnote-78) The European bacillus causes a “discord and existential uncertainty […] which was already penetrating his native land.”[[79]](#footnote-79) The utopian belief that socialism, science and rationality can solve the problems of humanity and lead to a brighter future, contradicts Dostoevsky’s understanding of man’s psychology and the philosophy of history. In *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions,* Dostoevsky explicitly rejects the possibility of “socialist brotherhood and the kind of romantic Rousseauism which fired revolutionary socialism with its assertion of man’s natural goodness and the possibility of social harmony based on its virtue”.[[80]](#footnote-80)

The structural and narrative ideation of abstract humanism, scientific determinism and revolutionary socialism is encapsulated in the anti-nihilist and political novel *Besy*. Considered by Gary Saul Morson as one “of the most influential anti-utopias in Europe literature”, *Besy* metaphorically visualizes the pandemonium of Western ideas on the Russian intellectual.[[81]](#footnote-81) Aside from the literary embodiment of Dostoevsky’s anti-European depiction, it is also possible to read *Besy* in union with Dostoevsky’s political stance: “it is clear from the foregoing that Dostoevsky’s view on Western Europe, Russia, […] are interrelated and form a key part of the ideological axis on which The Devils turns.”[[82]](#footnote-82) Closely intertwined with the destructive obsession with European ideas is its ontological and existential uncertainty. *Besy* can be thus read on two levels. On the one hand Dostoevsky’s political polemic is carried out by “a series of vitriolic caricatures of political figures and types” and on the other hand by a “rejection of socialism and revolution on philosophical grounds.”[[83]](#footnote-83)

From this point of view, *Besy* gives a perceptive example of man’s true psychological nature which contradicts revolutionary ideals. According to N.A. Berdjaev, the novel *Besy* attentively illustrates the pathological condition of a person when he or she is completely occupied with the *false* ideas and principles of revolutionary socialism. *Besy* pointedly contends that the sinful nature of man prevents him from eliminating “social injustice and creating a new social harmony”.[[84]](#footnote-84) This utopian vision of a better world is counterbalanced by the sinister motives and cruelty of the key characters. By juxtaposing their subversive behavior with their ideological aspiration, Dostoevsky set out to underline the true nature of (all) revolutionary aspirations and motivations. The iconoclasm of Christian faith, the mockery of authority, the spread of violence through agitation of the fabric workers or the ignition of fire in the provincial town – all symbolically outline the influence of spurious ideas on the Russian (rootless) intellectual.[[85]](#footnote-85) Moreover, Dostoevsky testifies in *Besy* that the complete upper class in Russia and their moral and ethical bearings are embedded in the spirit of *nechaevshchina[[86]](#footnote-86)*:

Бесами для Достоевского оставался и весь верхной правящий слой Росии. И все же бесы у него - это не социально-политическая категория, равно как не религиозно-мистическое понятие,- нет, это художественный образ, образ духовной смуты, означающий сбив и утрату нравственных ориентиров в мире, образ вражды к совести-кулътуре-жизни, образ смертельно опасной духовно-нравственной эпидемии. Любовь к человечеству, к дальним - вместо любви к человеку, к ближним, неспособность любить другого, как самого себя, - та же бесовщина. Бесы - это и образ людей, одержимых жаждой скорого подвига, жаждой получить весь капитал разом, одержимых страстью немедленно и в корне переделать весь мир по новому штату - вместо того чтобы хоть немного переделать сначала себя.[[87]](#footnote-87)

The embodiment of Russia’s adaptation of European ideas and its ontological denouement is visualized in the deeds and inter-human relations of the novel’s key protagonists such as Stavrogin or Petr Verchovenskij. In Dostoevsky’s mind, the latter anti-hero particularly epitomizes the symptom of the destructive element of Western civilization in Russia. The complete intellectual absorption in the fallacious ideas of revolutionary socialism leads to the annihilation of personality:

В образе Петра Верховенского Достоевский обнажил более глубокий слой революционого безнования… […] Одержимость ложной идеей сделала Петра Верховенского нравственным идиотом. Он одержим был идеей всемирного переустройства, всемирной революции, он поддался соблазнительной лжи… […] Он весь есть ложь и обман, и он всеx вводит в обман, повергает в царство лжи.[[88]](#footnote-88)

Moreover, Dostoevsky suggests in *Besy* a scenario where the obsessed loses the moral ability to distinguish between good and evil. The complete internalization of the socialistic idea results in *небытие*: все та же основная идея русского нигилизма, русского социализма, русского максимализма, все та же инфернальная страсть к всемирному уравнению.[[89]](#footnote-89)

In addition to the ontological condition of non-existence, Dostoevsky’s *Besy* refers to the most significant elements in the structure of the novel. Dostoevsky tried to show that the most dangerous consequence of assimilating the idea of socialism and revolution is based on the negation of Christ: “раз отвергнув Христа, ум человечиский может дойти до удивительных результатов”.[[90]](#footnote-90) In outlining the structure of the novel Dostoevsky illustrated that basically all characters are infected by the anti-Christian idea:

…трагическое равнодушие Ставрогина, безумие Кириллова, сатаническое злодейство Петра Верховенского, фанатическая тупость Шигалева, […] самодовольная глупость генерлальши Ставрогиной, простодушная жестокость Федьки Каторжного, пустозвонство Юлии Михайловны, пошлая самовлюбленность Кармазинова.[[91]](#footnote-91)

As to narrative structure, Dostoevsky provides the framework for the emergence of the adversary of Christ. Dostoevsky set out to show that the nature of the provincial city – which represents a microcosm of nineteenth century Russia – and the psychology of its inhabitants provide the environment for the catastrophic and fatal outcome in the novel. Moreover, Dostoevsky’s plot symbolically puts emphasis on an apocalyptic reading. This kind of interpretation is largely based on the two main characters – Petr V. and Stavrogin. These two antagonists of Jesus and Christian dogma demonstrate by means of their behavior the subversive element of the Antichrist. Completely emerged in the realm of the Antichrist they epitomize Dostoevsky’s fear of European thoughts, which had become rooted in the consciousness of the Russian intelligentsia. In sum, the driving force behind Dostoevsky’s eschatological and apocalyptic reference in terms of Russia’s fate is based on the realization of European ideas by a small portion of the Russian radical intelligentsia.

Another aspect closely intertwined with the idea of socialism and revolution is the utopian perception of a new and better world. The assumption that peoples’ coexistence can be founded only on a rationalistic and materialistic structure ignoring thereby the spiritual and religious side of man is reduced to absurdity in *Besy*. This point is convincingly illustrated by Shatov – a figure who is often associated with Dostoevsky’s own world-view – who passionately observes that in the course of a nation’s history science and rationality played only a subordinate role:

…ни один народ еще не устраивался на началах науки и разума. […] Социализм […] провозгласил, что он установление атеистическое и намерен устроится на началах науки и разума исключительно. Разум и наука в жизни народов всегда, теперь и с начала веков, исполняли лишь должность второстепеную и служебную.[[92]](#footnote-92)

3.2. The conceptual inconsistency of Marxist doctrine

Для понимания же революции мне давно ничего ненужно, кроме марксизма.

A.I. Solzhenitsyn

Analogous to Dostoevsky’s meditation on the basic political and ideological currents of the nineteenth century, Solzhenitsyn’s literary endeavor was also meant to outline the dominant intellectual discourse – at least in (Soviet) Russia – of the twentieth century. Similar to Dostoevsky’s critical approach to the all-pervasive scientific determinism and new humanism of his age, is Solzhenitsyn’s vociferous reaction to the ‘fallacy’ of Marxist thought and its societal and political repercussions: “Solzhenitsyn’s work constitutes a theoretical attack on Marx’s philosophy.”[[93]](#footnote-93)

To begin with, Solzhenitsyn rebuts Ludwig Feuerbach’s postulate: “Der Mensch ist, was er ißt.”[[94]](#footnote-94) With Feuerbach, Marx holds the idea that the economic structure of society, the historical process and the interaction between individuals is determined by the way people gain their livelihood, i.e. mode of production.[[95]](#footnote-95) This concept of human existence is categorically rejected by Solzhenitsyn. Solzhenitsyn debunks Marx’s view on the all-encompassing relation between material factors (mode of production) and the existence of living human beings, which Marx, for instance, pointed out in *The German Ideology* (1845-46):

This mode of production must not be viewed simply as reproduction of the physical existence of individuals. Rather it is a definite form of their activity, a definite way of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life*. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with *what* say produce, with what they produce and *how* they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions which determine their production.[[96]](#footnote-96)

The premise that human beings and societies are basically conditioned by material factors, by the relation in which they stand towards one another in the productive process entails the logical conclusion that the development of ideas and intellectual activities are merely a by-product, the result of the material conditions. Based on this understanding of human existence, every individual is devoid of a free, autonomous will, the possibility to consciously shape the course of his life. In *The German Ideology* Marx provides evidence for this kind of reading:

The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness is directly interwoven with the material activity and the material relationships of men. […] Conceiving, thinking, and the intellectual relationship with men appear here as the direct result of their material behavior. The same applies to intellectual production as manifested in a people’s language of politics, law, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc. […] Consciousness can never be anything else except conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process.[[97]](#footnote-97)

From this position Solzhenitsyn went on to criticize Marx’s belief that political and social change (historical development) only occurs when material and economic factors are radically altered.[[98]](#footnote-98) In this context it is important to explain Marx’s premise. He saw the alienation of human beings expressed in private property, which is based on economic factors. By overcoming private property “all alienation and the return of man from religion, family, state etc., to his *human*, that is, social existence” will be realized.[[99]](#footnote-99)

Solzhenitsyn saw in this premise the seed of revolt and political terror. His objection is based on the notion that by foregrounding material factors a blank check to immorality, aggression or cruelty is given at the expense of personal responsibility and moral principles. Since the existence of human beings is first and foremost based on material conditions (private property), the abolishment of men’s alienation and societal contradictions can be achieved by forcefully changing the actual process of life, the mode of production. This radical position was heavily criticized by Solzhenitsyn, for he believed that “Marx made his followers into self-righteous zealots.”[[100]](#footnote-100) Opposing thus any political aspiration to find a compromise, to make a concession to societal contradictions (class struggle), Solzhenitsyn saw in Marx’s ideology the permission “to deceive, arrest, terrify, and murder their opponents.”[[101]](#footnote-101) Solzhenitsyn’s assessment of Marx’s radical position towards political and social change can to some degree underpinned by a remark Marx made in the final issue of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (18 May 1848):

We have no compassion and we ask no compassion from you. When our turn comes, we shall not make excuses for the terror. But the royal terrorists, the terrorists by the grace of God and the law, are in practice brutal, disdainful, and mean, in theory cowardly, secretive, and deceitful, and in both respects disreputable.[[102]](#footnote-102)

The notion that Marx theoretically opposed the possibility of class reconciliation, co-operation or reform – for it would mean that opposed classes share to a certain degree the same values – is also expressed by Isaiah Berlin. According to Berlin’s interpretation, Marx rebutted in his writing the assumption that the “existing system can be altered without being destroyed”. Hence any attempt to ameliorate societal maladies by reforms “is to [be] build upon a volcano.”[[103]](#footnote-103)

Furthermore, Solzhenitsyn rails against the assertion that moral standards are only based on the mode of production and material conditions and economic activity, ignoring thereby the individuality, personal responsibility, and autonomy of human beings. Solzhenitsyn’s interpretation can be shored up by a statement Marx made in *The German Ideology*:

Rather one set out from real, active men and actual life-process and demonstrates the development of ideological reflexes and echoes of that process. […] Morality, religion, metaphysics, and all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness no longer seem independent. They have no history or development. Rather, men who develop their material production and their material relationships alter their thinking and the products of their thinking along with their real existence.[[104]](#footnote-104)

Solzhenitsyn’s criticism of Marx’s thought is particularly directed towards his concept of class. Marx’s assumption that the proletariat class stands in direct opposition to the ruling class of the bourgeoisie and that class antagonism can only be achieved by a “forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions”[[105]](#footnote-105), was sarcastically and polemically ridiculed by Solzhenitsyn. In his non-fictional historical work *The Gulag Archipelago*, Solzhenitsyn antithetically displays Marx’s view on class antagonism. According to Solzhenitsyn, this perception is founded on a fallacious understanding of man’s nature and psychological makeup. This position is illustrated in the second volume of *The Gulag*, in the chapter entitled *Зэки как нация*. By depicting how the ‘illusive’ social class of the *Zeks* occurred within the camp (Gulag), Solzhenitsyn shows the absurdity of Marx’s view on class contradictions:

…зэки Архипелага составляют класс общества. Ведь эта многочисленная (многомиллионная) группа людей имеет единое (общее для всех них) отношение к производству (именно: подчинённое, закрепленное и без всяких прав этим производством руководить). Также имеет она единое общее отношение и к распределению продуктов труда (именно: никакого отношения, получает лишь ничтожную долю продуктов, необходимую для худого поддержания собственного существования).[[106]](#footnote-106)

Solzhenitsyn continues to mock by making a reference to the animal world in order to reduce Marx’s concept of class to absurdity:

Гораздо сенсационнее было бы доказать, что эти опустившиеся существа (в прошлом - безусловно люди) являются совсем иным биологическим типом по сравнению с homo sapiens. Однако, эти выводы у нас еще не все готовы. Здесь можно читателю только намекнуть. Вообразите, что человеку пришлось бы внезапно и вопреки желанию, но с неотклонимой необходимостью и без надежды на возврат, перейти в разряд медведей или барсуков (уж не используем затрёпанного по метафорам волка) и оказалось бы, что телесно он выдюживает (кто сразу ножки съёжит, с того и спроса нет), - так вот мог ли бы он, ведя новую жизнь, всё же остаться среди барсуков - человеком? Думаем, что нет, так и стал бы барсуком: и шерсть бы выросла, и заострилась морда, и уже не надо было бы ему варёного-жареного, а вполне бы он лопал сырое.[[107]](#footnote-107)

And he finally arrives to the conclusion that, given Marxist dialectics, the *Zeks* should overthrow their oppressors, i.e. the Communist state, because they represent a suppressed social stratum within a class structure. Following the Marxist understanding of economic activity and mode of production, Solzhenitsyn explains, the *Zeks*, devoid of control over the means of production and the fruits of their labor, historical mission would be to get rid of the oppressive condition they are forced to live under. Thus Solzhenitsyn questions the notion that material conditions only define the way people interact and their consciousness. Accordingly, people possess the capability to overcome class stratification and “are able to resolve their differences through deliberation”.[[108]](#footnote-108)

