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Distinguished Contributions

Varieties of Belief in *The Brothers Karamazov*

by Gary Saul Morson

Since the Enlightenment, many intellectuals have presumed that religious belief is an aspect of human psychology that can—and ought—to be avoided. Fyodor Dostoevsky rejects this assumption. His novels contend that faith cannot be easily evaded, because belief is integral to human experience. This article explores how Dostoevsky understood faith as an activity that mirrored more ostensibly secular pursuits, like play acting. Morson analyzes four varieties of role playing, and, by extension, of believing, in *The Brothers Karamazov*. These roles include: the liar (Fyodor), the aesthete (Dmitri), the skeptic (Ivan), and the believer (Alyosha). Much like belief, play acting is often distinguished from the real activity. The stage has an illusory quality. Yet Dostoevsky's novels show that the seam between life and acting is more porous than one might think, because pretension and sincerity are often indistinguishable in human psychology. Dostoevsky implies that if actions can be concurrently feigned and genuine, then the basis of all human activity is one of simultaneously believing and unbelieving. The upshot is that "belief" includes doubt and imperfection; faith is a dynamic process. The paradoxes of belief thus illuminate the paradoxes of human nature. Humans are beings in transition; forever striving to believe or reject that what they already, in some sense, believe.

Varieties of Belief in *The Brothers Karamazov*

Gary Saul Morson

Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief. — Mark 9:24

Starting with its first chapter, *The Brothers Karamazov* introduces a theme to be developed throughout the novel: what does it mean to believe something? Could "belief" (or faith—also *vera*) be a single term for several different states of mind? And what about second-order beliefs: can one be mistaken in one's belief about what one believes? Can one believe and disbelieve something at the same time?

Describing Fyodor Pavlovich's marriage to Adelaida Ivanovna, "who belonged to a fairly rich and distinguished noble family," the novel's narrator explains that her choice was perplexing: "How it came to pass that an heiress, who was also a beauty , and moreover one of those lively, intelligent girls not at all uncommon in this generation, but somehow also to be found in the last, could have married such an insignificant 'puny fellow, as everyone called him, I won't attempt to explain."[1] And then, of course, he does, by citing another strange courtship:

> But I knew a young lady, still of the 'romantic' generation before the last, who after some years of enigmatic love for a gentleman, whom she might easily have married at any moment, invented insuperable obstacles to their union, and ended by throwing herself one stormy night into a rather deep and rapid river, and so perished, entirely to satisfy her own caprice, and to be like Shakespeare's Ophelia, and indeed, if this precipice, a chosen and favorite spot of hers, had been less picturesque, if there had been a prosaic flat bank in its place, most likely the suicide would not have taken place (*BK*, 11-12).

There have been many such cases in Russian life, the narrator continues. A person adopts a role and acts it out, like a stage actor who madly decides he really is the character he plays. At the same time, the person subscribes to a whole set of her generation's prescribed beliefs. Does she really believe them?

Elsewhere Dostoevsky describes such thinking as "wearing a uniform." One adopts a prefabricated philosophy wholesale. Dostoevsky loved to satirize people like this: in *Crime and Punishment*, Lebeziatnikov professes one absurd progressive belief after another, and yet it is plain he has never actually assessed the arguments for any one of them. In Dostoevsky's view, people who think this way—especially the educated who pride themselves on their critical thinking—buy

1. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 2nd edition, ed. Susan McReynolds, the Garnett translation revised by Ralph E. Matlaw and Susan McReynolds (New York: Norton, 2011), 11. Further references are to *BK*. I have occasionally modified the translation.

a whole package at a time. No arguments or evidence could ever shake any of these beliefs because no argument or evidence led to its adoption. As Jonathan Swift once remarked, no one was ever talked out of a belief he had not first been talked into.

Adelaida Ivanovna resembled this would-be Ophelia, except that the beliefs she adopted were those of the next, radical, rather than romantic, generation. Her marriage to Fyodor Pavlovich, the narrator surmises, resulted from "an echo of alien influences" (or "foreign currents of opinion" [*otgoloskom chuzhikh veyanij*]). Perhaps she "wanted to assert feminine impendence," or "go against social conventions" or "against the despotism of her family and birth"—all canned phrases for hackneyed fashionable ideas. Because she perceived the world through these lenses, "an obliging imagination persuaded her" that the sponger Fyodor Pavlovich was "one of the boldest and most ironical people of that epoch that was transitional to everything better"—the hackneyed ideas accumulate here—even though he was obviously, to anyone not blinded by assumed ways of seeing, "just an evil buffoon and nothing more" (*BK*, 12).

We may ask: did Adelaida Ivanovna actually believe these ideas? She evidently did in the sense that she acted on them. But the element of play acting here—the pleasure of the heroic role and the work of her "obliging imagination"—strongly suggest she didn't. It seems one can sincerely profess what one at some level knows to be untrue. In that case, which does one really believe? This question will recur in Dostoevsky's descriptions of other theatrical behavior, most obviously, that of Fyodor Pavlovich.

Belief (and faith) are examined time and again. Dostoevsky interrupts his description of "The Unfortunate Gathering" with two chapters about faith: "Believing Peasant Women" (Or "Peasant Women who Have Faith"—[*Veruyushchie baby*]) and "A Lady of Little Faith" (*Malovernaya dama*). The repetition of the root *vera* (belief or faith) in these chapter titles suggests the importance and complexity of this theme.

Doubting Thomas

In different ways, Fyodor Pavlovich and his three legitimate sons illustrate important insights about the nature of belief. When the narrator introduces Alyosha, he mentions the boy's belief in miracles. Readers will probably suspect Alyosha of "mysticism and fanaticism," he anticipates, but in this case that judgment would be hasty. Alyosha, he says, "was more of a realist than anyone." To explain this apparent paradox, the narrator expatiates on the nature of belief.

> Oh, no doubt in the monastery he fully believed in miracles, but, to my thinking, miracles are never a stumbling block to the realist. It is not miracles that dispose realists to belief. The genuine realist, if he is an unbeliever, will always find strength and ability to disbelieve in the miraculous, and if he is confronted with a miracle as an irrefutable fact, he would rather disbelieve his own senses than admit the fact. Even if he admits it, he admits it as a fact of nature till then unrecognized by him (*BK*, 28).

Religions usually offer miracles as proof. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, so how can you doubt His divinity? The narrator regards this argument as naïve because it presumes that people are bound to accept clear and indubitable evidence.

David Hume famously refuted miracles by asking, which is more likely: that the laws of nature were suspended or that people in a credulous age, who wanted to believe in the supernatural, found a

way to do so? He asked us to weigh evidence rationally, but, according to the narrator of *Karamazov*, people already committed to one side of the argument will not do so. Even if the miracles were performed right in front of the "realist's" eyes—"if he were [directly] confronted with a miracle as an irrefutable fact"—the demonstration would make no difference to his belief or disbelief. "He would rather disbelieve his own senses."

If that is so, is he truly a realist? Scientific realists supposedly respect the evidence. One does not just deduce or assert a truth, one has to test it by experiment. The experiment can disprove the hypothesis, or it is not a real experiment. As Karl Popper would later say, the hypothesis must be falsifiable. If a scientist is so wedded to a theory that he ignores an experiment that disconfirms it, is he really a scientist at all? Or, to use the narrator's term, a "realist"? As the narrator points out, many who act like real scientists in their day-to-day work find themselves unable to do so when the ideology they associate with science itself is questioned. In *A Writer's Diary* Dostoevsky imagines the chemist Mendeleev, who vigorously denied the existence of supernatural beings, being lifted into the air by demons who perform tricks that preclude scientific explanation. As a respecter of the evidence, Mendeleev would be obliged to acknowledge the supernatural, but would he?

According to the narrator, the scientist has one last resource: to admit the disconfirming evidence he has witnessed, but maintain that this apparently supernatural occurrence is really a "a fact of nature till then unrecognized." The problem with this move is that it makes the argument against the supernatural into a tautology: if anything manifestly supernatural is simply called another form of the natural, then naturalism is true by definition.

The passage from *Karamazov* continues:

> Faith does not, in the realist, spring from the miracle but the miracle from faith. If the realist once believes, then he is bound by his very realism to admit the miraculous also. The Apostle Thomas said that he would not believe until he saw, but when he did see he said, "My Lord and my God!" Was it the miracle that forced him to believe? Most likely not, but he believed solely because he desired to believe and possibly he fully believed in his secret heart even when he said, "I shall not believe except I see" (*BK*, 28).

Evidently it is possible to believe and disbelieve at the same time. One may sincerely profess a conviction and yet, like Doubting Thomas, not accept it in one's "secret heart." The narrator supposes that, even though Thomas thought the miracle convinced him, it in fact merely revealed to him what he already believed. If so, it is possible not only to believe and disbelieve simultaneously, but also simultaneously to change one's mind and not change it.

Thomas believed "solely because he desired to believe." Is it really possible to believe something "solely" because one wants to? I cannot decide to believe in Ptolemaic astronomy just because I choose to. And yet one can get oneself to believe what one either knows or easily could know to be untrue. It happens whenever one deceives oneself.

According to the narrator, Alyosha believed in miracles because he had faith. Far from deceiving himself, he was a "realist" believing without reservation in the world as he experienced it. But what if that world should disconfirm his belief? What if he had to choose between his realism and his belief in miracles? That is precisely what happens.

Fyodor Pavlovich: The Liar

Early in the novel the narrator describes how Fyodor Pavlovich loves to play a part "even to his own direct disadvantage," as he did when Miusov proposes to adopt little Mitya (*BK*, 15). Fyodor Pavlovich's treatment of his infant son has gone far beyond mere neglect: "he wholly and utterly abandoned his child by Adelaida Ivanovna, not from malice towards him or because of any wounded matrimonial feelings, but simply because he completely forgot him" (BK, 14). Describing Fyodor Pavlovich, Dostoevsky sometimes stretches the boundaries of realism: is it possible actually to forget one's child "completely"?

To be sure, Fyodor Pavlovich can be reminded of his son, even if he might pretend otherwise. "Long afterward he [Miusov] used to recount, as a characteristic trait of the man, that when he began to speak to Fyodor Pavlovich about Mitya, for some time he looked completely uncomprehending, as though he seemed surprised that he had a young son somewhere in the house. If there may have been some exaggeration in Pytor Aleksandrovich's [Miusov's] story, still there must have been something resembling the truth" (*BK*, 15). One may suppose that Fyodor Pavlovich, when reminded of what he usually forgot, pretended to be still forgetting—that is, he pretended to be what he really was.

