

Pluralism and Conflict: The Debate about “Russian Values” and Politics of Identity

Fedor Stanzhevskiy¹, Dmitry Goncharko²

¹*Saint-Petersburg State Institute of Technology (Technical University)*

²*Russian Christian Academy for the Humanities*

Abstract

This article addresses the issue of the plurality of Russian identities. The role of the “otherness” (as embodied by Catholicism) in Russian identity is addressed. The stereotype idea of the two traditionally opposed identities, those of elite and common people is corrected by suggesting a third Russian identity, shaped by the followers of the Old Belief after the split of the Russian Church. In analyzing this identity, one should consider not only the intertwined political and religious dimensions of the Russian identity but also its historical dimension. The Old Believers, owing to their worldview and way of thought, gave rise to a new anthropological figure which contrasts with the stereotyped image of the Russian grounded in the history of serfdom and rural community. This new type of Russian identity is associated with democratic governance, rigorous way of life, higher rationality, and dynamic and successful economic activity. Nevertheless, the history of the Russian Raskol reveals a latent conflict inherent in the Russian past and present and underlying Russian identities. Unlike the religious wars in Europe, this conflict received no resolution; instead, it has been repressed and therefore keeps latently affecting the Russian present. Present-day Russia should draw inspiration in the religious and political heritage of the Old Believers, if the conflict is to be resolved.

Keywords

identity; system of values; raskol (schism); old believers; pluralism; heritage

Introduction

In this article, we assume that the concept of identity and that of system of values are correlative, if obviously not equivalent; indeed, one’s identity affects the things that one values, while any system of values motivates a particular sense of identity. Therefore, when speaking about pluralism or conflict of values, we shall by the same token imply the issue of identity. One of the theses of the article is that instead of there being two Russian identities (that of the

* Fedor Stanzhevskiy (corresponding author), Saint-Petersburg State Institute of Technology (Technical University), 190013 Russia, Saint Petersburg, Moskovskiy pr., 26; stanzh@mail.ru; Dmitry Goncharko, Russian Christian Academy for the Humanities, 191011 Russia, Saint Petersburg, Fontanka embankment 15; goncharko@list.ru. The investigation is held within the larger project No 18-78-10051 “The Byzantine Roots of the Russian Logical Tradition”, funded by the Russian Science Foundation.

intellectual elite and that of the masses) there are three identities in Russia. First, we try to briefly describe the genuine forms of value pluralism in Russia; then, in the main part of the article, we focus on the issue of conflicting values in Russia. We try to provide a historical explanation to still existing conflicts in the hope that this is precisely the case when the history helps to understand our present. In the history of Russian identities, the political and religious aspects unsurprisingly intermingle; therefore, we are speaking of both religious and political values.

Linguistic and Religious Pluralism of Values in the Russian Federation

As far as pluralism of values in Russia is concerned, the most obvious basis of pluralism is due to the fact that there are 150 languages spoken in Russia (even though some of them are only spoken by a dozen persons), and therefore, there are so many different patterns of thinking, viewing the world and evaluating things – or, in other words, different sets of values. Indeed, if one is to believe the Polish–Australian linguist Anna Wierzbicka who seems to suggest a weaker version of the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis,¹ in languages there are entrenched distinctive habitual modes of thinking and evaluation (Wierzbicka 1997, 8). For example, the set of ideas expressed by the untranslatable Russian word *pošlost* (“spiritually and morally base, petty, worthless, mediocre and at the same time commonplace, devoid of higher interests and needs”) may seem strange to foreigners, but “from the Russian point of view it is a salient, habitual mode of evaluation” (Wierzbicka 1997, 3). Or, yet another example is as follows: the fact that the frequency of using the Russian words corresponding to the English “absolutely, utterly, perfectly” is much higher than that of using their English counterparts means that the Russian culture as reflected in the language encourages direct, sharp, undiluted value judgments, while in the Anglo culture there is a tendency to mitigate judgments. Generally, if it is true that different languages express different ways of viewing and evaluating the world, then the linguistic pluralism in Russia is closely tied to value pluralism. Certainly, the fact that the overwhelming majority of the Russian population speaks Russian brings some uniformity but it does not completely discard diversity.

To this form of pluralism, we should also add the religious component. Indeed, in Russia, various religions are represented, including Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and Paganism which are concentrated territorially in particular regions. There are also religions which cannot be associated with a particular region such as Catholic and Protestant Christianity, Hinduism,

1 According to the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis, language determines thought.

Neo-Paganism, Tengrism, etc. (Obydenkova 2015, 45). We should particularly stress the importance of Islam which is the second religion in Russia in terms of the number of adherents and which was already present in many regions at the moment of their acquisition (mostly by conquest) by the Russian government - notably, in the North Caucasus or else in Tatarstan which is situated on the territory of the historical Kazan Khanate. Most of Russian Muslims are Sunni (except for the south of Dagestan, where the majority are Shia), but within this Islamic denomination there are different schools, some of which are also present in Russia. Traditionally, Muslims in Russia belonged to the Hanafi and Shafi'i madhabs (schools of Islamic law). It is also important to note the traditional presence of the adherents of the mystical doctrine of Sufism in the North Caucasus (Yarlykapov 2012, 121). However, for the past two decades, there has been a growing influence of the more radical schools of Islam such as Salafi and Wahhabi which contributes to pluralism of religious denominations but at the same time remains a potential source of conflicts.

