Modernity and the theologico-political problem in the thought of Joseph de Maistre and Fyodor Dostoyevsky: A comprehensive comparison

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Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the PhD degree in Political Science

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Contents

ABSTRACT…….. iv
INTRODUCTION…… 1
CHAPTER 1
Maistre's critique of modernity and the coordinates of his counter-modern project…… 9
1.1. Introduction……... 9
1.2. Catholicism and Protestantism in their theological and political expressions……... 10
1.3. Providence and natural law in the thought of Maistre……... 19
1.4. The crisis of monarchical absolutism and its theocratic resolution…….. 35
1.5. From the contradictions of Rousseau's Social Contract to the justification of Maistre's theocracy…… 44
1.6. The nihilism of modernity…….. 60
CHAPTER 2
The contradictions of Maistre's counter-modern project and his vision of history and providence…… 67
2.1. Introduction……. 67
2.2. The decisionist moment of Maistre's ecclesiology…… 69
2.3. The contradictions of Maistre's attempt to overturn the Enlightenment…….. 74
2.4. From decisionism to a "philosophy of mystification": Joseph de Maistre as Grand Inquisitor…… 85
2.5 . The providential overcoming of the decisionist moment of Maistrian thought…….. 94
2.6 . From the temptation of panpolitism to prophetic apolitism…… 102
2.7 . The French Revolution as providential event and the providential character of violence…… 109
2.8 . The Tower of Babel, Pentecost and the New Age of the Holy Spirit…….. 124
2.8.1 **Josephus a Floribus** ***and "transcendental Christianity"***…….. 133
2.8.2 The paradox of a "heterodox orthodoxy"…….. 139
CHAPTER 3
Russia and Orthodoxy in the thought of Maistre…… 143
3.1. Introduction……... 143
3.2. Joseph de Maistre and Russia……..... 145
3.3. The Maistrian critique of Orthodox ecclesiology…….. 155
3.4. Greece, Byzantium and modernity……. 165
CHAPTER 4
The theological and political thought of the Slavophiles…….. 173
4.1. Introduction……. 173
4.2. Slavophilism and Westernism…… 175
4.3. Ecclesiology and epistemology……... 178
4.4. Russia, the West and modernity…… 201
4.5. The Slavophile political thought…… 215
4.6. The Christian democratic Utopia versus

theocratic Machiavellianism 229
4.7. Between Orthodoxy and Romanticism 242
4.8. Joseph de Maistre and the Slavophiles: A summary of similarities and differences 256
CHAPTER 5
The West and modernity in the thought of Dostoyevsky 263
5.1. Introduction 263
5.2. Hermeneutical perspectives 264
5.3. Catholicism, Protestantism and the theological origins of modernity 277
5.4. Dostoyevsky and "the modern idea" 294
5.5. The bourgeoisie, the proletariat, and the failure of the ideals of the French Revolution 309
5.6. The man from the underground 330
5.7. The collapse of the ant-heap and the necessary alliance between Catholicism and Socialism 338
5.8. Western individualism and Russian Orthodox brotherhood 343
5.9. Nihilism, the man-god and "the final Western solution to the crisis of order" 353
5.10. Dostoyevsky and Maistre on Revolution 376
CHAPTER 6
Dostoyevsky's response to the modern crisis 407
6.1. Introduction 407
6.2. The repentant return to the People 408
***6.3.* Redeeming the Enlightenment *versus* L'Autorité Contre les Lumières** 420
6.4. Nationalism, messianism and Christian socialism 431
6.5. Utopia and Eschatology 450
6.6. Incarnation and Resurrection 458
6.7. Between "Churchification" and Apocalypse 464
CHAPTER 7
The problem of theodicy in the thought of Joseph de Maistre and Fyodor Dostoyevsky 479
7.1. Introduction 479
7.2. Evil and the cosmic order 482
7.3. Antitheodicy and Revolution 490
7.4. Gnosticism, theological voluntarism and the origins of modernity 501
***7.5. The problem of theodicy in* Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg** 513
***7.6. The problem of theodicy in* The Brothers Karamazov** 537
7.7. A three-level dialogue between Joseph de Maistre, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and Ivan Karamazov 544
EPILOGUE IN LIEU OF CONCLUSION 566
BIBLIOGRAPHY 584

Abstract

In this thesis I compare the views of Joseph de Maistre and Fyodor Dostoyevsky with regard to the relation between modernity and the theologico-political problem. I integrate this comparison within the general context of the reflection concerning modernity and the theologico-political problem, as well as within the context of two Christian theological traditions, Catholic and Orthodox, on the basis of which the two authors develop their religious and political thought. In particular, I analyze the views of the two authors with regard to the origins and the defining traits of modernity. Likewise, I present their opinions concerning the consequences which are inherent in the modern project. Viewing modernity first and foremost as an attempt to build a secular world that would define itself by its opposition to what both authors regard as authentic Christianity, Maistre and Dostoyevsky emphasize the fact that, having theological origins that mark the totality of its becoming, modernity should be understood on the basis of a theologico-political reflection. Associating the modern ambition to build a secular world with the fate of the biblical Tower of Babel, both authors adopt a prophetic posture, announcing the collapse of the modern project as well as the ultimate eschatological resolution of the modern crisis. Yet, the two authors are differentiated by their interpretations of the relation between modernity and the theologico-political problem, identifying differently the theological origins of the modern crisis. In this sense, while according to Maistre modernity originates in the Protestant Reformation, for Dostoyevsky, modernity's origins must be located in the transformations of Western Christianity that have finally lead to the latter's separation from Eastern Orthodoxy. These differences of interpretation lead to the articulation of two different responses to the modern crisis, which are rooted in two different Christian theological traditions. Consequently, if in reaction to the modern crisis Maistre affirms the Catholic principle of authority, whose highest expression is the concept of papal infallibility, Dostoyevsky opposes to this crisis the Orthodox principle of brotherhood in Christ. The critique of modernity culminates in the thought of the two authors with an approach of the complex and troubling problem of theodicy, which, Maistre and Dostoyevsky believe, stands at the origin of the modern opposition to Christianity and its traditional institutions.