Fyodor Pavlovich takes the greatest pleasure in parodying or mocking anything that anyone regards as sacred. "Great elder, speak!," he proclaims in Father Zosima's cell. "What must I do to gain eternal life?," aping the lawyer's appeal to Jesus (Luke 11:27). One reason it is sometimes "difficult to decide" whether Fyodor Pavlovich is pretending or sincere is that he himself cannot always tell the difference. "With old liars who have been acting all their lives," the narrator explains, "there are moments when they enter so completely into their part that they tremble or shed tears of emotion in earnest, although at that very moment, or a second later they are able to whisper to themselves, 'You know you are lying, you shameless old sinner! You're acting now, in spite of your 'holy' moment of wrath."[2]

One can shed tears "in earnest" while knowing "at that very moment" that one is lying. That isn't true with ordinary self-deception. Neither does it resemble Doubting Thomas's mistaken belief in his change of mind. Fyodor Pavlovich "really" feels what he knows is pretense. But not completely, because the sense of having pretended does not altogether disappear.

But it can, as sometimes happens when people choose to feel insulted. "You know it is sometimes very pleasant to take offense," Father Zosima observes to Fyodor Pavlovich. "A man may know that nobody has insulted him, but that he has invented the insult for himself, has lied and exaggerated to make it picturesque, has caught at a word and made a mountain out of a molehill—he knows that himself, yet he will be the first to take offense, and will revel in his resentment till he feels great pleasure in it, and so pass on to genuine vindictiveness" (*BK*, 43). *And so pass on to genuine vindictiveness*: What begins as pretense becomes genuine feeling—genuine in the sense that one really feels vindictive and loses the awareness of pretense. And yet the feeling is at the same time fake. We lack a name for this condition.

How much of the world's evil is due to it? As Dostoevsky often shows, people sometimes crave to be insulted and injured so as to feel morally superior. As Dmitri says of his fiancé Katerina Ivanovna, she loves her own virtue, not him. She tries to get him to betray her so she can show her nobility. But is it nobility to rise above an offense one has deliberately provoked? How aware is she of what

2. *BK*, 68. My thanks to Ryan Serrano, who is writing a splendid dissertation on role-playing, for calling my attention to this passage.

she is doing? When Ivan hints at her pretense, she falls into hysterics, which suggests she both knows and does not know at the same time.

Katerina Ivanovna lives a lie, but she does so sincerely in the sense that she does not know she lives a lie. What make Fyodor Pavlovich unique—not only in this book but, I think, in world literature—is that he knows that his "genuine" vindictiveness, which he really feels, is not at all genuine, and yet is able to continue believing in it without losing the consciousness of falsity. Katerina Ivanovna lies, and conceals the lie from herself: Fyodor Pavlovich is fully aware of lying to himself and yet can indulge in it with all the fervor that she does. Indeed, he does everything he can to exaggerate the contradictions, as a kind of sport.

Dmitri

Dmitri tells Alyosha that, in the depths of degradation, he experiences ugliness as beautiful. "Beauty is a terrible and awful thing," he confides. "It is terrible because it has not been defined and is undefinable, for God sets us nothing but riddles. Here the two shores of the rivers meet and all contradictions stand side by side. … We must solve them as we can, and try to keep a dry skin in the water "(*BK*, 98). One cannot keep a dry skin in the water, or water would not be wet; if shores meet, then they are no longer shores; but some contradictions do seem to stand side by side. How, Dmitri wonders, can he regard something as ugly and beautiful at the same time? What's more, a man with the ideal of the Madonna in his heart—who believes in it sincerely—can at the very same moment adhere to "the ideal of Sodom. What's still more awful is that a man with the ideal of Sodom in his soul does not renounce the ideal of the Madonna, and his heart may be on fire with that ideal, genuinely on fire, just as in the days of his youth and innocence" (*BK*, 98). In youth, one might well believe in goodness and beauty without being aware of one's own evil and ugly impulses. Lack of self-knowledge would explain that. But what about simultaneously, and with full awareness, adhering to both with equal sincerity? Isn't that like believing in two mutually exclusive propositions? If I believe it is raining, how can I at that very moment believe it is not raining? If one can believe both, what does it mean "to believe"?

Dmitri simultaneously and knowingly believes in Sodom and the Madonna. That is not supposed to be possible, and if it somehow is, it shouldn't be! "Man is broad, too broad, indeed," Dmitri concludes. "I'd have him narrower." That, of course, is what Ivan's Grand Inquisitor proposes to do.

Ivan's Belief and Disbelief

At once an extreme moralist and an amoral denier that objective morality exists, Ivan is even more disturbed than Dmitri by his adherence to contradictory beliefs. As an amoralist, he believes that the laws of nature explain everything. They have no moral content: asking whether Newton's law of universal gravitation is moral or amoral makes no sense. Since people are just complex natural objects subject to the same natural laws as everything else, morality can be nothing more than social convention—necessary for social stability, perhaps, but no less groundless for that. It is one thing on this side of the Pyrenees, something else on the other, as Pascal observed. "Three degrees of latitude upset the whole of jurisprudence and one meridian determines what is true."[3] From this perspective, questions about life's meaning make no more sense than those about morality.

The devil who visits Ivan paraphrases his poem "The Geological Cataclysm," which argues that it will be some time before everyone grasps the amoral truth, but "everyone who recognizes the truth

3. Blaise Pascal, *Pascal Pensées*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1987), 46.

even now may legitimately order his life as he pleases. … In that sense, 'all things are permitted' for him." "That's all very charming," the devil retorts, "but if you want to swindle why do you want a moral sanction for doing it? But that's our modern Russian all over. He can't bring himself to swindle without a moral sanction. He's so in love with truth…" (*BK*, 546).

But Ivan also believes just the opposite, that good and evil (at least, evil) are absolute. In reciting his horrifying stories of child abuse, Ivan means to show that such evil cannot be argued away or justified by either religious theodicy, rationalist nihilism, or any other theory. Believing firmly in both evil and moral nihilism, Ivan is torn apart.

A keen psychologist, Zosima diagnoses Ivan's problem. The conflict is "unresolved in your heart and torments it," Zosima tells him. "That question is not solved in you, and it is your grief, for it demands an answer" (*BK*, 65-6). When Ivan asks if his question can ever be resolved "in the affirmative"—whether he will come to believe in meaning and good and evil—Zosima replies that "it will never be decided in the negative." That is, Ivan will never become a complacent nihilist, like his father, but will either find meaning or go on searching. "You yourself know that that is the peculiarity of your heart; and all its suffering is due to it. But thank the Creator who gave you a lofty heart, capable of such suffering, of thinking and seeking higher things, for our dwelling is in the heavens" (*BK*, 66).

The devil who haunts Ivan mocks his hesitation between opposite truths by making Ivan also hesitate between affirming and denying the devil's existence. Ivan tells the devil he is only a hallucination—"It's I myself, speaking, not you"—but does one address a hallucination? "You don't exist" is surely a paradox. The devil doesn't mind this accusation of nonbeing a bit. As if he had overheard the narrator's discussion of Doubting Thomas, he remarks:

> "Don't believe it then," said the gentleman, smiling amicably, "what's the good of believing against your will? Besides, proofs are of no help in believing. Especially material proofs. Thomas believed, not because he saw Christ risen, but because he wanted to believe, before he saw" (*BK*, 535).

The devil taunts Ivan with proofs that he is and at the same time isn't a hallucination. He offers evidence for both possibilities. He also points out that if one has to convince oneself that something is not true, one must believe it at least to some degree. "From the vehemence with which you deny my existence," the devil laughs, "I am convinced you believe in me," if only a tiny bit, and, after all, "homeopathic doses perhaps are the strongest" (*BK*, 542). The devil explains that he leads Ivan "to belief and disbelief by turns" because "hesitation, suspense, conflict between belief and disbelief, is sometimes such torture to a conscientious man, such as you are, that it's better to hang oneself at once. … It's the new method" (*BK*, 542). Ivan's "belief and disbelief" in morality is no less tormenting.

The devil himself claims to reside somewhere between existence and nonexistence. Much as believing while disbelieving is a distinct state of mind, "perhaps-being" is itself a way of being. If only he could either be or not be, the devil pleads, how much better it would be! "What I dream of is becoming incarnate once for all and irrevocably in the form of some merchant's wife weighing two hundred and fifty pounds and of believing all she believes. My ideal is to go to church and offer a candle in simple-hearted faith, upon my word it is" (*BK*, 537). Appropriately enough, this devil is also an agnostic.

Faith, the devil leads Ivan to think, is firm and "simple-hearted," not hesitant and contradictory, but if Ivan really understood Zosima's diagnosis he would realize that sometimes the search for faith can be a kind of faith in itself. In T*he Idiot*, Ippolit explains that "Columbus was not happy when he had discovered America but while he was discovering it. … It's life that matters, nothing but life, the everlasting and perpetual process, and not the goal at all."[4] In *A Writer's Diary*, Dostoevsky explains that "happiness lies not in happiness but only in the attempt to achieve it."[5] As happiness can be processual, so can faith.

If Ivan would only realize the meaningfulness of questing, he would resemble his creator. In his famous letter to Natalya Fonvizina, who was suffering from depression, Dostoevsky consoled her that "at such moments one thirsts for faith like 'parched grass' … I will tell you that I am a child of the [materialist nineteenth] century. A child of disbelief and doubt. I am that today and (I know it) will remain so until the grave. How much torture this thirst for faith has cost me and costs me now, which is all the stronger in the soul for all the arguments against it."[6] Increase in disbelief fuels increase in belief, as the search for faith grows ever more intense.

Dostoevsky next affirms that, in this state of mind, he has formulated his "credo": nothing more beautiful than the image of Christ exists or ever could exist. Of course, belief in the beauty of the image of Christ does not necessarily entail belief in His existence. So Dostoevsky next formulates his oft-quoted paradox: "Even more, if someone proved to me that Christ is outside the truth, and that *in reality* the truth were outside Christ, then I should prefer to remain with Christ rather than the truth." But to believe in something is to believe it is true; how can he believe in Christ lies outside the truth?