Conflicting Values in Russia and a Third Russian Identity

It is precisely the issue of conflicting values which constitutes the thrust of the present article. In fact, in contemporary Russia, there are several sets of opposite or even conflicting values. For example, one of the most salient dividing lines is the one concerning attitudes toward the October Revolution (or, according to a different evaluation, the Bolshevik takeover). According to the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (WCIOM), in response to the question whether the October Revolution actually expressed the will of most people living in the Russian Empire, 45% of respondents answered in the affirmative and 43% in the negative. 46% of respondents believe that the October Revolution was in the interest of the Russian society, while 46% are of the opposite opinion. There is a growing number of people sympathizing, on the one hand, with Lenin, Stalin, and Dzierzynski, and on the other hand, with Nicholas II and admiral Kolchak (one of the leaders of the White movement during the Civil war) (WCIOM, 2017). This divergence of opinions is due to many factors. Indeed, on the one hand, many elderly people are nostalgic about life in the late Soviet Union, which was much easier in many regards, and on the other hand, many people start to take interest in their family roots before the revolution, which brings in focus the fact that their families suffered from the consequences thereof. As a matter of fact, in contemporary Russia, there are numerous descendants of minor nobility, merchants, rich peasants, etc., who did not leave Russia after the revolution. At the same time, the official ideology tries to (inefficiently) reconcile both the

period of *Ancien régime* and the Bolshevik period by claiming both of them as the historical heritage of present-day Russia. In particular, in school textbooks, one can observe some feeble attempt at rehabilitating the figure of Stalin, wherein Stalin is presented as “a successful manager” and authors even try to find justification of some of his tough measures. Still, younger generations see the western model of development as obviously more successful than the postrevolutionary one which was adopted in the Soviet Union. By the end of the article, we try to show the deeper historical causality lying behind this split of opinion.

It should be emphasized that pluralism and conflict constitute the very keynote of Russian history. To use Norbert Elias’ terms, the civilizing process did not take place in Russia the way it did in Europe. Let us remind that according to the prominent sociologist Norbert Elias, the process of civilization in Europe was conducive to the formation of the social stratum of courtiers, within which new demands of self-control and constraining one’s emotions were imposed, while the thresholds of shame were raised (Elias 1994, 493). External restraints were interiorized and gradually became self-restraints. With time, bourgeoisie came to adopt the same criteria of behavior and thereby the same practice of self-control got extended to the middle class. Now, in Russia, this civilizing process was repeatedly interrupted – first by Peter the Great destroying old Muscovite customs, then (and that precisely at the moment when bourgeoisie was rising) by the October Revolution, and finally by the Revolution of 1991 which swept away the Soviet regime with its own forms of etiquette and its peculiar constraints of inner self-control. This fact could be used in explaining some behavioral peculiarities of contemporary Russians, but it also shows that conflict of values is inherent in the very Russian history.

Another value axis is related to the traditional (at least, since Peter the Great’s reforms) division of the Russian society into two unequal groups: the westernizing intelligentsia and the traditionalist masses. One of the main points of what follows will be to show the simplistic character of this generalization. However, such an opposition is not thoroughly groundless. The Russian elite largely followed western models of behavior (this process started even before Peter the Great, in the middle of the 17th century). By the beginning of the 19th century, some representatives of the Russian aristocracy spoke better French than Russian. At the same time during the Napoleonic wars, a deeper understanding of the spirit of freedom inherent in the West brought about some transformation of what used to be a purely outward imitation. Thenceforth, the Russian intelligentsia did not limit itself to blindly imitating external behavior of the western elites – instead, it creatively carried

the fruits of the western thought over to the Russian soil. In fact, even during the Soviet period, intelligentsia continued to be the bearer of some sort of universalist ideas originating from the West.

On the other hand, the history of the so-called common people in Russia is marked by the gradual consolidation of serfdom since the 17th century. Even if one considers the important difference between lands where *corvée* dominated and those governed by way of labor rent, it is clear that serfdom tended to suppress personal initiative and instill in people passivity, fatalism, and irresponsibility. Although there is some genetic link and continuity between the elite of the tsarist Russia and Soviet intelligentsia, there also exists a narrative line leading from serfdom to the figure of *Homo Sovieticus* (a line largely strengthened by collectivization under Stalin and by the period of stagnation under Brezhnev). Therefore, it seems that the gap between the intellectual elite and the masses never disappeared in Russia, even during the Soviet period. The two groups mentioned in a way constitute two different modes of Russian identity and certainly represent two different (or even opposite) systems of values.

When analyzing the semantic properties of the Russian words *sud'ba* (fate), *dusha* (soul), and *toska* (melancholy) which seem to reflect the Russian national character, Anna Wierzbicka distinguishes the following features of Russian mentality (Wierzbicka 1997, 33): emotionality, irrationality (non-rationality), non-agentivity, etc. The Polish–Australian linguist adduces a number of authoritative testimonies by Russian authors to the effect of Russian passivity, patience, submissiveness, and notably Tolstoy's famous idea of nonresistance to evil. Indeed, these somewhat stereotyped features of the Russian mentality are not completely ungrounded in the Russian reality. However, it is very important to understand that they do not represent the whole of the Russian worldview underlying the Russian identity and value system. There is another anthropological figure which manifested itself in the Russian history and could still be kept track of in contemporary Russia. Instead of being submissive and passive, this figure is active, creative and sometimes rebellious, ready to debate, and able to think and reflect. This type of personality was generated in the communities of the Old Believers under the influence of the worldview and lifestyle animating these communities. This figure appeared as a result of dramatic events in the Russian history which received the name of *Raskol* (Schism or Split) of the Russian Church and nation. We are deeply persuaded that genuine political thought necessitates historical reflection and in particular that it is impossible to understand value conflicts inherent in the present-day Russia without trying to retrace their historical sources.

This will help us to realize that instead of two opposed Russias or Russian identities (the Russia of intelligentsia and that of popular masses) there are at least three Russias, the third being the Russia invented by the Old Believers which despite appearances to the contrary has not completely vanished. It is important to understand that these identities are not just plural; the identity formed by the Old Believers was being shaped *in conflict* with the official political and religious identity. Therefore, instead of speaking of pluralism of values we should speak of a conflict of values, a conflict still to be resolved.

Catholicism: The Other in the Russian Identity

Before we delve into the phenomenon of *Raskol* as an important constituent of the Russian identity, we should note that identity is determined not only by inner reality but also, importantly, by “outer” relations with others. In the case of Russia, the paradigmatic “other” which constantly reappears in the Russian history and whose influence is always present in one way or another is embodied in the figure of Catholicism. The idea of the conflictual background of the Russian identity would be incomplete without considering the role of Catholicism.

Historically, Kievan Rus and principalities established after its decay in the XIII century did not immediately endorse the results of the schism of 1054 which split the Christian world into the Latin and Greek parts. For instance, there were two catholic churches in the city of Novgorod which was a republic and the political center of an immense territory extending from the Baltic Sea to the Ural Mountains. Catholic merchants long coexisted in Novgorod with the Orthodox majority and even were placed under the archbishop’s protection – even though the very need of protection speaks to some religious tension between Catholics and the Orthodox majority. Another influential Russian principality, that of Tver sought alliance with Lithuania whose elites were converting into Catholicism after the 1385 union with Poland. Therefore, princes of Tver had a tolerant attitude toward Catholicism. Situation was exactly converse in the principality of Moscow which gradually was becoming the chief center of power in Russia and which was destined to absorb both Novgorod and Tver.