Introduction

This thesis is a comprehensive comparison between the religious and political thought of Joseph de Maistre and Fyodor Dostoyevsky, which is centered on the modality in which the two authors view the relation between modernity and the theologico-political problem. Maistre and Dostoyevsky rarely use the terms "modernity" or "modern" as such. But they refer in their writings to various paradigms, ideologies or cultural and political transformations which represent, according to the scholarship dedicated to the topic of modernity, distinctive or defining aspects of the modern phenomenon: secularization, individualism, rationalism, capitalism, socialism, revolution, nihilism, etc. Moreover, Maistre and Dostoyevsky are united by a strong sense of the unity of such modern phenomena, which, according to them, are all marked by the same *Zeitgeist*, in as much as they are all traced back to a common historical origin and point towards a common historical destination. The two authors also have a strong sense of the profound distinctiveness that characterizes the modern age. For them, although it is marked by a series of aspects which have existed also in previous ages, modernity appears nevertheless as radically distinct, if only due to the unprecedented intensity with which some of these aspects manifest themselves, but above all, due to modernity's rebellion against what each of them regards as authentic Christianity. Thus, we can regard Maistre and Dostoyevsky as interprets of modernity, whose works are integrated in the general context of the reflection concerning modernity, which begins at the end of the eighteenth century, or even earlier, and continues ever since.

For Maistre, modernity originates in the Protestant Reformation. Maistre perceives the Reformation as a truly diabolical rebellion against the principle of authority, which has been the ordaining principle of Catholic Christianity until the beginning of the 16th century, and which has

been replaced in Protestantism by the principle of individual judgment. In as much as it was the same principle of authority that sustained the absolute monarchy and the institutions of the *Ancien Régime*, Protestantism then becomes responsible, in Maistre's view, for the French Revolution, which, by overthrowing the legitimate authority of the French monarchy, inaugurates an age where legitimacy is no longer possible, and in its absence, society inevitably gets caught in a vicious circle of tyranny and anarchy that feed each other reciprocally. But beyond this aspect, for Maistre, the inner logic of a modernity, which is Protestant in its essence, must sooner or later lead to the disappearance of society as a result of absolute individualism. In response to the modern crisis, Maistre will then reaffirm the Catholic principle of authority, seeking to justify through his political and religious philosophy the authority of the monarchy, the authority of the papacy, and, ultimately, the authority of God.

For Dostoyevsky, modernity originates in what he also considers to be the diabolical Roman Catholic reactivation of the Ancient Roman imperial idea. More precisely, Catholicism, in Dostoyevsky's view, replaces the Christian principle of unity through brotherly love in Christ with a new principle of unity that is based on an exterior authority, the universal authority of the Roman Pontiff, which since then seeks to bring the world to unity through force. This radical transformation of Western Christianity triggers the Protestant reaction of opposition, which, in principle, is viewed by Dostoyevsky as it is viewed by Maistre: namely, as a purely negative opposition to ecclesial unity articulated in the name of individual freedom. This conflict between unity and freedom, which is at the heart of the Western social ontology, fundamentally unable to reconcile the two poles, defines then, in the opinion of the Russian author, the evolution of the modern West as a whole. The religious and political institutions of the West are defined by this conflict and, furthermore, the evolution of modernity is identified with the ever growing

intensification of this conflict, which, at the limit, can lead either to total chaos, or to the restoration of order through a universal tyranny like the one described in "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor". In response to the crisis of the modern West, Dostoyevsky then re-affirms the principle of Orthodox brotherhood in and through Christ. For the repudiation, in various forms, of this principle, is what defines, according to Dostoyevsky, the essence of modernity.

As it results from this brief outline of Maistre and Dostoyevsky's parallel interpretations of the relation between modernity and the theologico-political problem, interpretations that will be extensively developed in the thesis, the two authors see differently the nature and origins of modernity, and as a consequence, they propose different solutions in response to the modern crisis, solutions that express, in the view of the authors, the truth of Catholicism and respectively of Orthodoxy. But Maistre and Dostoyevsky concord in their belief that, having theological origins that leave their mark on its nature and evolution as a whole, modernity can be understood only on the basis of a theologico-political reflection. Moreover the two authors are also united by a common rejection of modernity's understanding of itself as an age that is essentially defined by the idea of progress. Instead of this optimistic vision which has been championed by the representatives of the Enlightenment, Maistre and Dostoyevsky propose a catastrophic vision of modernity - although, as we shall see, unlike Maistre, Dostoyevsky believes that modernity can be Christianized and thus redeemed from itself. Identifying modernity's advancement (at least, in the case of Dostoyevsky, to the extent that modernity is reduced to itself) with the ever growing deployment of nihilism, the two authors ultimately situate their Christian opposition to nihilism in an eschatological horizon.

