A History of Russian Philosophy 1830–1930

Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

wrote in the early years after his arrival in the West. His "new people," capable of liberating humans from their mental shackles and regenerating society, were reborn as rational egoists in Nikolai Chernyshevskii's novel, *What Is To Be Done?* (1863), as members of the "critically thinking minority" in Pëtr Lavrov's *Historical Letters* (1868), and, in different incarnations again, as the questing heroes and antiheroes of Dostoevskii's fiction. In his writings on "Russian socialism" he laid the foundations for the revolutionary populism of the 1870s. Most importantly from our present point of view, Herzen insisted on the importance of freedoms of conscience, association, and expression in a civilized society and deplored the sacrifice of individual human beings for the sake of some imagined higher purpose. He is a leading early exponent of the tradition of skeptical humanism that is identified in this volume as one of the elements in the Russian philosophical paradigm, an element that may be set against the tradition of utopian speculation about universal salvation. For these reasons he was inspirational not only to later pre-revolutionary thinkers but also to thinkers trying to come to terms in the early Soviet years with Bolshevik totalitarianism.

And yet alongside this libertarian thinker, who is generally admired in western (especially British) scholarship for his "remarkably prescient insights into the self-deceptions of self-confident ideological thought,"[24] there is a socialist thinker who occupied a prominent position in the Soviet pantheon. This latter Herzen, from whom the "poor heroic" Parisian workers will hear no reproach (V, p. 153), conceived of the Russian peasantry as a Rousseauesque abstraction and commended their commune (in which it is hard to believe the individual would have primacy) as a model for a collectivist utopia. He was a critic of the *laissez-faire* economic attitudes that in western societies were associated with the extension of personal and political rights. He persistently predicted that western civilization was about to die and devoutly wished that it would. He tended, in the crucial works on which I have focused in this chapter, to undermine rather than to promote respect among his compatriots for such notions as parliamentary democracy, the rule of law, and contractual exchange. He declined unequivocally to condemn revolutionary violence or to advertise the benefits of political stability. Indeed it is arguable, finally, that his attack on liberalism, which reverberates in later Russian radical thought, helped to weaken the Russian branch of a political current whose representatives were themselves concerned to promote the very liberties and respect for human dignity that Herzen so eloquently advocated.

[24] *Ibid.* 498.

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MATERIALISM AND THE RADICAL INTELLIGENTSIA: THE 1860S

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Materialism, or the philosophical proposition that the world consists entirely of matter, has existed since the ancient Greeks. The implications of this proposition, however, have changed considerably over time. In Russia in the late 1850s and early 1860s, radicals were principally interested in the consequences of materialism for theories of the way the mind operates. Contradicting Christian conceptions, they argued that there is no such thing as an immortal soul, responsible for all thoughts and decisions and capable of exercising free will. Nor, they claimed, are there any innate ideas. All thoughts are the results of sensory stimuli, formed into perceptions and ideas inside an entirely material mind.

These assertions were based on scientific theories that were still controversial in the mid-nineteenth century. Even so, Russian radical journalists elevated materialism to the status of a worldview that contained the answers to the country's most pressing political and social problems. The sweeping nature of their claims led the conservative critic Mikhail Katkov (1818–1887) to denounce materialism as a new "religion" in 1861, a view famously repeated by the philosopher Nikolai Berdiaev in the early twentieth century.[1]

From 1858, the two leading radical journals, *The Contemporary* and *The Russian Word*, became synonymous with materialism. It was not long, however, before some radical writers began to voice significant doubts about their religion. Indeed, materialism's postulates were never entirely stable. Articles by its most famous representatives, Nikolai Chernyshevskii (1828–1889), Nikolai Dobroliubov (1836–1861), Maksim Antonovich (1835–1919), and Dmitrii Pisarev (1840–1868), had an experimental quality and were not free of contradictions. These journalists were (sometimes ineptly) trying to settle highly

[1] [M.N. Katkov], "Starye bogi i novye bogi," *Russkii vestnik* 31 (1861), 891–904; N.A. Berdiaev, "Filosofskaia istina i intelligentskaia pravda" in *Vekhi. Intelligentsiia v Rossii* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1991), pp. 24–42, here pp. 32–33.

complex philosophical questions.[2] Fearless as they were in attacking their liberal and conservative opponents, they were just as frequently on the defensive, testing new ground as they attempted to refute criticisms that had been leveled at them. One of the thorniest objections they faced was their failure to take into account the principle of human dignity. This was a problem materialists were not successfully able to resolve.

MATERIALISM IN THE ERA OF REFORMS

In the mid-nineteenth century, materialism emerged in tandem with recent discoveries in the natural sciences: physics, chemistry, geology, and biology. Physiology was of special interest, as research conducted in France and Germany during the 1830s transformed the way the operation of the nervous system and brain was understood. In Germany of the 1840s and 1850s three talented writers, all trained as natural scientists, stepped forward to popularize new discoveries: Carl Vogt (1817–1895), Jacob Moleschott (1822–1893), and Ludwig Büchner (1824–1899). They did more than just summarize the latest research, however, but used it to advance political, social, and religious claims.

Their most famous slogan was "Keine Kraft ohne Stoff": no force without matter, a statement that held sharply anti-Christian implications.[3] God and the immortal soul could be excluded from scientific studies. Vogt, Moleschott, and Büchner found philosophical grounds for their anti-religious zeal in *The Essence of Christianity* (1841) and *Lectures on the Essence of Religion* (1848), by the Left Hegelian philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872).[4] Religions, according to Feuerbach, were the inventions of primitive societies. Ignorance had led people to explain incomprehensible features of the natural world by attributing them to fictitious deities. They eagerly dedicated themselves to carrying out their gods' wishes, but forgot to take care of their own needs. Denigrating themselves, they projected their best attributes onto their gods. Humanity must now learn to see the "divine" in human nature and commit itself to living in accordance with

[2] Evgenii Lampert found Chernyshevskii's views contradictory and poorly thought through: for example, he never defined what he meant by "matter." E. Lampert, *Sons Against Fathers: Studies in Russian Radicalism and Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 144. Similar accusations were leveled against the German materialists of the nineteenth century by Friedrich Albert Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart*, 8th edn., 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1908), vol. 2, pp. 89–105, especially pp. 98–101.

[3] Ludwig Büchner, *Kraft und Stoff. Empirisch-naturphilosophische Studien* (Frankfurt am Main, 1855), p. 2. Like many of their slogans, this one circulated among the three: Moleschott and Vogt used it as well.