Starting from the beginning of the XIV century, the Lithuanian grand dukes managed to integrate into their state the extensive western part of Kievan Rus including Kiev itself. By the end of the XIV century, there were two rival centers of unification of Russian lands – Lithuania in the west and Moscow in the east (with Novgorod in between). When Lithuanian elites rejected Orthodoxy and converted into Catholicism after the 1385 union between Lithuania and

Poland, the religious difference only added to the political confrontation. This opposition was at the origin of a fanatical anti-Catholic attitude in Moscow. In a text written in Moscow in the XV century and devoted to the Florence council, it is said that Catholics are not Christians and even cannot be such (Fedotov 2004, 164); in the late medieval hagiographic works on Moscow Saints it is said that demons wear Lithuanian hats. Interestingly, the only work by the Greek mystic Gregory Palamas to be translated into Russian in that period was his treatise against Catholics.

The growing integration between Poland and Lithuania with several consecutive unions (concluded with the definitive 1569 Lublin union) got this anti-Catholic attitude extended to the Poles. The situation was aggravated by the 1596 Brest Union, whereby several Orthodox bishops of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth entered into communion with Rome; the nascent Uniate movement received support from the Polish authorities, but clearly, it was a slap in the face to Moscow. As if this was not enough, the Russian–Polish relations worsened to the lowest during the Time of Troubles (1598–1613), in the course of the interregnum, when Polish authorities supported two pretenders to the Russian throne (false Dimitri I and II) and Polish troops invaded Russia.² Starting from this time, the figure of the Pole embodied the image of enemy, with Catholicism being its most salient feature (Polish kings' active religious policy toward Moscow contributed largely to the fact that "Catholic" was equated to "the enemy"). Even subsequent political reconciliation with Poland did not mitigate the animosity toward Catholicism which was already rooted too deeply in Russian minds. Interestingly, due to long-age interaction with Mongols, with pro-Tatar and anti-Tatar Russian parties, the Tatars were not perceived with such a "metaphysical" hostility in Russia; indeed, Catholicism was becoming the metaphysical "other" of the Russian culture with the whole set of concomitant affective attitudes ranging from fear and mistrust to the gradually nascent sense of own identity *vis-à-vis* the otherness of the other.

This awareness of the radical otherness of Catholicism with regard to the Russian Orthodox mind was crystallized in the image of the Jesuit. The word "Jesuit" is still often used in the Russian language in a metaphorical sense, mainly pejoratively. Historically, the first contact between the Russian culture and the Jesuits took place during the visit of an Italian Jesuit Antonio Possevino to Moscow during the Livonian war between Ivan

2 For the sake of objectivity, it is important to stress that this was not entirely a Polish–Russian conflict, even if it has been since perceived as such in the Russian collective unconscious and even in historiography; rather the Polish Commonwealth came down on the side of one of the parties in the *Russian civil war*; therefore one cannot speak here of pure and simple "Polish aggression".

Grozny and Lithuania (Poland–Lithuania after 1569). After the Polish king Stefan Bathory's victorious campaign, Tsar Ivan the Terrible asked Rome for mediation. In 1581, Rome sent its emissary, Antonio Possevino S. J. to negotiate peace between Muscovy and Poland–Lithuania with the view of getting Moscow involved in war against the Ottomans. At the same time, Possevino was entrusted with the task of negotiations with Moscow on the possibility of union with Rome (Danuta Quirini-Poplawska 2012, 244).³ The figure of the astute Jesuit diplomat defending Roman faith (he participated in debates on faith with Ivan the Terrible) must have fueled apprehensions about the dangers of Catholic proselytism among the Russian elite; noteworthy, papal authority was thought to menace the Tsar's autocracy.

In the XVII century, the Jesuits had an indirect impact on the Russian culture. The Slavic Greek Latin Academy (the first higher education establishment in Russia) opened in 1667 was inspired by the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy in Kiev founded in 1615. In its turn, the Kiev Academy was modeled in part on the Jesuit College in Vilnius which was to become the Vilnius University. Generally speaking, in the XVII century, many Orthodox intellectuals in Belorussia and Ukraine studied in European universities – in Padua, Cracow, Prague, etc. These men significantly influenced the intellectual and institutional climate of Moscow Orthodoxy. The Ukrainian Orthodox clergy educated after the Catholic fashion finally came to constitute the core of the spiritual intelligentsia in Moscow.

After the first partition of Poland (1772), Russia annexed the Belorussian territories of the Polish Commonwealth with some catholic population. After the two consecutive partitions of Poland in 1793 and 1795, over 4 million Catholics found themselves to be citizens of the Russian empire. Among them, there were 201 Jesuits (Inglot 2004, 14). In their apostolic work, the Belorussian Jesuits made a special emphasis on education, with the Jesuit College in Polotsk being the largest educational center in the whole of Belorussia. It was largely owing to the Jesuits' successive activity in the field of education that the Russian empress Catherine II inspired by the Enlightenment ideals of education placed the Jesuits under her personal protection. Indeed, Catherine went as far as to forbid in Russia any anti-Jesuit expressions or polemical statements against the Jesuits (Inglot 2004, 69). When in 1773 Pope Clemens XIV edited his *breve Dominus ac Redemptor* which dissolved the Society of Jesus, Catherine did not obey. The papal *breve* was to become effective only after its publication in every particular diocese.

3 After the truce was concluded, due to the Pope's intervention Ivan explicitly rejected all the projects of Rome.

Catherine simply prohibited publishing papal decrees in Russia without informing the empress, and the *breve* abolishing the Jesuits never became effective in Russia. In this way, the Society of Jesus survived in Russia until the moment of its final restoration in 1814.