Taking into account the above mentioned aspects, my comparative study reveals itself to be relevant for several reasons. Not done previously by other authors, my comparative study

represents, first of all, a contribution to the history of religious and political ideas in the 19th century. As such, it can contribute to a better understanding of this intellectual historical context, of its stakes, cleavages, and central motives. The thesis also represents a contribution to the general reflection concerning the relation between modernity and the theologico-political problem. In this sense, with the purpose of better understanding the place of Maistre and Dostoyevsky within the context of this reflection, as well as their relevance, I have tried to relate their theologico-political views to referential contributions to the study of the relation between modernity and the theologico-political problem, belonging to 20th century authors such as Carl Schmitt, Leo Strauss, Ernst Kantorowicz, Eric Voegelin or Hans Blumenberg.

One important aspect of my thesis, and a mark of its originality, is represented by the fact that I specifically chose to compare one author who belongs to the Catholic tradition with another who belongs to the Orthodox tradition. While the general issue of the relation between Catholicism and Orthodoxy, as well as the specific issue that concerns the different ways in which these two Christian traditions relate to modernity, are in no way exhausted by the comparative study of Maistre and Dostoyevsky, such a comparative study can nevertheless contribute to a better understanding of these issues. For while Maistre and Dostoyevsky cannot be regarded as official spokesmen of the Catholic Church and of the Orthodox Church, the two authors are nevertheless relevant as religious and political thinkers whose thought has been shaped within the theologico-political context of these two traditions, which Maistre and Dostoyevsky claim to represent. As a consequence, I have tried to identify the place of Maistre and Dostoyevsky within Catholicism and Orthodoxy respectively, often referring in this sense to the relevant Catholic and Orthodox theological sources.

Concentrating on the study of their major works, I begin the comparison of the two authors in chapter 1 with the study of Maistre's view concerning the origins and the nature of modernity. In this chapter, I also analyze the coordinates of Maistre's counter-modern project. If for Maistre modernity defines itself by the critique of authority, whose origins are located in the Protestant Reformation, in response to the modern crisis, Maistre reaffirms the authority of the monarchy and the authority of the papacy. The consistency of Maistre's counter-modern project is nevertheless questionable, and, moreover, the latter is exposed to some possible deviations that Maistre himself seeks to neutralize. I analyze these inner problems of Maistre's system of thought, in particular its decisionist potential, in chapter 2. Likewise, in this chapter I analyze Maistre's providential interpretation of modern history, relating Maistre's understanding of the French Revolution with his eschatological expectations. Satanic and divine at the same time, the Revolution both punishes the apostasy of the eighteenth century, and redeems those that are guilty for the Revolution through the blood of the Revolution's innocent victims, preparing thus the way for an eschatological transformation of all the world. Taking into account the fact that Dostoyevsky is criticizing Catholicism and modernity in the name of Russian Orthodoxy, I have dedicated the third chapter to the study of Maistre's view of Russia and of Orthodoxy, a study that, beyond its relevance for my comprehensive comparison, also offers us a better overall view of the Maistrian work. Criticizing Orthodox ecclesiology, which according to him ultimately reveals Orthodoxy as just another form of Protestantism, Maistre, who for a long period had been ambassador in Saint-Petersburg, sought to convince the Tsar of the necessity of reuniting the Eastern and Western Church under the authority of Rome, and of the need to reject any liberal reforms as far as Russia is concerned.

Chapter 4 has a specific status within the general context of my thesis, in as much as it does not deal with Maistre, nor does it deal with Dostoyevsky directly, but with an intellectual current whose understanding is essential for a sound understanding of Dostoyevsky himself: Slavophilism. While the main axis of my thesis remains the comparison between Maistre and Dostoyevsky, I will analyze the thought of the Slavophile authors in order to understand the theological concepts on the basis of which Dostoyevsky articulates his Orthodox critique of modernity. The study of the Slavophile authors is all the more relevant in the context of a comprehensive comparison between Dostoyevsky and Joseph de Maistre, given the fact that, while the political-theology of the Slavophiles shapes the literature of Dostoyevsky as well as his journal articles, unlike the former, and unlike Maistre, Dostoyevsky did not write specific works of theology. In this sense, I begin the chapter with an analysis of the Slavophile theological concepts of *sobornost* (organic togetherness) and *tselnost* (integral knowledge), which also represent the key concepts of Dostoyevsky's religious thought. Next, I analyze the Slavophile view of modernity, as well as the coordinates of the Slavophile theologico-political project, articulated in response to what the Slavophiles perceive as the modern crisis.