[4] Feuerbach did not consider himself a strict materialist. See Hermann Braun, "Materialismus-Idealismus" in Otto Brunner (ed.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexicon*, 8 vols. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972–1997), vol. 3, pp. 977–1019, here pp. 1002–1003.

that nature. To Vogt, Moleschott, and Büchner, the study of physiology became a means of rehabilitating the "dignity of matter."[5]

There was a political agenda behind the materialists' provocative advocacy of atheism: all three were opponents of monarchy. Moleschott and Büchner sympathized with the republicanism of the 1848 revolutions, while Vogt directly participated in them. Their attacks on religion were intended to facilitate a future revolution by undermining the religious ideology on which conservative German states based their power.[6] But the three also had an egalitarian social agenda. Physiology could prove the innate equality of human beings by showing that disparities in intelligence and physical strength were merely the result of unequal material circumstances and education. They could be eradicated through a more even distribution of goods. By making new discoveries available to "the German people," Moleschott, Vogt, and Büchner sought to disseminate science more equally.[7] Needless to say, their writings met significant resistance among natural scientists, philosophers, and clergymen. Disputes came to a head in 1854 during the so-called *Materialistenstreit*, in which it became almost impossible to distinguish political and religious arguments from ones that were scientific or philosophical.[8]

Conservatives in Russia were well aware how powerful this blend of science and politics could be. When revolutions broke out abroad in 1848, Nicholas I responded by tightening censorship at home and banning the instruction of philosophy at universities. After 1850, only clerics at seminaries and theological academies were permitted to teach subjects like logic and psychology.[9] As a result, idealism was formally defended only by philosophers trained at theological academies, who came from a clerical background. Nicholas I's censorship may have delayed the arrival of the new materialism into Russia, but it probably radicalized the terms of the debate when materialism did arrive. Idealism's association with the church would later make it an easier target for proponents of materialism like Chernyshevskii.

The conservatism of Nicholas I's regime was discredited by Russia's humiliating defeat in the Crimean War (1854–1856). When Alexander II came to power, he was forced, *nolens volens*, to commit himself to sweeping reforms, including the long-awaited peasant emancipation, promulgated in 1861. He

[5] Büchner, *Kraft und Stoff*, p. 25.

[6] Frederick Gregory, *Scientific Materialism in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1977), p. 1.

[7] Gregory, *Scientific Materialism*, pp. 88, 71.

[8] Braun, "Materialismus-Idealismus," pp. 1008–1011; Gregory, *Scientific Materialism*, pp. 29–48.

[9] Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia, 1825–1855* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1959), pp. 218–219.

also relaxed censorship, making the late 1850s and early 1860s golden years for the Russian press. Despite his displays of liberalism, however, Alexander II remained committed to autocracy and firm social hierarchy and made no less use of Orthodox ritual than his father had.[10] His vacillations helped give rise to radicalism, as some educated Russians became convinced that far-reaching change in Russia would not come from above.

Radicals were also troubled by Russia's persistently rigid social stratification.[11] Nikolai Chernyshevskii, a priest's son from Saratov, sensed this keenly in the 1840s and 1850s as he moved to St. Petersburg and attempted to establish himself in the nobility-dominated world of journalism. He suffered from his lack of social refinement, and his noble colleagues at *The Contemporary* did little to allay his fears; privately, they referred to him as "that bedbug-stinking gentleman."[12] This was not unrequited disdain. Chernyshevskii, together with his younger colleagues (and fellow seminarians) Dobroliubov and Antonovich, no doubt returned the noblemen's scorn with the same ardor.[13]

In this strained atmosphere, the arrival of German materialism was well timed. Educated Russians had been watching scientific developments in western Europe closely since the 1840s, when thick journals like *The Contemporary* began to publish large numbers of translations of the latest in popular science.[14] Now, in the 1850s, science promised to vindicate the "seminarians'" demands for respect, providing them with a seemingly objective basis for their defense of human equality.

BODY, MIND, AND FREE WILL

Materialism also helped Chernyshevskii and his followers establish grounds for a new system of morality outside of Christian ethics, one which could in turn be used to justify sweeping social reforms. All this hinged on an argument over the relationship between mind and body: individuals' actions were regulated from

[10] Richard S. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, 2 vols. (Princeton University Press, 1995, 2000), vol. 2, pp. 19–91.

[11] On the limitations of social mobility for educated Russians, see Daniel Brower, *Training the Nihilists: Education and Radicalism in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), pp. 51–68, especially p. 56.

[12] Irina Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior* (Stanford University Press, 1988), p. 77.

[13] Laurie Manchester argues that enmity toward the nobility helped cement the "collective identity" of priests' sons. Laurie Manchester, *Holy Fathers, Secular Sons: Clergy, Intelligentsia, and the Modern Self in Revolutionary Russia* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), pp. 38–67.

[14] Alexander Vucinich, *Science in Russian Culture*, 2 vols. (Stanford University Press, 1963, 1970), vol. 1, pp. 348–349, 371, 379.

within by an instinctual, physical understanding of what was good for them, not by a soul that recognized good and evil by virtue of its connection to God.

The debate about the relationship between body and mind has always tended to center on two positions. Ideas may be formed in an immaterial soul; or, as materialists insist, they are produced by the body ("matter"). In the nineteenth century, discoveries about the operation of the nervous system and brain gave materialists new confidence. Moleschott, Vogt, and Büchner used them to back up their slogan, "no force without matter." Thoughts are caused, directly or indirectly, by physical stimuli conveyed by the nerves and processed by the brain. The extrasensory has no place in explanations of the functioning of the mind, and the notion of an immaterial soul can be dismissed as invalid. From this vantage point, Moleschott, Vogt, and Büchner also rejected the Christian doctrine of free will. There is no higher instance in the mind that regulates its operations. Thought processes are entirely subject to natural laws that determine their outcome. An individual's mental habits are largely the product of upbringing; moods and dispositions are attributable to environmental and nutritional influences on brain chemistry. The materialists did not deny that people have will, but maintained that its exercise is entirely determined by environment and circumstances.[15]

Nikolai Dobroliubov first brought these views to the Russian reading public in the pages of *The Contemporary* from February to May 1858. Drawing on the work of Moleschott, he argued that there can be no "spirit" without "material attributes," no thoughts, ideas, impulses, or memories that do not involve some activity of the brain and nervous system. A properly functioning mind depends on a healthy brain. Education and upbringing play a part in mental function: the content of a person's thoughts depends on impressions he or she receives from early childhood on. Together, physical health and upbringing determine whether those thoughts and feelings tend toward the bad or the good.[16] Dobroliubov claimed that there is no such thing as an immortal soul or a free will. The impulse to act comes from the body, more specifically, from the brain and the nerves, which always guide the person to pursue pleasant sensations.[17] Religious beliefs and experiences, even the sensation

[15] Carl Vogt, *Bilder aus dem Thierleben* (Frankfurt am Main, 1852), pp. 422–452; Jacob Moleschott, *Der Kreislauf des Lebens. Physiologische Antworten auf Liebig's Chemische Briefe* (Mainz, 1852), pp. 403–434; Büchner, *Kraft und Stoff*, pp. 251–258.