Apart from criticizing the concept of class, Solzhenitsyn points out that Marxist ideology served as a basis for Stalin’s dictatorship. Marx’s notion that only material factors determine the socioeconomic structure of human life and social phenomena, given Solzhenitsyn’s interpretation, culminated in the belief that the political apparatus, the legal systems and human rights lack a universal meaning. This led, according to Solzhenitsyn, not only to intense political and social ferment in twentieth-century (Soviet) Russia but also to the death of millions of people. Solzhenitsyn’s analysis can be adduced from a text passage Marx made in the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (published in 1859):

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life.[[109]](#footnote-109)

Solzhenitsyn continues to criticize Marx’s thought on the relation between the role of political and social institutions (the state) and the relevance of material conditions. Solzhenitsyn takes Marx to task for introducing an ideology that “makes no provision for governing, establishes no institutional checks against tyranny, and lays down no limitations on the exercise of power.”[[110]](#footnote-110) Consequently, this theoretical fallacy gave rise to political arbitrariness, where a simple call from a self-appointed authority could decide over life and death.[[111]](#footnote-111) Although Solzhenitsyn recognizes the noble intentions of Marx’s philosophy, he, nevertheless, accuses Marx of failing to introduce a scheme for political institution and, most of all, to consider people’s natural ambitions. Marx’s assertion that after the socialist revolution has succeeded a short period of a transitional form of state will lead to the dictatorship of the proletariat ignores, given Solzhenitsyn’s analysis, the temptation of power. In his writing Solzhenitsyn expounds his views on the complexity of human nature, which cannot so easily be altered; the economic base might lead to a different form for relationships, but human nature remains a static and enduring entity: “Indeed, nowhere was desire to attain and hold power more evident than in Communist countries, proving once again that certain traits are synonymous with human existence and not intrinsic to a particular mode of production.”[[112]](#footnote-112) Taken together, Marx’s sin of omission left, given Solzhenitsyn’s point of view, “those countries that accepted his principles unprepared for the political squabbles and contests or power and influence that are inevitable in social life.”[[113]](#footnote-113)

In addition to Solzhenitsyn’s criticism of Marx’s meditation on the relation between the role of the state and human nature, Solzhenitsyn’s set out to attack Marx’s reflections on historical developments. To begin with, Solzhenitsyn reviles Marx for introducing the idea that history inevitably moves towards a Communist epoch: “The entire movement of history is therefore both its [Communism] actual genesis […] and also for its thinking awareness the conceived and conscious movement of its [Communism] *becoming*.”[[114]](#footnote-114) Given Marx’s analysis of historical process and his belief that human existence is based on material conditions, Solzhenitsyn set out to combine this premise with human matters. According to Solzhenitsyn, Marx excluded people’s direct involvement in historical developments; he believed that human beings do not possess the capability of consciously establishing an order based on their choosing. Consequently, people do not possess natural inborn rights in the first place.

By making this concept of human nature part of the political agenda in Russia, given Solzhenitsyn, “Marx’s views anointed party decisions with the infallibility of historical inevitability.”[[115]](#footnote-115) Devoid of any moral and ethical principles party members acted out of personal expediency. Since the moral and ethical mindset of people is a remnant of the past and, thus, obsolete, a new standard of behavior and moral meaning was considered to be necessary. This new conceptual understanding of history and of the nature of man, given Solzhenitsyn’s assertion, led to the sacrifice of people’s will. Obediently people followed any decision the party leaders made, for resistance to the party members “would have cast doubt on the inevitable victory of socialism and made their entire life’s work meaningless.”[[116]](#footnote-116) Solzhenitsyn recounts this tenacious mindset in his fellow inmates:

А вот В.П. Голицын […] 140 суток он просидел в смертной камере (было время подумать!) Потом 15 лет, потом вечная ссылка. В мозгах ничего не изменилось. Тот же беспартийный большевик. Мне помогла вера в партию, что зло творят не партия и правительство, а злая воля *каких-то людей*… […]Или Борис Дьяков: смерть Сталина пережил с острой болью (да он ли один? все ортодоксы). Ему казалось: уметла вся надежда на освобождение! […] А мыслили они о чем? - если единственно разрешали себе повторять: все действительно разумно? О чем они *мыслили*, если вся их молитва была: не бей меня, царская плеть?[[117]](#footnote-117)

Based on these experiences with *Zeks* in the Gulag, Solzhenitsyn arrived at the conclusion that Marx’s thought resulted in the “totalitarian nature of Communist societies, for unlimited power in the hands of unrestrained will was the consequence of Marx’s teaching about history.”[[118]](#footnote-118) Despite this cataclysmic course of history for Russia, Solzhenitsyn questions the whole ideological concept of Marx’s teaching. Solzhenitsyn’s assumption is related to the Khrushchev era, where, in contradiction to Marx’s understanding of the progressive laws of economics, changes actually occurred in government policy. This is proof enough, given Solzhenitsyn’s assertion, to object to Marx’s emphasis on economics as the basis for historical development. Another example is made by referring to language. Solzhenitsyn wonders why languages do not change in the aftermath of an important historical event. Perhaps, Solzhenitsyn ruminates, “human capacity for speech is independent of changes in the economic structure, a conclusion that casts doubt on Marx’s theory of historical development.”[[119]](#footnote-119)

According to Solzhenitsyn, the consequence of the implantation of Marx’s postulate: *Das Sein bestimmt das Bewußtsein* did not only engulf the political and social culture in countries that adopted socialism, but even changed the perception of evil and good. The readjustment of people’s behavior is intrinsically intertwined with the assumption that good and evil are clear evidence of a fallacious social system. In his non-fictional work *Gulag*, Solzhenitsyn critically expounds his view on the subject on arbitrariness of criminal deeds and social background:

Как крепостной не выбирал своей рабской доли, он не виновен был в своем рождении, так не выбирал ее и заключенный, он тоже попадал на Архиоелаг чистым роком.[[120]](#footnote-120)

Moreover, Solzhenitsyn’s writing encapsulates the notion that Marxist ideology generates criminal behavior, that it gave them to some degree immunity from persecution, for their criminal attitude was based on the perception that class influences evil deeds. The consequence was, given Solzhenitsyn’s experience in the Gulag, that criminality flourished in the Soviet Union and that it came only to an end when Stalin, ignoring the concept of class affiliation, ordered that criminals be imprisoned:

Нельзя оглупить и оболгать больше! Блатные просят правил. Блатные прекрасно знают свои правила – от первого воровства и до последнего удара ножом в шею. И когда можно битъ лежачего. И когда нападать пятерым на одного. И когда на спящего. И для коммуны своей - у них есть правила еще пораньше "Коммунистического манифеста"!

Их коммуна, а точней – их мир, есть отдельный мир в нашем мире, и суровые законы, которые столетиями там существуют для крепости того мира, никак не зависят от нашего "фраерского" законодательства и даже от съездов Партии.

И что значит само их слово "фраерский"? *фраерский* значит – общечеловеческий, такой, как у всех нормальных людей. Именно этот общечеловеческий мир, *наш* мир, с его моралью, привичками жизни и взаимным обращением, наиболее ненавистен блатным, наиболее высмеивается ими, наиболее противопоста-вляется своему антисоциалъному антиобщественному *кублу*.

Нет, не "перевоспитание" стало ломать хребет блатному миру ("перевоспитание" только помогало им поскорей вернуться к новым грабежам), а когда в 50-х годах махнув рукой на классовую теорию и социальную близость, Сталин велел совать блатных в изоляторы.[[121]](#footnote-121)

IV. F.M. Dostoevsky’s religious ideal

4.1. The spiritual merits of the Russian *narod*

Свет и спасение воссияют снизу.

F.M. Dostoevsky

In creating a bulwark against Europe’s moral and spiritual disintegration, Dostoevsky invents a broad spectrum of opposing aspects of Russian qualities. Dostoevsky’s writing can be explained as a strong counterblast to Western rationalistic and scientific civilization. In opposing Europe’s ‘morbid’ condition, Dostoevsky conceptualizes an alternative, a beacon of hope for Russia and even for Europe. He held out much hope that the salvation of the nineteenth-century maladies lie in the virtues of the Russian *narod*.[[122]](#footnote-122) In contrast to the European people, Dostoevsky endows the Russian *narod* with an aura of spiritual and moral superiority:

The root of his [it is meant Dostoevsky] nationalism and his messianic vision of the Russian soul as the spiritual savior of the rationalistic West was the Russian ability to continue to in the face of overwhelming scientific evidence.[[123]](#footnote-123)

Before illuminating Dostoevskian juxtapositions, it is important to list the main causes for his anti-European attitudes. Dostoevsky’s strong biases in favor of the Russian people (and against the Western civilization) have to be read in the light of the political and cultural developments of the nineteenth-century Russia as well as in terms of Dostoevsky’s intellectual and nationalistic evolution. In the same manner as the nineteenth-century European intellectuals were preoccupied with nationalistic aspirations, Russia followed the same path of elaborating a national identity.[[124]](#footnote-124) On the one hand, this process has to be seen through the prism of the reform era triggered by Russia’s defeat in the Crimean War (1853-56) and the acquisition of new territories in the nineteenth century, for the latter development gave new impetus “to shore up the Russian people’s position as the ‘reigning nationality’, destined to shape the character of the expanding empire on the basis of allegiance to its ethnic core.”[[125]](#footnote-125) The humiliation Russia experienced in the Crimean War served as a catalyst for a spectrum of changes.[[126]](#footnote-126) The most significant reform was manifestly the liberation of serfs, i.e. the Russian people, in 1861, which resonated through the cultural and intellectual elite in Russia. Especially Dostoevsky evinced strong enthusiasm for the latter reform, for he believed that Russia could now find her own and emancipate from Europe:

Nach seiner Rückkehr nach Petersburg begann er – bewegt und begeistert von der durch den Reformzar Alexander II. dekretierten Abschaffung der Leibeigenschaft – für einen eigenständigen Weg Rußlands zu kämpfen, dafür, daß sein Land sich nun endlich vom Einfluß Westeuropas befreit und den eigenen Wurzeln und Traditionen zuwendet.[[127]](#footnote-127)

On the other hand – which is in the context of this dissertation more important – the preoccupation with the Russian people was intended to perform another function: “The emergence of the construct [i.e. of the Russian people] was one manifestation of the intelligentsia’s attempt to solve the riddle of Russia’s relationship with the west”.[[128]](#footnote-128) Intertwined with the effort to define Russia by means of creating a political and cultural polarity is the desire of the Russian intelligentsia (and Dostoevsky) to foreground the relationship between the Russian *narod* and them. The awakening self-awareness of the one percent of the Russian population led to a reevaluation (or even reinventing) of the Russian people.

From this prospective, Dostoevsky’s admiration for the Russian people is to a certain extent based on such a psychological mechanism; his teleological agenda for the Russian people bear at its core a search for a nationalistic grounding; his poetic and utopian visions have to be read against the background of a national identification process. On such a view, Dostoevsky’s wording echoes the hope of a reunion with Russian people by means of opposing Western civilization. His eulogistic description of the Russian *narod* is based on his belief that Russians bear virtues foreign to Europeans. A manifestation of Russian uniqueness is, for instance, embedded in the ability to suffer. Dostoevsky even starts from the premise that suffering represents a key characteristic of the Russian people: Я думаю, самая главная, самая коренная духовная потребность русского народа есть потребность страдания, всегдашнего и неутолимого, везде и во всем.[[129]](#footnote-129)

The desire and ability to suffer makes him distinct from European people. Unlike the complacent Germans who experience satisfaction in immoral deeds, Russian moral transgressions are devoid of pride and self-satisfaction.[[130]](#footnote-130) This self-denying characteristic is in line with his strong desire for truth. The devotion to truthfulness permeates every aspect of his life, for the Russian people know that truth is based on a higher spiritual meaning:

Главное, правды захотелось, правды во что бы ни стало, даже жертвуя всем, что было до сих пор ему свято. Потому что никаким развратом, никаким давлением и никаким унижением не истребишь, не замертвишь и не искоренишь в сердце народа нашего жажду правды, ибо эта жажда ему дороже всего.[[131]](#footnote-131)

Another key element of the Russian *narod* is interwoven with religion and the Russian Church. The interrelationship between Russian Orthodoxy and the Russian people “can be explained” through Dostoevsky’s fully conversion “towards the peasantry”.[[132]](#footnote-132) The Orthodox culture played a significant role for Dostoevsky in defining Russian uniqueness, for it functions as an instrument of division. With the focus on Orthodox tenets, Dostoevsky sought to produce a religious line between Western and Russian civilization. In Dostoevsky’s mind, Russian people are entwined with the teaching of Christ. According to Dostoevsky, the Russian *narod* incarnates Jesus’ ideals of living. Although the Russian people do not really know the basic tenets of Christian doctrine, it nevertheless embodies Jesus’ love:

Но сердечное знание Христа и истинное представление о нем существует вполне. […] Может быть, единственная любовь народа русского есть Христос, и он любит образ его по-своему, то есть до страдания.[[133]](#footnote-133)

Based on the ability of the Russian *narod* to live up to the *true* Christian values, Dostoevsky nourished the hope that the reconciliation with the *two* Russia’s must stem from the Russian people. The division initially caused by the Petrine reforms can come to an end when the Russian *narod* endowed with the ‘right’ Christian spirit engulf every aspect of Russia’s life:

Я все того мнения, что ведь последнее слово скажут они же…; они скажут и укажут нам новую дорогу и новый исход всех, казалось бы, безысходных затруднений наших. Не Петербург [St. Petersburg is the embodiment of European ideas] же разрешит окончательную судьбу русскую. А потому всякая, даже малейшая, новая черта об этих теперь уже ‘новых людях’ может быть достойна внимания нашего.[[134]](#footnote-134)

This nationalistic assertion that the Russian people are the *true* embodiment of Christ’s teaching, led Dostoevsky to see the Russian *narod* not only as a platform for Russia’s salvation and resurrection. According to Dostoevsky, the spiritual bond between the Russian people and Christian/Orthodox doctrine can also beckon a new era. At variance with the rationalistic West and its decaying culture, Dostoevsky evinced a beacon of hope for the misguided Western world. Moreover, Dostoevsky envisioned for the Russian people a messianic task of saving humanity:

И не заключается ли все, все, чего ищет он, в православии? Не в нем ли одном и правда и спасение народа русского, а в будущих веках и для всего человечества? Не в православии ли одном сохранился божественный лик Христа во всей чистоте? И может быть, главнейшее предызбранное назначение народа русского в судьбах всего человечества и состоит лишь в том, чтоб сохранить у себя этот божественный образ Христа во всей чистоте, а когда придет время, явить этот образ миру, потерявшему пути свои![[135]](#footnote-135)

Based on the humble attitude and devotion to Christian teachings of the Russian people, Dostoevsky discerned in the Russian *narod* a self-denying, altruistic characteristic and the foundation of true brotherhood.[[136]](#footnote-136) Dostoevsky’s metaphysics of modern history thus reveal that only Orthodox Christianity bears at its core the “possibilities of a final resolution of the problem of human order, and the inauguration of a new historical epoch.”[[137]](#footnote-137) In Dostoevsky’s mind, Orthodoxy encompass the ultimate unity necessary to reconcile humanity and, thus, give impetus to a new social order.