In his interpretation of the origin and nature of modernity, analyzed in chapter 5, Dostoyevsky expresses the same views as the Slavophiles. Thus, if for Maistre the orgins of modernity are located in the Protestant heresy, for Dostoyevsky, as for the Slavophiles, modernity's origins are located in the Roman Catholic heresy, and modernity is essentially defined by the conflict between the Catholic principle of unity without freedom and the Protestant principle of freedom without unity. The 19th century political conflict between bourgeois individualism and socialism, structurally reproduces, according to Dostoyevsky, the above mentioned theological conflict. The impossibility of the West to articulate a social

ontology that would harmoniously reconcile unity and freedom represents the source of the nihilist crisis, and of its revolutionary expressions, which are analyzed in the last sections of the chapter. In the next chapter I analyze Dostoyevsky's theologico-political project, articulated in response to the modern crisis. If in response to this crisis Maistre affirms the principle of authority and proposes a theocratic system based on the concept of papal infallibility, like the Slavophiles, Dostoyevsky attributes a messianic role to the Russian people as he seeks in the latter's experience of Christian brotherhood the resolution of the modern crisis. Moreover, while Maistre simply proposes a counter-modern project, Dostoyevsky and the Slavophiles seek instead to reconcile modernity and Christianity by subordinating the scientific and democratic achievements of the former to the principles of Orthodox spirituality.

Finally, taking into account the fact that the critical reflection concerning modernity ultimately leads in Maistre's case, as well as in the case of Dostoyevsky, to a reflection on the problem of theodicy, I will dedicate the last chapter of the thesis to the analysis of this fundamental aspect of Maistrian and Dostoyevskyan thought, as it appears in the most important works of the two authors: *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* and *The Brothers Karamazov*. The protest against the idea of divine justice, as expressed by Christianity, and the incapacity of accepting the theological thesis according to which God is both good and omnipotent, represents, in the opinion of the two authors, the most profound cause of the modern ambition to reorganize society on the basis of secular principles. Confronted with this protest, Maistre and Dostoyevsky will provide two different responses, which reflect the general coordinates of their responses to the modern crisis, presented in the first six chapters of the thesis. Affirming the generalized culpability of mankind, Maistre will present evil as a punishment that man deserves, but which God nevertheless turns into a providential instrument of redemption due to the reversibility of

merits, through which the just who suffers expiates the sins of the guilty. Rejecting the theological thesis that affirms the generalized culpability of mankind by virtue of the generalized transmission of the original sin, Dostoyevsky will argue instead that evil remains an absolutely incomprehensible mystery. And yet, he will argue that evil can nevertheless be surpassed through the equally incomprehensible mystery of divine love.

Chapter 1 – Maistre's critique of modernity and the coordinates of his counter-modern project

1.1. - Introduction

In this chapter, I will present Joseph de Maistre's view on the nature and origins of modernity that, according to him, begins with the Protestant Reformation and ultimately ends in nihilism. Likewise, I will analyze Maistre's attempt to re-legitimize the theologico-political categories of the *Ancien Régime*. First of all, I analyze in section 1. 2 Maistre's ecclesiology. Within this context, I present Maistre's views concerning the nature and the theologico-political consequences of Protestantism. I refer in particular to Maistre's opinions concerning the relation between the Protestant principle of individual judgment and the basic categories of political modernity. Section 1.3 is dedicated to the study of Maistre's political anthropology and of his providential historicism, articulated as a response to the modern understanding of natural law. Within this context, I analyze the problematic relation between Maistre's historicist critique of modern natural law and traditional Roman Catholic natural law. The analysis continues in section 1.4., which deals with Maistre's theocratic project, as well as with his analysis of the inner problems of monarchical absolutism, which in Maistre's view have finally led to the French Revolution. If Maistre's providential historicism presupposes a rejection of the social contract theories, section 1.5 concentrates on Maistre's critique of Rousseau's *Du Contrat Social*, a work that, according to Maistre, represents the essence of the contractualist philosophy of the state. In particular, I insist in this section on the way in which Maistre justifies his theocratic project on the basis of the contradictions of Rousseau's *Contrat Social*. Finally, in section 1.6, I try to demonstrate that Maistre's critique of religious and political individualism

indicates that, in the last instance, for the Catholic Counter-Revolutionary author, the essence of modernity is defined by nihilism.

1.2. - Catholicism and Protestantism in their theological and political expressions

The central thesis of Joseph de Maistre's *Du Pape* and the cornerstone of the latter's ecclesiology is the analogy between sovereignty and infallibility: "*l'infaillibilité dans l'ordre spirituel et la souveraineté dans l'ordre temporel, sont deux mots parfaitement synonymes*"[1]. According to Maistre, "*le principe fondamental*" of the Christian religion, "*l'axiome primitif sur lequel elle reposait dans tout l'univers avant les novateurs du XVIe siècle, c'était l'infaillibilité de l'enseignement d'où résulte le respect aveugle pour l'autorité, l'abnégation de tout raisonnement individuel, et par conséquent l'universalité de la croyance*"[2]. The Protestant reformers "*sapèrent cette base : ils substituèrent le jugement particulier au jugement* catholique *; ils substituèrent follement l'autorité exclusive d'un livre à celle du ministère enseignant plus ancien que le livre et chargé de nous l'expliquer*"[3]. As a result, "*il n'y a plus de souveraineté religieuse parmi les protestants…, le principe gouvernant y est anéanti*" and the "*livre séparé de l'autorité qui l'explique n'est rien*"[4]. It is simply delivered to the pure arbitrariness of interpretation, which necessarily results in an ever growing multiplication of factions. Discussion once legitimized in the sphere of theology inevitably spills over into the sphere of politics. As a consequence, the relation of structural analogy is doubled by one of