[16] N.A. Dobroliubov, "Organicheskoe razvitie cheloveka v sviazi s ego umstvennoi i nravstvennoi deiatel'nost'iu" in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (*PSS*), 6 vols. (Leningrad: GIKhL, 1934–1941), vol. 3, pp. 90–113, here pp. 95, 102–104, 109. Compare Moleschott, *Der Kreislauf des Lebens*, pp. 364, 370–373.

[17] N.A. Dobroliubov, "Fiziologichesko-psikhologicheskii sravntitel'nyi vzgliad na nachalo i konets zhizni" in *PSS*, vol. 3, pp. 342–349, here p. 345; "Organicheskoe razvitie," pp. 110–111.

of communing with God, are nothing but the combined product of external influences: culture, geography, physical health, nourishment.[18]

Summarized in this way, Dobroliubov's views would have been too radical to publish.[19] This may be why he left it to his mentor, Chernyshevskii, to expound the social and ethical implications of the new materialist theories. Chernyshevskii had been skeptical of the principle of free will ever since his student days.[20] He began to challenge this and other Christian notions of morality in his essay "Russian Man at a *Rendez-Vous*" (1858).[21] Two years later he more fully elaborated his ideas in one of his best-known works, "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy," published anonymously in *The Contemporary*.

The article was framed as an attack on Pëtr Lavrov (1823–1900), a liberal, member of the nobility, and perfect target for Chernyshevskii. Lavrov later became famous as a populist, but at the time he was mainly known for his philosophical erudition and eclecticism. His article "Notes on Questions of Practical Philosophy" (1859) provoked Chernyshevskii by taking a cautiously idealist position. Lavrov emphasized the importance of "dignity," arguing that it is the product of ethical self-awareness. Every person, Lavrov claimed, has an inner being, or self, which consists of two parts. One is the "real" self, the sum of a person's impulses, feelings, wishes, and moods. The other is the "ideal" self, which serves to master the changing impulses of the real self, judging them in accordance with the person's fixed norms of dignity. Dignity, then, consists in an ethical decision-making process. It is neither subject to the body nor mind alone, but to the will.[22]

In "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy,"[23] Chernyshevskii countered that the notion of two selves, and indeed any distinction between mind, body, and will, is nonsensical. People's decisions are the result of a chain of thought responses and as such are subject to the laws of cause and effect. Mind and body are not separate, but governed by the same "law," presumably a natural one.[24] And thoughts are nothing but the product of sensations and impressions,

[18] N.A. Dobroliubov, "Zhizn' Magometa," *PSS*, vol. 3, pp. 334–339, here pp. 337–338.

[19] He claimed, improbably, that his views on the soul were "compatible with the higher Christian view." Dobroliubov, "Organicheskoe razvitie," p. 96.

[20] Paperno, *Chernyshevsky*, p. 108.

[21] Chernyshevskii, too, was forced to make some concessions to censorship: "Russian Man at a *Rendez-Vous*" was not published in *The Contemporary*, but in the more obscure *Athenaeum* (*Atenei*). N.G. Chernyshevskii, "Russkii chelovek na rendez-vous," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (*PSS*), 16 vols. (Moscow: GIKhL, 1939–1953), vol. 5, pp. 156–174.

[22] P.L. Lavrov, "Ocherki voprosov prakticheskoi filosofii" in I.S. Knizhnik-Vetrov (ed.), *Filosofiia i sotsiologiia. Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Mysl', 1965), vol. 1, pp. 339–461, here pp. 377–381, 384.

[23] N.G. Chernyshevskii, "Antropologicheskii printsip v filosofii" in *PSS*, vol. 7, pp. 222–295.

[24] *Ibid.* pp. 240, 283, 293.

gathered and formulated through the nervous system.[25] They are not arbitrary, nor can they be understood as the result of a will that stands above or outside of a chain of thought.[26]

Three points seemed especially important to Chernyshevskii as he formulated the ethical consequences of rejecting free will in "Russian Man at a *Rendez-Vous*" and "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy." All three points corresponded closely to the theories of the German materialists Büchner, Moleschott, and Vogt. One was that materialist physiology effaced the notion of innate mental and moral differences between people. All human beings are innately the same. Circumstances and environment dictate what they become as adults. In this regard members of the nobility were at a particular disadvantage: their upbringing not only conditioned them to look down on members of lower orders, but prepared them only for flaccid inactivity as adults. By nature, however, all people are equal, even if there are undoubtedly better or worse adults.[27]

A second point made by Chernyshevskii was that the rejection of free will undermines good and evil as absolute categories. According to Chernyshevskii (and Büchner), these categories are not fixed but extremely unstable concepts, often applied by people in contradictory ways to a wide range of behaviors.[28] Consistency can only be introduced by making these categories measures of judgment about the utility of actions.[29] To determine the utility of an action, in turn, one must judge the extent to which it fulfills human needs: the needs of the individual, a given community, or humanity at large. The greater the number of people who benefit, the better the action is.[30] Chernyshevskii hoped that these calculations would permit mathematical precision in resolving ethical questions and thus free people from having to rely on Christian ethical values.

Thirdly, according to Chernyshevskii, the materialist denial of free will legitimated social reform while undermining the principle of individual moral and

[25] *Ibid.* pp. 277–280. [26] *Ibid.* pp. 260–261.

[27] Chernyshevskii, "Russkii chelovek," pp. 164, 165, 168, 170–171; "Antropologicheskii printsip," pp. 264, 274.

[28] Chernyshevskii, "Antropologicheskii printsip," pp. 260, 256. Compare Büchner, *Kraft und Stoff*, pp. 245–246, 248.

[29] This is why Chernyshevskii posits the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain as the primary motivating factor in all human action and calls this "egoism." Chernyshevskii, "Antropologicheskii printsip," pp. 282–285. A comparable passage, including the word "egoist," can be found in Büchner, *Kraft und Stoff*, p. 249. For an overview of Chernyshevskii's "rational egoism," see N.G.O. Pereira, *The Thought and Teachings of N.G. Černyševskij* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), pp. 35–39.