When speaking about the role of the Jesuits in Russia, a special emphasis needs to be placed on the activity of the Jesuit boarding school for Russian nobility in Saint Petersburg. Many future Decembrists – aristocrats who rose against autocracy in 1825 – had received their education in this establishment. In 1815, its ten-year work was interrupted by a decree of Alexandre I banishing the Jesuits from Saint Petersburg and Moscow on account of their proselyte activity. In 1820, the Jesuits were definitely expelled from the Russian empire. However, even after the expulsion of the Jesuits, there were several conversions into Catholicism among the Russian nobility. One of the most striking examples is that of Prince Ivan Gagarin, member of one of the most illustrious Russian families, who became Catholic and in 1843 entered the Society of Jesus (he was the first Russian Jesuit, but he was followed by others). His essay entitled *La Russie sera-t-elle Catholique* provoked much indignation in the ruling circles in Russia (Harrison 2014, 2). Prince Gagarin’s case certainly did not make the Jesuits more attractive in the eyes of the Orthodox majority.

The entire history of Russia’s relations with Catholicism and with the Jesuits in particular as well as the expulsion of the Society of Jesus from Russia played their role in the formation of a particular stereotype of the Jesuit in Russia. The Jesuits ended up being perceived as the main force of Catholic proselytism and as an embodiment of cunning, perfidy, and hypocrisy. It is not implausible to suppose that such a stance toward the Jesuits was fueled by the complex and only partially conscious attitude toward Catholicism. The image of the Jesuit finally became a symbol of the mistrust and fear with which Catholicism as a figure of the “other” was treated in Russia. This attitude found its literary expression in Russia. In Alexei Khomiakov’s play, “The false Dimitri” the Slavophile author puts into Dimitri’s mouth the following words: “I know the Jesuits. Their cunning minds are inclined to insurrections. They rejoice in bloody disturbances. They hate peaceful silence [...] and therefore they dream of conspiracies” (Harrison 2014, 4). In Dostoyevsky’s works, the theme of the Jesuits is inseparable from the broader question of Catholicism; as a matter of fact, “Dostoyevsky’s novel [“Idiot”] depicts the Jesuits as the epitome of all that can be disliked in Catholicism” (Harrison 2014, 12). In Tolstoy’s “War and Peace”, one can find a scene of conversation between Princess Hélène Kuragina and a Jesuit in which the figure of the Jesuit might be said to

symbolize an external threat to Russia, while guileful and treacherous Hélène represents an internal threat.

Evidently, even personalities so refined as Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky were not impervious to the surreptitious influence of the image of Catholicism as an enemy. Indeed, this image was cherished so long by the Russian history and was so deeply rooted in the “collective unconscious” that it finally became inscribed into the narrative identity of Russia – no wonder that it is reflected in the works of men who embody the Russian spiritual and cultural heritage. This instinctive animosity to Catholicism reappeared in recent history – for instance, the Orthodox Church in the two decades after the fall of the USSR treated Roman Catholicism as its chief rival, remaining blind to the real menace to its authority constituted by Protestant denominations. One of the sources of contemporary policies of the Russian authorities toward the West is the antiquity of Orthodoxy, which is rooted in the collective and unconscious suspicion toward Catholicism. It is owing to this ideological heritage that the image of Russia surrounded by enemies imposed by some politicians still has a hold over some parts of the Russian population.

It is important to note that this is not the only attitude inherited from the past – suffice it to recall the names of philosophers P. Chaadaev and V. Solovyov who sought to reconnect with Catholicism, not to mention the aristocratic converts to Catholicism attracted by its politically emancipating power. Prince Pyotr Vyazemsky, a prominent Russian poet who spent a couple of years in the Jesuit boarding school wrote about his Jesuit teachers as luminous, attentive, and conscientious instructors who treated their pupils in a fatherly way, taught freedom of expression and never as much as alluded to the superiority of the Roman Church over Orthodoxy. In his autobiography, he speaks highly about the self-sacrifice and disinterest of the Jesuits (Vyazemsky 1992, 283-287).

After the fall of the USSR and the ensuing religious revival, it was precisely in Catholicism that many representatives of intelligentsia – the Russian thinking elite – sought answers to questions of faith. Apparently, the Russian attitude toward Catholicism represents some kind of repulsion–attraction, *odi et amo*. This paradoxical and emotionally charged attitude bears evidence to the significance that Catholicism has long had in the Russian identity down to its affective level.

At the same time, even though identity is to a significant degree constituted by relation with otherness, in contemporary Russia's case dependence on the other seems to be too far-fetched. Both politically and mentally, Russians define themselves through their relations with the USA, Europe, and Ukraine (many Russians think of their country based on stereotypes such as: “Russia

is no worse than America”, “Russia is better than Ukraine” etc.). Instead of defining ourselves exclusively through external relations, we should consider other elements of our identity. In historical terms, Russian narrative identity does not need to be defined exclusively through relations with the outward otherness (such as Catholicism or the West in general). In the remaining part of our article, we suggest a way of reconstructing Russian identity based on the inward otherness – elements of otherness inherent in the very Russian history taken in abstraction from any external relations. One of the most striking factors of this inward otherness underlying Russian identity can be found in the phenomenon of *Raskol*.

***Raskol*, or the Split of the Russian Church and Nation**

The split of the Russian Church (and nation, one should add) took place after the Council of 1666–1667. It was due to the fact that a significant part of the Russian population did not accept the reform of the Orthodox rites and Church books undertaken by the Patriarch Nikon. Nikon strove to harmonize the Russian Orthodox rites and books with those which was adopted in the Greek Church. This aspiration was in part politically motivated since by that time the Russian state had become the only autonomous Orthodox country, the rest being dependent on the Ottoman Empire or simply being part of it, with the notable exception of Georgia. In this context, the Russian tsar (as well as the patriarch himself) claimed that the status of the defender of Orthodoxy and the idea of unifying all the orthodox nations under the auspices of Moscow was beginning to loom large on the horizon. Although the circle of *bogolubcy* (“lovers of God”, predecessors and future thought leaders of the Old Believers) striving to reform spiritual life in Russia focused specifically on the destiny of Moscow, Russia, which was the last to preserve the genuine Orthodox faith, Nikon felt responsible for the fate of the Orthodox people beyond Russia. These were two different political and religious visions: while the value system of the *bogolubtsy* and soon-to-be *raskolniks* can be called nationalist, Nikon’s political and religious ideas were purely universalist. The universalist idea finally had the upper hand, the *Raskolniks* (or schismatics as the Old Believers were called until 1905) being anathematized and subjected to persecutions. The final triumph of the universalist idea is associated with the establishment of the Russian Empire under Peter the Great.