4.2. The concept of *pochvennichestvo*

В земле, в почве есть нечто сакраментальное […]. Земля у русского человека прежде всего, в основании всего; земля все, а уже из земли у него и все остальное, то есть, и свобода, и жизнь, и честь, и семья, и детишки, и порядок и церковь - одним словом, все, что есть драгоценного.

F.M. Dostoevsky

Closely intertwined with the construct of the Russian *narod* is the ideology of *pochvennichestvo*. Deriving from the Russian word *pochva* (eng. native soil, earth) this polysemantic term “was projected to the foreground of discourse on Russian identity in the early 1860s by Dostoevskii and the pochvenniki”.[[138]](#footnote-138) Apart from an intrinsic reference to spatial and temporal dimensions the concept of *pochva* more importantly bear at its core an attempt to elaborate on the one hand a *Russian* consciousness, an identity and, on the other hand, to find a way of counterbalancing Western ideas. Given the pursuit of a national identity, Russian thinkers focused their attention on the philosophical and moral meaning of personality. In doing so, the Russian intelligentsia sought to show the consequential interdependence between *pochva*, i.e. Russian soil, and personality (lichnost’). The question of personality played a significant role for many Russian thinkers, for it helped to determine the interrelationship between the disconnected Russian intelligentsia and the *living truth* embodied by Russian people. Moreover, Dostoevsky and other Russian intellectuals discerned an estrangement from *pochva*, i.e. from an organic structure of personality.

The literary resonance of an interrelation between nationality and personality as well as the quintessential expression of alienation from the Russian soil is shown in *Besy*.[[139]](#footnote-139) The narrative and structural realization of disorientation from the Russian *pochva* and its destructive consequences is highlighted in the plot and in the figural constellation of Dostoevsky’s tendentious and anti-nihilistic novel *Besy*.[[140]](#footnote-140) In the protagonists’ cataclysmic behaviour Dostoevsky metaphorically passes a judgment on those who blindly absorb Western ideas, values, attitudes etc. The ontological and psychological manifestation of an infectious adaptation of intellectual principles alien to the Russian soil causes a condition of constant metaphysical uncertainty and endangers Russia’s ‘harmonious’ life:

…все эти люди не высидели положенного времени в чреве матери-природы, русской земли. Удаленность от земли определяет ложное отношение к миру, искажает духовное лицо человека и целого поколения. Оторвавшись от родной почва по разным социально-историческим причинам, обыватели и вообще все представители *культурного* общества губернского города [which is a microcosm of Russia] готовы в любую минуту *сорваться* при малейшем толчке извне.[[141]](#footnote-141)

This maniac condition of constant unrest is largely embodied in the main characters of the novel, for “in his various Raskolnikovs, Verkhovenskys and Kiril[l]ovs Dostoevskii has given perhaps the most unforgettable, if highly caricatured, portraits of the new rootless intellectual.”[[142]](#footnote-142) The imprints of Western ideas in its extreme radical form are particularly presented in the evil deeds and ontological anomaly of Petr Verchovensky and Stavrogin. Especially the former anti-hero stands for the hollowness of European ideas, adopted by “Russia’s upper classes ad by the Westernized intelligentsia of both the 1840s and 1860s”.[[143]](#footnote-143) Thus Petr Verchovenskij must be seen as an example of “the alienation of the nineteenth-century Russian intelligentsia from living Russian national roots”.[[144]](#footnote-144)

Итак, *ум* [Petra] Верховенского сочетается с отсутствием *почвы и связей*, с беспочвенностью. Оттуда происходит *отвлеченность* и, конечно, *безнравственность* героя. Оттуда происходит и его способность срываться, как срываются все его жертвы.[[145]](#footnote-145)

The disconnection from the *living truth* is even more explained in the characteristics of Stavrogin. This figure is “essentially a noncharacter, an ever-shifting, an indefinite composite”, a portrait of a personality devoid of any conviction, of any intellectual, emotional or spiritual bonds; he has become “a total nonbeing, […] a black hole at the center of the novel.”[[146]](#footnote-146)

In view of the fact that Stavrogin’s personality lies at the core of the figural world, his state of non-existence and disillusionment not only overshadows other characters but he also becomes involved in their perception and understanding of the world, in their existential concerns. Given Stavrogin’s ontological nihility “he becomes the focus of every other character’s designs”.[[147]](#footnote-147) Thus Stavrogin becomes only a reflection, a substitute for the ideas, wishes and obsessions of the uprooted and confused figures in the novel: “Stavrogin’s followers are largely guilty of self-deception in the identities they have ascribed to their ‘idol’.”[[148]](#footnote-148) Dostoevsky shows that this inter-figural relationship crystallize the notion of alienation from the Russian soil, for the main character’s devotion to Stavrogin symbolizes their intellectual, spiritual and ideological emptiness, their lack of connection to the *living truth* of the Russian *narod*. He is “torn from his native soil, from his people and his God, and condemned thereafter to limbo.”[[149]](#footnote-149) In a letter to Dasha Stavrogin confronts his rootless and empty condition and clearly encapsulates his disconnection from the Russian soil:

В России я ничем не связан, - в ней мне все так же чужое как и везде. […] Я пробовал везде мою силу. Но к чему приложить эту силу - вот чего никогда не видел, не вижу и теперь… […] …из меня вылилось одно отрицание, без всякого великодушия и безо всякой силы. Даже отрицания не вылилось. Все всегда мелко и вяло.[[150]](#footnote-150)

In outlining this idea Dostoevsky elaborates, in addition, a distinguishing juxtaposition between Stavrogin and Maria Lebiadkina. Bearing in mind that Stavrogin emanates the absolute disintegration from the Russian soil, Dostoevsky invents a character, i.e. Maria Lebiadkina, that not only oppose Stavrogns ontological condition but also symbolizes the Russian *pochva*. The French scholar Louis Allain even sees the main idea of *Besy* in the clash between Stavrogin and Maria Lebiadkina, i.e. between someone who is completely alienated from the Russian soil and someone who embodies it:

Тайный и глубинный смысл романа Бесы - не столько в полемическом обличении ‘всех язв, всех миазм, всей нечистоты’, ‘загноишихся на поверхности’ русской земли, сколько в религиозном столкновении между *бесом* Ставрогиным и *падшим ангелом* - Хромоножкой, которая по меткому определению Вячеслава Иванова *предствляет в мифе душу Земли Русской*.[[151]](#footnote-151)

The key non-fictional text “for the diagnosis of Russian intellectual and cultural life from the point of view of *pochva* is Dostoevskii’s ‘Pushkin Speech’ of 1880 […], with Dostoevskii’s whole oeuvre as backdrop”.[[152]](#footnote-152) Delivered in June 8th 1880 during the unveiling of the Pushkin monument in Moscow, Dostoevsky refers to Pushkin’s magnum opus *Evgenij Onegin* in order to illustrate the concept of *pochva*: “есть кокое-то химическое соединение человеческого духа с родной землей, что оторваться от нее ни за что нельзя, и хоть и оторвешься, так все-таки назад воротишься.”[[153]](#footnote-153) According to Dostoevsky, Pushkin was the first Russian writer who elucidated the topos *pochva* and the disconnection of the Russian intelligentsia from it:

Пушкин первый своим глубоко прозорливым и гениальным умом и чисто русским сердцем своим отыскал и отметил главнейшее и болезненное явление нашего интеллигентного, исторически оторванного от почвы общества, возвысившегося над народом. Он [Pushkin] отметил и выпукло поставил перед нами отрицательный тип наш, человека, беспокоящегося и не примиряющегося, в родную почву и в родные силы ее не верующего, Россию и себя самого.[[154]](#footnote-154)

Given this phenomenon of dislocation from the Russian soil, Dostoevsky divides the key protagonists in Pushkin’s work in negative and positive figures, in uprooted and rooted personalities respectively. The epithet for the superfluous and disconnected figures is symbolized, for instance, in Aleko and Onegin. At variance with this ‘homeless wanders’ Dostoevsky advocates Tatjana as an embodiment for the *true* and *living* spirit of the Russian people:

Against this type Dostoevskii champions Pushkin’s Tat’iana, who is rooted in her native culture and place. It is the theme of Tat’iana’s moral integrity that Dostoevskii develops at length in characterizing how she ‘stands firmly on her native soil’.[[155]](#footnote-155)

4.3 Dostoevsky and the conceptualization of life

*Dostoevsky’s pursuit of the ‘right’ idea*

The loss of belief in God releases dangerous forces which previously were bound and fastened to the divine image and now take the road into the unconscious.

Carl G. Jung

Dostoevsky’s meditation on the political and ideological conceptions in the West and Russia in the nineteenth century not only focuses on the mere description of its ontological and psychological meaning for the individual and society. Dostoevsky’s ‘prophetic’ voice also includes a deep concern with the “unprecedented historical consciousness” induced by theoretical conceptions such as the doctrine of scientific progress or modern nihilism.[[156]](#footnote-156) In his fictional and non-fictional writing, Dostoevsky perennially lays emphasis on finding a remedy for the Underground Man’s existential uncertainty, a way of dealing with the ‘fallacious’ ideas permeating Russia and the Western civilization in the modern era:

Dostoevsky’s religious thought and his political analysis of the West are held together in the question of the best order. It is this question that informs both his elucidation of the Western crisis and his recommendation for overcoming it.[[157]](#footnote-157)

Dostoevsky’s kaleidoscopic view on the political and social ferment is particularly incorporated into his pursuit of an ideal which could withstand the disintegration of Russia and Western civilization. According to Vladimir S. Solovyov, a close friend of Dostoevsky and one of Russia’s most important religious philosophers, Dostoevsky’s literary endeavour is evidently based on elaborating the best human order:

Общий смысл всей деятельности Достоевского, или значение Достоевского как общественного деятеля, состоит в разрешении этого двойного вопроса: о высшем идеале общества и о настоящем пути к его достижению.[[158]](#footnote-158)

Central to Dostoevsky’s understanding of the means to an ideal society is the supposition that at the core of every functional human order is based on the all-permeating presence of an idea: “To Dostoevsky the *sine qua non* of human order is the possession of an idea of life”.[[159]](#footnote-159) The pivotal point of the ‘idea of life’ is based on the perception that people act and live according to the degree of the actualization of a conceptual entity. The more a society or nation is permeated with the unquestionable and unwitting meaning of an idea, the more the acceptance of a national reality is perceived:

Dostoevsky knew that faith or lack of faith is the determining factor behind the psychological and ideological conduct of both the individual and the masses. He knew this would be so under any social system.[[160]](#footnote-160)

This automatization of reality finds thus its way to the concrete world and engulfs the nature of a nation and life itself. In addition to the conceptual meaning of an idea, Dostoevsky points out that “the most complete human order is characterized by the coincidence of personal and social meaning”.[[161]](#footnote-161) Given the importance of an idea and the combination between personal and social as a prerequisite to the best human order, Dostoevsky arrives at the concept that only religion encompasses both aspects: “In Dostoevsky the concept of order is intimately associated with that of religion, because historically religion has been the primary vehicle of order for humanity.”[[162]](#footnote-162)

Based on the assumption that the realization of a religious idea constitutes the best human order, Dostoevsky set out to adduce the relevance of religion in Russia. In the process of understanding the significance of religion, Dostoevsky discerned a disconnection, an alienation from the religious tradition in Russia since Peter’s reforms; he got to conclusion that a distortion of people’s consciousness accompanied this historical development. This distortion of the Russian spirit, the uprootedness from the Russian soil consequently endangered the foundation of human order itself, for Dostoevsky believed that once a nation loses its spiritual bond to God and faith in Him, disorientation and confusion take hold in the minds of people.[[163]](#footnote-163) Despite the acknowledgement of the lost of a Russia’s national spirit, Dostoevsky discerned that a lack of spirituality endangers the whole Western civilization. The Europeanization of Russia since Peter the Great is not just an indication of Russia’s political and spiritual disorientation, but also a sign that the Western world experiences a maldevelopment.

*‘The Brothers Karamazov’ and Dostoevsky’s meditation on the salvation of the world*

The narrative and theoretical realization of this ideation (and, more importantly, the antidote to this disease) can be detected from the ontological interpretation of Dostoevsky’s *magnus opus* *The Brothers Karamazov*, a novel which “can be regarded as the culmination of his religious and political thought – his final statement concerning the question of human order”.[[164]](#footnote-164) The conceptual framework of *The Brothers Karamazov* does in this sense not just deal with the importance of human order, but has to be seen as an attack on Western civilization. The question of the final word is, first of all, elaborated in the *The Great Inquisitor*’s monologue, a key text in understanding of *The Brothers Karamazov’s*. Set in the sixteenth century at the climax of the Spanish Inquisition, Ivan’s account displays, on the one hand, the historical transition between the dawn of Roman Catholic civilization and the beginning of the modern quest for a new social formula and, on the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church’s “militant attempt during the Counter-Reformation to preserve itself by means of the Spanish sword.”[[165]](#footnote-165) Furthermore, the spatial and temporal context is intended to be a teaching “about Western civilization and humanity as a whole, for the Inquisitor’s fundamental concern is to articulate the social order which closely corresponds to human nature”.[[166]](#footnote-166) Semantically related with the Inquisitor’s longing to find the human order in accordance with human nature, is Ivan’s account about the three temptations of Christ in the desert and the questions posed to him. The narration of this event is meant to illustrate that the drive for human order is intrinsically connected with human nature. In addition, it shows that the best human order is intertwined with the realization of those questions. Thus an *a priori* need for order constitutes life itself.