[30] Chernyshevskii, "Antropologicheskii printsip," pp. 286–287. Compare Moleschott, *Der Kreislauf des Lebens*, pp. 427–428.

legal culpability. If all decisions result from thought processes over which people have little or no control, then they cannot be held accountable for their actions.[31] Indeed, it is hypocritical for one person to condemn another for harmful behavior. Since human beings are physiologically the same, and all respond to circumstances in the same way, the judge would behave no differently than the judged under the same conditions.[32] Moral condemnation is in any case misplaced: society and material circumstance are the cause of harmful behavior, not the individual. If society is to reduce harmful behavior, it must change the circumstances in which people live.[33] To Chernyshevskii, the most pressing priority was to abolish the grossest manifestation of inequality in Russia – serfdom.[34]

In sum, Chernyshevskii sought to rule out free will because he wanted to make ethical and social deliberation less arbitrary and less personal. Harmful behavior is not the result of an individual's free choice to do wrong. If bureaucrats are corrupt and peasants violent, it is because upbringing and environment induce them to act this way. Likewise, helpful behavior cannot be attributed to an individual's free choice to do good. If journalists like Chernyshevskii called for social reform, they did so as a result of their upbringing and environment, which left them in a better position to understand their true interests.

IURKEVICH'S FIRST CRITIQUE AND ANTONOVICH'S RESPONSE

Chernyshevskii's views were roundly attacked, in fiction, philosophy, and literary criticism. Philosophically, his most formidable adversary was another priest's son only one and a half years his senior: Pamfil Iurkevich (1827–1874), professor at the Kiev Theological Academy. In 1860, Iurkevich published "The Science of the Human Spirit," a refutation of materialism, in *Studies of the Kiev Theological*

[31] Vogt, *Bilder aus dem Thierleben*, pp. 445–446; Büchner, *Kraft und Stoff*, pp. 250, 256–257; Moleschott, *Der Kreislauf des Lebens*, pp. 428–429. Not everyone who looked for the origin of thought in physiological processes believed that this cancelled out moral liability. See Monika Ritzer, "Physiologische Anthropologien. Zur Relation von Philosophie und Naturwissenschaft um 1850" in Andreas Arndt and Walter Jaeschke (eds.), *Materialismus und Spiritualismus. Philosophie und Wissenschaften nach 1848* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2000), pp. 113–140, here pp. 121–124.

[32] Chernyshevskii, "Russkii chelovek," pp. 164–166.

[33] Chernyshevskii, "Antropologicheskii printsip," pp. 265–266; "Russkii chelovek," pp. 165–166. In the latter passage, Chernyshevskii admitted that some acts of violence (a tiny minority) were egregious and could not be accounted for by material circumstance alone.

[34] Chernyshevskii, "Russkii chelovek," pp. 172–174. He did not explicitly mention emancipation in these pages (journals were forbidden to discuss it in any detail at this time), but contemporaries and scholars read them this way. See A.I. Batiuto, "Turgenev, Chernyshevskii, Dobroliubov, Annenkov" in *Izbrannye trudy* (St. Petersburg: Nestor-Istoriia, 2004), pp. 712–759, here p. 721.

Academy.[35] The article, which combined philosophical idealism with Orthodox Christian theology, sharply criticized Chernyshevskii's "Anthropological Principle in Philosophy." The conservative critic Mikhail Katkov was so pleased by the article that he republished it in 1861 in his widely-read journal, *The Russian Herald*. Iurkevich was further rewarded that year by being promoted to a professorship in philosophy at Moscow University.

Iurkevich began from an idealist perspective by critiquing Chernyshevskii's materialist claim that thoughts are produced by matter. This proposition could not be proven by natural science, because ideas are not tied to sensory experience; no physiologist and no microscope will ever demonstrate that nerves and the brain beget ideas. Ideas are only subject to the kind of internal observation conducted by psychologists and philosophers.[36] Further, perceptions can only be explained by taking into account the individual self that perceives them, and this self can make choices about how and what to perceive.[37] Materialism, by contrast, denies the individual the freedom to determine his or her own thoughts.

Chernyshevskii dismissed Iurkevich's review out of hand,[38] but his protégés Antonovich and Dobroliubov responded to it in some detail. Maksim Antonovich, one of the youngest of the *popovichi* at *The Contemporary*, had always been interested in natural science. Having graduated from the St. Petersburg Theological Academy (in 1861), he was also in a very good position to appreciate the theological and philosophical foundations of Iurkevich's views. (Both Chernyshevskii and Dobroliubov had ended their theological education at the seminary level.) In 1861 and 1862, Antonovich published three articles refuting idealism in *The Contemporary*. He first focused on Lavrov, but his main targets were Iurkevich and other philosophers trained at Russia's theological academies.[39] Antonovich had no patience with their attempts to integrate idealist philosophy with Orthodox Christian teachings on the soul, which resulted, he claimed, only in obscure and "unnatural" theories of the operation of the mind.[40]

[35] P.D. Iurkevich, "Iz nauki o chelovecheskom dukhe" in A.I. Abramov and I.V. Borisova (eds.), *Filosofskie proizvedeniia* (Moscow: Pravda, 1990), pp. 104–192.

[36] *Ibid.* pp. 110–112, 115. [37] *Ibid.* pp. 128, 131.

[38] N.G. Chernyshevskii, "Polemicheskie krasoty" in *PSS*, vol. 7, pp. 707–774, here pp. 725–726, 762–763, 769–773.

[39] Specifically, S.S. Gogotskii, graduate of the Kiev Theological Academy and teacher at Kiev University, and V.N. Karpov, graduate of the Kiev Theological Academy and teacher at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy.

[40] M.A. Antonovich, "Sovremennaia filosofiia," *Sovremennik* 85 (1861), 249–280, here 261–262, 268–269; "Dva tipa sovremennykh filosofov" in V.S. Kruzhkov (ed.), *Izbrannye filosofskie sochineniia* (Moscow: OGIZ, 1945), pp. 18–91, here pp. 23–29.

Antonovich further displayed the weakness of quasi-idealist Christianity by highlighting the strength of physiological accounts of mental phenomena. He detailed the process by which the nervous system transfers sensory stimuli to the brain to form impressions and ideas. When such impressions accumulate, they eventually give rise to more abstract ideas, knowledge, and consciousness. The entire process is "purely material," a point Antonovich did not tire of emphasizing. The nervous system acts as a "conductor," and the transformation of impressions to ideas is "purely mechanical." It is thus "involuntary," taking place by "physiological necessity." There is no part of the mind that observes the thought process as if from outside and assents to or denies the impact of impressions on it. Instead, ideas develop "freely," as if by themselves.[41] Here, Antonovich went considerably further than Chernyshevskii. While denying free will, Chernyshevskii continued to speak of a will actively intervening in a person's thought processes.[42] Antonovich, by contrast, described thought processes in the passive voice and tended to use organic metaphors, arguing that individuals have little ability to intervene in the formation of their own ideas.[43] He used some lurid examples to prove that seemingly voluntary, goal-oriented actions do not depend on the brain, much less on the soul, and have nothing at all to do with free will. Experiments on frogs had shown that a living organism remains capable of activity even when the brain is cut out. Indeed, frogs that have been deprived of their brains are capable of goal-oriented action through reflexes that come from the spinal cortex. In responding to certain stimuli, they behave in exactly the same way a human being would.[44]

Antonovich did seem to recognize that people make important philosophical choices, for example, in preferring materialism over idealism or philosophical eclecticism. In describing how or why people commit themselves to materialism, however, he deliberately avoided terms like choice or decision. Materialism, he claimed, is more than an intellectual option; rather, it fulfills a human need. The individual "needs" a coherent, "decisive," "definite" philosophy to "bring order into his head," to resolve all of those "persistent and pressing" questions

[41] Antonovich, "Dva tipa," pp. 48–52; "Sovremennaia filosofiia," 265, 267, 270–271; "Sovremennaia fiziologiia i filosofiia," *Sovremennik* 91 (1862), 227–266, here 255, 260–263. This was ostensibly a review of George Henry Lewes, *The Physiology of Common Life* (1859–1860). Antonovich's description of the nervous system as a "conductor" (*Leitung*) that relayed sensory stimuli to the brain probably came from Moleschott, *Der Kreislauf des Lebens*, pp. 409–410.