Nikon was an ambitious person: when the tsar Alexey Mikhailovich was absent participating in a successful war with Poland, the patriarch had himself called *gosudar* – a title which belonged exclusively to the tsar. Nikon had a strong vision of relationship between the Church and the state: he held

that priesthood is superior to tsardom, since tsars are anointed by priests, while the latter receive their dignity from God. Ironically, it is due to Nikon's activity that the Orthodox Church ended up being irrevocably submitted to the Russian state. The Russian Church Council convoked by the tsar in 1666, which was later joined by the patriarchs of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, deposed Nikon for his abuses of power, but definitively approved of his reforms. The Russian rite and style of Orthodoxy were decisively condemned by the patriarchs. Importantly, the Greek patriarchs also addressed the political issue of the relationship between the Tsar and the Church. Indeed, they decreed that the tsar was godlike as far as his power is concerned and that he was God's vicar on earth (Zenkovsky 2009, 224). The patriarch was put under the Tsar's authority as regards civil and administrative issues. The Tsar was given the right to depose the patriarch. Briefly, the Council established the domination of the tsar and the state over the Church based on the monarch's divine right. The Church ceased to exercise any autonomous political power; this act contributed greatly to the strengthening of autocracy in Russia. In a way the rules proclaimed by the patriarchs created a theoretical foundation to the idea of absolute monarchy, for even if Ivan the Terrible had considered himself to be tsar by God's grace, now this idea acquired even greater legitimacy due to the authority of the universal Orthodox Church. In the beginning of the 20th century, Nicholas the Second still believed in this idea, which was the source of many fatal errors that finally led to the collapse of the Russian empire. One can see that the religious and the political never ceased to intertwine in Russia, even with the definitive weakening of the Orthodox Church. Considering distant historical causality, the rules adopted by the Eastern patriarchs regarding the relationship between the state and the Church have become one of the sources of the separation of the Ukrainian Church which took place in 2018. Indeed, it is the utmost dependency of the Russian patriarch on the contemporary figure of tsar that hindered him from supporting his Ukrainian faithful during the conflict with Russia. This, in turn, contributed to the weakening of the authority of the Russian Church in Ukraine.

No less importantly, the 1666–1667 Council adopted all the innovations introduced before by Nikon. The Council also anathematized the leaders of the adherents of the old faith, that is partisans of the traditional, pre-reform Orthodoxy (the so-called Old Believers). Curiously, the Council also prohibited the *Story of the White Cowl* – a literary work which described the passage of a religious relic symbolizing spiritual power, from Rome to Constantinople and from there to Moscow. According to this legend, Russia became the center of Christianity after the Florence union and the fall of

Constantinople. In other words, together with rites and books, it was the very Russian spirituality and traditional value system, the entire way of thought that fell under prohibition. The Council revised the very history of Russia and rejected the idea of the special Russian way of being sanctified by God.

This decision brought about a desperate protest on the part of numerous clergymen, monks, and laymen. This antireform, traditionalist movement received the name of Old Believers. The Old Believers were declared heretics and persecuted by the secular and Church authorities; many of them fled to the forests or even abroad, to Turkey, Poland, Sweden etc. - according to Zenkovsky, there might have been up to a million emigrants (Zenkovsky 2009, 362). Some Old Believers fled to the North of Russia, others to the eastern Volga region, to the Ural or even to Siberia. In the 17th–18th centuries, up to half of the inhabitants of Siberia were Old Believers (Zenkovsky 2009, 379). Besides that, thousands of Old Believers committed self-immolation to escape the reign of the Antichrist. To understand this readiness to die for the possibility of making the sign of cross with two fingers (instead of three, as Nikon imposed), one should keep in mind, that for the Old Believers, behind the issue of the rites there was the more fundamental matter of the purity of their faith: the Old Believers strove to preserve their whole body of beliefs anchored in the old Russian culture.

In 1682, the four spiritual leaders of the Old Believers, including the famous archpriest Avvakum were burnt at stake (or rather in a log house, according to the Muscovite custom). The Solovetsky monastery situated on the Solovki islands in the White Sea region, one of the most significant and mightiest Orthodox monasteries, took the side of the Old Believers and endured a nearly ten-year blockade by the tsar's troops. Finally, it was taken by treachery and most of its monks were slaughtered.

One of the most dramatic pages of the history of *Raskol* (schism) is the lamentable fate of Feodosia Morozova who belonged to the highest aristocracy of Russia. She was an ardent partisan of the Old Belief and took monastic vows. Being an aristocrat, she escaped burning at stake, but instead together with her sister Evdokia Urusova and another fellow noblewoman she was starved to death in 1675. One can better understand the fury of the opponents of the Old Believers if one keeps in mind that the Morozovs and the Urusovs belonged to the 16 most illustrious muscovite families.

However, the most outstanding figure in the history of the early *Raskol* is that of the archpriest Avvakum, Feodosia Morozova's confessor and one of the most intransigent opponents of Nikon's reforms. His autobiography, one of the first works of this genre in Russia, depicts the figure of an ascetic man

ready to condemn depravity and to stand up for those insulted by the mighty. He was more than once beaten up by order of magnates, for example, when a nobleman took away a widow's daughter and Avvakum tried to talk sense into him. Avvakum ended up being burnt together with his three companions in 1682. When still imprisoned, he continued writing petitions to the tsar trying to exhort him. In his fifth and last petition to Alexey Mikhailovich, he modifies his heretofore gentle style and address himself to the tsar in a straightforward manner (Avvakum 1990, 104-109). He says that if the Old Believers are heretics, then all the Russian holy fathers and tsars and patriarchs of old are also to be considered such. The tsar, according to Nikon, died in his soul when he came to share Nikon's doctrine, and he is going to respond before Christ's judgment. The tsar is God's slave much like everybody else, and he is the lord over others only in so far as he is master of himself and of his own passions. Therefore, Avvakum suggests a political vision which is different both from Nikon's theocratic papocaesarism and from the Council's caesaropapism. The tsar is limited in his power not only by divine law but also by moral constraints, and he should be armed with the weapon of honesty and fight senseless passions. He will be punished by God if he does not follow the truth.