In connection to the ontological meaning of the Inquisitor, the role he represents in Dostoevsky’s cosmos of ideas is of particular importance, for he epitomizes the key intellectual ideography in the nineteenth century. Thus the Inquisitor symbolically refers, given Dostoevsky’s perception of the modern era, to the intellectual confusion permeating Russia and the Western civilization. In the same manner as the period of transition in the sixteenth century led to significant changes, Dostoevsky symbolically transfers this crucial moment to the nineteenth century. Bearing in mind that Dostoevsky reckoned a paradigm shift in human history, the Inquisitor stands for man’s orientation on a new social formula. The monologue (which is actually a dialogue in which Christ remains silent) of the Inquisitor reveals the attempt to constitute mankind on the principle of rational thinking.[[167]](#footnote-167) Aside from the Inquisitor’s reasoning of the best social formula, the ‘conversation’ with Christ bear testimony to the fallacy of nihilism, rationality and scientific determinism debated in the nineteenth century. The presence of a silent Christ thus “highlights the compulsion of the nihilist to subject to rational argument that which cannot be encompassed by such argument.”[[168]](#footnote-168)

It is, however, important to mention that Dostoevsky never opposed reason or rational thinking. He rather pointed out that reason is the faculty of understanding the spiritual side of the world. Given the historical role the Inquisitor plays in Dostoevsky’s understanding of human history, the Russian writer attaches a conceptual meaning to the way the Inquisitor’s approach reasons. In Dostoevsky’s cosmos of ideas the Inquisitor represents the rationality in the process of finding the best human order.

*Father Zosima’s spiritual alternative*

A conceptual alternative, an antidote to his existential anxiety is epitomized in Father Zosima’s Christian teachings. Coupled with the structural texture is the narrative framework which reveals the polyphonic clash of a conceptual process of finding the best human order. This thesis is supported by the fact that each protagonist in Dostoevsky’s novels voice independently from the narrator an idea, that each one represents an immanentization of the conflicting political or social conceptions embedded in the nineteenth-century intellectual history. It is hence not surprising that in the arena of Dostoevsky’s opposing ideas the right conception of a potential human order is part of his literary reflection; it is possible to adduce from Dostoevsky’s polyphonic structure a frame of vision for an alternative to the ‘modern historical consciousness’.

This different vision, the ‘utopian’ outlook for man’s salvation are, for instance, symbolically discerned in the metaphysical confrontation between Ivan Karamazov and Father Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov*, “one of whose central themes is the opposition between ‘life’ and ‘theory’, […] “the distinction between reason and the heart.”[[169]](#footnote-169) Ivan Karamazov’s epistemological teaching, whom Dostoevsky pictured in a letter as one of the “теперешние *деловые социалисты*” and the embodiment of rationalism and humanist doctrine[[170]](#footnote-170), encapsulates the intractable dilemma of the nineteenth-century civilization: “reconciling the idea of a perfect God with the affliction of human beings”.[[171]](#footnote-171) Ivan’s intellectual and rational meditation testifies that the decisive battle for a better world in modern civilization is intrinsically in line with the religious tradition, since it conveys the same moral dynamic as the judeo-christian teaching does. In the process of understanding God’s world, Ivan denies in the name of compassionate love to accept the traditional theodicy, for he “refuses any longer to await obediently the transcendent overcoming promised in the doctrine of Providence”.[[172]](#footnote-172) His metaphysical defiance thus “signifys the repudiation of […] Christian providentialism.”[[173]](#footnote-173) In short, the crystallization of the socialistic idea and new humanism in Ivan’s character not only reveal an intrinsic element of traditional Christian dogma in the teaching of socialism but more pointedly the rebuttal of God’s order for the sake of suffering humanity.

At variance with Ivan’s ontological impasse, stands Father Zosima who symbolizes the answer, an alternative to “всю эту отрицательную сторону” expressed by the adherents of godless socialism; in relation to Ivan, Zosima antithetically embodies a different vision of things: “противуположное выше выраженному мировоззрению”.[[174]](#footnote-174) His reaction “to the modern quest for heaven on earth” is based “not only on reason alone, but on Christ.”[[175]](#footnote-175) Zosima’s ontological understanding of history not only rebuts the key philosophical and ideological reflections on the idea of the best human order in the whirling cosmos of the nineteenth-century intellectual reasoning but advocates a different approach to the salvation of mankind. Rather than believing in the scientific progress and new humanism, Zosima approaches the growth of the socialistic threat by proclaiming that history has a final spiritual goal. In Father Zosima Dostoevsky shows that by means of a spiritual criterion modern man can bridge the existential uncertainty permeating Russia and the West:

Only through cultivation of the spiritual principle within them can human beings have access to that truth which is not subject to the finality of becoming – that is, God (‘God’ is used here in the Platonic sense of an unchanging ‘perfection’, or ‘good’). And only through the ‘heart’ can human beings know themselves as something more than the mere product of that becoming, as ‘soul’.[[176]](#footnote-176)

He sees the realization of this principle in a Christian society, in a “…ожидании своего полного преображения из общества […] во единую вселенскую и владычествующую церковь.”[[177]](#footnote-177) The establishment of this universal community on earth by Christian people will resolve all political and social contradictions and pave the way for the final state of harmony: “Zosima himself speaks […] of the Church as an agent of reconciliation in society”.[[178]](#footnote-178)

As to this Christian society, Zosima differs from the central dogma of the Orthodox Church. His understanding of an ideal society, his religious credo is based on the premise that the actualization of *ray* (this Russian term can mean the Garden of Eden, as well as paradise) can actually be realized on earth: “Zosima’s paradise is predominantly a terrestrial condition.”[[179]](#footnote-179) An illustration of the importance and the emphasis on earth as the foundation of a better world can be seen in Zosima’s injunction to Alyosha to kiss, to water the earth. With regards to this call, Zosima expresses, on the one hand, joy and happiness and, on the other hand, the confession to the earth which involves a “desire for reconciliation with the earth.”[[180]](#footnote-180) Once the bond between men and the earth through reconciliation has been reestablished, men can embark on the realization of better social formula.

Thus this Christian institution does not put emphasis on ecclesiastical and sacramental authority, but it is rather a realization of a “human community in which human behaviour and relationship have been transformed by Christian love.”[[181]](#footnote-181) The condition, the prerequisite of this community is love for man and all Creation. The touchstone of Zosima’s spiritual conception is thus not primarily based on the love of an abstract God but more insistently the love of man and nature, i.e. God’s creation:

Любите все создание Божие, и целое, и каждую песчинку. Каждый листик, каждый луч Божий любите. Любите животных, любите растения, любите всякую вещь. Будешь любить всякую вещь и тайну Божию постигнешь в вещах.[[182]](#footnote-182)

Once the meaning of this formula has penetrated man’s consciousness, the immediate consequence is, so the hope of Zosima, the recognition that everyone must sacrificially accept the responsibility for the sins of his fellows: “Всякий из нас пред всеми во всем виноват.”[[183]](#footnote-183) If everyone bears the consequences of man’s sins, everyone is impelled to seek forgiveness and atonement. The incarnation of these traits is, according to Dostoevsky, embodied in the teaching and person of Christ, for only “the divine image of Christ” can provide “the true foundation of morality and order” and thus establish the best human order.[[184]](#footnote-184)

Given the fact that the attainment of an ideal society is within individual’s reach… Zosima draws attention to the mutual responsibility and the love for man and for all Creation, for “Всякий из нас пред всеми во всем виноват.”[[185]](#footnote-185) In this Christian community people can, according to Zosima, achieve freedom, equality and brotherhood, like it was envisaged in the political program of socialism and in the nineteenth-century philosophy. Moreover, Zosima discerns that the ideal society, that *heaven on earth* imginated by the socialist movement in the nineteenth century can only be achieved “through the Church which has been founded and established on earth.”[[186]](#footnote-186) As an advocate of man’s responsibility and freedom, Dostoevsky put emphasis on the separate individual as prerequisite of a paradise on earth. Taken together, Dostoevsky describes through the lens of Zosima that the attainment of an ideal society is within individual’s reach, that “Zosima’s paradise is predominantly a terrestrial condition”[[187]](#footnote-187): “Life is a paradise, and we are all in paradise, yet we do not want to know it, but if we did want to know it, paradise would begin tomorrow the whole world over.”[[188]](#footnote-188)

Since the spiritual factor is at issue in establishing a paradise on earth rather the economic and political factors, the question arises, which nation or people are best suitable to lead humanity towards this new era. The crucial role in the process of its realization lies within the Russian narod, for “the truth of the universal Christian society is preserved in theory by the Russian monk and in practice by the Russian people”.[[189]](#footnote-189) According to Dostoevsky, the Russian peasants, i.e. *narod*, embody the *obraz* of Christ and possess the prerequisite religious instinct necessary to resist the atheistic socialism and new humanism and bring a harmonious society to a successful conclusion.[[190]](#footnote-190) In opposition of other nations, who lack the spirit of humility, Russia as the ‘God-bearing nation’ bears at its core the “possibilities of a final resolution of the problem of human order, and the inauguration of a new historical epoch”.[[191]](#footnote-191) In the short story *Мужик Марей*, Dostoevsky describes the extraordinary encounter with a peasant man who, despite the brutish condition of serfdom, was able to preserve a loving and compassionate nature:

Встреча была уединенная, […] и толъко бог видел сверху, каким глубоким и просвещенным человеческим чувством и какою тонкою, почти женственною нежностью может бытъ наполнено сердце […] русского мужика, еще и не ждавшего, не гадавшего тогда о своей свободе.[[192]](#footnote-192)

*Dostoevsky’s doubt about the human ideal*

Although Dostoevsky hoped that the touchstone of a spiritual principle, that morality rooted in the religious belief could give a new impetus to man’s modern maladies and lead into a brighter future, he stayed throughout his life skeptical. While in the *Diary of a Writer* Dostoevsky consistently used the “empirical data of ‘real life’ to defeat the simplifications of idealists and romantics” and back up his utopian conception of a universal church, he, nevertheless, uttered doubts in the face of the same empirical data.[[193]](#footnote-193) He even admitted that the Grand Inquisitor’s tyranny “remains a possibility which will or will not become an actuality according to the choices made by modern people.”[[194]](#footnote-194) In his notebooks Dostoevsky demonstrably makes a reference to the teaching of Christ in order to show that there might not be a denouement for human history:

Христос проповедовал свое учение только как идеал, сам предрек, что до конца мира будет борьба и развитие (учение о мече), ибо это закон природы… […] Итак, человек стремится на земле к идеалу, - *противуположному* его натуре.[[195]](#footnote-195)

Anticipating the unlikely actualization of a historical happy ending for mankind, Dostoevsky even lowered his expectations in terms of the Russian people as a beacon of hope for Russia’s and the Western civilization. In his *Diary* Dostoevsky periodically admits that “his faith in the fraternal instincts of the Russian people may be too strong”[[196]](#footnote-196), that the Russian people need spiritual guidance from the upper class in order to cope with maladies of the modern time.[[197]](#footnote-197)

V. Solzhenitsyn’s ethical and moral emphasis

5.1. ‘Spirituality determines existence’

In his literary work Solzhenitsyn attached immense importance in illustrating the intrinsic fallacy of Marx’s thought. He set out to demonstrate that the political and social realization of Marx’s philosophy dangerously infects the minds of people and political institutions. In the process of implementing Marx’s concepts of social phenomena, Solzhenitsyn highlights its social and political distortion when put into practice. Solzhenitsyn believed that it bears at its core an infectious disease, serving as a catalyst for the worst behavior of human beings.

Rather than pointing out to the extrinsic circumstances as the source for evil deeds, Solzhenitsyn claims in his oeuvre that the real reason for immoral behavior is more a lack of spiritual force within people. In *The Gulag* *Archipelago* Solzhenitsyn recalls many examples which underpin spiritual strength in defiance of inhuman conditions. In a sense, this notion defies the belief that human beings are determined by environmental conditions:

Каждый поступок противодействия власти требовал мужества несоразмерного с величиной поступка. Безопаснее было при Александре II хранить динамит, чем при Сталине приютить сироту врага народа – однако, сколько же детей таких взяли, спасли. И тайная помощь семьям – была. […] А кто-то же ушел на Архипелаг и за защиту своих неприметных безвестных сослуживцев. Сын в отца: сын того Рожанского, Иван, пострадал и сам за защиту своего сослуживца Копелева.[[198]](#footnote-198)

Marx’s assumption that existence determines consciousness was further discredited on the account of the fact that the *Zeks* did not turn into devout revolutionaries. Solzhenitsyn points out that due to the unbearable conditions in the Gulag every *Zek* should, given Marx’s proposition that social determinism is true, seek to destroy the Communist state, for it is the origin of their suppression and suffering. This historical contradiction proves that people’s will, that consciousness prevails over matter and, consequently, rebuts the validity of Marxist ideology. The theoretical and dialectical *Aufhebung* of Marxist historical necessity is expressed by Solzhenitsyn in the ideological and political blindness of socialist adherents, whom he met in the Gulag:

И не крикнет никто: да позвольте же! да черт же вас раздери! да у вас бытие-то в конце концов – определяет сознание или не определяет? Или только тогда определяет, когда вам выгодно? а когда невыгодно, так чтоб не определяло? Еще так у нас умеют говорить с легкой тенью на челе: "да, были *допущены* некоторые ошибки". И всегда – это невинно-блудливая безличная форма – *допущены*, толъко неизвестно кем. Чуть ли не работягами, грузчиками да колхозниками допущены. Никто не имеет смелостъ сказать: *партия* допустила! бессменные и безответственные руководители допустили! А кем же еще, кроме имеющих властъ, они могли быть "допущены"? На одного Сталина валить? - надо же и чувство юмора иметь. Сталин допустил – так вы-то где были, руководящие миллионы?[[199]](#footnote-199)

In line with the rebuttal of Marx’s concept of class struggle, Solzhenitsyn refutes to accept the Marxist notion that only an improvement of the environment can lead humanity to a better future. The idealistic notion that the transformation of the environment will lead to a change of human nature, was not just theoretically opposed by Solzhenitsyn, but he set out to show that the depreciation of human complexity can have atrocious consequences: “A theory that does not take this truth into account is destined to make tragic errors when put into practice”.[[200]](#footnote-200) The practical realization of Marxist concept of social class and human nature is tragically recounted in Solzhenitsyn’s non-fictional work *Gulag*:

Старшина, начальник кенгирской тюрьмы был профессиональный боксер. Он упражнялся на заключенных, как на грушках. Еще у него в тюрьме изобрели бить молотом через фанеру, чтобы не оставлять следов. (*Практические* работники МВД, они знали, что без побоев и убийств перевоспитание невозможно; и любой *практический* прокурор был с ними солгласен. Но ведь мог наехать и теоретик! – вот из-за этого маловероятного приезда теоретика приходилось подкладывать фанеру.) Один западный украинец, измученный пытками и боясь выдать друзей, повесился. К тому же среди ‘боевиков’ нашлись жадные проходимцы, желавшие не успеха движению, а добра себе.[[201]](#footnote-201)