The answer is that faith as a striving for faith, faith as a process, involves just such a paradox. Faith lies in the attempt to achieve it.

Alyosha's Crisis

If Ivan suffers from extreme doubt, Alyosha is all too certain. The incidents following the death of Father Zosima "exerted a very strong influence on the heart and soul of … Alyosha, forming a crisis and turning point in his spiritual development, giving a shock to his intellect, which finally strengthened it for the rest of his life" (*BK*,285). To strengthen his faith, Alyosha must first question it.

Alyosha firmly expects the traditional sign that his mentor Father Zosima was a saint, the incorruptibility of his body. He is more than disappointed: not only does the elder's body not diffuse a sweet smell, it emits the most pungent "odor of corruption" even more rapidly than usual. All those who felt "jealousy of the dead man's saintliness" and who out of jealousy had even succumbed "to an intense hatred of him," rejoice at his downfall. It seems to Alyosha that either there was no miracle or, because the smell was "in excess of nature," a reverse miracle. Alyosha wonders resentfully, "Why did providence hide its face 'at the most critical moment … as though voluntarily submitting to the blind, dumb, pitiless laws of nature?" (*BK*, 293).

Rakitin reports that Madame Khokhlakova wrote him a note saying "that she would never have expected *such conduct* from a man of such a revered character as Father Zosima. 'That was the very

4. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Modern Library, 1962), 375.

5. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *A Writer's Diary: Volume One, 1873-1876*, trans. Kenneth H. Lantz (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1993), 335.

6. I modify the translation of this letter as it is cited in Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Years of Ordeal, 1850-1859* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983), 160.

word she used: conduct.'" The joke, of course, is that she treats the rapid decay of Zosima's body as something he was choosing to do. But in a sense it is: this is the action that Zosima would have chosen in order to teach Alyosha not to place his faith in miracles.

The narrator comments: "If the question is asked: 'Could all his grief and disturbance have been due only to the fact that his elder's body had shown signs of premature decomposition instead of at once performing miracles?' I must answer without beating about the bush, 'Yes, it certainly was'" (*BK*, 292). Alyosha demands a miracle: that is precisely what Christ refuses to do in his second temptation. As the Inquisitor paraphrases it: "If Thou wouldst know whether Thou art the Son of God then cast thyself down, for it is written that the angels shall hold him up lest he fall and bruise himself." As fully human, Jesus cannot be absolutely sure that he is who he thinks he is, but he refuses to resolve doubt by demanding a miracle.

A miracle would eliminate uncertainty, but then people would simply be acknowledging power, not demonstrating faith. As the Inquisitor explains, "Thou wouldst not enslave man by a miracle, and did crave faith freely given, not based on miracle. Thou didst crave for free love and not the base raptures of the slave before the might that has overawed him forever" (*BK*, 222). Faith based on power that precludes doubt is not faith at all because it is not "freely given," not a matter of choice; and choice can be real only when there is uncertainty.

From the Inquisitor's point of view, certainty would make people happier. Jesus therefore should have accepted the temptation and performed a miracle, but He didn't. "Instead of giving a firm foundation for serving the conscience of man at rest forever, Thou didst choose all that is exceptional, vague, and enigmatic" (*BK*, 223). And instead of following clear and infallible rules, "man must hereafter with free heart decide for himself what is good and evil, having only Thy image before him as his guide." An image inspires, but it does not offer infallible prescriptions.

In demanding miracles, then, Alyosha misunderstands what faith is. He experiences his "critical moment," but in the next chapter, he recovers faith by consoling Grushenka in *her* "critical moment." When Alyosha returns to the monastery and listens to Father Paissy reading the Gospel over Zosima's corpse, he dreams that Father Zosima has praised this very act as truly Christian. The story Father Paissy reads, the marriage at Cana, recounts Jesus's first miracle, which no one but Jesus, Mary, and their servants detect. It is therefore a secret miracle, one that does not call attention to itself. As Alyosha now understands, that is also true of our loving kindness and compassion to each other, which no rationalist theory could explain except as a sort of bargain. Active, inconspicuous love is the true miracle.

When Madame Khokhlakova demands proof of God and immortality, Zosima tells her that "there is no proving it" but that, if one lives the right sort of life of active love, one can be convinced of it. The real miracle is the one always available to us. One is convinced without proof, and since love always flickers, doubt inevitably abides with faith. The narrator refers to Alyosha as his "future hero" because he plans to describe the many tests and temptations, doubts and renewals, that Alyosha will undergo. His faith will always be a search for faith.

"Denying, believing and doubting are to men what running is to horses," observed Pascal, who, like Dostoevsky, considered why God did not give indubitable proof of his existence (Pascal, 208). "If there were no obscurity man would not feel his corruption: If there were no light man could not hope for a cure," Pascal explained. "Thus it is not only right but useful for us that God should be partly concealed and partly revealed" (Pascal, 167). That is why the atheist objection that "there

is nothing in the world which proves" God's existence misses the point. God is, and must be, *deus absconditus* [the hidden God—Isaiah 45:15].

Meditating on the death of his first wife, Dostoevsky recorded his thoughts about life and faith as constant striving. The atheists object that if Christianity is true, why does brotherhood not reign on earth? Dostoevsky answers: because so long as man is on earth he lives in a world of "struggle and development" and that life itself is always "developing." Humanity is always incomplete, always becoming itself, and so "on earth man is in a transitory state."[7] People cannot completely fulfill the ideal of loving others because it conflicts with "the law of … personal identity. … And thus on earth mankind strives for an ideal opposed to his nature" (*UD*, 41).

Abiding in uncertainty and blending affirmation with doubt, faith reflects our "transitory" nature. It is necessary "to develop, to attain, to struggle, to glimpse the ideal through all one's falls and eternally strive towards it": that is what life on earth is (*UD*, 39). What Ivan never comprehends, but Alyosha learns, is that one would not so ardently seek faith if one had not already found it.

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7. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Unpublished Dostoevsky: Diaries and Notebooks (1860-1881)*, vol. 1, trans T. S. Berczynski, Barbara Heldt Monter, Arline Boyer, and Ellendea Proffer (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1973), 39. Further references are to *UD*.

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by Gary Saul Morson

Since the Enlightenment, many intellectuals have presumed that religious belief is an aspect of human psychology that can—and ought—to be avoided. Fyodor Dostoevsky rejects this assumption. His novels contend that faith cannot be easily evaded, because belief is integral to human experience. This article explores how Dostoevsky understood faith as an activity that mirrored more ostensibly secular pursuits, like play acting. Morson analyzes four varieties of role playing, and, by extension, of believing, in *The Brothers Karamazov*. These roles include: the liar (Fyodor), the aesthete (Dmitri), the skeptic (Ivan), and the believer (Alyosha). Much like belief, play acting is often distinguished from the real activity. The stage has an illusory quality. Yet Dostoevsky's novels show that the seam between life and acting is more porous than one might think, because pretension and sincerity are often indistinguishable in human psychology. Dostoevsky implies that if actions can be concurrently feigned and genuine, then the basis of all human activity is one of simultaneously believing and unbelieving. The upshot is that "belief" includes doubt and imperfection; faith is a dynamic process. The paradoxes of belief thus illuminate the paradoxes of human nature. Humans are beings in transition; forever striving to believe or reject that what they already, in some sense, believe.

Momentous Intersections

A Comparative View on Russian and Jewish Spiritual Traditions

Gary Saul Morson

Tell me, a draughtsman of the desert,
a geometer of shifting sands:
is the unrestrained freedom of lines
more powerful than the blowing wind?
I am not affected by the tremor
of his Judean concerns:
he molds his experience from murmur
and drinks his murmur from experience.
Osip Mandelstam

A Draft of a Human

How can one write about nations from the lofty spiritual vantage point required to understand them without succumbing to the worst vices of nationalism or to intellectual self-indulgence? These jottings are written neither from the perspective of the scholar nor of the historian, but are rather in the nature of philosophical essay, being a subjective attempt to discern general features of the Russian and Jewish characters and of their interaction in the twentieth century. To paraphrase Mandelstam, I should define the genre of the present contribution as "the murmur of my experience."

If I could sum up my sense of Jewishness in a single word, it would be "vibration." As Mandelstam wrote about Solomon Mikhoels: "The entire strength of Judaism, the entire rhythm of dancing abstract thought, all the pride of the dance, the sole stimulus for which, in the last analysis, is the feeling of compassion for the Earthall of this turns into quivering of the hands, into the vibration of thinking fingers, which are imbued with spirit, like articulate speech."[8]

Mandelstam's observation is not merely physiognomic, but is also metaphysical, and is well in accord with the central image of his octave (see the epigraph): "the tremor of Judaic concerns." Judaism's "concerns" (in all the manifold meanings of that word pertaining to relations with the Divine and one's fellow human beings) are "tremors," both in the literal sense of "tremblings," but also "quiverings," the "vacillations" between constantly reappraised possibilities, between flight into the future and return to the present, the constant need to revise the life's course that has been roughly mapped out, to redraw it and re-plan it. This metaphor of Judaism's "concerns" arises in the context of shifting sands, the quaking, crumbling flesh of the earth, which imparts the same "tremor"

8. Osip Mandelstam, "Mikhoels," *Collected Works*, 3 vols. (New York: Mezhdunarodnoe literaturnoe sodruzhestvo, 1969), 108.

of lines in headlong flightfor the draughtsman of the Jewish desert is the wind, probably the most "tremulous" of all draughtsmen. If Mandelstam's sketch of Mikhoels offers us a *portrait* of vibration, then his octave portrays its *landscape*. The quiver of hands and the "thinking fingers" correspond to the "shifting sands." The same image recurs in the line, "He moulds his experience from murmur." For a "murmur" is a quivering of the lips, of halting speech, a preliminary attempt at articulating sound and sense. Indeed, the word "experience" is etymologically related to "experiment," a meaning also relevant here, in the sense of an "essay"/"assay," a "trial," a vacillatingly hypothetical orientation towards the world. In the original Russian, all of these words*za**bot**a* [concern], *o**pyt*** [experiment/ experience], *tre**pet*** [tremor/quiver], *le**pet*** [murmur]not only have acoustic correspondences, but also evince correspondences in meaning, in that they convey the oscillations of the soul and the body, of thoughts and speech. … Mandelstam discovered the unique images and words to represent Jewishness as vibration, both phonetically and semantically.