Nevertheless, Avvakum keeps praying for the salvation of the tsar's soul. He tells him of a vision in which he saw a terrible sore on the tsar's body which he failed to thoroughly heal. Speaking of another vision, Avvakum tells Alexey Mikhailovich that while the latter possesses only the Russian land, he, Avvakum, was given by God both heaven and earth for the sake of his confinement. In spite of all the above-said information, Avvakum still hopes to see the tsar in the world to come.

Most Old Believers went much farther than did Avvakum in their criticism of the authorities. Nikon's reforms were associated with the coming of the Antichrist and with the end of the immaculate Orthodox realm which had used to be embodied by the Moscow state. Now, this holy land of old was betrayed by the Tsar and patriarch. Some Old Believers saw the Antichrist in the person of Peter the Great. According to Richard Pipes, some *bespopovtsy* (priestless Old Believers) considered Napoleon Bonaparte to be Messiah coming to liberate Russia from the Antichrist and placed his portrait close to icons (Pipes 1997, 236). This mistrust to the authorities is still part of the legacy transmitted to contemporary Russia.

The Legacy of the Old Believers

By the 19th century, there were two radically different ways of life and systems of values in Russia. The first one was official Orthodox and roughly coincided

with the villeinage Russia, the Russia of serfdom. The second one was the Russia of Old Believers, where serfdom did not exist. Since, clearly, serfdom has weighed heavily on the mentality of the Russian people, it is all the more interesting to trace the legacy of a different Russia which represented quite different values. For example, many peasants living in lands where serfdom was customary, naively believed that all the abuses were due to the local people in power, while the tsar deeply cared about ordinary people. This belief in the good tsar and bad boyars reemerged again under Stalin (with Stalin’s famous criticism of “local abuses” during the collectivization). The very same belief has been revived in the recent history of Russia, whereby President is endowed with sacral power, while all the blame, in the people’s opinion, always goes to the functionaries. The political legacy of the Old Believers (especially *bespopovtsy*) based on utter mistrust toward authorities is obviously quite opposite. Admittedly, in terms of content, the attitude of the old believers suffered significant transformation over the ages – indeed, while initially it was a conservative movement aimed at preserving old customs, by the end of the 19th century they turned to be liberal since what they strove for was more economical and political freedom. Nevertheless, formally their attitude remained the same since both initial conservatism and subsequent liberalism were positions held *in opposition* to the government.

In fact, from the very beginning, the Old Believers dialectically combined tradition and innovation, since they had to defend their old faith in a changing and hostile world. They showed significant creativity and they created a peculiar and unique culture and worldview. It is this particular worldview, and not only the fact of their being a persecuted group, that accounts for their active and creative attitude, in particular in matters of business. The Old Believers formed an ethics of labor not unlike that created by the followers of Calvin. Although they were traditionalists as opposed to Protestant reformers, nevertheless similarly to the latter they also emphasized the national aspect of religion, and much like Puritans they found inspiration in the Old Testament and doctrines of labor derived from it. For example, for the Old Believers, wealth was not evil if it was acquired by righteous labor; moreover, they considered as blessed people who used their wealth to help their community. D. E. Raskov, the student of the economical institutes of the Old Believers, distinguishes the principal features of their worldview as regards economic activity (Raskov 2012, 143-146). He stresses the secular asceticism of the Old Believers, whereby business activity and everyday labor are endowed a sacred status. Lifestyle is aligned with the rules of Christian life, and labor is a matter no less serious than religious rites (which, in their turn, are equated to dogmas). This form of asceticism did not admit any sensual pleasures and

luxury – indeed some Old Believers whose business brought them millions of rubles never changed their modest way of life. Businessmen–Old Believers were distinguished by their discipline and high productivity, in part because it was their cause (their business) that mattered to them first and foremost, not just sheer profit or power. Importantly, the Old Believers' way of life instilled in them the sense of mutual trust and aid. The awareness of their chosenness drew them together so that merchants–Old Believers identified themselves with their communities and served the community's interests. Inversely, some of the great capitals made by Old Believers were born based on a loan obtained in the community. Moreover, merchants and businessmen were inspired by the imperatives of public service and strengthening their community. Wealth was not an end in itself but a means for preserving and consolidating the community and doing public service, generally - for helping their neighbor. Importantly, charity often went beyond the Old Believers' communities. On the whole, the Old Believers' worldview contributed to a more rational way of management, with such features as methodicalness, attention to small things and mutual aid favoring successfully doing business. Certainly, significantly higher level of literacy among the Old Believers than in the rest of Russia's population did but help to promote their activity. Indeed, the Old Believers had a *sui generis* cult of books – both peasants and merchants held books in much more respect than was typical for average Russians. Besides, the communities of the Old Believers were organized in a democratic way, which also provided free access to books for everybody. In big cities, the Old Believers also ran book centers and publishing houses.

The Old Believers' community kept some of the features of old rural communities, but these were creatively revised and reworked. They transformed community into a religious–economic communion which favored the growth of its particular representatives. The community had multiform economic structures which made its economic activity more stable; besides mobility of capitals was supported by the religious and moral ideology. Before the transformation of Russian capitalism by the end of the 19th century, with share capital coming to the foreground, the Old Believers' communities were the main regulators of business activity in this social group (Kostrov, 28). These communities created their own credit system, distribution networks, and system of raw material supply; they practiced mutual aid to the extent that some individual big capitals had their origin in the community. The democratic structure of the community helped to instill in its members the spirit of social and economic activity. The superiors of the community were elected according to their personal qualities and their commitment to the common good so that a mere peasant could become the

head of the community (Kostrov 2006, 29). This factor also stimulated the instilment of appropriate qualities and attitudes in individuals. Importantly, the Old Believers' families were highly consolidated and based on the idea of high respect for elders and keeping close relations with distant relatives. This is why most business dynasties in Russia originated from the Old Believers' families. On the whole one can conclude that the structure of the Old Believers' communities and families largely contributed to the economic success of particular businessmen originating from this milieu.