Thus human nature objects Marx’s concept of class. Solzhenitsyn displays in his writing the unpredictability, the inconsistency of human behaviour. Human nature remains a mysterious entity, full of contradictions which can never be completely understood by class analysis. Following this precept, Solzhenitsyn distances himself form the idea that the creation of the ‘right’ social conditions can ever pave the way for a harmonious life. In recounting a policy on the treatment of the inmates in the Gulag in 1930, Solzhenitsyn, on the hand, rails against the concept of social determinism and, on the other hand, shows its inhuman character:

Да с 30-х годов начиналась и новая лагерная эра, когда и Соловки уже стали не Соловки, а рядовой 'исправительно-трудовой лагерь'. Всходила черная звезда идеолога этой эры Нафталия Френкеля, и стала высшим законом Архипелага его формула: 'От заключенного нам надо взять все в первые три месяца - а потом он нам не нужен!'[[202]](#footnote-202)

Fundamental to Solzhenitsyn’s attack of Marx’s ideology was also the premise that the world operates on the basis of production. Solzhenitsyn recoiled from this idea, for it consequently degenerate the consciousness, the free will of human beings. According to Marx, the structural layout of labour determines the outcome of culture or, even, creates humanity itself. Marx asserts that “the entire so-called world history is only the creation of man through human labour and the development of nature for man”. Thus, Marx writes, man “has enough proof of his self-creation, his own formation process”.[[203]](#footnote-203) At variance with this proposition, Solzhenitsyn holds the opinion that consciousness comes before production. In a sense, Solzhenitsyn reverses Marx’s deterministic view by highlighting that before becoming a “conscious producer, one must first have consciousness”. Given the claim that existence precedes essence – a philosophical statement which markedly refers to Jean-Paul Sartre’s philosophy of existentialism – Solzhenitsyn points out that man’s distinguishing characteristic lies in his capability to create language and thought. These capabilities, according to Solzhenitsyn, prove that conscious activity plays an important part in forming the world: “It is high time to remember that we belong first and foremost to humanity. And that man has separated himself from the animal world by thought and speech.”[[204]](#footnote-204)

Put into practice, Marx’s emphasis on labour as the key element in creating the ‘right’ consciousness had fatal consequences. Solzhenitsyn sees in the assumption that the structure of labour defines man, the justification and legitimation of the Gulag. Due to the fact that the reconstitution of man can only occur in relation to the ‘right’ form of labour, the rationalization of labour “ushered into the world the cruelty of the corrective (destructive) labor camps.”[[205]](#footnote-205) To illustrate the conceptual flaw Marx’s ideology, Solzhenitsyn refers to the old (tsarist) regime and Western capitalism. The author of *The Gulag Archipelago* ironically alleges that the exploitative and cruel working conditions in the Communist state exceeded those in the Western countries. He recounts many examples of the arbitrariness and inhumanity in the Gulag:

Как и помещеки, начальник лагеря мог взять любого раба себе в лакеи, в повара, парикмахера или шуты (мог собрать и крепостной театр, если ему нравилось), любую рабыню определить себе в экономки, в наложницы или в прислугу. Как и момещик, он вволю мог дурить, показывать свой нрав. Менялся ли помещики или начальник лагеря, все рабы покорно ждали нового, гадали о его привычках и заранее отдавались в его власть. […] Крепостной не мог жениться без воли барина – и уж тем более заключенный только при снисхождении начальника мог обзавестись лагерной женой. Как крепостной не выбирал своей рабской доли, он не виновен был в своем рождении, так не выбирал ее и заключенный, он тоже попадал на Архипелаг чистым роком.[[206]](#footnote-206)

In accordance with Marx’s reflection on labour, Solzhenitsyn recognizes another nebulous concept negatively affecting the course of history. Solzhenitsyn regarded forced labour camps in the Soviet Union as a direct consequence of Marx’s view on economics. Marx believed that the disappearance of the necessity for labour will lead to end of man’s alienation. He attached much significance in the power of science, for science can “fully conquer natural necessity” and, thus, release man from the need of labour.[[207]](#footnote-207) Once the discrepancy between human beings and nature is bridged, the coercive force of labour will be converted into a free realm of life and the necessity of labour will become obsolete.[[208]](#footnote-208)

In opposing this precept, Solzhenitsyn drew attention to the fact that the intention to subjugate nature can have not only deep ecological consequences but negatively engulf life itself. At variance with Marx’s ideology, Solzhenitsyn believed that nature remains an untamed force, a complex entity difficult to grasp. Thus he reasoned that Marx’s theory of labour implies an endless intervention in the process of natural phenomena which leads, on the one hand, to radical changes in human life and, on the other hand, negatively engulfs nature itself. Due to the fact the Communist state in the Soviet Union was devoid of investment capital, it was consequently unable to produce the industrial machinery in order to change the environment. In order to compensate the lack of capital, the Soviet government, given Solzhenitsyn’s explanation, filled the gap by exploiting forced workers in the Gulag. Accordingly, Solzhenitsyn argues, the inhuman exploitation in the Gulag is intrinsically intertwined with Marx’s conceptual understanding of labour.[[209]](#footnote-209)

As to the meaning of private property, Solzhenitsyn attacks Marx’s ideology in the same way. Marx’s hope that the overcoming of private property will give new impetus to the creation of a better and more human society, proved, given Solzhenitsyn, to be false. The misconception of Marx is embedded in the false assessment of human nature. Solzhenitsyn opposes the materialistic assertion in view of the fact that greed, egoism or immorality cannot be abolished by socializing property. The misjudgment of human nature by Marxist doctrine Solzhenitsyn poignantly describes in his manifesto *From under the Rubble* (Russian: *Iz pod glyb*). Published in 1974, shortly after Solzhenitsyn’s involuntary exile, this work aimed at showing the absurdity of Marx’s assumption that the socialization of poverty will generate the basis for morality:

In no socialist doctrine, however, are moral demands seen as the essence of socialism – there is merely a promise that morality will fall like manna from heaven after the socialization of property. Accordingly, nowhere on earth have we been shown ethical socialism in being (and indeed the juxtaposition of these two words, tentatively questioned by me in one of my books, has been severely condemned by responsible orators). In my case, how can we speak of ethical socialism, when we do not know whether what we are shown under the name is in fact socialism at all? Is it something that exists in nature?[[210]](#footnote-210)

In contrast to this precept, Solzhenitsyn expresses in his writing an antithetical stance on the importance of poverty as a precondition for human behaviour. From his experience in the Gulag he arrived to the conclusion that people can live up to a higher moral consciousness in defiance of suffering and severe poverty. The embodiment of a different understanding of life Solzhenitsyn illustrates in his best-known short story *Matryona’s dvor*: “At the heart of the story […] was the message that Matryona […] was a genuinely good and moral person but that there was no room for her in the grasping, materialistic culture of contemporary Soviet society.”[[211]](#footnote-211) Thus Solzhenitsyn shows an alternative to the capitalist (accumulation for egoistic motifs) and the socialist (accumulation for the collective) concept of property.[[212]](#footnote-212) Appearing 1963 (written in 1959) in *Novyj Mir* this autobiographical story symbolically conveys in the main character a different ideal: “*Matryona* does not acquire material goods because she does not believe in their value, and this very lack of belief enables her to transcend all political systems and government.”[[213]](#footnote-213) The anti-materialistic and anti-modernistic concept of the story is also accompanied by religious intention: “The whole story was also bathed in a kind of Christian light.”[[214]](#footnote-214) In close structural relationship with Tolstoy’s moral and ethical peasant stories, the main character has to be seen in line with a Christian world view and Christian morality. Putting together, Solzhenitsyn epitomizes in *Matryona* an icon of spirituality and unreflective piety for nature necessary to live a free and happy life.

5.2 The purport of morality and religion

To those whose minds are not liberated, wars, revolutions, and radical movements will never bring freedom but only an exchange of one kind of slavery for another. That is one of the most tragic lessons of the twentieth century.

Walter Kaufmann, *Without Guilt and Justice*

The embodiment of spirituality and piety in *Matryona’s* character thus gives a hint of Solzhenitsyn’s understanding of a different social formula. The author of *The Gulag Archipelago* did not only give particular importance to accentuating the inconsistency of Marxist philosophy when put into practice, but he also provided in his writing a framework for a conceptual alternative. Aware of the fact that ideas do not entirely determine the psychological mindset of human beings, he, nonetheless, considered them to be crucial in shaping the minds of people. Thus the internalization and disposition towards a concept defines the basic criteria of people’s thinking and, consequently, behavior pattern. Accordingly, Solzhenitsyn believed that by living according to the ‘right’ concept evil deeds can be undermined and good behaviour can be strengthened.

But what is the ‘right’ idea through which people can live up to moral and ethical standards? What conceptual understanding is the right one in a time where good and evil seems to be based on a relativist view? Solzhenitsyn answers these questions by referring first of all to the emotional side of human beings, for every man possess the intrinsic ability to feel the pain and misery of others. Although Solzhenitsyn agreed on the danger of the emotional exuberance, for it can lead to anger and hatred, he, nevertheless, considered it to be essential in raising an awareness of social and political injustice in the world. Thus the detailed and vivid description of cruelty and inhuman conditions in the Gulag used by Solzhenitsyn bears at its core the intention to generate empathy for someone else’s pain.[[215]](#footnote-215) In *The* *Gulag Archipelago* Solzhenitsyn expounds this idea:

Тут пойдет о малом, в этой главе. О пятнадцати миллионах душ. О пятнадцати миллионах жизней. Конечно, не образованных. Не умевших играть на скрипке. Не узнавших, кто такой Мейерхолд или как интересно заниматься атомной физикой. Во всей первой мировой войне мы потеряли убитыми три миллиона. Во всей второй – двадцать миллионов (это – по Хрущеву, а по Сталину – только семь. Расщедрился ли Никита? или Иосиф не доглядел капиталу?) Так сколько же од! Сколько обелисков, вечных огней! романов и поэм! – да четверть века вся советская литература этой кровушкой только и напоена. А о той молчаливой предательской чуме, сглодавшей нам 15 миллионов мужиков, да не подряд, а избранных, а становой хребет русского народа – о той Чуме нет книг. И трубы не будят нас встрепенуться. И на перекрестках проселочных дорог, где вижали обозы обреченных, не брошено даже камешков трех. И лучшие наши гуманисты, так отзывчивые к сегодняшним несправедливостям, в те годы только кивали одобрительно: все правильно! так им и надо![[216]](#footnote-216)

In giving an account of people’s suffering in the Gulag, Solzhenitsyn hoped, on the one hand, to make people think about injustice and cruel conduct and, on the other hand, to increase the awareness of moral and ethical principles: “Solzhenitsyn inspires a sense of righteous indignation as a means of teaching his readers that there are such things as morality and justice.”[[217]](#footnote-217) Indifference to the concept of right and wrong in modern times has obscured, given Solzhenitsyn’s point of view, the guide line for moral bearings. Yet people can refer to their inner feelings when they are confronted with an encroachment on basic human rights. Acknowledging thus an intrinsic entity of compassion in every human being, Solzhenitsyn aimed at addressing people’s hearts in order to make them aware of the importance of moral criteria: “Indeed, empathy is exactly what his artistry hopes to educe.”[[218]](#footnote-218)

At some point in his writing Solzhenitsyn concedes, however, that empathy and compassion are not sufficient in dealing with ‘uprooted minds’ and ‘false’ ideology. Thus Solzhenitsyn recognizes several sources which can provide the inner strength necessary to oppose the destructive effects of ideology-induced hatred. One such source, for instance, is family structure. Solzhenitsyn believed that the traditional bond within families can function as a shield or buffer against political and social distortion, for “family ties evoke spiritedness by appealing to the natural desire to protect and nurture loved one.”[[219]](#footnote-219) Along with the importance of family, Solzhenitsyn refers to the relevance of communities and nations. The identification with the history of a nation and its cultural heritage can, given Solzhenitsyn’s interpretation, provide a sense of responsibility and care to individuals and, more importantly, “protect the country’s way of life, to sacrifice themselves for the good of the whole.”[[220]](#footnote-220) Aside from the magnitude of family and national consciousness, Solzhenitsyn acknowledges the fact that some individuals possess an inborn spiritual quality which makes them more resistant to oppression and violence. In *Gulag* Solzhenitsyn recounts people who did not succumb to the inhumanity in the Gulag and maintained their spiritual and moral strength:

Например, общая потеря внешней свободы для человека с богатым внутренним миром менее тяжела, чем для человека малоразвитого, более живущего телесно. Этот второй более нуждается во внешних впечатлениях, инстинкты сильнее тянут его на волю. Первому легче и одиночное заключение, особенно с книгами.[[221]](#footnote-221)

Despite the fact that Solzhenitsyn agrees that the existence of a strong will and a national spirit is a stabilizing factor in times of political and social turmoil, he nonetheless considered it to be too weak to provide people with moral principles and spiritual strength. The relativist view, the divergence of opinions encompassing all the thoughts and ideas in the modern world endangers too much, given Solzhenitsyn’s explanation, the existence of mankind itself to leave the burden of decision-making to people alone. Using – as he often does – a Russian proverb to convey this notion, Solzhenitsyn stated: “We could not manage to survive on one Earth, just as a man with two hearts is not long for this world.”[[222]](#footnote-222) Accordingly, Solzhenitsyn asks who or what can give mankind the system or scale to differentiate between the wrong and the right. Solzhenitsyn was strongly convinced that morally good behaviour can be intensively fostered by religion and a belief in god: “Solzhenitsyn moral vision takes it bearings from a religious view of life and the world.”[[223]](#footnote-223) Only the concept of religion and god has the ability to emanate, by Solzhenitsyn’s account, the power which strengthens the character and soul, for it gives people a higher meaning and the awareness that life is based on a divine plan. Man devoid of a religious and spiritual entity is capable of the worst crimes. Based on his experience in the Gulag, Solzhenitsyn arrived at the conclusion that the absence of faith and moral standards made the horrible and devastating outcomes of Soviet dictatorship in the first place possible: “Men have forgotten God; that’s why all this happened.”[[224]](#footnote-224) Religion was thus seen by Solzhenitsyn as an instrument to ensure a higher authority which could guarantee a “steady presence of a powerful good” in the world.[[225]](#footnote-225)

Closely intertwined with the relevance of religion are the aspects of self-limitation and repentance. In order to live a spiritual or Christian life it is inevitable to keep desires and urges under control, for noble behaviour is based on self-limitation and self-control.