[1] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, Imprimeurs des Facultés Catholiques de Lilles, 1890, p. 36.
[2] Joseph de Maistre, *Sur le protestantisme*, in *Œuvres*, Édition établie par Pierre Glaudes, Éditions Robert Laffont, Paris, 2007, p. 312.
[3] *Ibidem.* I use italics for all the quotations in French. The words from French quotations which are written with regular letters are written with italics in the original French text. With the exception of the cases where I specify that they are mine, the italics from the quotations are reproduced from the original texts.
[4] *Ibidem*, p. 323.

historical causality, which makes of the French Revolution the daughter of the Protestant Reformation. According to Maistre, "toute discussion générale et populaire des dogmes religieux, emporte avec elle une discussion semblable des dogmes politiques"[5]. For this reason, Protestantism not only attacks the ecclesial sovereignty of the Roman Pontiff, destroying through this the unity of Christendom, but, sooner or later, it attacks national sovereignties, further destroying the unity of the European nations. Consequently, what distinguishes the Protestant heresy is the fact that the latter "*n'est point seulement une hérésie religieuse, mais une hérésie civile, parce qu'en affranchissant le peuple du joug de l'obéissance et lui accordant la souveraineté religieuse, elle déchaîne l'orgueil général contre l'autorité, et met la discussion à la place de l'obéissance*"[6]. Inevitably rationalist and by this opposed to the essence of religion itself, Protestantism is then the "*ennemi mortel de toute souveraineté, même de celles qui règnent avec lui, parce qu'en établissant l'indépendance des jugements, la discussion libre des principes et le mépris des traditions, il sape par la base tous les dogmes nationaux*", on which are based "*toutes les grandes institutions civiles et religieuses*"[7]. Thus, according to Maistre, "*le grand ennemi de l'Europe qu'il importe d'étouffer par tous les moyens qui ne sont pas des crimes, l'ulcère funeste qui s'attache à toutes les souverainetés et qui les ronges sans relâche ; le fils de l'orgueil, le père de l'anarchie, le dissolvant universel, c'est le protestantisme*"[8].

For Maistre, Protestantism is not only opposed to monarchical sovereignty but to any form of sovereignty. Protestantism is more favorable to republics, only because republics are less perfect forms of sovereignty when compared to monarchies. Unlike in the latter, in the former, sovereignty is dispersed. However, rooted in the right of individual judgment, Protestantism is

[5] Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, Librairie d'Aug. Vaton, Paris, 1859, p. 76.
[6] Joseph de Maistre, *Sur le protestantisme*, p. 312.
[7] *Ibidem*, p. 313.
[8] *Ibidem*, p. 311.

necessarily hostile to any form of sovereignty. Sovereignty must necessarily transcend the individual and realize the unity of the political body through the transcendence of authority. But this transcendence is necessarily at odds with the cornerstone of Protestantism, which is the right of individual judgment; or, otherwise said, the right to disobey. The natural state of the Protestants is then "*l'insurrection*"[9]. Therefore, "*ce n'est pas* cette *autorité qui leur déplaît; c'est* l*'autorité*". The Protestant who is republican in a monarchy is so only in order to become anarchist once the monarchy has been replaced by the republic[10]. It is in the nature of Protestantism to reject both the authority of an individual (the Pope) over the collective, as well as the authority of the collective over the individual. For this reason, since Protestantism ultimately represents an attack against the Church, and since the French Revolution is the daughter of the Reformation, then the 1789 insurrection, directed against the absolute monarch, represents for Maistre an insurrection against social unity, or, more precisely, an insurrection against the very existence of society. For him, it is in the essence of sovereignty, both in religion, as well as in politics, to be indivisible and therefore inevitably monarchical. Once sovereignty has been divided by its transfer from a single person to a group of persons, nothing can stop the continuous evolution of this destructive process of division. In religion as well as in politics, only an absolute sovereign has the capacity to put an end to the otherwise unending war of opinions.

Maistre's social arithmetic arrives thus at the demonstration of his fundamental sociological thesis: "*il ne peut y avoir de société humaine sans gouvernement, ni de gouvernement sans souveraineté, ni de souveraineté sans infaillibilité*"[11]. According to Maistre, any assembly inevitably heads towards disintegration unless the movement is stopped "*par le froid de*

[9] *Ibidem*, p. 312.
[10] *Ibidem*, pp. 326-327.
[11] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p 137.

l'autorité qui se glisse dans les interstices et tue le mouvement"[12]. Maistre argues that "*tout gouvernement est absolu; et du moment où l'on peut lui résister sous prétexte d'erreur ou d'injustice, il n'existe plus*"[13]. For this reason, Maistre stresses the fact that, independently of whether they truly are so or not, all governments "*agissent nécessairement comme infaillibles*"[14]; otherwise, government would be impossible for no final decision could be made. "*Ainsi*", Maistre argues, "*quand même on demeurerait d'accord qu'aucune promesse divine n'eût été faite au Pape, il ne serait pas moins infaillible, ou censé tel, comme dernier tribunal,* car tout jugement dont on ne peut appeler est et doit être tenu pour juste dans toute association humaine"[15]. Pushed to the limit, the analogy between sovereignty and infallibility determines Maistre to argue that in the conflict triggered by the Reformation, the issue was not "*de savoir qui avait tort ou raison, mais seulement qui était* souverain *ou* rebelle*, et sur ce point il ne peut y avoir de doute*"[16].