Carefully validated statistics adduced by D. Raskov in his book on the economical institutes of the Old Believers shows that this social group was much more active in business than the official Orthodox Russians (Raskov 2012, 75). For example, by 1850 Moscow's population included 5% of Old Believers, who covered 15% of business activity in Moscow. By the end of 19th-century Kuznetsov's porcelain factories run by an Old Believer yielded production worth almost half of the overall Russian output in this field. By 1867, Moscow Old Believers controlled almost half of textile and wool production in Moscow (which was the single most significant center of this industry in Russia) (Raskov 2012, 67). The Old Believers Guchkovs who owned wool-weaving factories invented a new method of carding wool which permitted them to completely substitute foreign materials with Russian-made ones. As for agriculture, an overwhelming majority of were big or average, with only 4 per cent of farms being light sized (Kostrov 2006, 43). Strictly speaking, one should distinguish the contribution of the *popovtsy* (Old Believers having clerical hierarchy) and that of the *bespopovtsy* (priestless Old Believers); however, for the purposes of the present article, we chose not to go into these details, however important they may be.

On the whole, one can fully appraise the paradoxical character of the Old Believers' contribution in terms introduced by the British sociologist Anthony Giddens. Giddens defines modernity as a post-traditional order which departs from the preestablished precepts and practices of traditional or premodern societies. Modernity is characterized, among others, by such institutional dimensions as industrialism and capitalism. Industrialism is defined by way of "the social relations implied in the widespread use of material power and machinery in production processes", while capitalism is a system of "commodity production involving both competitive product markets and the commodification of labour power" (Giddens 1991, 15). According to Giddens, capitalistic production and distribution constitute the central components of modernity's institutions. Modernity implies risk and constant choice between different alternatives instead of simple orientation to the past whereby activities

follow a predestined course, which is typical for traditional cultures (Giddens 1991, 29). Clearly, these definitions of capitalism and industrialism match the new economic reality in whose creation the Old Believers took an active part by promoting capitalistic production and distribution. From this brief foray into Giddens' thought, it follows that whereas the initial intentionality of the Old Believers' movement was purely traditional and aimed at preserving *preestablished precepts and practices*, its final result consisted in a substantial contribution to the overcoming of traditional society and institution of modernity with its constitutive features of industrialism and capitalism. In other words, while the Old Believers' gazes were directed into the past, their minds and hands were creating the future.

Political Effects of the Raskol: from Nationalism to Liberalism to Revolution

All of the economic achievements mentioned earlier and many others were made in spite of the fact that before 1905 the Old Believers did not have full civil rights. The initial severe persecutions lasted about a century and were mitigated in 1762 under Catherine the Great. However, they were resumed again under Nicholas the First. Marriages between Old Believers did not have a legal status until 1874, and even then they were associated with numerous humiliating formalities. Open religious service was permitted in 1883, but on the condition it was sanctioned by the authorities. Total police control over the Old Believers was demeaning and humiliating. It was not until the wake of the 1905 revolution that the Old Believers finally obtained civil rights. On April 17, 1905, Nicholas II signed a decree on strengthening the foundations of religious tolerance, which among others legalized the Old Belief as one of Christian confessions. The Old Believers were no longer considered as an opposition to the state and ceased to be called schismatics (instead, the term "Old Ritualists" was coined). The decade before the revolution was the time of blossom for the Old Believers, but it was terminated with the well-known disaster which put an end to old Russia.

The statistics of the Old Believers in Russia was purposefully or self-deceitfully underreported by the tsarist authorities; officially by the beginning of the 20th century, they counted 2% of the population. Real numbers were much more significant, although they certainly did not reach up the 20 million adduced by some researchers (Prugavin 1904, 17). Be it as it may, the important fact is that a significant part of the nation for centuries was completely ignored by the state and by the official Church. If one is to believe A. Solzhenitsyn, the Raskol produced a fatal rift in Russia's body which has become the source of

all the other conflicts inherent in the history of Russia (Solzhenitsyn 1994, 70). In particular, the split of the 17th century became a distant cause of the Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent split of the Russian nation resulting in the Civil war which probably did not end in 1922, but is still latently ongoing nowadays. Putting aside Solzhenitsyn's national mysticism (however not completely groundless), one can state with certainty that the rich Old Believers played an important role in the preparation of the February 1917 revolution which abolished monarchy in Russia. Merchant bourgeoisie (whose elite was formed by the Old Believers, primarily the *popovtsy*) did not want to be pawns of the obsolete bureaucratic system serving autocracy. The efficiency of their economic activity demanded from them political action aimed at constraining the power of the state and consolidating civil rights and liberties. The richest Old Believers financed the formation of the milieu wherein liberal values, opposition to the state control and protest against police abuses were promulgated (Pyzhikov 2013, 634). Unlike *intelligentsia* liberals, rich merchants did not hesitate to get in touch with more radical political forces, which finally led to the 1905 revolution in Russia, after which the merchants came to the foreground in the opposition movement. The historian of *Raskol* A. Pyzhikov remarks the dependence of the revolutionary movement on the interests of the Moscow clan of the Old Believers' bourgeoisie (Pyzhikov 2013, 637) whose aim was to discredit the authorities. Many figures of the Russian provisional government of 1917 were financed by Moscow merchants. Finally, the Bolshevik overthrow put an end to all those liberal aspirations. If one wants to schematize, one can say that while the liberal Revolution was prepared by the *popovtsy*, the Bolshevik overthrow was supported by many *bespopovtsy* – moreover, its utopian ideology was somewhat grounded in that of the *bespopovtsy* (Pyzhikov 2013, 643). As far as the level of the so-called common people is concerned, one can safely affirm that the Russian peasants were always under some influence of the Old Believers – if only for the reason that for the most part the latter provided a much more convincing and consistent model of religion and example of faith than the official Orthodox clergy. Therefore, along with the belief in the good tsar Russians held an opposite belief permeated with mistrust toward authorities. The tsarist authorities tried to downplay the role of the Old Believers to the extent of self-deceit with which they underreported the statistics. Uvarov's famous motto "Orthodoxy, autocracy, nationality" which became the ideological basis of the Russian monarchy was based on the false premise of the unity of the nation guaranteed by the unity of faith. The problem was that the alleged unity of faith was a fiction. Although in Europe the religious wars were concluded and received a definitive settlement either in the form of the *cuius regio, eius religio*

principle or were finally solved by the 30 years' war or else by the French Revolution, the Russian religious war was never concluded. This is why it finally led to three revolutions and a never-ending civil war which continues to surreptitiously split the Russian society and the Russian identity itself. This is why Russian identity is plural and conflictual by its nature. There is a seemingly irreconcilable (or not yet reconciled, at any rate) opposition of intelligentsia and common people, liberals and conservatives, authorities and the people, the capital and the regions, etc. Interestingly, modern Russian ideology is based on an attempt to revive the motto "Orthodoxy, autocracy, nationality" – indeed, the very name of the ruling party "United Russia" is quite telling in this context. In fact, the *Raskol* which never was brought to a solution remains a very strong archetype in the Russian collective unconscious which still continues to surreptitiously affect the nation.