The fundament of Jewish spiritual life trembles, quakes, as if animated by continuing volcanic activity under the surface of the earth. The constant quaking, quivering, or rather, tremulousness of the Jewish sense of life finds its most forceful expression, in my view, in the poetry of Afanasy Fet and Boris Pasternak. It is all the more authentic for being unconscious, as neither acknowledged their Jewishnessindeed, they shunned it. "Trembling" and "quivering" were the epithets that Fet most frequently applied to natural phenomena. "The moon shines tremulously" ("*Tikhaia, zvezdnaia noch* …"), the "ardent light" of sun "plays quiveringly on the leaves" ("*Ia prishel k tebe s privetom* …"), "the chorus of stars quivers" ("*Na stoge sena* …"), "the leaves and stars quiver" ("*Solovei i roza*"), "everything quivers and sings in spite of itself" ("*Chto za vecher* …"). In this general tremor of life, the lyrical persona joins, every fibre of his being a-quiver: "I hear the beating of my heart and the quiver of my hands and feet" ("*Ia zhdu … Solovinoe ekho* …")

The most characteristic state of the Pasternakian hero is precisely the same kind of quivering, as if his soul is becoming a single tremulous spark: "I shuddered. I blazed up and was extinguished. …" ("Marburg"). "I would break open verse, like a garden, with all the quiver of veins …" ("*Vo vsem mne khochetsia doiti* …"), "Nature, the world, a universal hiding place / I will remain steadfast in your long service / held fast in a secret trembling / In tears of happiness" ("*Kogda razguliaetsia*"). The state of being imbued with the utmost plenitude of life extends even to nature: "The very nightingales would roll their eyes with a shudder. …" ("*Osen*"). This quivering is the sparking of the spirit through every particle of the universe, its flight and return as the incessant flickering of life, of its possibilities that flare up and die out.

This quivering betrays the Jew's dependence on his Creator, his Jewish "fear and trembling." Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, the *fons et origo* of European existentialism, is in essence a depiction of Abraham, a proto-Jew. He converses, with trembling hands, and thinks, his thoughts a-tremble. Europeans and Americans keep face, they do not crumble under pressure, the contours of their physiognomy do not fragment, but are drawn clearly, as if with a ruler. It seems to me that Jews are set apart by the frequency and amplitude of their waverings and of their psychic impulses. A Jew constantly thinks and re-thinks his thoughts, feels and re-feels his feelings. On this account, he can make an impression of psychomotoric "tremulousness," bustling and pottering about, or in Saltykov-Shchedrin's phrase, "of hare-like hastiness, which prevents a Jew from sitting still for a moment."[9] But this is only on the surface. This "hastiness" uproots a Jew from the soil of reality and bears him off into the realm of vacillating contours, where reality consists entirely of glinting

9. Saltykov-Shchedrin, "July Breeze" ("*Iulskoe veianie*"), 1882. This satiric essay is one of the strongest statements by Russian writers of the 19th century in defense of Jews. https://lechaim.ru/ARHIV/87/salt.htm

possibilities. This accounts for the success of Jews in trade, in financial dealings, on the stock-market, where one passes from the natural relations of the tangible world into the realm of possibilities, of vaulting magnitudes, of symbolic relations, where interpretations remain in flux. The Jews are the people of the Book, and not of nature; and the book, moreover, in contrast to nature, is a world of possibilitiesunrestricted and volatile, which can never be entirely realised. For the Jew, reality is only still in the process of creation, remaining a thrilling possibility, constantly being corrected and remade, now being underlined, now being crossed out. The Jew is an unfinished sketch, a *draft of a man*; he is nowhere to be found, his place is unoccupiedhe is merely a possibility.

I was once told about a French art collector who attended an exhibition of work by Chaim Sutin and other Jewish artists and summarised his impressions thus: "not a single smooth line." It is known that Walter Benjamin, a major twentieth-century German-Jewish thinker, "did not like round numbers and straight lines. When observing the world around him, he found nothing straight in it: straight lines only existed in philosophy, whose predisposition not to notice crookedness and fragmentariness, to ignore discontinuities and conceal voids he tried to resist" (Denis Sobolev).[10] Finally, the most famous Jewish person of the twentieth century, Albert Einstein, is renowned for having discovered the curvature of time and space.

The word "Jew" has the unusual quality of combining with the names of other nations. Jews can be Russian, German, Polish, American, even Chinese and Egyptian, without ceasing to be Jews. Jews are always a "dual" nation: its designation requires another epithet, and sometimes even two, as in "American-Russian Jew." Only in the last sixty years has there been the Jew-as-such, although they are also called "Israeli Jews," as if there were a suspicion that "Jewish" and "Israeli" could not be one and the same thing but were rather a variety of dual national allegiances. To be a Jew always means to be someone else. The Jew is always more himself as a Jew: it is as if his essence acquires a "mark-up," the price for which is estrangement from his own roots.

Thus, the Jew is easily assimilated into other nations and can be transplanted into the soil of other cultures. This is not the grafting of one reality onto another, but the grafting of possibilities onto reality. This assimilation is simultaneously a problematisation. The Jews introduce into other cultures the realm of other possibilities, like a question and a hypothesis introduced into the circle of established realities. I am reminded of the little linguistic anecdote: "Why does a Jew always answer a question with another question?But why not?" The point is not the separately posed "Jewish question," but rather the fact that Jewishness is itself a question, posed to itself and to others. The question is not only about Jewishness as such, but also about the foundations of the life of other nations, their beliefs, persuasions, institutions, and their social and cultural establishments. Thus, in his marvellous article, Vladimir Solovyov substituted for the stereotypical phrase "the Jewish question" a much better one"Jewry and the Christian Question"; and Dmitry Merezhkovsky subsequently entitled one of his articles, "The Jewish Question as a Russian Question."[11] In their relations with other nations, Jewry simultaneously casts doubt on both them and itself, so that everything shifts and a new day of creation dawns. The Jewish question arises everywhere simultaneously with Russian, German, Arab questionsand also simultaneously with a

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10. Denis Sobolev, *Evrei i Evropa* (2008), ch.19: "Walter Benjamin: mezhdu iazykom i istoriei." https://www.e-reading.co.uk/chapter.php/1004520/47/denis-sobolev-evrei-i-evropa.html.

11. See Solovyov, "Jewry and the Christian Question" (1884), in Vladimir Solovyov, *The Burning Bush: Writings on Jews and Judaism*, ed., trans., and with commentary by Gregory Yuri Glazov (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), 277; and Dmitry Merezhkovsky, "The Jewish Question as a Russian Question" (1916), in *A Revolution of the Spirit: Crisis of Value in Russia, 1890*, ed. Bernice Glatzre Rosenthal and Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, trans. Marion Schwartz (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990), 222.

host of other questions in science, literature, music, politics, philosophy, religion. … The Jews are like inquisitive children still at the age when they persistently raise questions about "hows" and "whys," spontaneously asking about matters that seem self-evident and settled for "adults." It is no accident that the very word "Jew" in its etymological derivation from Hebrew means "from another or from the opposing side," "not of these parts." This affords the possibility of seeing the world as strange, of being surprised by the most generally accepted truths and deeply rooted customs, and of problematising the existence of other nations and of mankind as a whole.

" … The Jew is the spirit of negation, a protest against the dogmas of creeds …,"remarked the American rabbi Isaac Wise.[12] Eric Fromm and Martin Buber ascribed to a similar view: the Jews are ostensibly staunch iconoclasts but are not as renowned for creation. But a question only signifies negation and revolutionary overthrow in its most primitive forms; in its essence, a question is a summons to create. In the words of Ernest Renan, "the true Israelite is a man who is tormented by dissatisfaction, in the grip of an unquenchable thirst for the future."[13] From the Jews emanate waves of probabilities from which the world is made, accomplishing one thing, discarding anotherthey have not yet been fashioned into a smooth line of things in existence. The Jew is himself a process of taking decisions about the world, a process in which there is also a place of for indecisiveness and vacillation. The Jew senses within himself the constant pulsation of God's free will, poised between the multiplicity of possible world-orders rather than choosing one alone. The Jew is like a fontanelle in the cranium of humanity, the incompleteness of all contours of personality and history. The Jew is a lump of primordial clay: man is still being moulded from it, it is still being squeezed and kneaded in the hands of the living God. In the Jew, reality is still fermenting and being raised by the yeast of the possible.

In a famous speech, the Renaissance thinker Giovanni Pico della Mirandola spoke thus of the dignity of man: "God took man as the creation of an indeterminate image, and having placed him at the centre of the world, said: 'I give thee, Adam, neither an appointed place nor thine own image, nor even an appointed duty, so that thy place, thy face and thy duty shall be according unto thine own desire, thine own will and thine own choice. The image of other created things is determined within the limits of the laws that I have made. Thou alone art not bound by any limitsthou shalt fashion thine own image according to thy wish.'"[14] If the freedom has been given to man by God to fashion himself according to the likeness of other beings, from the beasts to the angels, then the Jew has been given the same freedom in relation to humanity as a whole, and can choose amongst other nations. He can fashion himself in the likeness of a Spaniard or a Frenchman, a German or a Greek, a Pole or a Russian, taking on different national traits and remaining all the while himself, a Jew, as a man remains a man precisely on account of the freedom of self-determination amongst other beings. This is the origin of the diasporic tendency of the Jews, that transnational excess of humanity which was revealed in them through persecution and expulsion: the capability to soak up, like a sponge, the emanations of other cultures, to become impregnated with them and to create them anew, imparting to them the quality of universal humanity.