[42] Chernyshevskii, "Antropologicheskii printsip," p. 277. Here, he claimed that the mind can "choose" to focus on certain impressions over others, using "*vybrat'*" and "*vybor*" three times in one sentence.

[43] Antonovich, "Dva tipa," p. 48: "Our inner world is formed, it grows out of the external, so to speak, it is the fruit, of which the roots are the feelings, and the nourishing, formative sources are the phenomena of the external world."

[44] Antonovich, "Sovremennaia fiziologiia," 256.

that bother him.[45] He described Orthodox Christianity as too confusing and unnatural to meet this need; it evokes doubts rather than certainty in the most sincere people and threatens doubters with damnation. Materialism, by contrast, offers not only certainty, but courage, the courage to think for oneself and try new things. To Antonovich, becoming a materialist was an act of "spiritual liberation," a veritable "rebirth."[46]

This was an important part of Antonovich's argument, because it addressed a further criticism Iurkevich had leveled against materialism. Iurkevich had pointed out that materialism makes any kind of individual decision-making pointless. If everything in the world (including human behavior) were predetermined by natural laws, it would be useless to attempt to change the status quo.[47] Antonovich must have had this criticism in mind when he claimed that materialism, far from leading people to despair, gives them courage. Yet here Antonovich's empiricist rhetoric and denial of free will broke down. In Orthodox Christianity, "rebirth" is what happens when an individual chooses to live in Christ, casting off his or her old, sinful nature. As Antonovich knew, such rebirth is an exercise of free will.[48] This may only have been a rhetorical lapse on Antonovich's part, but it was ironic, given that it was precisely through philosophical rigor and the empirical evidence furnished by the natural sciences that he hoped to defeat Iurkevich. The lapse serves to demonstrate how difficult it was even for him to uphold the logic of his own materialism. Subsequent developments would prove that fellow radicals had even more trouble with the rejection of free will than he.

DIGNITY: IURKEVICH'S SECOND CRITIQUE AND DOBROLIUBOV'S REBUTTAL

Antonovich may have thought he had finished Iurkevich off, but there was a second line of argument in Iurkevich's "The Science of the Human Spirit" that Antonovich had entirely failed to address. This portion of Iurkevich's article concerned human dignity. Chernyshevskii had advanced an ethical system in which free will played no role at all. People, he said, are instinctively driven to pursue their own interests, and the actions that result are good when their outcome benefits not only the individual actor, but a maximum number of

[45] Antonovich, "Dva tipa," pp. 77–78. [46] *Ibid.* pp. 30–33.

[47] P.D. Iurkevich, "Materializm i zadachi filosofii" in *Filosofskie proizvedeniia*, pp. 193–244, here pp. 196, 197–198.

[48] See, e.g., Makarii (Bulgakov), *Pravoslavno-dogmaticheskoe bogoslovie*, 5th edn., 2 vols. (Moscow: Golike, 1895), vol. 2, p. 294. Originally printed in 1856–1857, this work would have been available to Antonovich.

other people. Iurkevich argued that intention, not outcome, has to be taken into account in judging people's actions. And in evaluating intentions, people invariably refer to human dignity. Here, Iurkevich drew on theology: human beings are formed in the image of God and are born with innate ideas and feelings, which are manifestations of their "godlike" (*bogopodobnyi*) souls. Dignity is one of these innate ideas: it is what people try to preserve or secure by their actions, and it is the measure they use to judge one another's behavior. Dignity can only be realized by willing the good; a philosophical system that denies free will thus excludes dignity.[49]

Dignity was indeed a term that materialists rarely made use of, perhaps because it was widely associated with Kantian metaphysics.[50] To make it serviceable, materialists would have to show that dignity is not an attribute of the mind or soul, but of the body. Feuerbach had suggested such an approach in *The Essence of Christianity*: human beings might honor dignity in God, but this dignity was in fact a human attribute that had been projected onto an imaginary God. Further, Feuerbach claimed, dignity is not a mental trait, derived from human reason. Rather, it consists of the recognition that the self is embedded in a body made of flesh, and that this fleshly body must be respected.[51]

While Chernyshevskii and Antonovich were silent about dignity, Dobroliubov used the term while pursuing a line of reasoning much like Feuerbach's in literary reviews he wrote in the last year of his life. Most notably, he defended the dignity of the flesh in "A Ray of Light in the Kingdom of Darkness" (October 1860), a review of Aleksandr Ostrovskii's play, *The Storm* (1860). The article was an encomium to the play's heroine, Katerina Kabanova; in Dobroliubov's rendition, she rebelled against the stifling atmosphere in her home by committing adultery and then suicide. From an Orthodox Christian perspective, both acts represent sheer immorality, the weakness of a body overcome by passion. To Dobroliubov, however, these acts were manifestations of strength: a strong person is one who will always seek to satisfy her natural and physical needs. Katerina, a woman of the people, had no education, no capacity for theorizing, but she did not need learning or theory. She was an empiricist: she acted

[49] Iurkevich, "Iz nauki," pp. 165–169, 172–173.

[50] Kant famously claimed that dignity is the chief attribute separating human beings from animals: humans are different in the sense that they cannot be judged only in terms of their utility, or treated only as a means to an end. On the contrary, every human being has dignity by virtue of being a rational person. Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals* (Mary Gregor (trans.), Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 230, 255. Materialists (including Moleschott, Vogt, and Büchner, but also Chernyshevskii) stressed that human beings *are* just another kind of animal, acting according to the same natural laws. No special status should be accorded to them on the basis of higher mental capacities.

[51] Ludwig Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994), p. 520.