Conclusion

The solution could be sought at the same level as the source of the problem. The failure of the autocratic model of government in Russia sanctified by the 1666–1667 Council has become evident after the Revolution prepared by the descendants of the people rejected by the said Council. For some reasons, contemporary Russia has seen the rehabilitation of this failed autocracy together with the bureaucratic apparatus associated therewith. We have rebuilt the same obsolete figure of the good Tsar, the same (even much more oppressive) bureaucracy, and the same Church which serves the richest and the most powerful and sets no moral example to the people. Part of the solution would be to reject the heritage of the 1666–1667 Council and to reassume the heritage of those who were then condemned. Indeed, it is clear that democracy is the most efficient and beneficial way of government. Yet, democracy needs time and should have deep roots – one cannot install democracy in a hypothetical Iraq where there are no historic foundations for it whatsoever (at least since Sumerian epoch). Therefore, the question arises as to where one can find the roots of democracy in Russia to make it more anchored and grounded in the local soil. Russian liberals sometimes refer to the Novgorod Republic with its *veche* (popular assembly) democracy or to the tradition of *Zemsky Sobors* (assemblies of the land). However, Novgorod Republic was twice destroyed by Moscow rulers and the last Zemsky Sobor was held in the 17th century. More realistically, perhaps we could reconnect with the legacy of the Old Belief whose very aim was to preserve the link with old Russia and who, by claiming to keep traditions in fact kept inventing a new Russia. The idea of civil society today could find inspiration in the democratic structure

of the Old Believers’ communities. Although the traditional rural community generated mistrust to individual farmers as unsocial persons, in the Old Believers’ communities there seems to be a dialectical relation between the corporative and the individual. Even if (when it comes to rural areas) concepts such as “traditional rural community” and “Old Believers’ community” are probably ideal types considering mutual influences, the difference between the two mentalities associated therewith seems to be real and effective. Besides, the Old Believers’ communities might include a number of social classes, and not only peasants. At the same time in these communities, the class differences were not emphasized – as said earlier, a mere peasant could become the head of the whole community based on his personal qualities. It is precisely personal qualities instilled in the Old Believers by their lifestyle that constitute another model that could be appropriated in contemporary Russia. Although serfdom together with collectivization and Brezhnev’s stagnation have produced the figure of passive opportunist with no or little sense of responsibility, the Old Belief brought up creative and proactive persons who made difference in the *milieux* they lived in.

Certainly, in today’s Russia, the Old Believers constitute a minority and have little influence. At the same time, the turbulent history of the 20th century has been conducive to a breakdown of many social barriers and blurring of many social and narrative borders between different people and families. Quite a number of Russians today can count some Old Believers among their ancestors and naturally share at least some part of behavioral patterns inherited from their forebears. Reassuming their family history would be beneficial on both the individual and collective levels. It is precisely this “intermixture of genes” (as folk biology would put it), or speaking strictly, that of different narratives and behavioral patterns, that deepened the conflict: while before the split concerned two parts of the society, now it passes through individual minds and greatly adds to the effect of Russian “paradoxicality”. In addition, speaking of the influence of the Old Believers we should keep in mind that they molded socially and mentally entire regions of Russia, notably the Russian North and (before exiles under Stalin) Siberia.

As far as the relation between the religious and political dimensions is concerned, much work in reforming Russia and reconstituting Russian values and Russian identity befalls to the Orthodox Church. Today’s Church is heir to the decree of the 1666–1667 Council which proclaimed the superiority of the secular authorities. It is only if the official Orthodoxy stops serving the interests of the state and undertakes a vast reform which will make it closer to the example set by the Old Believers that the Church will be able to rightfully

claim the formative function of shaping the mentality of the nation. Moreover, for some matters (if certainly not for the case of priesthood), the Church might find good inspiration among the *bespopovtsy* or priestless Old Believers. The idea is simple: if prince Gagarin, former governor of Arkhangelsk was right in attributing the increase in the number of the Old Believers in his province to the difference between the deplorable state of the official clergy and “the intelligence, eloquence, impeccable morals and rigorous way of life” of the Old Believers (Prugavin 1904, 70), then perhaps the Church has something to learn from them. Even if prince Gagarin’s evaluation is overexaggerated, and there were in his time as there still are in ours many bright and committed Orthodox priests, the general tendency of his thought remains valid. If there is any truth to Solzhenitsyn’s words about the fatal role of the *Raskol* in Russian history, then to solve the conflict it is not enough to pronounce mere words of reconciliation – it is also necessary to reassume the heritage of the long-rejected part of the nation so that the two parts of the nation become really one. It goes without saying, though, that when we suggest reassuming the legacy of the Old Believers, we certainly do not mean the revolutionary part of their heritage.

Reconciliation in a centuries-old conflict also demands a narrative engagement: the history of the split should not be ignored or silenced. Quite the opposite, it should be told and retold, discussed and presented in textbooks; much like in psychoanalysis the healing comes through speaking and listening. All the alternative attempts of constructing our identity are for now unsatisfactory. Our thesis is that in order to fully realize the genius of the Russian people one should study the history of the Old Believers. These people longed for the holy Russia which most probably had never existed, but in their longing, they were making contemporary Russia holier and at the same time more rational,⁴ they forged a system of values which could still be a source of inspiration, both religious and political. While at first motivated by the utopian longing for the Russia they had lost, they finally found the resolution to strive for a future, freer and more just Russia. Moreover, if one shares this latter strife, it is certainly enriching to reconnect with the past and to reassume the creative and inspiring heritage of the Old Belief.

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4 For reasons of space, we cannot dwell on this idea here; it should be the object of a special study.

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