5.3 How to save Russia?

*The Revival of Russia*

Just as Solzhenitsyn expresses grave misgivings in his writing about spiritual and political conditions in the Western world, he in the same way dwells on Russia’s terrible predicament in the twentieth century. In both cases, however, Solzhenitsyn does not merely elaborate on the disintegration of social and political institutions caused by ideological misconceptions. There is clear evidence that Solzhenitsyn’s oeuvre offers a possibility of a remedy, a solution for the spiritual and political ‘distortion’ in Western civilization and especially in Russia. Solzhenitsyn’s quintessential expression of his deep concern and anxiety about Russia’s fate found its way explicitly into a Letter to the Soviet Leaders, published in 5 September 1973.

Before delving into the central themes of the Letter it is interesting to have a look at the circumstances in which the Letter was published, for it shows Solzhenitsyn’s sincere attitude and devotion to Russia’s political and spiritual wellbeing. Given the fact that Solzhenitsyn concealed the mere existence of the Letter from the Russian (and Western) public it is possible to make the conclusion that his strategy was developed in order to have a direct impact on the Russian (Soviet) leaders; his attention was to address the issue directly to the Soviet *nomenklatura* in the hope that the Letter would evoke a sense of responsibility for Russia’s fate and its citizens:

I do not entertain much hope, but I shall try to say what is most important in a short space, namely, to set out what I hold to be for the good and salvation of our people, to which all of you – and I myself – belong. […] But it is the fate of the Russian and Ukrainian people that preoccupies me above all.[[226]](#footnote-226)

From the standpoint of his love for Russia, Solzhenitsyn begins by sketching out the main historical events of twentieth-century (Soviet) Russia. In contrasting the achievements and failures of Soviet history, Solzhenitsyn arrives at the conclusion that some political and economic success and power occurred even under Stalin after the Second World War. But he also points out that Soviet policies have, fundamentally, been flawed, for they lack a national spirit which is due to the “exact adherence to the precepts of Marxism-Leninism.”[[227]](#footnote-227) Rather than following national considerations Russia endangered itself by supporting, for instance, communist movements abroad (like the support for Mao Tse-tung’s China) or the German *Wehrmacht.[[228]](#footnote-228)*

More importantly for Solzhenitsyn, however, is the inner spiritual development Russia is facing in the twentieth century. This development is closely intertwined with the political activity of a cohort of Russian intellectuals who saw in the progressive doctrine of Western kind the only way to Russia’s economic and political advancement. The quintessential expression of this modernistic policy found its way in the practical realization of Marxist ideology: “we [Russia] had to be dragged along the whole of the Western bourgeois-industrial complex.”[[229]](#footnote-229) Following thus the path of Marxist doctrine Russia, given Solzhenitsyn’s analysis, has reached an impasse: “All that ‘endless progress’ turned out to be an insane, ill-considered, furious dash into a blind alley. A civilization greedy for ‘perpetual progress’ has now choked and is on its last legs.”[[230]](#footnote-230)

The first way out of this deadlock is to deliberately distance oneself from the idea that constant progress is something which is worth pursuing. Rather than implementing the policy of continuous economic enhancement and thus exploiting natural resources, Solzhenitsyn makes a case for “a zero growth economy” where nature is conserved not squandered.[[231]](#footnote-231) The realization of a stable economy will, given Solzhenitsyn’s hope, ease the immediate threat on the environment and avoid the catastrophic destruction of mankind:

Unless mankind renounces the notion of economic progress, the biosphere will become unfit for life even during our lifetime. And if mankind is to be saved, technology has to be adapted to a stable economy in the twenty to thirty years, and to do that, the process must be started now, immediately. (Letter, p. 23)

From Solzhenitsyn’s concern about economic progress in the world he sets out to rail against the external political efforts and attention of (Soviet) Russia. Rather than dwelling on foreign affairs Russia should, according to Solzhenitsyn, focus on internal matters. Solzhenitsyn begins by pointing out the ailing structure of Russia’s agricultural system. He considers it a shame that Russia is forced to import grain in order to feed its population. The remedy for food shortage is “to give up the forced collective farms and leave just the voluntary ones.”[[232]](#footnote-232) Solzhenitsyn goes on by elucidating the fatal consequences of vodka consumption. In this context he argues for an alteration of state policy, for “so long as vodka is an important item of state revenue nothing will change, and we shall simply go on ravaging the people’s vitals.”[[233]](#footnote-233) From this position Solzhenitsyn lays emphasis on the importance of the spiritual dimension. In line with the physical existence of people, Solzhenitsyn also contends that spiritual considerations should be taken into account. Allied to Solzhenitsyn’s concept of spiritual development is the education of the Russian youth. Solzhenitsyn calls for a release “from universal, compulsory military service [which] we maintain solely out of military and diplomatic vanity.”[[234]](#footnote-234) In doing so, Russia can “achieve physical and spiritual salvation.”[[235]](#footnote-235) Along with the idea of nurturing spirituality by exempting the youth from military service Solzhenitsyn favours a pluralist approach to intellectual undertakings and multiple scholastic centres, for “the present-day centralization of all forms of life of the mind is a monstrosity amounting to spiritual murder.”[[236]](#footnote-236) In order to foster spiritual and inner life in Russia Solzhenitsyn also claims that the distortion of family structure due to the ‘fallacious’ ideology of Marxism must be revoked. Rather than financially supporting revolutionary movements in other countries such as in South America, Solzhenitsyn suggests spending extra money on giving men the right sort of wages and, thus, freeing the Russian women from the burden of raising children and working at the same time: “The demands of internal growth are incomparably more important to us, as a people, than the need for any external expansion of our power.”[[237]](#footnote-237)

At the heart of Solzhenitsyn’s reflection on the importance of inner moral values is also the relationship between the ruling class and spiritual health. He begins his meditation on spirituality and power by chronicling the historical development of Russia in order to shed light on the interplay between the ruling caste and their understanding of morality and good behaviour. Solzhenitsyn arrives at the conclusion that despite the fact that misapprehension of power took place in Old Russia, it, nevertheless, demonstrably bore testimony to a spiritual and moral dimension. The diffusion of moral principles and spiritual values was closely interwoven, given Solzhenitsyn’s historical analysis, with Christian Orthodoxy. The decline of Russia’s moral integrity occurred as a result of Patriarch Nikon’s reforms in the seventeenth century and the introduction of a bureaucratic structure by Peter the Great. Consequently, the distortion of Orthodox teaching led to a loss of trust in “the authoritarian order.”[[238]](#footnote-238)

*Russia’s spiritual regeneration*

НЕ В СИЛЕ БОГ, А В ПРАВДЕ.

A Russian proverb.

Along with Solzhenitsyn’s mediation on the significance of politics and economics for Russia’s revival, he put even more emphasis on the meaning of divine providence and Christian religion. Solzhenitsyn was convinced that “Christianity [is] today […] the only living spiritual force capable of undertaking the spiritual healing of Russia.”[[239]](#footnote-239)

The literary realization of Solzhenitsyn’s reflection on the importance of Christian religion is best encapsulated in a collection of essays *From Under the Rubble*.[[240]](#footnote-240) Along with the attack on the “uncritical adaptation of the Western European enlightenment in its nineteenth-century forms of positivism, atheist materialism, ‘scientific socialism’”, the authors from across Russia’s political and intellectual landscape, including Solzhenitsyn himself or the famous Russian mathematician Igor Shafarevich “called for a return to traditional values – which for most of them meant those enshrined in Christian teaching – as a necessary condition for a regeneration of the country’s intellectual, cultural and social life.”[[241]](#footnote-241) All authors claim that the antidote to Russia’s political and cultural predicament begins on a spiritual and religious level and not by propounding revolutionary upheavals or physical compulsion and violence: “Their goal is to bring about in Russia a moral revolution.”[[242]](#footnote-242)

But how is the goal of a peaceful moral revolution to be achieved? Before elucidating Solzhenitsyn’s vision of a society based on moral, religious and ethical criteria, it is important to explain his understanding of the transference of moral values. At variance with the modern propensity to measure individual and human principles on the basis of social sciences or crude economic processes, Solzhenitsyn upholds the idea that morality and ethics necessitate, on the one hand, a personal approach to right and wrong, and, on the other hand, a clear religious foundation. The latter point reveals that “Solzhenitsyn confronts the dogma, sacrosanct in social scientific circles, that reason as such can tell us nothing about how human beings ought to live, that true science is incompatible with value judgment.”[[243]](#footnote-243) Thus fundamental to Solzhenitsyn is not so much reason, the adherence to ideological principles or scientific dogmatism, as a value system based to a large extent on a moral and religious foundations, for a society devoid of a moral constitution “will destroy itself, or be brutalized by the triumph of evil instincts, no matter where the pointer of the great economic laws may turn.”[[244]](#footnote-244) In terms of individual responsibility Solzhenitsyn argues that “the examination of social phenomena” should be measured according to “the categories of individual spiritual life and individual ethics.”[[245]](#footnote-245)

From the position of personal duty to evaluate social and political phenomena, Solzhenitsyn dwells on two such categories by which the examination of historical events can be judged. Solzhenitsyn encapsulates them as “repentance and self-limitation.”[[246]](#footnote-246) The American professor of political science Daniel J. Mahoney even calls these two categories the “touchstone of Solzhenitsyn’s reflection and the place where his philosophical, spiritual, and political concerns most clearly and fruitfully converge.”[[247]](#footnote-247)

To begin with, Solzhenitsyn believed that repentance plays a significant role in the modern world with reference to individual responsibility. He even called it a “gift” and something which “perhaps more than anything else distinguishes man from the animal world.”[[248]](#footnote-248) In line with his criticism of man’s spiritual condition in modern times, Solzhenitsyn stated that man has lost the capability to repent; man is even ashamed of showing any kind of repentance: “The habit of repentance is lost to our whole callous and chaotic age.”[[249]](#footnote-249) Solzhenitsyn is ill at ease with this development, for repentance “is now a matter of life and death” and determines “life here and now and our very survival on this earth.”[[250]](#footnote-250) Man’s survival is endangered, according to Solzhenitsyn, by the “destructively greedy pursuit of progress” or the “tensions between nations and races.”[[251]](#footnote-251) Especially the political and ideological dissonance pervading all social and political groups in the modern day pose a threat to man’s survival. The only way out of man’s dilemma is, according to Solzhenitsyn, based on “simple *repentance* and the search for *our own* errors and sins.”[[252]](#footnote-252) It is particularly people’s proclivity to localize evil in other human beings which endangers mankind and alienates man from the obligation of spiritual and moral development. According to Mahoney this tendency “is perhaps the central moral message of Solzhenitsyn’s *Gulag* – and is at the heart of his rejection of every form of religious and ideological manicheanism.”[[253]](#footnote-253) Rather than blaming everyone else for the misconceptions and social and political defects in the world, Solzhenitsyn advocates a personal and, more importantly, a spiritual approach to the world: “repentance is the starting point of spiritual growth.”[[254]](#footnote-254)

Along with the importance of individuality with reference to repentance, Solzhenitsyn was also convinced that whole nations have to be judged according to its spiritual, moral and emotional life.[[255]](#footnote-255) Convinced that every country possesses a national consciousness, Solzhenitsyn sets out to apply the same criteria of individual responsibility to larger communities. The analogous process to individual liability for misdeeds is explained by Solzhenitsyn as a result of the fact that all nations undergo political, social or spiritual transformations: “the mutability of all existence, a nation can no more live without sin than can an individual.”[[256]](#footnote-256) The inevitability of sin in the course of every nation’s history also implies the necessity of repentance. And even if inhuman acts and sin are committed by a small group of the political elite, Solzhenitsyn nonetheless acknowledges an interrelationship between the political minority and the majority, because “we all bear responsibility […] for the quality of our government […] for the deeds of our soldiers in the line of duty or […] for the songs of our young people.”[[257]](#footnote-257) Thus “the nation is mystically welded together in a community of guilt, and its inescapable destiny is common repentance”.[[258]](#footnote-258) The moral culpability of entire nations poses the question which individual possesses the philosophical and spiritual authority to express, to point out to the wrongdoing of a country and the inevitability of repentance. Solzhenitsyn arrives at the conclusion that “at a historical distance […] we unerringly judge to what degree one man has expressed a genuine change of heart in his nation.”[[259]](#footnote-259) An example of acted repentance based only on a feeling of guilt and moral bearings by just one person Solzhenitsyn sees, for instance, in the whole *Ost-Politik* of the German Chancellor Willy Brandt.[[260]](#footnote-260)

Solzhenitsyn’s intention is, however, to animate “the natural proclivity of Russians to repent” and thus “set the whole world an example.”[[261]](#footnote-261) Fundamental to this policy is to inspirit the Orthodox faith, for Solzhenitsyn believed that through the Orthodoxy of the pre-Petrine period the Russian people embraced “the gift of repentance […] and forgiveness.”[[262]](#footnote-262) But it all changed with the “soulless reforms of Nikon and Peter the Great”, the “monstrous punishment of the Old Believers” and during the “whole Petersburg period of our history.”[[263]](#footnote-263) These spiritual and political aberrations destroyed and suppressed the Russian national spirit and thus the ability and desire to repent. The twentieth-century history of Russia bears testimony to the loss of repentance: “it engulfed us in the clouds of new savagery, brought a pitiless rain of vengeful blows in our heads, an unprecedented terror, and the return, after seventy years, of serfdom in a still worse form.”[[264]](#footnote-264) Once the ability to repent was gone, Russia could not cushion from the worst effects of twentieth-century ideological doctrine. The consequence was ideological violence, dishonesty or hatred, for people refused to believe that anyone, including themselves, is responsible for evil. In order to reestablish the lost trait of sincerity and humanity, people must try “shedding the burden of the past […] by repentance, for we are all guilty, all besmirched.”[[265]](#footnote-265) And if “a multitude of people” will admit and repent, the “soil of Russia [will] be cleansed” and “a new, healthy national life can grow up.[[266]](#footnote-266)

Closely intertwined with repentance is self-limitation: “repentance creates the atmosphere for self-limitation.”[[267]](#footnote-267) In the same manner as repentance can lead to the recognition of moral and ethical precepts, the concept of self-restraint once understood and adopted encourages the same behaviour: “this principle diverts – as individuals, in all forms of human association, societies and nations – from outward to inward development” or “thereby giving us greater spiritual growth.”[[268]](#footnote-268) Following these precepts, Solzhenitsyn, in addition, points out that repentance as well as self-restriction stimulate altruistic deeds, for once a person lives according to the precepts he begins to live “for the sake of others.”[[269]](#footnote-269) Solzhenitsyn puts much emphasis on the transformation development from outward into inward qualities; he even compared it with “the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance”.[[270]](#footnote-270) Once people have turned their attention towards inner growth, Solzhenitsyn prophecies a change “in the character of human societies“; it will be “a moral revolution” and “a new phenomenon in human history.”[[271]](#footnote-271) This inner growth will also be accompanied by a new approach towards the material world. Solzhenitsyn predicts that the individual will abandon their greed for possessions and the government will avoid strength and pressure. By abandoning governmental and administrative force on people’s will, not only the assumption that in order to expect something one must apply political and economic pressure will disappear, but also, according to Solzhenitsyn, a regulated, “a well-ordered life […] on our planet” can be established.[[272]](#footnote-272) Along with the spiritual gain of self-restriction, Solzhenitsyn expounds his view on the importance of ecological and environment responsibility. Although Solzhenitsyn acknowledges the difficult character of self-control and self-restraint, for it endangers free economy and the freedom in the West, he, nonetheless, takes the view that “we must go over from the uninterrupted progress to a *stable economy*, with *nil growth* in territory, parameters and tempo, developing only through improved technology.”[[273]](#footnote-273)

At the heart of Solzhenitsyn’s argument is also his deep concern about Russia’s progress. It is his hope that Russia will choose in the context of self-limitation the right measures and thus set an “example of spiritual breadth.”[[274]](#footnote-274) Due to Russia’s misapplication of its political power during the course of its history, Solzhenitsyn espouses the notion that it “is perhaps more than any other country in need of comprehensive *inward* development – both spiritual, and the ensuing geographical, economic and social development that will occur as a consequence.”[[275]](#footnote-275) Thus Solzhenitsyn claims Russia needs to get away from world politics and focus on inner development; it is important for Russia to abandon “the exhibitionistic space race” and rather take care of its ramshackle villages; it is also essential to stop the degenerating process of its youth and women or the decline “of our native language.”[[276]](#footnote-276) And only if Russia manages to overcome these obstacles, it will, given Solzhenitsyn’s hope, heal its soul, for “nothing now is more important to us after all that we have lived through, after our long complicity in lies and even crimes.”[[277]](#footnote-277)

VI. Conclusion: A Critical Assessment

*Dostoevsky’s one-sided assessment of the West*

Dostoevsky’s engagement with the ‘rationalistic’ and ‘morally inferior’ Western civilization entailed many theoretical and conceptual inaccuracies. His anti-Western sentiments also revealed a psychological mechanism which is closely intertwined with the formation of Russia’s cultural identity in the nineteenth century.