Precisely the same traits of swift responsiveness, imitation, and universal sympathy are also widely discernible amongst Russians. Russia is close to the Jew, because she too is still in an

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12. Isaac M. Wise, *Selected Writings of Isaac M. Wise*. With a Biography by the editors David Philipson and Louis Grossmann (Cincinnati, OH: The Robert Clarke Company, 1900), 182. https://collections.americanjewisharchives.org/wise/attachment/5307/IMWise_selected_writings.pdf

13. Quoted in Nikolai Berdyaev, *Smysl istorii. Opyt filosofii chelovecheskoi sud'by*, 2nd ed. (Paris: YMCA Press, 1969), 119

14. Pico della Mirandola, "On Human Dignity," *Istoriia estetiki*, 5 vols. (Moscow: Izd. Akademii khudozhestv, 1962), vol. 1: 507.

embryonic statethe first day of creation has not yet dawned for her, but everything is in preparation for it. As Berdyaev observed: "There is that in the Russian soul which corresponds to the immensity, the vagueness, the infinitude of the Russian land, spiritual geography corresponds with physical. … For this reason the Russian people have found difficulty in achieving mastery over these vast expanses and in reducing them to orderly shape."[15] Russian spirituality has been and remains the spirituality of the first day of creation. "The Earth was without form and void, and darkness ruled upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2). This accounts for the characteristic Russian proclivity to "hover over the abyss," poised between boldness and spleen, flaring up and dying out, weariness induced by the surrounding void and the immense task of world creation. Prior to fashioning the stuff of which the world will be made, this Spirit is in a state of agitation and feverish ferment, procumbent on the stormy face of the waters in the dark maw of the abyss. Here the Spirit, as yet unresolved into differentiated elements, is still at its most whole, powerful, and menacing; it does not have a "form," like the most endless of plains, where, in Gogol's words, "everything is even, like an open wilderness … there is nothing to beguile and charm the gaze." And further on: "But what kind of inscrutable and secret strength draws one to you? Why can one hear resounding incessantly in one's ears your melancholy song, which is borne across your entire length and breadth and from sea to sea? What is crying out and wailing, and tugs at the heart?" (*Dead Souls*). This Spirit is imbued with an inscrutable and secret strength because it has as yet given form to nothing and is itself unformed, but like a bird-troika or a word-song without origin, hovers over the depths, and gives no answer to the query whither the troika is rushing or why the song is resounding. Incidentally, the Biblical phrase "the Spirit of God moved" is rendered in the original Hebrew by a verb signifying the soaring of a bird; so it is not without reason that Gogol, contemplating "poor, scattered and disconsolate" Rus′ from his strange and remote vantage point, sees "a bird-troika" in flight over it.

Russian religious thinkers and prophet-philosophers similarly proclaim that Russia needs another religion, not Orthodox Christianity or even Christianity itself, which discloses the abyss of the spirit, be it prehuman, superhuman or extra-human. Merezhkovsky observed in Dostoyevsky's work "a contradiction between this (religious) outlook, which wishes to be Orthodox at all costs, and unconscious experiences which cannot be accommodated within Orthodox Christianity. … But the true nature of his religion, if he is not yet conscious of it and it consists of experiences at a profoundly unconscious level, is absolutely not Orthodox Christianity, not historical Christianity, even not Christianity at all; rather, it goes beyond Christianity and the New Testamentit is the Apocalypse, the Future Third Testament, the revelation of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity: the religion of the Holy Spirit."[16]

Thus, Russian art is fundamentally a "spiritual" artand not merely the art of Gogol, Dostoyevsky, and Tolstoy, but also that of Gorky, Platonov, Mandelstam, Pasternak, Chagall, Brodsky, Il′ya Kabakov, Mikhail Shvartsman. And not because art is placed in the service of extrinsic religious aims and ideals, but rather that art assumes the role of religious revelation which cannot be accommodated within the dogmas of established religious creeds. This understanding of art does not even view it as a process of form-creation, that is, the skilful creation of perfect and complete forms, but rather as "artisticity," the dissolution of the created world by means of the artist's vision, the outbursts of the spirit that assail the object out of a vague urge to transform it. Russian "artisticity" (as distinct from Western art), like Russian "philosophicity" (as opposed to Western

15. Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*, trans. R. M. French (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), 2.
16. Dmitry Merezhkovsky, *V tikhom omute. Stat′i i issledovaniia raznykh let* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1991), 321, 345.

philosophy) are expanded and indeterminate mediums for the exploration of those areas of human experience that remain unexplored by religionspiritual languor and vexation of spirit, enquiry into the ultimate meanings of existence for which no religious doctrine provides answers.

This accounts for "holiness" being the most important and indivisible category of Russian spirituality, and also its concepts of "integrity" and "totality." "Totality" precedes the division into good and evil, into beauty and ugliness, into truth and falsehood. "In its polarities and contradictions, the Russian people can only be compared to the Jewish people. And it is no accident that these peoples have a strong messianic outlook."[17]

Jewishness in Russians, Russianness in Jews

Who in the world can understand the Russians better than the Jews? Both are warm, soulful peoples. They share a past history of hermetic isolation from other peoples (the Pale of Settlement and the Iron Curtain), and through their experience of centuries of solitude, of being cut off from the world, they accumulated a great deal of internal warmth.

Let us set out the most striking of the traits that they have in common:

1. The religious strivings of Jews and Russians. Vladimir Solovyov adduced three reasons why the Jewish nation begot Christianity, and to a certain degree they can be also applied to the Russian nation: 1) the intensity with which religious preoccupations pervade national life; 2) the spontaneity and independence of the nation, its vitality and purposefulness; 3) religious materialisma system of religious rules separating the pure from the impure. A profound relationship to sanctity, including the sanctity of the material aspects of existencethe routine of church rituals extended to everyday life, fasting, utensils; the laws of the Torah and the kashrut, of ritual cleanliness. The warmth of the material aspects of life in God. I quote the words of the Russian thinker and scholar of spiritual life Georgy Fedotov: "Christianity … is steadily converted into a religion of sanctified matter: icons, relics, holy water, amulets, communion bread and *kulich* [Easter cake] … This is ritualism, but ritualism of a terribly demanding and morally effective kind. In his religious ceremonies, the Muscovite finds support for heroic feats of self-sacrifice, as the Jew does in the Law."[18]
2. A tendency to utopian thinking, the subjection of all life to unified principles and ideals which are destined to be attained in the distant future: "live for the sake of one's children, for the sake of the happiness of future generations" and so forth. As Dostoyevsky observed, "universal happiness is something indispensable for the Russian wanderer if he is to find peace: he will not settle for lessnaturally, while the matter remains in the realm of theory" ("Pushkin Speech," 1880). The enormous importance of fantasy, fairy tales, miracles, dreams in the national cast of mind. Both Jews and Russians are peoples of inspiration and Revelation, rather than of empirical ratiocination.
3. Adherence to the ideal of social equality and justice, readiness to root out aristocratic privileges even at the cost of individual freedom. A socialistic, egalitarian outlook, a thirst to reorder the entire world in accordance with religious-social teachings. Millennialism, eschatologism. A striving for the end of history, for the eternal kingdom of Truth. A revolutionary outlook. A sense that there is nothing that could not be parted with, that there is nothing to lose but one's

17. Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*, trans. R. M. French (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), 2.
18. Georgy P. Fedotov, "Pis′ma o russkoi kul′ture," in *Sud′ba i grekhi Rossii. Izbrannye stat′i po filosofii russkoi istorii i kul′tury*, 2 vols. (St Petersburg: Sofia, 1991), vol. 1: 174, 175.

chains. Marx and Bakunin, their mutual suspicion of one another as prudent revolutionary-accountant and revolutionary-anarchist, preparing himself and the entire world to be turned upside-down. And although Marxism triumphed in Russia, Bakuninism emerged from it and under the name of "Leninism" reconciled it with itself.

4. A feeling for the national element with which personality becomes merged and thereby finds itself. The tradition, long-preserved well into the twentieth century, of communal lifeby the world of the Russian peasant mir community and the Jewish shtetl. The collective farm and the kibbutz. The abundance of legends and anecdotes, rumours and gossip, communal living, whispering in corners, the habit of discussing everyone, neighbourliness, the small town and the village. *Skaz*, tales, oral narratives, the strong folkloric basis for culture.

5. A tendency to wander, to rootlessness, the nomadic element in Russian civilisation which was conditioned by the sheer extent of the territory. To quote Chaadayev: "In our homes it is as if we are assigned billets; in families we look like a kind of stranger; in cities we are like nomads ..."[19] Or Dostoyevsky: "These homeless Russian wanderers continue right up to the present day to wander, and it seems that this practice will not die out for a long time" ("Pushkin Speech"). The fate of the Wandering Jew is close to the Russian heart. The tendency of Russians to disperse is also attested geographically in the twentieth century by streams of emigrants, refugees, and defectors. These constitute one of the largest and culturally rich diasporas in the work, alongside the Jewish diaspora. The Jewish diaspora acquired in Russia the first homeland of socialism in the worldand the Russian diaspora, having been ejected from its homeland by the victory of socialism, went on to create a diaspora all over the world.

6. Universalism, the easy assimilation of cultural customs, of the scientific and technical achievements of other peoples, imitativeness, a flexibility of mind conditioned by the great historical experience of merging, co-existing with other nations. More than a hundred nations settled in Russia, and the Jews in the course of their wanderings settled on the lands of many nations. Both the Russians and Jews, like gifted actors, are adept at taking on alien roles.

7. Centuries-long experience of suffering and persecutions (the Egyptian and Babylonian captivities, the Tatar-Mongol yoke, the Pale of Settlement, serfdom ...). From this, a tendency to melancholy, to despair, to grieve. In contrast to Europeans, they willingly disclose and share negative emotions, complain about life, and even flaunt their failures. (But the Jews, all the same, are more closed and guardedit is not done to talk aloud about death or serious illnesses.)

8. The combination of melancholy with gentle humour, lyrical enthusiasm, an acceptance of lifelaughter through tears (as in Gogol, Chekhov, Babel, Sholem Aleychem, Perets Markish). Irony and self-irony. The habit of laughing at everythingand first and foremost at oneself, but all the while preserving the sacred in one's soul.

9. Psychological openness, sociability, fondness for conversation, emotionality, animation, heartiness, being easily roused to the point of being highly strung, a readiness to share one's feelings, to trust what is innermost, to discuss one's personal life. Credulousness and gullibilitywith the difference that the Jews tend to believe other Jews, and the Russians to believe foreigners.

10. Both Jews and Russians are logocentric, "literary" nations, for whom the Book, the written word, is the source of higher religious and moral authority. In Russia, the classicsPushkin,

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19. Peter Chaadaev, *Filosoficheskie pisma* (1836). Letter 1. https://www.vehi.net/chaadaev/filpisma.html.