"on the basis of living impressions" and in response to "life's facts." Katerina also acted on reflex: she was driven by "instinct" to fulfill "a need that arises from the depths of her whole organism"; she allowed "nature to guide her." Dobroliubov implied that there was nothing undignified in acting on instinct, in responding to the needs of one's organism. Those "ideas," "prejudices," and "artificial combinations" (by which Dobroliubov meant religious values) that had been imposed upon Katerina could do nothing but confuse her and pervert what was truly "lawful and holy" in her, namely her feelings.[52]

According to Dobroliubov, then, dignity does not consist in acting according to religious ideals. Religiously-motivated behavior involves the subordination of one individual to the will of another – a subordination that Dobroliubov thought *deprives* a person of dignity.[53] On the contrary, dignity is to be measured by the degree to which one acts on one's own initiative.[54]

Dobroliubov extrapolated on this claim in "Downtrodden People," his September 1861 review of Dostoevskii's works. In his latest novel, *The Downtrodden and Humiliated* (1861), Dostoevskii had warned that the radicals' system of ethics "risked unleashing forces in the human personality over which Utilitarian reason had no control."[55] So much the better, said Dobroliubov. People were constantly being treated with contempt under the existing order. The only force that could redeem them was the "divine spark" inherent in all human beings, which prompts them to defend their humanity by rebelling against the status quo. The instinct to rebel was indeed frightening, above all to people who felt it stirring inside themselves. This was why most refused to act on it. Instead, they responded by justifying their humiliation to themselves: there was some higher order, divinely ordained, that demanded that they occupy their lowly position and accept it without complaint.[56] To Dobroliubov, this cultivation of humility was the ultimate crime perpetrated by humanity against itself: it meant the "inner suppression of one's human nature, the sincere admission that one was something far lower than a human being." To demand such resignation was to expect a person "to transform himself entirely into a machine." Instinct was the only guarantor that dignity would eventually prevail: the "divine spark" must lead the person to recognize his unhappiness and rebel.[57]

[52] N.A. Dobroliubov, "Luch sveta v temnom tsarstve" in *PSS*, vol. 2, pp. 310–366, here pp. 349, 351, 356, 357–358, 361–362.

[53] Dobroliubov spelled this out in another review of Ostrovskii's works: "Temnoe tsarstvo" in *PSS*, vol. 2, pp. 36–139, here p. 133.

[54] N.A. Dobroliubov, "Zabitye liudi" in *PSS*, vol. 2, pp. 367–405, here p. 397.

[55] Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Stir of Liberation, 1860–1865* (Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 125.

[56] Dobroliubov, "Zabitye liudi," pp. 398, 390, 384–387.

[57] *Ibid.* pp. 380, 396, 398.

Iurkevich, too, had spoken of a "spark" in the human being: a "spark of goodness" or "spark of good will" that prompts feelings of altruism. He viewed this as a manifestation of the divine in the individual, the image of God imparted to humanity at the moment of creation.[58] By contrast, when Dobroliubov used the term "divine," he was gesturing in the opposite direction, at Feuerbach, who had argued that God's attributes are in fact human traits that people project onto an imagined, higher being. The "divine spark," as Dobroliubov understood it, was the opposite of what Iurkevich meant. Dobroliubov's spark dictated that people preserve their own fleshly and individual nature, not sacrifice themselves for others; it is a manifestation of the instinct to defend one's personality and assert one's rights in a world that stifles the human impulse for freedom.

TURGENEV'S CRITIQUE

The debate over the proper role of natural inclinations entered its next stage with the publication of Turgenev's famous novel, *Fathers and Children*, in March 1862.[59] Ivan Turgenev (1818–1883) had decided to publish it in Katkov's conservative journal *The Russian Messenger* after quitting *The Contemporary* in anger over some negative reviews of his work by Chernyshevskii and Dobroliubov. Some readers, including Chernyshevskii, viewed *Fathers and Children* as a personal attack on Dobroliubov.[60] Though this was undoubtedly a one-sided interpretation, the novel did point to a key flaw in Dobroliubov's understanding of natural human inclinations; namely, that acting on them had little to do with materialism. Indeed, the materialists in the novel are the characters least capable of coming to grips with their inclinations.

The hero of the novel, Bazarov, was Turgenev's version of a radical materialist. He was, like Chernyshevskii and Dobroliubov, a *raznochinets*, the grandson of a priest, and the offspring of a country doctor. Bazarov was training to be a doctor and natural scientist; he spent every morning in pursuit of frogs on which to perform experiments. Nominally, then, Bazarov was an empiricist. As he told some boys he met on one of his frog-hunting expeditions, he would dissect a frog in order to "see what goes on inside it, and since you and I are the same as frogs, only we walk on our legs, I will also know what goes on inside us."[61]

[58] Iurkevich, "Iz nauki," pp. 179, 185, 182, 140.
[59] Ivan Turgenev, *Ottsy i deti*, in *Sochineniia*, 12 vols. (Moscow: Nauka, 1978–1986), vol. 7, pp. 7–188.
[60] V. Evgen'ev-Maksimov, *"Sovremennik" pri Chernyshevskom i Dobroliubove* (Leningrad: GIKhL, 1936), pp. 544–546; David Lowe, *Turgenev's Fathers and Sons* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1983), pp. 90–93.
[61] Turgenev, *Ottsy i deti*, pp. 21–22.

Figure 3.1 Illustration from A.M. Volkov, *Ottsy i deti. Karikaturnyi roman* (St. Petersburg, 1869), p. 7.

In claiming that there is no essential difference between humans and animals, Bazarov mirrored Antonovich and Chernyshevskii, and there were other points of correspondence, too. He asserted that all people are inherently the same. Though there are differences between "good and evil" people, such differences are not attributable to free will. Rather, bad behavior is usually a sign of "moral illnesses" stemming from a person's irrational upbringing and difficult social circumstances.[62] Bazarov and his acolyte, Arkadii Kirsanov, called for radical social change in Russia. They asserted that all existing authorities and institutions must be overturned. Arkadii claimed to reject "all principles," and Bazarov denied the very existence of principles, stating that all mental processes come down to "sensation." Their rejection of principles dumfounded Arkadii's uncle,

[62] *Ibid.* pp. 78–79.

Pavel Petrovich, and led him to wonder, "Let's see how you will exist in empty space, in a vacuum."[63]

Reading *Fathers and Children*, some of Turgenev's contemporaries noted a disjuncture between Bazarov's materialist philosophy and the way his mind operated: in everyday life, he was not much of an empiricist.[64] The critic Nikolai Strakhov (1828–1896) noted that Bazarov was more of a "theoretician." Bazarov did not seem to develop gradually in response to sense impressions, as an empiricist should, but resisted them. Indeed, he was an "ascetic" who avoided anything that might influence him unduly, and stood "aloof from life" itself. Yet Bazarov was also a sincere, passionate person; he had attempted to bury himself in theory, but he could not help but respond to "the forces of life."[65] If Bazarov acted on his natural inclinations, he did so despite himself.