All of Maistre's ecclesiological argumentation in *Du Pape* rests on the premise that the Church is not excepted from his fundamental rule concerning the relation between society, government, sovereignty, and infallibility. Thus, Maistre argues that unless the Church is governed like any other society, it inevitably loses its unity and stops being Catholic. For Maistre, the principle of papal infallibility represents a confirmation, in the Church, "*d'une loi du monde*". And, in general, for Maistre, "*les vérités théologiques ne sont que des vérités générales manifestées et divinisées dans le cercle religieux*"[17]. As indicated by Jean-Yves Pranchère,

[12] *Ibidem*, pp. 94-95.
[13] *Ibidem*, p.36.
[14] *Ibidem*.
[15] *Ibidem*, p. 39 (my italics).
[16] Joseph de Maistre, *Sur le protestantisme*, p. 315.
[17] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 35. We are confronted here with a fundamental paradox, which we will later approach in greater detail, a paradox that results from Maistre's analogy between sovereignty and infallibility. Model of the European monarchy, the Papal monarchy is at the same time nothing else than the confirmation of a universal law concerning the structure of government. Maistre defends his theological views with arguments

Maistre's analogy between sovereignty and infallibility implies a vision of the Church according to which the latter "is a monarchy or nothing"[18]. Papal infallibility becomes the capital dogma of Catholicism and the basis of all other dogmas; without papal infallibility, Catholicism and soon after Christianity, in general, would cease to exist[19]. According to Maistre, just like a people "*ne peut y avoir d'ensemble ni d'unité politique*" unless it comes together around "*un centre commun*" represented by the sovereign[20], likewise, in the Church, "*dès qu'il n'y a plus de centre ni de gouvernement commun, il ne peut y avoir d'unité ni par conséquent d'Église universelle (ou catholique)*"[21]. Maistre staunchly opposes conciliar ecclesiology arguing that if the legitimacy of an assembly does not depend on its presiding chief, "*nulle force ne peut l'empêcher de se diviser, et nulle section n'est en état de prouver sa légitimté à l'exclusion des autres*"[22]. Maistre argues on the one hand that, especially in the conditions of a Church spread on all continents, a Council without an infallible Pope would destroy the visible unity of the Church[23]. On the other hand, given the above mentioned reasons, in Maistre's view, any local or national council, left to itself, can only lead to a religious war. And for this reason, Maistre believes that it is perfectly natural for all separated churches to fall, inevitably, under the absolute domination of the civil power. Nobody, Maistre argues, "*serait blâmer des souverains qui établissent l'unité civile partout où ils n'en trouvent pas d'autre*"[24]. Just as sovereignty is

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extracted from the theory of sovereignty, while on the other hand, he tries to provide a theological foundation for his monarchical absolutism. As we shall see, this paradox of his thought will inevitably raise a series of questions with regard to the orthodoxy of his ecclesiology.

[18] Jean-Yves Pranchère, "Joseph de Maistre's Catholic Philosophy of Authority", in Richard Lebrun (ed.), *Joseph de Maistre's Life, Thought and Influence – Selected Studies*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal&Kingston, London, Ithaca, 2001, p. 140.

[19] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, pp. 32, 342.

[20] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, Presses Universitaires de Frances, Paris, 1992, p. 105.

[21] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 38.

[22] Joseph de Maistre, *De l'Église gallicane dans son rapport avec le Souverain Pontife*, Libraire de N.S.P. le Pape, Lyon, 1838, p. 149.

[23] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, pp. 43-44.

[24] *Ibidem*, note 2, p. 288.

absolute or does not exist, likewise, a local church has to choose between the absolute control of the Sovereign Pontiff or the absolute control of the political sovereign. There is no third possibility. As a consequence, aside from losing their catholicity, according to Maistre, all separated churches also lose their apostolicity and become state departments. But what is more important, Protestantism inevitably introduces "*dans l'état un germe démocratique, ennemi naturel de toute hiérarchie*"[25], which sooner or later would bring about its devastating political effects.

In *De l'Église gallicane*, Maistre argued that the proclamation of the superiority of the Council in relation to the Pope through the declaration of the French bishops from 1662 has been the preamble of the subsequent proclamation of the superiority of the national assembly over the monarch. In the same sense, Maistre indicates the fact that Pope Clement XI has warned Louis XIV in 1706 that his endorsement of Gallicanism, with the intention of strengthening the power of the absolute monarchy in relation to the Vatican, was actually undermining the basis of the absolute monarchy[26]. Finally, in his memorial addressed to Tsar Alexander, in which he is trying to convince the latter, among other things, that Protestantism is the natural enemy of sovereignty and therefore must be fought by all sovereigns, Maistre quotes the following passage from Condorcet:

> *les hommes, après avoir soumis les préjugés religieux à l'examen de la raison, devaient nécessairement l'étendre bientôt jusqu'aux préjugés politiques; éclairés sur les usurpations des papes, ils finiraient par vouloir l'être sur les usurpations des rois... […] Les nouvelles sectes enfin ne pouvaient sans une contradiction grossière, réduire le droit d'examiner dans des limites trop resserrées, puisqu'elles venaient d'établir sur ce même droit la légitimité de leur séparation*[27].