Gogol, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoyassume the role of "Sacred texts"; they contain commandments and homilies and provide spiritual guidance both in social and personal life. The whole culture of both nations is founded on the Word"holy Russian literature," holiness and the commandment-like nature of the word. As Chernyshevsky remarked, "literature is the textbook of life." To become absorbed in a book to the point of frenzy, distraction, of voluptuous lassitude. The world in a fog of words.

11. The love of the Jews for Russian world of nature and for poetry, which they treat as their spiritual property. Breadth and spaciousnessin these there is something fated for Jews in their wanderings and dispersals; not a foreign land, but a new homeland, which must become the entire world. The melancholy of the Russian autumn, the purity of tints, the transparency of the air, the nakedness of the plain and the immensity of the skyall of these are consonant with the Jewish heart, a fact which finds incomparable expression in the work of Isaak Levitan. Nature, purged of a sense of confinement and of heat, the open heavens and the shining of its stars, the light, airy, and not exalted, humbly prostrating itself before God. This world is quite different to the biblical one but is nonetheless dear to that part of the Jewish soul which is in quest for itself in the diaspora and in dispersal, and partially finds itself in Russianness.

12. A musicality of soul, a love of folk melodies, for choral singing, for folk songs and dances. In the kibbutz, round-dances are performed as in Russian villages. Chekhov's *Rothschild's Violin*the Russian bequeaths to a Jew his music and his sorrow. (Amongst Russians, the guitar is more popular, one encounters more drunken sincerity and love-songs; amongst Jews, the violin tugs at the heartstrings.) Dunayevsky, the brothers Pokras, Fel'tsmann, Basner, Blanter and other Jewish composers turned out to be the creators of the genre of the popular song in the USSR.

In spite of all the persecutions of the Tsarist and Soviet times, the Jews nonetheless took root in Russia, in the midst of a reckless, "irregular" people, where their love for the winding paths of life could manifest itself fully. It comes naturally to the Jews to do everything in a way that is not entirely free from cunning, with a "catch" somewhere, with evasions and "notwithstandings"; but in Russia, this was the honest and normal means of living, so they found themselves in their native element, where they could pin their hopes not on law and order, but only on the keenness of their wits and on God's grace. God and nation, Tsars and prophets, wars and executions, prayers and miracles, cruelty and clemency, intemperate violence and unrestrained repentancehere the Jew found a passionate, fierce Biblical world which had long since disappeared in the enlightened West, but which was in a strange way revived for them in the Russia of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this immense country, the Jews found their Leviathan, their fear and trembling, their beast from the abyss described in the book of Job as being "above God's ways" and simultaneously as a pitiless monster: "all hope is in vain: shall you not die from a single glance of his?" In Russia it is easier than in any other country to sense the quaking of all the foundations of existence, the upheavals of the historical soil, as before an earthquakethe rumble travels all over the earth, announcing the tread of a jealous and vengeful God. This constant presentiment of catastrophe, this menacing emanation from other worlds formed part of the Jewish fate in biblical times, and Russia, even when Jews were consciously repelling it, turned out to be the embodiment of an their archetype of the "Austere Judge" and a "strange attractor" of their collective unconscious.

The Jewish-Russian Atmosphere

The unique phenomenon of the Russian intelligentsia who are uprooted from their native soil and separated from their people is comparable to the Jewish experience of diaspora. It is precisely the

Russian intellectual, who lives as an internal exile in his own country, is completely marginalised, is critical of everything, and is given to utopian dreams, that exhibits the greatest spiritual kinship with the Jew. The Jews assisted the growth of the Russian intelligentsia, and that intelligentsia was responsible for the deep assimilation of Jewish influences that proved decisive for Russia's culture and destiny. The two intermingled and merged. As Fedotov remarked, "It was no accident that once the Jews began to emerge from their ghetto in the 1880s, we can observe the closest comingling of the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia not only in revolutionary activities, but also in all kinds of passionate spiritual movements; and most importantly, in their fundamental existential outlook: in their ardent state of groundlessness and eschatological prophecies. … Spengler saw in Russian intellectual circles a continuation of the Talmudic tradition and spirit."[20]

From a western viewpoint, Jews and Russians are seen as lacking in self-restraint, *schlimazel* and unbridled. Neither nation is seen as being *comme il faut* or being from "good society"; both are felt to emerge from different heights and depths of life. "Out of the depths, I cry unto Thee, O Lord" and Pushkin's evocation of being "at the edge of the gloomy abyss" are experiences known to both of them. Both are inclined to give themselves up to their emotions and fantasies, to violently surpassing limits, and at times to succumb to hysteria. They are unaccustomed to the happy medium; they have no respect for form, or any feeling for it. The content boils over and overflows the rim of the vessel.

Jews and Russians incite one other, lead one another on; their steps ring out so harmoniously when crossing the bridges of history that they destroy them with their resonance. Precisely such a mutual incitement and leading on occurred with the 1917 Revolution and the communist experiment. The Jew wants to show the Russian that he is more Russian even than hethat he is fearless, unyielding, that he will stop at nothing (consider the phenomenon of Trotsky). The Russian wants to show the Jew that he is even more of a Jew: far-sighted, canny, that he acts in a fully conscious and systematic fashion and can subdue the elements (the phenomenon of Lenin). In Fadeyev's novel *Defeat*, Levinson manifests both Russian inflexibility and Jewish awareness in his fight with spontaneity. As a result, the Jewish qualities of shrewdness and being systematic assume Russian characteristics of daring, recklessness and lack of restraintsuch as the Soviet regime displayed, with its mass of plans, its daredevilry in systematisation itself (the pressure to complete projects ahead of schedule … to deliver the Five Year Plan in four years … the proclamation that the present generation of Soviet citizens would live under communism). The ecstasy and hysteria of planning, the mania for figures, the reckless bookkeepingsuch were typical phenomena of Soviet bureaucracy. The outlook conveyed in the proverbial Russian exhortation, "Strain every muscle to cut the hay," was reinforced by Jewish intellectual stubbornness, meticulousness, and the drive to bring things to their logical conclusion, even at the risk of failure: if, according to our calculations, the bright day of socialism should dawn, then it will do soand if it does not, then so much the worse for reality.

The Talmudism of the Soviet regime, its passion for words and the tiniest ideological nuances of their meaning, its faith in the self-sufficient and self-fulfilling power of words which will render reality more joyous and more beautifulthis is both Jewish and Russian. As was the regime's faith in drafts on paper, and the Talmudic disputes over interpretations of their wording, and the heated discussions of deviations, of "right" and "left" ideological leanings, and of the subtlest details in the employment of citations from the fundamental texts of Marxism. They treated the latter writings as Jews treated holy writ, as being susceptible of multilayered interpretations and explications, like

20. Georgy P. Fedotov, "Rossiia i svoboda," in *Sud´ba i grekhi Rossii. Izbrannye stat´i po filosofii russkoi istorii i kul´tury*, 2 vols. (St Petersburg: Sofia, 1991), vol. 1: 285.

the Torah, the Mishnah, the Gemara, the Kabbala … There was a similar Talmudic hierarchy: Marx, Engels, Lenin, then Stalin, then subsequent foreign adherents to Marxist thoughtthe "outstanding representatives of the Party and government," the "founders of Socialist Realism," the "writers from fellow Communist states" … Every level was endowed with its own degree of authority, which could be measured by the length and frequency of citations from their work, and the relative significance of which could be gauged with minute accuracy from the number of column inches allotted them in the press.

It is said about the Russians that they are a people given to extremes and polarities. In *The Russian Idea*, Berdyaev offers the following examples: despotismand anarchism; ritualised beliefand the search for truth; the search for Godand flagrant atheism; slaveryand mutiny … The Jews are also a nation of extremes: hoarders and people who are above financial self-interest; realists and fantasists; capitalists and communists; commonsensical and prone to eccentricity. In western nations, there is a wide zone of middle ground for a neutral and secular way of lifewhich is only natural and is justified by human nature. Jews and Russians constantly set themselves unrealisable tasks, and both surpass average norms and fall short of them. The inclination to irrationalism, existentialism and personalism in philosophy is exemplified by Rozanov, Berdyaev, Shestov, Rozenzweig, Buber, and Levinas.

Dostoyevsky's "man from the underground," and indeed Dostoyevsky himself are "Jews" in their extravagant thriftinesss, their hyperactivity, their impulsiveness (Sholem Aleichem's Menakhem-Mendl): everything is calculated, put in the kitty for the sake of a certain winonly to lose ignominiously. Dostoyevsky's teenage "yid" dreams of becoming a Rothschild. Tolstoy remarked on Dostoyevsky's Jewishness. The existential situation of the underground, the state of "nowhereness" characteristic of Jews were carried across into Russian literature by Dostoyevsky.

In general, strange as it may seem, the "anti-Semites" Gogol and Dostoyevsky were the first to introduce the Jewish spirit into Russian literature. With both men, Russian society itself becomes bourgeois, Chichikovised; it is possible that their Ukrainian and Polish roots made them sensitive to the spirit of this derivative milieu, dominated by preoccupations with money, gambling and speculation, in which the Jews took root. In the case of both writers, nature recedes into the background and "Jewish" ideas come to the fore: getting rich, possessing the signs and symbols of power. A noisome urban milieu predominatesa St Petersburg "ghetto." It would be easy to imagine Akakiy Akakiyevicha small man in a small worldas a denizen of a shtetl or some small town in the Pale of Settlement. Both the tailor Petrovich and the "important personage"such are the different ranks of "authority" before whom Akakiy Akakiyevich is reduced to a trembling creature. Similarly, Raskolnikov's way of life and mental outlook also mark him out as a "trembling creature," though he also imagines himself to "have entitlements." As has long been remarked, in Dostoyevsky's depictions of St Petersburg, the colour yellow, traditionally associated with Jews, predominates. "This black and yellow colour, this joy of Judea" (Mandelstam).

In both nations can be observed a combination of two extremes: spontaneous emotionality and abstract ratiocination. Inspiration and "gut feeling," a simple trust in God, and childlikeness are reflected in Hassidism, an emotional, charismatic sect within Judaism. To live by one's heart, to see God in small and everyday things. Hassidism, which originated precisely on Jewish-Slavonic soil, links these nations. As Gershom Sholem writes, "the greater part of Russian and Polish Jewry were drawn into the orbit of this movement (Hassidism) … but this form of mysticism was unable to take

root anywhere outside the Slavonic countries and Russia."[21] Ukraine is considered to be only second in the world to Israel for having the greatest number of Jewish holy places. It was proposed to build the biggest synagogue in the world with a capacity of five thousand worshippers in Uman, the burial place of Rabbi Nakhum. An unschooled, unbookish relationship to Godout of an overflowing heart, in the expectation of joy.