Returning to *Fathers and Children*, one may observe that Bazarov's materialist associates are even more inclined to suppress their inclinations than he is. In Bazarov's presence, Arkadii constantly hides feelings of which he himself seems only dimly to be aware. Arkadii suppresses tears, buries his joy, and forces himself to laugh at Bazarov's jokes. The narrator makes it clear that this was no accident: "he viewed it as his duty to hide feelings. Not for nothing was he a nihilist!"[66] The same traits stand out even more markedly in the character Avdot'ia Nikitishna Kukshina, who has changed her name to "Eudoxie." She is at once the novel's most willfully progressive and most unnatural character. Her chief trait is "awkwardness," a trait her radical associate, Sitnikov, shares. His only real pleasure, the narrator explains, is feeling and expressing contempt, and contempt seems to be the only emotion he evokes in others. His fellow materialists Arkadii and Bazarov are constantly putting him down.[67]

Turgenev showed, then, that materialism did not necessarily heighten respect for dignity in other people; still less did it enable people to manifest the "divine spark" of their own humanity. Indeed, there was a general discordance between materialists' principles, their experiences, and their actions. By pointing out these discrepancies, Turgenev had opened a breach in the materialists' defenses. It was up to radical journalists to plug it.

[63] *Ibid.* pp. 25, 48–49, 121.

[64] The arch-conservative Mikhail Katkov noted that Bazarov's negating stance and rejection of "phrases" was not motivated by concern for the truth, but was itself a phrase and form of dogmatism. M.N. Katkov, "O nashem nigilizme po povodu romana Turgeneva," in *Kritika 60-kh godov XIX veka* (Moscow: Astvel', 2003), pp. 143–169, here pp. 150–165.

[65] N.N. Strakhov, "I.S. Turgenev, 'Ottsy i deti,'" in L.I. Sobol'ev (ed.), *Kritika 60-kh godov XIX veka* (Moscow: Astrel', 2003), pp. 65–109, here pp. 78, 96, 98, 105. Strakhov may have been paraphrasing a remark Dostoevskii made about Dobroliubov: Dobroliubov was a "theoretician" whose knowledge of "reality is often poor." F.M. Dostoevskii, "G-n –bov i vopros ob iskusstve" in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 30 vols. (Leningrad, 1972–1990), vol. 18, pp. 70–103, here p. 81.

[66] Turgenev, *Ottsy i deti*, pp. 57, 94, 102, 105. [67] *Ibid.* pp. 61–63, 65, 67, 100–101, 103.

ANTONOVICH AND PISAREV RESPOND

Fathers and Children infuriated many a radical reader, but few can have been angrier than the intensely partisan Antonovich. His review, "The Asmodeus of our Time," published in *The Contemporary* immediately upon the appearance of Turgenev's novel, was so vituperative that it embarrassed many of his contemporaries. Antonovich repudiated Bazarov for being a poor caricature of the young generation. Turgenev's treatment of Bazarov was "hateful," and Turgenev himself was as "incapable of enthusiasm," as "cold" and "unfeeling," as Bazarov. But Turgenev had misrepresented the radical position more generally by accusing his young heroes of denying "all principles," of rejecting "everything," including art, poetry, "and . . ." (God, it is implied). By doing so, Antonovich wrote, Turgenev falsified the radical position. The young generation did have its principles, and its selection of those principles was not arbitrary, or "without cause." Here, Antonovich relied upon the quasi-scientific language of cause and effect. Young people held beliefs, but those beliefs "resulted from some foundation that resides in the very person." Young people recognized only one "authority," namely themselves; they accepted only those principles that "satisfied" their individual "nature" and that cohered with the "inner motives" of their personality and level of development.[68] Radicals' principles followed naturally from their experiences. Once again, Antonovich was trying to argue that a person could adopt materialism as a principle without that adoption involving an act of choice.

Antonovich did not, however, speak for all radicals. In the same month that his review of *Fathers and Children* appeared in *The Contemporary*, a very different interpretation was published in the radical journal *The Russian Word*. Its author was Dmitrii Pisarev. Unlike Antonovich, Pisarev was not the son of a priest, but came from a noble family of limited means. His career with *The Russian Word* had begun in 1861, at the same time Antonovich had started writing for *The Contemporary*.

Like Antonovich, Pisarev was a materialist and had devoted several reviews to works by the German materialists.[69] Unlike Antonovich, however, he praised

[68] M.A. Antonovich, "Asmodei nashego vremeni" in V. Evgen'ev-Maksimov (ed.), *Izbrannye stat'i. Filosofiia. Kritika. Polemika* (Leningrad: GIKhL, 1938), pp. 141–202, here pp. 144, 148, 160, 189.

[69] Pisarev reviewed works by Vogt, Moleschott, and Büchner in "Protsess zhizni," "Fiziologicheskie eskizy Moleshotta," and "Fiziologicheskie kartiny." See D.I. Pisarev in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (*PSS*), 12 vols. (F.F. Kuznetsov *et al.* (eds.), Moscow: Nauka, 2000–), vols. 3 and 4.

Turgenev's novel. In "Bazarov" (March 1862), he celebrated the hero as a "pure empiricist." Pisarev's Bazarov was such an empiricist that he found himself responding involuntarily to outward stimuli. No external "regulator" could be detected in him, "no moral law, and no principle" guiding his actions. This did not mean that Bazarov was incapable of calculated decision-making (*raschet*), but as a proper materialist, he based his calculations on his natural inclinations. Bazarov always acted in accordance with his nature, driven by "taste" and "unlimited impulse." Admittedly, Bazarov occasionally failed to take feeling properly into account. He tended toward a "despotism of the mind" that led him "arbitrarily" to reject natural inclinations in himself and other people. But this tendency was only caused by the circumstances in which Bazarov had been raised; these circumstances had bred in him a kind of extremism that would have softened, given time.[70]

Turgenev had provoked materialists by claiming that their theories were only scantly connected to empirical realities and that materialism seemed to prevent them from acting on their natural inclinations. Pisarev and Antonovich, coming from different angles, thought they had refuted him. Having answered this criticism, however, they unwittingly opened a new gap in their defenses – this one among radicals themselves over the very merit of scientific empiricism.

THE SCHISM OF THE NIHILISTS

The journals for which Antonovich and Pisarev wrote had never entirely seen eye to eye on the capacity of the natural sciences to solve the country's social problems. Antonovich and his colleagues at *The Contemporary* were enthusiastic about materialism, but they did not view it as the *only* possible source of progress in Russia: they believed that even uneducated people had a role to play in bringing about social change. Pisarev and his fellows at *The Russian Word*, by contrast, believed that meaningful change would only occur thanks to scientific advances and the spread of education. Peasants were too backward to contribute meaningfully toward social progress.[71]

The tensions between the two journals could be observed in Antonovich's and Pisarev's continuing dispute over *Fathers and Children*. Antonovich was appalled by what he considered to be Bazarov's indifference to the fate of the

[70] Pisarev, "Bazarov," *PSS*, vol. 4, pp. 164–201, here pp. 166–168, 179–182, 191, 192, 196, 199.