[25] Joseph de Maistre, *De l'Église gallicane dans son rapport avec le Souverain Pontife,* p. 42.
[26] *Ibidem*, p. 150.
[27] Condorcet, *Esquisse d'une histoire*, etc., in - 8°, p. 201, 206 - quoted in Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, p. 109.

Maistre insists that "*la grande base du protestantisme étant* le droit d'examiner, *ce droit n'a point des limites; il porte sur tout et ne peut recevoir de frein*"[28]. Protestantism thus offers to the critiques of monarchical absolutism and, furthermore, to all future revolutionaries from all ages, "*ce qu'ils demandent: qu'on leur accorde le principe, ils se chargent des conséquences : ils se chargent encore de tourner en ridicule les hommes pusillanimes qui n'oseraient pas les tirer*"[29]. The Protestants are then not only the enemies of the Church, but, ultimately, they are the enemies of the State, and Maistre praises the political leaders who have grasped this reality and have acted accordingly. Thus, while "*Louis XIV foula au pied le protestantisme et […] mourut dans son lit, brillant de gloire et chargé d'années*", "*Louis XVI le caressa et il est mort sur l'échafaud*". And, Maistre adds, "*c'est surtout les enfants de cette secte qui l'y ont conduit*"[30].

Nevertheless, as it has already been underlined, Joseph de Maistre believes that through his endorsement of Gallicanism, Louis XIV has also contributed to the collapse of the French monarchy. For while Maistre admits that there can be more moderate and more radical manifestations of Protestantism, the latter remains essentially a single phenomenon. Being essentially a protest against authority, it needs only time in order to erode completely every single authority. Maistre expresses his admiration for the moderation of the French clergy and of the French monarchy, which have avoided marching to the end in the direction presupposed by Gallicanism. He has similar feelings with regard to the moderation of the Anglican Church, from which he expected that the generalized return to Catholicism will begin. However, Maistre clearly underlines the fact that there is no middle way between Catholicism and Protestantism. For him, "*toute Église qui n'est pas catholique est protestante*"[31] and, "*toute nation, comme tout*

[28] Joseph de Maistre, *Sur le protestantisme*, p. 325.
[29] *Ibidem*, p. 325.
[30] *Ibidem*, p. 320.
[31] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 322.

homme, qui voudra choisir les dogmes, les perdra tous".[32]No matter how small, any breach in the system which is based on the dogma of infallibility opens the way for the contestation of any religious and political authority. Implicitly then, any Protestant/non-Catholic is a more or less guilty accomplice of the French Revolution, which according to Joseph de Maistre is an absolute political catastrophe. Thus, for Maistre, there can be no Gallican or Anglican Counter-Revolution, for the simple reason that the Revolution – and modernity as a whole – is essentially a Protestant and therefore anti-Catholic phenomenon. For this reason, as stressed by Pranchère, Maistre's "*défense du catholicisme doit se présenter comme une critique de la modernité – dont la définition est d'être négation de l'autorité*"[33].

The structural analogy that Maistre establishes between infallibility and sovereignty and the historical connection that he establishes between the insurrection against the former and the insurrection against the latter, determines Maistre to affirm that Protestantism is "*l'ennemi de toute espèce de souveraineté*" while Catholicism is "*le défenseur le plus ardent de tous les gouvernements*"[34]. For Maistre, the fact that Luther had staunchly rejected any form of active resistance in front of the civil power was irrelevant. According to Maistre, the objective content of Protestant political theology does not matter. In fact, *there is no* Protestant political theology, and more specifically no Protestant theology. Since Protestantism means essentially the right of every believer to be a theologian, there can be *no Protestantism* but *only Protestants*. The only thing that they have in common is the protest and their only dogma is "de n'avoir plus de dogmes"[35]. By itself, the right of every individual believer to be a theologian represents a mortal

[32] Joseph de Maistre, *Lettres à un gentilhomme russe sur l'inquisition espagnole*, Pélagaud, Lesne et Crozet, 1837, p. 153.
[33] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières - La philosophie de Joseph de Maistre*, Librairie Droz S.A., Genève, 2004, p. 282.
[34] Joseph de Maistre, *Sur le protestantisme*, p. 324.
[35] Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, p. 183.

threat for the existence of all sovereigns, a threat whose fulfillment is, as already said, just a matter of time. To be more specific, for Joseph de Maistre, the fact that Luther's interpretation of the Bible presupposes the total rejection of any right to insurrection is infinitely less important than Luther's theological methodology. It is not Luther's conclusions that matter but his approach of the scriptural text. For once Luther has proclaimed Scripture as the single dogmatic authority and the right of every believer to interpret it by himself, the Anabaptist hermeneutics of the Bible (or any other hermeneutics for that matter) and Lutheran hermeneutics become equally legitimate according to Luther's own criteria. Protestantism therefore essentially destroys the possibility of social order, a fact that determines Maistre to affirm that it is worse than Islam or Paganism. If the latter two are religions that can support a social order, Protestantism is the enemy of any form of sovereignty[36]. Inherently rationalist since it recognizes no other authority except the individual conscience, it is therefore the precursor of the Enlightenment, or what Maistre will define as *philosophisme*. Protestantism is not only a revolutionary theology but the theology of permanent Revolution. Or, more precisely, like the Revolution, which according to Maistre is by definition permanent, Protestantism is unable to stop "*sur les flancs d'un précipice rapide*", and is condemned to roll "*jusqu'au fond*"[37]. Protesting against all authorities, a "*protestant dans la force du terme*", Maistre argues paraphrasing Bayle, "*proteste contre toutes les vérités*"[38]. Moreover, Maistre insists on the fact that a rebel/heretic "*n'a plus le droit de prêcher l'obéissance sous prétexte qu'il est ou moins ou autrement révolté qu'un autre*".[39] Not only does a heretic not have the right to preach obedience to another heretic but, similarly, a rebel does not have the right to preach obedience to another rebel. And implicitly, a heretic does