To begin with, Dostoevsky’s attack on the Western mind reflected a tendency very common among Russian intellectuals in the nineteenth century. The fact that many Russian thinkers, including Dostoevsky, in the nineteenth century reviled the West for believing that “scientific methods and categories of that type that had proved so successful in advancing our knowledge of the natural world should be extended to the study of humanity and its history”[[278]](#footnote-278), shows that Russia was more linked with intellectual activity in Europe than conservative Russians would have admitted. There is clear evidence that the theoretical basis for Russia’s anti-Western stance stemmed largely from the West itself. The simplistic premise that the West was egoistic, superficial, atheistic, immoral or corrupt was actually a concept heavily derived from German Romanticism. The classification of France as rationalistic, egoistic, inorganic, cold-hearted etc. by German Romantic philosophers was adopted and transformed by Russian thinkers. Russian intellectuals, including Dostoevsky and particularly Slavophile thinkers, used the German characterization of the conceptual ‘fallacy’ of French Enlightenment and its emphasis on scientific methods and reason to show that Russia was morally superior to the West. Briefly put, the typology used by Dostoevsky to describe the West bears the imprint of German Romanticism and its criticism of rationality, scientific methods, materialism, etc.

An insightful illustration of this one-sided and biased adaptation of German ideology, can also be drawn from P.V. Kireyevsky’s anti-Western writing. It is particularly Kireyevsky’s characterization of the West as the epitome of “холодный анализ”, “безчувственный холод разсуждения” or “всемогущество своего отвлеченного разума”[[279]](#footnote-279), which reveals the link between anti-Western ideas in Russia and the West itself. In advocating thus spirituality and inner moral values rather than the ‘cold-hearted’ rationalism and the principles of logic and reasoning Slavophile thinkers, such as Kireyevsky, bear testimony to the fact that Russia’s political and spiritual development is bound up with the political and philosophical course of the Western world.[[280]](#footnote-280)

In this regard it is also interesting to mention that the French Catholic Church also gave dynamism to Russia’s anti-Western sentiments. It was the French Catholic Church’s characterization of Enlightenment reason as morally bad that Russian conservative thinkers adopted and redirected towards the West. It can thus be said that to a certain degree the West provided the context for Russia’s attack on the West: “Moral Russia thus prolonged European religious loathing of the perceived ways of reason for many decades.”[[281]](#footnote-281)

Dostoevsky’s biased description of Western vices also testified to his participation in Russia’s search for self-identity in the nineteenth century. By juxtaposing Russia with Western civilization, Dostoevsky sought to elaborate a Russian cultural identity which was differentiated socially, intellectually, and, especially, morally from the West. With regards to this identification process, Dostoevsky’s concepts of the Russian *narod* as the bearer of spiritual truth and *pochvennichestvo* as the panacea for Russia’s social and political mayhem evoke a different understanding of Dostoevsky’s meditations on Russia and the West. It can be argued that his attack on the West and his simplistic admiration of Russian qualities bore at their core the nationalistic tendency to find a national unity. Faced with the idea of becoming a modern country, Dostoevsky – as often happens in the history of emerging nations – set out to theorize a cultural, societal, and moral dichotomy dividing thus Russia and the West in two different cultural spheres. What was even more corrosive in the long term was Dostoevsky’s naiveté in believing that in order to become a modern state or to preserve Russia’s social harmony Russia had to cling to its spiritual (religious) and societal past. Dostoevsky’s advocacy of the Russian people as their guide to a brighter future or his belief in simple knowledge ignored the political and social implications necessary to deal with progressive political change. This myth of simplicity Dostoevsky and many other Russian thinkers were attracted to, turned out to be – as Solzhenitsyn has pointed out – counterproductive in overcoming Russia’s political and social problems at the beginning of the twentieth century when Russia entered the First World War.

Furthermore, Dostoevsky’s engagement with the Western mind also offered a portrait of the Russian intelligentsia in the nineteenth century. Dostoevsky and many Russian thinkers “lived in an unconstitutional and arbitrary political culture where personal morality mattered or nothing.”[[282]](#footnote-282) There is clear evidence that because the Russian intelligentsia was excluded from the decision-making political process in Tsarist Russia, they championed a vague concept of a mystical-moral community. In fact, Dostoevsky’s belief in the superiority of the Russian soul, which stands in contrast to the Western bourgeois, revealed his situation in the political environment of nineteenth-century Russia. His evocation of spirituality and religion, his advocacy of moral and altruistic behaviour, his belief in the merits of the Russian people was tinged with his political impotence. In a sense, Dostoevsky’s inchoate ideas in terms of the West’s emphasis on scientific methods and reason as well as his admiration of Russian qualities showed his exclusion from the political process. Thus, Dostoevsky’s attack on the West bore the imprints of a disappointed and embittered Russian intellectual.

Dostoevsky’s abhorrence of the perceived fallacy of Western ideas had at its basis another important aspect. Dostoevsky’s engagement with morality and ethics, his vocation for unselfish deeds bore the imprints of a guilty Russian intellectual given the suffering of the peasantry and his privileged status, education etc. in the nineteenth century. The guilt-driven Russian intelligentsia, including Dostoevsky, wanted to reconnect with the Russian *narod* and to protect it against external authority. Dostoevsky’s, as other Russian conservatives, sacrifice of individuality, his sympathy with the Russian people had a goal: reconciliation with the Russian people: “The Russian complex of communal belonging […] reflects the drama of Russia’s torn soul.”[[283]](#footnote-283)

Seen from this perspective, Dostoevsky’s attack on the West appears in a different light. It can be argued that the classification of the West as immoral was actually a projection of Dostoevsky. First of all, Dostoevsky’s attribution of his guilt-driven feelings to Western nations was an unconscious mechanism showing his dissatisfaction with the fact that the Russian intelligentsia lived at the expense of the Russian peasantry. Thus by criticizing the West for its moral vices he actually tried to hide his guilt. And secondly, the mechanism of projection can also be seen with regards to Dostoevsky’s negative connotation of French, German or English people. Given his experience with Russian criminals at the *Katorga* or the drunkenness and immoralities of the Russian people, it can be argued that Dostoevsky projected these ‘Russian vices’ to European people. His encounter with negative aspects of the Russian people along with his awaking nationalistic feelings in the nineteenth century, led Dostoevsky to establish a distorted image of the West.

*Solzhenitsyn’s misconception of Marx’s thought*

Reading Solzhenitsyn’s meditation on Marx’ thought a polemic and sarcastic tone on the part of Solzhenitsyn can be adduced. The impression was created that Marx’s ideas paved the way for the Russia’s social and political disaster in the twentieth century. According to Solzhenitsyn’s analysis, Marx’s interpretation of human relations, historical development or morality and ethics was to blame for the humanitarian catastrophe following of the Russian Revolution in 1917.[[284]](#footnote-284) Furthermore, Solzhenitsyn’s associated Marx’s thought with the intellectual and moral decay occurring particularly under Stalin’s rule.

This naïve and simplistic interpretation excluded and refused to consider the multifarious – and to a certain degree ambiguous – aspects of Marx’s philosophy. Especially Marx’s early writings gave an account of a variety of themes which led to a whole range of interpretations:

Philosophers have reinterpreted Marx’s thought to find him essentially an idealist – even a metaphysical egoist – in his view of history, a pragmatist in his recurrence to practical activity, or an existentialist in his account of man as a suffering subject reacting against an alien system of ideas and institutions.[[285]](#footnote-285)

Also Solzhenitsyn mistakenly concentrated his analysis and criticism of Marx’s thought on the so-called mechanic view of Marx’s teaching, thereby ignoring the humanitarian idealism of Marx. There is clear evidence that Marx addressed in his writing a strong social concern. Even Marx’s application of ‘materialism’ as a synonym for ‘real humanism’, disclose that “behind his socialism was a moral commitment to the dignity and preciousness of every man.”[[286]](#footnote-286) In *Reflections of a Youth on Choosing an Occupation* (1835) Marx, for instance, set forth:

The main principle, however, which must guide us in the selection of a vocation is the welfare of humanity, our own perfection. One should not think that these two interests combat each other, that the one must destroy the other. Rather, man’s nature makes it possible for him to reach his fulfillment only by working for the perfection and welfare of his society.[[287]](#footnote-287)

What is even more strikingly is the fact that Solzhenitsyn refused to pay attention to Marx’s affirmative references to religion. At some point in his early life Marx saw the realization of humanitarian idealism in the concept of religion: “Religion itself teaches us that the ideal for which we are all striving sacrificed itself for humanity, and who would dare to destroy such a statement?”[[288]](#footnote-288)

Apart from Solzhenitsyn’s one-sided analysis of Marx’s diverse thought, Solzhenitsyn mistakenly linked Marx’s ideas with the formation of the Soviet state. His assumption that War Communism or Stalin’s atrocities happened because Russian intellectuals and the Russian government adopted Marx’s doctrines show a lack of understanding with regards to Marx’s philosophy and the history of the Soviet Union or the twentieth century. As a counterpoint to Solzhenitsyn’s analysis it can be argued that Marx’s thoughts on socialism and communism were never really implemented in Russia.

In this context it is also interesting to mention that Solzhenitsyn’s interpretation resembles more the radical position expressed by Marx’s most formidable opponent, the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876). It was first of all Bakunin who favoured extremist and violent means with regards to the destruction of the oppressive state:

He [Bakunin] believed that since the use of organized force was the principle obstacle to justice and freedom, anything at all likely to lead men to revolt against their masters should be encouraged, until in one final revolutionary act all authority was destroyed.[[289]](#footnote-289)

On the subject of Solzhenitsyn’s analysis of the political environment in the Soviet Union, it is also not accurate to yoke Marx’s thought and the aberration of the Soviet state. The accusation Solzhenitsyn expressed with regards to the fact that Marx’s ideas gave birth to the political and legal arbitrariness in Soviet Russia lack clear evidence. Solzhenitsyn’s reference to Marx’s doctrine as an obstacle to political and social evolution, took no account of Marx’s meditation on the importance of democracy for society and human beings. In *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of the State* (1843) Marx commented on the merits of democracy:

Only, in democracy the species itself is existent as a *particular* modification distinct from existences that do not correspond to their essence. Democracy is the Old Testament of all other forms of state. Man does not exist for the law, but the law exists for man. In democracy there is *particular human existence*, while in other forms of state man is the *particular juridical existence*. This is the basic uniqueness of democracy.[[290]](#footnote-290)

A link between Solzhenitsyn’s examinations of Marx’s thought as a foreign and hostile element and Russia’s cultural uniqueness, can be established with regard to Solzhenitsyn’s early life. A closer look at Solzhenitsyn’s upbringing, for instance, enables us to understand Solzhenitsyn’s polemic views on Marxism as well as his nationalistic and reactionary stance. It was first of all Solzhenitsyn’s aunt who supplied Solzhenitsyn with a sense of patriotic and religious feelings and a love for Russia which later in Solzhenitsyn’s life unfolded:

She taught him the true beauty and meaning of the rituals of the Russian Orthodox church, emphasizing its ancient traditions and continuity. She showed him its importance for Russian history, demonstrating how the history of the church was inextricably intertwined with the history of the nation; and instilled into the boy a patriotic love of the past and a firm faith in the greatness and sacred destiny of the Russian people.[[291]](#footnote-291)

VII. Summary

The main research objective of this dissertation is to draw attention to the fact that Russia’s cultural and intellectual formation happened to a large extent in opposition to Western civilization. Although Russian thinkers clearly capitalized upon Western ideas, they nevertheless believed that the West's dependence on materialism, logical thinking and rationality rendered it morally corrupt. The epitome of this antagonistic tendency towards the West is especially expressed in the (fictional and non-fictional) writings of F.M. Dostoevsky and A.I. Solzhenitsyn, two key figures of Russia’s intellectual and political history. Both authors dwelled upon the Western tradition’s conceptual and theoretical fallacy with regards to the nature of men and socio-economical conditions.

Thereby at variance with the key philosophical currents of scientism in the nineteenth century and Marx’s materialism in the twentieth century, Dostoevsky and Solzhenitsyn espoused the notion that morality and belief in a god not only surpass materialism or rationality of a Western kind but even can lead to a better societal order and inter-human relationships. Moreover, for Dostoevsky and Solzhenitsyn the road to truth and justice is not based on the realization of logical thinking, materialism or rationalism but in the pursuit of moral and ethical strength.