And yet, both nations are bookish and are devoted to the word and to literary sermonising. Reflectiveness and premeditation. Action often dissolves in self-reflection, in the construction of multiple points of view, in the art of commentary and interpretation. Job and Dostoyevsky, Buber and Bakhtin, the dialogic character of both nations, emphatically expressed gesticulation (Russian gestures are sweeping, Jewish ones are hasty), a love for endless conversations and verbal sparring, the loss of a feeling of reality. A tendency to self-awareness and to experiment on oneself is predominant. Although one of these nations possessed the most expansive territory in the world and the other remained homeless for many centuries, both these extremes fostered the development of an approach to existence that was at once utopian and schematic. Rabbis, scribes, wise men, people well versed in the scriptures, fantasists and explicators set the tone for Judaism, all having little contact with the reality of the society that surrounded them. Russia was created and recreated to plan: the Christianisation of Rus by Prince Vladimir, the Europeanisation of Russia by Peter the Great and Catherine II, the socialist revolution and the building of communism under Lenin and Stalin, Gorbachev's *perestroika*all of this was imposed from above, and originated in the heads of rulers. Ideas and projects always came firstthings were not introduced and brought into being in a way that arose organically out of national customs and ways of life, but rather out of a fertile-brained "head with a little organ" (Saltykov-Shchedrin), obsessed with the next transformative idea. This accounts for St Petersburg being, in Dostoyevsky's phrase, "the most abstract and premeditated city in the world" (*Notes from Underground*), and the spectre of communism, which sprang from the head of Marx and was realised precisely in Russia, which has always been so hospitable to all kinds of speculative abstractions.

This combination of Hassidism and Talmudism, of heartfelt faith and bookish wisdom is characteristic of both nations. There are Talmudic traits in Solovyov and Mandelstam; and Hassidic ones in Rozanov and Pasternak. Holy foolishness, spontaneityand cultural mediatedness. Both stem from idealism: the world is reduced to the heart or the book. The relation of both nations to reality is a difficult one, for the European opposition of subject and object is alien to them, their epistemology is weakly developed, as well as its attendant search for reliable criteria for establishing objective truth. From the excessively German Kant, the Jews (Hermann Cohen, Ernst Cassirer) moved towards neo-Kantianism, which is preoccupied with collective subjectivity, a common faith which is jointly shared rather than subjected to rational scrutiny. The proclivity of the Jews for philosophical constructivism and intuitivism is evident: the pupils of Cohen included Pasternak and Matvey Kagan, an older friend and accomplice of Bakhtin. Kant's sharp and consistent dualism is softened in neo-Kantianism in favour of "things-for-us." And the Russians were also drawn to neo-KantianismLunacharsky, Gorky, the revisionists of Mach (Bogdanov and Yushkevich)and to the construction of belief from human commonality, the totality of faiths, and not from rational scrutiny seeking to establish objective truth. The collectiveness of experience, the spirit of togetherness [*sobornost'*] as the decisive factor in one's orientation towards the world …

"Yes, there was such a particular Jewish-Russian atmosphere of which one Jewish poet said:

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21. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1995), 325.

'Blessed is he who once breathed it.'"[22]

The Fourth Jerusalem

Messianic strivings and the belief in being God's chosen people simultaneously unify and divide both nations. One of them, in accordance with their forefathers' covenant with God, is obliged to preserve its spiritual isolation; the other to embrace all other nations with Christian love. Both Israel and Russia are "holy lands." This is not merely a typological likeness, but also a conscious historical continuity. The first *attempts* to liken Russia to the New Israel and Moscow to the New Jerusalem are found in Russian sources that date back to the late fifteenth century; and Russians at times called themselves "the true Israelite proselytes." Thus, the subsequent tense relations between both nations can be explained as a kind of messianic jealousy about which was God's chosen people, and whose time had come and whose time had passed. Both messianic aspirations fused for a time in the Bolshevik Revolution.

The notion that Moscow was the Third Rome, which inspired Russian religious self-imagining since the sixteenth century, was in essence a metaphor or a parable of another, more profound, though unarticulated formulanamely, Moscow as the Fourth Jerusalem. For Rome was the second, both in temporal succession and in importance as a sanctuary of religious belief, after Jerusalem. The third Jerusalem was Constantinople, and Moscow was consequently the fourth. Why did the importance of Jerusalem itself, the beginning of the beginnings, wane in this messianic succession?

The answer, of course, is that Jerusalem was unsuited to being the centre of a newly-created Christian *empire*, because it had never been an imperial capital. The magic of the number three, sanctified by its association with the Trinity, also played its role. But one can also adduce yet another reason: the connection with Jerusalem, and with God's chosen people, was so important for Russia that it remained in the depths of its religious unconscious; it also determined the strange and rationally inexplicable intensity of its relationship with the historically dispossessed and politically powerless Jews. Rome and Byzantium were empires, but the Roman and the Byzantine nations were not God's chosen people. Russia, on the other hand, laid claim not only to being an empireand thereby being the successor of Rome and Constantinoplebut also to the fact of being God's chosen people. In this respect, it was the direct successor of the Jewish nation. This messianic component of the "Russian idea" was scarcely no whit less important than the imperial one, and concealed far greater ambitions, for it pertained not to political horizontalsthat is, to world conquestbut to religious verticals, namely, to being chosen by God. The Jewish nation was also chosen by Godbut it did not found an empire. The Romans (both western and eastern) founded an empire, but they were not chosen by God. The Russian nation, however, was called to the higher synthesis of both missions, the "Jerusalemite" and the "Roman."

This fermentation of the "Russian idea" with Jewish leaven did not merely remain in the realms of wishful thinking. Within Russian Orthodox Christianity, there is genuinely something close to the religious psychology of the Jew, and correspondingly, in Judaism there is something akin to the religious psychology of the Russian. This fact explains the Judaizing sects in Rusthe "Judaizers" and the "Sabbatarians." It also explains the frequent conversations of Jews to Russian Orthodox Christianity in the late Soviet epochwhich did not take place for careerist reasons, as was often the case in tsarist Russia, but due to spiritual attraction, as conversion to Russian Orthodox Christianity did not remove, but doubled and tripled the burden of life in the atheistic State. To persecution

22. Fedotov, "Rossiia i svoboda," 285.

directed at Jews was now added persecution directed at believers, as well as suspicion of the very presence of a Jew inside the interior of an Orthodox church: converts had to contend with the mistrust of their fellow communicants towards non-Russians and the mistrust of their fellow Jews towards voluntary converts to Christianity.

At a meeting with rabbis in New York on 13 November 1991, Patriarch Aleksey II (Ridiger) declared in a speech characteristically entitled, "Your prophets are our prophets":

> The union of Judaism and Christianity has a real basis in spiritual and natural affinity and positive religious interests. We are at one with Jews, not giving up Christianity, not in spite of Christianity, but in the name and strength of Christianity; and Jews are at one with us not in spite of Judaism, but in the name and strength of true Judaism. We are thus set apart from the Jews by the fact that we are "not fully Christian"; while the Jews are set apart from us because they are "not fully Jewish." For the fullness of Christianity embraces Judaism, and the fullness of Judaism is Christianity.[23]

Whatever one might think of these sentiments, they are characteristic of Orthodox Christianity, especially in its Russian manifestation, to a much greater measure than is the case with other major Christian denominations. In an Orthodox church, the sanctuary is set apart and concealed from parishioners, just like the "Holy of Holies" in the Jewish Temple. In Catholic churches, and even more so in Protestant ones, the altar is brought forward, corresponding to the incarnation of God in man and His visible and tangible manifestation in the world. When Christ was crucified, the veil which set apart the secret part of the temple was rent, for the secret of God was disclosed to the people when he took on human form and died on the Cross. But there was of God something that remained out of bounds and which did not merge with man. And thus, as if as a sign of the non-merger of both natures in Christ, the Russian Orthodox Church from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries onwards erected the iconostasis between the worshippers and the altar so that the preparation for the mystery of Communion could take place in secret from the worshippers themselves. This separation is also a sign of the "out-of-bounds-ness" of God for man, the incomprehensibility of his mystery that is also emphasised in apophatic (negative) theology, which principally developed in Eastern Christianitythat is, the knowledge of God in his inaccessibility by the negation of all his names and likenesses.

Is this not also the purpose of the iconostasisnot merely to bring God closer to the believer through images, but also to set him apart by mean of the very veil of these images? The iconostasis simultaneously makes visible (the image of the Son) and conceals that which ought to remain invisible (the action of the Holy Spirit on the altar): it is not only a window onto another world, but also a veil between two worlds. The icon is a visual paradox of concealment-by-disclosure, which in Judaism is solved in favour of concealment, but in western Christianity in favour of disclosure. Thus, the icon is of such importance in Russian Orthodox Christianity, which mediates between Judaism, with its understanding of the out-of-bounds-ness of God, and western Christianity, with its emphasis on the human and the taking on of human form in God. The same dual relationship ought to be maintained towards the icon, the contemplation of which should set bounds to the act of contemplation itself. It is impossible to approach it not only as a self-sufficient sacred object (that is, as an idol), but also as a transparent likeness of sacred persons (as a picture). For faith, in the words

23. The full speech of Patriarch Aleksey II is reproduced here: https://mparchiv.narod.ru/alravvin.html.

of St Paul, is ‘confidence in the invisible’. The invisible has been made visible in other to conceal the invisible more effectively and to strengthen our faith in it.