[71] The debate between the two journals is explained in great detail in Daniel Philip Todes, *From Radicalism to Scientific Convention: Biological Psychology in Russia from Sechenov to Pavlov* (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1981), pp. 15–67.

Russian peasant.[72] Pisarev, by contrast, thought this indifference entirely natural: Bazarov and the peasants had nothing in common.[73] The same disagreement would be played out in 1864 as Antonovich and Pisarev reconsidered Ostrovskii's play, *The Storm*. In 1860, Dobroliubov had praised Ostrovskii's uneducated heroine Katerina for her rebelliousness. Antonovich continued to celebrate her "primitive," "instinctual" protest.[74] Pisarev, by contrast, found little to admire in Katerina: she might be virtuous, but since her mind was weak, she could benefit neither herself nor others. To lead a meaningful life, people must be able to think independently and systematically, and this was an ability they could only acquire by engaging directly in scientific study.[75]

Having repudiated Katerina, Pisarev went on in his article "Realists" (1864) to repudiate instinct more generally.[76] People cannot base their actions exclusively on instinct, inclination, or feeling, because they do not always know what their true instincts and feelings are. These are not necessarily spontaneous responses to external stimuli, but often reflect culturally learned preferences. Worse yet, even if one's impulses are spontaneous, acting on them may lead one to become the passive instrument of changing external events and circumstances. People need to examine what they think and why they act in the way they do. They need a "large" aim in life, and acquiring such an aim involves choice: they must "choose a specific form of activity" for themselves, one that will be morally satisfying and useful to society.[77] This was exactly the opposite of the position Pisarev had taken in earlier years, when he had followed Chernyshevskii in trumpeting the dominating influence of "circumstances" over the volitional life of the individual.[78] As if he had not signaled his change of heart strongly enough, Pisarev now dismissed the philosophy of Büchner and Feuerbach as "childish."[79]

Pisarev was not the only radical to call into question core tenets of materialism. *The Contemporary*, too, was gradually edging away from materialism. Partly, this was caused by a growing sense of desperation among radicals: a wave of state repression, with tightened censorship and countless arrests, set in during summer

[72] Antonovich, "Asmodei," p. 190. See also M.A. Antonovich, "Promakhi" in *Izbrannye stat'i*, pp. 431–484, here pp. 470, 472.

[73] Pisarev, "Bazarov," p. 195; see also Pisarev, "Motivy russkoi dramy," *PSS*, vol. 5, pp. 359–388, here pp. 384–385.

[74] Antonovich, "Promakhi," pp. 444–445.

[75] Pisarev, "Motivy," pp. 363, 375, 385.

[76] Pisarev, "Realisty," *PSS*, vol. 6, pp. 222–353.

[77] *Ibid.* pp. 274–276, 241, 244, 299, 280–281.

[78] Prior to this, Pisarev had accorded "will" an important role, not in making free choices, but in maintaining self-discipline. Bazarov, for example, had an usually strong "will." It prompted him to act on his inclinations, to work hard, and think things through. (Pisarev, "Bazarov," pp. 193, 176, 170; "Motivy," p. 380.) But it was not involved in making choices. The term "choice" does not figure in these earlier articles.

[79] Pisarev, "Realisty," p. 249.

1862. Radical journalists, fearful that their young adherents would abandon the cause under these adverse circumstances, felt the need to remind them of their moral duty to work for political and social change. They also wanted to reassure readers that change was possible. In other words, journalists behaved as if the political environment were subject to their influence. Amidst these calls to action, the old criticism that materialism bred an attitude of passivity proved an embarrassment.[80]

By 1865, *The Contemporary* was prepared to give the floor to Lavrov, whose idealist leanings had been the subject of Chernyshevskii's attacks five years earlier. Lavrov now dismissed as a waste of time journal articles that popularized science. In "On Journalist-Popularizers and on Natural Science," he claimed that principles deduced from the study of the natural world cannot tell people how to organize their social relations. Moreover, he wrote, materialist determinism promotes a kind of passivity that is out of keeping with the radical spirit of social activism.[81] In making this last point, Lavrov was implicitly siding with Iurkevich against Chernyshevskii, Dobroliubov, and Antonovich. Remarkably, far from alienating radical readers, Lavrov gained a following among them that was to make him a leader of the intelligentsia for the next decade (see Thomas Nemeth in chapter 4). The materialist era in Russian radicalism was (for the time being) over.

THE END OF A DEBATE

Three reasons may be given for the relative decline of materialism in the mid-1860s. One I have already mentioned was the atmosphere of renewed political repression, which made the deterministic aspect of materialism unattractive. A second was that materialism had been undermined by disagreements among its most prominent proponents. In the early 1860s, radical journalists had touted materialism for its ability to provide unambiguous and precise answers to the country's most pressing social problems. Yet the vehement disagreements between Pisarev and Antonovich showed that certainty was illusive. Disputes between *The Contemporary* and *The Russian Word* over key issues struck a blow to materialism's mystique of objectivity.

A third and more complex reason has to do with materialists' changing attitude toward idealists. Friedrich Albert Lange observed that materialism

[80] Todes, *From Radicalism to Scientific Convention*, pp. 66–67.

[81] P.L. Lavrov, "O publitsistakh-populiarizatorakh i o estestvoznanii" in I.S. Knizhnik-Vetrov (ed.), *Izbrannye sochineniia na sotsial'no-politicheskie temy*, 4 vols. (Moscow: Obshchestvo politkatorzhan, 1934–1935), vol. 1, pp. 134–160, here pp. 148–152, 155.

flourishes where there is a healthy spirit of debate,[82] and this was especially true of Russia in the late 1850s. At that time, materialists might have viewed idealists as enemies, but they took them seriously enough to enter into polemics with them. Why else would Antonovich seek to vanquish Iurkevich? Radical ardor on this score seems to have dampened, however, as a result of the political polarization that accompanied state reaction in the mid-1860s: radicals were now more inclined to dismiss men like Iurkevich as political reactionaries unworthy of being taken seriously as adversaries.

Materialism returned to intellectual prominence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, thanks to theorists like Georgii Plekhanov and Vladimir Lenin. By this time, however, German idealism, especially Kantianism and neo-Kantianism, were finding new adherents in Europe and Russia. Plekhanov and Lenin were driven to take up the pen not only by their loyalty to Marx's materialism, but by their anger at peers who had drifted off in the wrong direction. The resurgence of idealism lent materialism new energy.

[82] Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus*, vol. 2, p. 71.