Taken together, the critique by leading Russian intellectuals of the Western paradigm of thinking and interpreting the world combined with Russia’s ‘philosophical’ and intellectual endeavour of showing that moral principles and spirituality dominates the existence of men basically frames the methodological layout of this dissertation. With regard to this research scheme, it is essential to highlight the importance of Russia’s reflection on the nature of the Western mind, for it gives a new insight into the intellectual history of the Western world, and also Russia’s.

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1. Lesley Chamberlain, *Motherland. A philosophical History of Russia* (New York: Overlook/Rookery, 2007), 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ibid., p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid., p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid., p.11. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid., p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid., p. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid., p. 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. ibid., p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid., p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ibid., p. 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Ibid., p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Ibid., p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ibid., p. 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Boris Groys, *Die Erfindung Rußlands* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1995), 8-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Lev N. Tolstoi, *Voina i Mir* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2008), 885. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Derek Offord, *Dostoevsky and the Intelligentsia*, ed. W.J.Leatherbarrow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Lesley Chamberlain, *Motherland. A philosophical History of Russia* (New York: Overlook/Rookery, 2007), 18. . [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Jurii Kariakin, *Dostoevskii i Kanun XXI Veka* (Moscow: Sovetskii Pisatel, 1989), 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Lesley Chamberlain uses this term as the title of her book on the philosophical history of Russia. Her intention is to point out the fact that the Russian people perceived their country as a cultural entity different from the West. Motherland (*rodina*) makes a reference to family linkage (*rod*) rather than to a national identity. Contrary to the universal used word *natsiia* for a nation most Russians still prefer the term *narod*. One major reason for such a historical development is the perception that it was the people’s ability to sustain social integrity and survive their nation’s mistakes or even atrocities. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Derek Offord, *Dostoevsky and the Intelligentsia*, ed. W.J.Leatherbarrow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Ibid., p. 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Lesley Chamberlain, *Motherland. A philosophical History of Russia* (New York: Overlook/Rookery, 2007), 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Ibid., p. xiv. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Ibid., p. x. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Petr Chaadaev, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii i izbranye Pisma* (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1991), 330. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Kathryn Feuer, *Introduction*, ed. Kathryn B. Feuer (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976), 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Fëdor M. Dostoevskii, *Dnevnik Pisatelia*, Vol. 26 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972-1990), 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. In English: The design of Western Europe in Dostoevsky’s *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*. (translated by Waldemar Petker) [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. In the context of this dissertation it is completely legitimate to use a fictional novel for the sake of the methodological and theoretical accuracy, for “the novel was in the nineteenth-century Russia far more than literature; it was the primary vehicle for the expression of philosophical, religious, political, and even economic teaching.” Boris K. Ward, *Dostoevsky’s Critique of the West* (Waterloo, ON:Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. It is important to mention in this context that saving Russia could also mean saving the world, for Russia can, given Dostoevsky’s religious world-view, disseminate a new Christian message. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. F.F. Seeley, Ivan Karamazov, eds. M.V. Jones & G.M. Terry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Joseph Pearce, *A Soul in Exile* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1999), 230. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Michael Scammell, *Solzhenitsyn* (London: Hutchinson, 1985), 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Ibid., p. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Ibid. p. 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. L.R. Easton & K.H. Guddat (eds.), *Writings of the young Marx on Philosophy and Society* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967), 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Ibid., p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Isaiah Berlin, *Die Wurzeln der Romantik* (Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 2004), 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Fëdor M. Dostoevskii, *Zimnie Zametki o letnich Vpechatleniiach*, Vol. 5 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972-1990), 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Andrea Guski, *Die Konstruktion Westeuropas in Dostoevskijs ‚Winteraufzeichnungen über Sommereindrücke‘*, ed. G. Goes (Berlin: Verlag Otto Sagner, 2010), 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Fëdor M. Dostoevskii, *Zimnie Zametki o letnich Vpechatleniiach*, Vol. 5 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972-1990), 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Ibid., p. 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Ibid., p. 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Andrea Guski, *Die Konstruktion Westeuropas in Dostoevskijs ‚Winteraufzeichnungen über Sommereindrücke‘*, ed. G. Goes (Berlin: Verlag Otto Sagner, 2010), 133.

    [In English: The motif of a guidebook is a keystone of the Slavophile east-west typology. It underpins the thesis according to which the West European depends on external (heteronomous) standards, i.e. rules, regulations, the law (emblematic of this pattern is the guidebook, i.e. Baedeker). The opposition to this state of mind is the Russian who bases his actions in accordance with a free and autonomous (ethical) mind. (translated by Waldemar Petker)] [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Ibid., p. 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Fëdor M. Dostoevskii, *Zimnie Zametki o letnich Vpechatleniiach*, Vol. 5 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972-1990), 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Ibid., p. 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Ibid., p. 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Andrea Guski, *Die Konstruktion Westeuropas in Dostoevskijs ‚Winteraufzeichnungen über Sommereindrücke‘*, ed. G. Goes (Berlin: Verlag Otto Sagner, 2010), 134.

    [In English: …their anarchic opposite: the moral underground, the realm of vice, alcohol, crime and prostitution.(translated by Waldemar Petker)] [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Fëdor M. Dostoevskii, *Zimnie Zametki o letnich Vpechatleniiach*, Vol. 5 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972-1990), 69-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Ibid., p. 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Ibid., p. 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Milton Ehre, *On August 1914*, eds. Dunlop, J.B., Haugh, R. & Klimoff, A. (Belmont, Mass.: Nordland Publishing Co., 1973), 368. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Joseph Pearce, *A Soul in Exile* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1999), 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. E.E. Ericson, & A. Klimoff, *The Soul and barbed Wire. An Introduction to Solzhenitsyn* (Delaware: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2008), 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Ibid., p. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Ibid., p. 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Kathryn Feuer, *Introduction*, ed. Kathryn B. Feuer (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976), 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Letter to the fourth Congress of Soviet Writers*, eds. Dunlop, J.B., Haugh, R. & Klimoff, A. (Belmont, Mass.: Nordland Publishing Co., 1973), 463. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Ibid., p. 464. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Ibid., p. 466. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Published in 1972 due to Solzhenitsyn decision of avoiding the ceremony in Oslo. Solzhenitsyn feared that the Soviet authorities would expel him from his native country when he leaves the country. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Nobel Lecture*, eds. J.B. Dunlop, R. Haugh & A. Klimoff (Belmont, Mass.: Nordland Publishing Co., 1973), 482. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. William J. Leatherbarrow, *Fedor Dostoevsky: a Reference Guide* (Boston, MA.: G. K. Hall, 1990), 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Ibid., p. 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Ibid., p. 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Thomas S. Berry, “Dostoevsky and Socrates: The Underground Man and ‘The Allegory of the Cave,’” *Dostoevsky Studies* 6 (1985): 158-164. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Fëdor M. Dostoevskii, *Zimnie Zametki o letnich Vpechatleniiach*, Vol. 5 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972-1990), 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Diane O. Thomson, *Dostoevskii and Science*, ed. W.J. Leatherbarrow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 201. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Ibid., p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. William J. Leatherbarrow, *Fedor Dostoevsky* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981), 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Thomas S. Berry, “Dostoevsky and Socrates: The Underground Man and ‘The Allegory of the Cave,’” *Dostoevsky Studies* 6 (1985): 158-164. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Rene Fülöp-Miller, *Fyodor Dostoevsky: Insight, Faith, and Prophecy* (New York: Scribner, 1959), 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. William J. Leatherbarrow, *Fedor Dostoevsky* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981), 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Ibid., p. 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Gary S. Morson, *Literature and History: theoretical Problems and Russian Case Studies* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1986), 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. William J. Leatherbarrow, The Devils in the Context of Dostoevsky’s Life and Work, ed. William J. Leatherbarrow (Evanston, Ill: North Western University Press, 1999), 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. William J. Leatherbarrow, *Fedor Dostoevsky* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981), 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Ibid., p. 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Birgit Harres, “Besy als Sendschreiben Dostoevskijs an Russland,“ *Dostoevsky Studies* (2008): 37-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. This term refers to a Russian revolutionary activist, S.I. Nechaev (1847-1882), who stands for a radical political attitude by which all means are allowed, including murder and violence, in order to achieve the political or revolutionary goal. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Jurii Kariakin, *Dostoevskii i Kanun XXI Veka* (Moscow: Sovetskii Pisatel, 1989), 234. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Nikolai A. Berdiaev, *Iz knigi ‘Novoe religioznoe Soznanie i Obshchestvennost*, ed. Iu. Seliverstov (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1992), 232. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Ibid., p. 517. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Fëdor M. Dostoevskii, *Dnevnik Pisatelia za 1873 Goda* (Berlin: Izdatelstvo I.P. Ladyzhnikova, 1922), 416. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Viacheslav P. Polonskii, *Nikolai Stavrogin i Roman ‘Besy’*, ed L.I. Saraskina (Moscow: Soglasie, 1996), 625. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Fëdor M. Dostoevskii, *Besy,* Vol. 10 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972-1990), 198. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. James F. Puntuso, *Assault on Ideology. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s political Thought* (New York: Lexington Book, 2004), 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Ludwig Feuerbach, *Die Naturwissenschaft und die Revolution*, ed. W. Schuffenhauer (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1982), 367. [In English: The human is what he eats. (translated by Waldemar Petker)] [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. L.R. Easton. & K.H. Guddat (eds.), *Writings of the young Marx on Philosophy and Society* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967), 419. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Ibid., p. 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Ibid., p. 414. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Ibid., p. 304. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Ibid., p. 305. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. James F. Puntuso, *Assault on Ideology. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s political Thought* (New York: Lexington Book, 2004), 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Marx, Karl. (1848) Neue Rheinische Zeitung [online] <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1849/05/19c.htm> [Accessed 15/07/2013] [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Isaiah Berlin, *The Sense of Reality* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1996), 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. L.R. Easton & K.H. Guddat (eds.), *Writings of the young Marx on Philosophy and Society* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967), 415. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Penguin, 2004), 258. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *ARKHIPELAG GULag 1918-1956,* Vol.2 (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1974), 489. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Ibid, p. 490. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. James P. Pontuso, *Assault on Ideology . Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s political Thought* (New York: Lexington Book, 2004), 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of political Economy* (Calcutta: Bharati Library, 1904), p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. James P. Pontuso, *Assault on Ideology . Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s political Thought* (New York: Lexington Book, 2004), 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Ibid., p. 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Ibid., p77. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. L.R. Easton & K.H. Guddat (eds.), *Writings of the young Marx on Philosophy and Society* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967), 304. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. James P. Pontuso, *Assault on Ideology . Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s political Thought* (New York: Lexington Book, 2004), 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Ibid., p. 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *ARKHIPELAG GULag 1918-1956*, Vol. 2 (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1974), 331-38. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. James P. Pontuso, *Assault on Ideology . Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s political Thought* (New York: Lexington Book, 2004), 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Ibid., p. 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *ARKHIPELAG GULag 1918-1956,* Vol. 2 (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1974), 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Ibid., p. 432-33. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Robin F. Miller, *Dostoevsky’s unfinished Journey* (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Pres, 2007), 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Orlando Figes, *Natasha’s Dance: A cultural History of Russia*. (New York: Picador, 2003), 333. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Olga E. Maiorova, *From the Shadow of Empire: defining the Russian Nation through cultural Mythology, 1855-1870*. (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Ibid., p. 184. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Ibid., p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Karla Hielscher, *Von Marx zu Dostoevskij*. *Die Rolle F.M. Dostoevskijs in den aktuellen ideologischen Debatten in der Sowjetunion 1954-1983* (Hagen: Insel Verlag, 1987), 140.

     [In English: After his return to St. Petersburg (from Europe) Dostoevsky begun – moved and enthusiastic by the declaration of tsar Alexander II. to abolish serfdom – to fight for an independent Russia; a Russia devoid of Western European influences and following its own roots and traditions. (translated by Waldemar Petker)] [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. William J. Leatherbarrow & Derek C. Offord, *A documentary History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism*. (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1987), 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Fëdor M. Dostoevskii, *Dnevnik Pisatelia,* Vol. 21 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972-1990), 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Ibid., p. 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Robin F. Miller, *Dostoevsky's unfinished Journey* (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2007), 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Fëdor M. Dostoevskii, *Dnevnik Pisatelia,* Vol. 21 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972-1990), 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Ibid., p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Ibid., p. 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Fëdor M. Dostoevskii, *Zimnie Zametki o letnich Vpechatleniiach,* Vol. 5 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972-1990), 79-80. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Bruce Ward, *Dostoevsky’s Critique of the West* (Waterloo, ON:Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Robin Aizlewood, “*Besy*, Disorientation and the Person,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* (2010): 294. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. William J. Leatherbarrow, *The Devils in the Context of Dostoevsky’s Life and Work*, ed. William J. Leatherbarrow (Evanston, Ill: North Western University Press, 1999), 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Robin Aizlewood, “*Besy*, Disorientation and the Person,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* (2010): 292. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Louis Allain, “*Besy* v Svete Pochvennichestva Dostoevskogo,” *Dostoevsky Studies* (1984): 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Martin Malia, *What is the intelligentsia?*, ed. Richard Pipes (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. William J. Leatherbarrow, *The Devils in the Context of Dostoevsky’s Life and Work*, ed. William J. Leatherbarrow (Evanston, Ill: North Western University Press, 1999), 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Ibid., p. 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Louis Allain, “*Besy* v Svete Pochvennichestva Dostoevskogo,” *Dostoevsky Studies* (1984): 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. William J. Leatherbarrow, *The Devils in the Context of Dostoevsky’s Life and Work*, ed. William J. Leatherbarrow (Evanston, Ill: North Western University Press, 1999), 49 and 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Ibid. p. 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Ibid. p. 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Ibid. p. 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. Fëdor M. Dostoevskii, *Besy,* Vol. 10 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972-1990), 513. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Louis Allain, “*Besy* v Svete Pochvennichestva Dostoevskogo,” *Dostoevsky Studies* (1984): 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Robin Aizlewood, “*Besy*, Disorientation and the Person,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* (2010): 296. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Fëdor M. Dostoevskii, *Zimnie Zametki o letnich Vpechatleniiach,* Vol. 5 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972-1990), 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Fëdor M. Dostoevskii, *Rech o Pushkine,* Vol. 26 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972-1990), 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Robin Aizlewood, “*Besy*, Disorientation and the Person,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* (2010): 297. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Bruce Ward, *Dostoevsky and Meaning in History*, ed. M.V. Jones (Nottingham: Astra Press., 1993), 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Bruce Ward, *Dostoevsky’s Critique of the West* (Waterloo, ON:Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Vladimir S. Solovev, *Izbrannoe* (Moscow: Sov. Rossiia, 1990), 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
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