The same "Jewishness" of Russian Orthodox Christianityin comparison with Catholicismis also discernible in their Creeds. The dividing term is the *filioque* (and the Son)it would seem as a purely formal obstacle. Is this a significant differencewhether the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father, as the Orthodox Creed implies, or additionally from the Son (*filioque*), as the Catholic Church maintains? But precisely in this incommensurability between the Paternal and the Filial can be discerned the closeness of Russian Orthodoxy to the Jewish notion of the out-of-bounds-ness of God. It would seem that for Christianity the entire plenitude of God takes human form as manifest in Christand this divine assumption of human form is emphasised in Catholicism and to an even greater degree in Protestantism, simultaneously with the move of the altar closer to the worshippers. But just as the "Holy of Holies" is protected in an Orthodox church, in the Orthodox Creed, God the Father fully contains within Himself the mysterious source from whence proceeds the Holy Spirit, not transferring it to the Sonit is elevated above both other hypostases.

Meanwhile, Catholicism also took the next step towards the abolition of that mysterious veil. Not only is the entire plenitude of the power of God the Father transferred to the Son, but also all the power of Christ is transferred to his sole representative on Earththe Pope. In Catholicism, the Pope is the Vicar of Christ, His deputy on Earththat is, not only does the God-man fully partake of the Divine, but what is more, the human fully partakes of the God-man. The Pope is endowed with complete infallibility when he pronounces *ex cathedra*.

Therefore, the two fundamental differences between Catholicism and Russian Orthodox Christianitythe *filioque* and the papacycome down precisely to the abolition of the transcendence of God, first in the fusion of the human and the divine and then in the incarnation of the divine in the human. Russian Orthodox Christianity, of all Christian faiths, adheres most closely to Judaism, preserving the most precisely defined hierarchy, the subordination of the hypostases and emphasising the out-of-bounds-ness of God to all humanity and even to the Godman himself.

In the work of the Russian philosopher Semyon Frank, an ethnic Jew who converted to Russian Orthodox faith, Christianity is understood in an apophatic spirit which is in general closer to Eastern than to Western Christianity. This apophatism is a Jewish trait inside Christianity: the notion that God did not become fully incarnate in human form and remains inaccessible to comprehension. Frank adheres to the doctrine of Nicholas of Cusa about knowing unknowingness or "learned ignorance"that is, that one can only know God through one’s ignorance of Him. Frank’s most important work, *The Incomprehensible*, in essence propounds apophatism as being half way between Christianity and Judaism: "being conscious of and feeling ‘my God,’ I cannot and do not have the right to lose sight of that depth of His in which He is the unspeakable, unknowable, and terrible (in His unknowableness) Divinity, which essentially transcends all definition…."[24] In this sense, Frank is a Jewish-Christian thinker.

The Orthodox priest Aleksandr Men′ (1930), an ethnic Jew, was the "godfather" of the Soviet intelligentsia, which accounts for his transformative role in the development of post-Soviet Orthodoxy as opposed to its pre-Revolutionary form. This form of Orthodoxy became imbued with that "internationalism" which emerged during the Soviet period from Russian-Jewish atheismbut bestows on this union a religious dimension. By this I do mean neither the Christianisation of

24. S. L. Frank, *The Unknowable: An Ontological Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, trans. Boris Jakim (Brooklyn, NY: Angelico Press, 2020), 242.

Judaism and the Judaization of Orthodox Christianity, nor the reciprocal religious conversions between these faiths, but rather the establishment of intermediate, transitional degrees of a common tradition of spiritual life. Take the baptism of Russian Jews at the end of the twentieth century: this did not separate many of them from Jewishness, but rather brought them closer to itinto the bosom of Abraham and David from which Christ and the apostles came forth. It may be that precisely Russian Jewry afforded both Christianity and Judaism an opportunity to discover a mode of psychological relatedness to one another, to draw closer voluntarily as never before, except in the times of the apostles, and in the presaging of the end of time, when the coming of the Messiah is promised to both Jews and Christians.

And so one can understand why the purely negative experience of communism proved instructive for both nations, and stimulated them to try to become closer on account of religious and not atheistic affinities. Formerly, it was easiest for Jews and Russians to converge in their idealistic materialism, in stubborn and fanatical atheism, in disbelief as a variety of belief. Their atheism, in contradistinction to western atheism, which is rational and enlightened, was itself a form of faith, a utopian one, and their denial of the existence of God was itself religious. Communism was the convergence of Christians and Jews on the paths of negation equally of Christianity and Judaismand thus, having made evident the negative and self-destructive results of such a renunciation, prepared the conditions for a positive religious convergence of both nations. This is why Berdyaev and Buber, who had first-hand experience of Russian communism and Jewish socialism and found themselves on the paths of Christianity and Judaism, were inwardly akin to one another.

In his collection of essays *Shield* of 1915, Vyacheslav Ivanov, observing the evolution of "Aryan" ideology, expressed the thought that anti-Judaism always becomes transformed into anti-Christianity as a matter of course, as the subsequent history of Nazism confirmed. In its turn, the history of communism confirmed that, conversely, anti-Christianity eventually transforms itself into anti-Semitism. Judaism and Christianity are not only linked historically, but also bound up with one another as systems of beliefs and values; and denying one will sooner or later cause the other to be denied too. In the Russian nationalist movement of the 1980s and 1990s, hostility to Judaism and Russian Orthodox anti-Semitism quickly led to the denial of Christianity from the position of Vedantism, neo-paganism and "native faith" [*rodnoveriye*].

Philias and Phobias

The fact that the founder of Communism Karl Marx was both an anti-Semite and a Russophobe was a good reason for the two nations to draw closer together, as they both managed to survive communism and free themselves from the yoke of Marxism. This judgement can only be made out of love for both nations, from a standpoint of both Russophilia and Judeophilia. Unfortunately, terms of hatred still predominate in Russian. When one does a Google search for information in Russian about the word "Judeophilia," the automated message appears "Did you mean Judeophobia?" In fact, on Russian-language internet sites, the word "Judeophobia" occurs eighteen times more frequently than "Judeophilia" (90,000 results and 5,000 results respectively). If one compares the data for the search terms "anti-Semitism" and "philo-Semitism," then the difference is even more pronounced: 4,000,000 results as opposed to 2,000. Should one infer from this that anti-Semites are two thousand times more numerous than philo-Semites? I will refrain from drawing simplistic conclusions about attitudes, but even in relation to Russians, the language of hatred predominates: the search term "Russophobia" returns 1,400,000 results, and "Russophilia" merely 20,000.

My personal position in relation to the two vitally important national questions can be summed up in one word: *Judeo-Russophilia*. I propose this term for general use. It is especially helpful in a situation where Russophiles are usually considered (and indeed sometimes actually are) Judeophobes, and Judeophiles are considered Russophobes. The term usefully emphasises the compatibility of these philias, which are understood by manywithout any foundationto be mutually hostile and mutually exclusive.

What is at issue here is love for another nation, and not one's own. Love for one's own nation and culture usually goes without saying, and it is even inappropriate to express it. It would be odd for a Russian to be a Russophile, a Jew to be a Judeophile, a German to be a Germanophile, and so on. It would be like answering the question "who do you love?" with "myself." Just as it befits a Russian by and large to be a Germanophile, a Polonophile, a Judeophile or an Anglophile, but not a Russophile, it similarly befits a German to be a Russophile or a Francophile. However, in the nineteenth century, Slavophiles appeared amongst the Slavs themselves, just as Germanophiles appeared amongst Germans, and this was naturally a sign of trouble: only someone for whom things are going badly starts to declare love for himself. One has to take pity on him and understand the reason for his recourse to self-love, when his love should be directed at others.

Thus, by the loftiest standards, it does not become Russians or Jews or Russian Jews to experience Judeo-Russophiliathat is something for the Germans, the Italians or the Americans, if they are roused to particular interest in and favour towards Russia, Judaism and the unique intersection of their destinies. But in the real and very unfavourable situation in which we find ourselves, a state of schism between a multiplicity of national self-loves and mutual xenophobias, it would be greatly advantageous even if one reinforced the feeling of self-love with the love for a culture which is closely related and parallel, but which in essence is even perpendicular. Under such conditions, *Judeo-Russophilia* is not an egocentric idea, but an eirenic one, which prompts us to understand and accept these "fateful crossings."

The end of the twentieth century was the time when the two nations parted, and perhaps also the time of their new mutual recognition. Once liberated from the equally onerous yoke of Communist rule which they had created jointly by their own efforts, they could now, at the point of leave-taking, take a close look at one another and understand why fate had brought them together, and what lesson the world could draw from their encounter and leave-taking. Russians and Jewsof all nationsturned out to be (and, indeed, were from the very beginning) the most Soviet. They laid claim to their own particular national terrain to a lesser extent than any other nations in the USSR, for it was they who embodied the internationalism of the new order. Other nations had their own territories (in the sense that they kept them or created them anew), their own customs, traditions, national festivals; but the Russians and Jews were permitted almost nothing of the kind, so that they would embody the very idea of Soviet rulea self-denial of a separate past in the name of the brotherhood of the workers of the world. The Jews had a nominally autonomous region in Siberia, Birobidzhan, but they did not live there; the Russians nominally had their own republic, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, but its administrative organs were weakened by the fact that they largely overlapped with the overarching Soviet ones (the so-called "Soviet-Republic Ministries"). Russians and Jews were not nations, but rather the flesh and blood of the new transnational commonwealth of the Soviet people. There were doubts as to whether the Jews could even be considered a nation, or whether, in the absence of a territorial community, they should be considered a "pseudo-nation." Russians were also considered to be transnationals, "the elder brother" in the family of Soviet nationsthat is, as if they were responsible for the entire family in the absence

of the deceased father (God and the Tsar). Jews were "an insufficient nation" and Russians were a "trans-nation," but in both roles they had to suppress their own individual nationalitymost of all, when it came to religion.

Therefore, the collapse of the USSR meant first and foremost the sundering of Russians and Jews, who returned to their own national existences. But it was precisely then that the time came for deeper and freely creative relations between the two nations, now that they were no longer bound by the yoke of their combined fates and the injuries caused by a difficult way of life. In a certain sense, the USSR did not fall asunder into Russia and the other constituent republics, but into Russia and the diaspora: the Russian diaspora and the Jewish one. The republics adjoined other areas that were more capacious religiously and culturally, and to which they had formerly partially belonged (the central Asian republics to Islam, the Baltic republics to Western Europe ...). But the USSR was created to a significant degree by the interaction of Russian and Jewish religious utopianism, precisely on that common international and atheistic soil, where they rejected their own religions and thereby their nationality. With the collapse of the USSR, the messianic and totalitarian era in Russian history came to an end, and each nation has been given back its separate fate.