[36] Joseph de Maistre, *Sur le protestantisme*, p. 329.
[37] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 327.
[38] Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, p. 183.
[39] Joseph de Maistre, *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*, Poussielgue-Rusand, Paris, 1936, Vol. 2, p. 331.

not have the authority to preach obedience to a rebel and vice versa. In conclusion, just like heresy is a type of rebellion, likewise, rebellion is just a type of heresy.

1.3. - Providence and natural law in the thought of Joseph de Maistre

The principle of individual judgment that represents the cornerstone of Protestantism ultimately presupposes that the individual has a right to separate himself from society. But to the extent that the individual is himself a product of society, and, implicitly, of the authority that keeps it in existence, then he has a natural duty towards this authority, while his rights can only be positive rights granted by the existing authority. In the case of the Reformation, the right of disobedience was supported by the idea of a direct relation between the individual and God, which was short-circuiting ecclesial mediation. Implicitly, Protestantism was denying that the Papal monarchy represented a divine institution, in as much as its existence and authority found their ultimate source in the will of God. For Maistre, this contestation inevitably exposed all existing sovereignties. As we have seen, in reaction to this contestation, Maistre tried to demonstrate why absolute sovereignty is necessary: there is no middle way, at least in theory – and it is only a matter of time until practice follows theory –, between the smallest contestation of the sovereign authority and the greatest degree of anarchy. Maistre however will not stop here and will try to demonstrate that, just like the sovereignty of the Pope, the sovereignty of the kings has been instituted and is willed by God himself, a fact that inevitably transforms the rebellion against the existing sovereign, and, in particular, the French Revolution, into an insurrection that is first and foremost directed against God himself. As they rebel against sovereignty, Protestant individualism and rationalism must inevitably lead to a redefinition of

society itself in liberal terms. If the Protestants affirm the right of the individual to separate himself from society, for the theoreticians of modern natural law, beginning with Hobbes, society is the result of a contract agreed upon by individuals who exist in a pre-social state of nature. Society is then artificially instituted with the explicit purpose of securing the presocial rights that the individuals naturally possess in the state of nature. In order to protect these rights, John Locke attacked monarchical absolutism, demanding its constitutional limitation, while Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued that only a republican regime is compatible with men's natural freedom. Subject to the interpretation of the philosopher to the same extent that scripture is subject to the interpretation of the Protestant, nature then becomes a "*machine de guerre contre tous les pouvoirs établis*"[40]. After having argued that modern natural right and the modern theories of the state of nature constitute the philosophical basis of the revolutionary spirit of modernity, which, just like individual reason, knows no limit, Maistre will try to demonstrate that, just like sovereignty, society is both natural for man, and of divine origin. Against the abstract speculations of the contractualist philosophers, Maistre will point to the historicity of the societies that always pre-exist the philosophical reason and the possibility itself of philosophizing. On the other hand, the historicity of societies, which excludes their artificial constitution, also conceals their providential origin.

If the basis for the contestation of monarchical absolutism has been the affirmation of a pre-social natural right, opposable to the abuses of the sovereign power, Maistre argues that, being *already* socialized, wherever he finds himself, man is also already governed. "*Le gouvernement*", Maistre argues, is not a choice, but "*résulte de la nature même des choses […], car un être social*

[40] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 353.

et mauvais doit être sous le joug"[41]. If the popular insurrection against the absolute monarchy is grounded on the speculations concerning the state of nature, like Burke, Maistre mobilizes against the abstract speculation of the modern philosophers the empirical fact of human history. "*Toute question sur la* nature *de l'homme*", Maistre underlines, "*doit se résoudre par l'histoire*", and, for this reason, "*le philosophe qui veut nous prouver par des raisonnements* à priori *ce que doit être l'homme, ne mérite pas d'être écouté: il substitue des raisons de convenance à l'expérience et ses propres decisions à la volonté du Créateur*"[42]. Thus, Rousseau's discourse concerning the inequality of men appears to Maistre as "*une réponse faite dans le délire à une question faite dans le sommeil*"[43]. For if everywhere where he is found man is in chains, this means that definitely man is not born free and neither is he meant to be that way. This fact is declared by history, that is, by the human nature that *we know*. And history, according to Maistre, declares the will of God.

History represents an argument that confronts not only the democratic character of the idea of human rights but also its universal character. According to Maistre, while no nation can do without government, different nations can be more or less governed according to their cultural aptitude for freedom. As Maistre underlines, "*un peuple né pour la liberté a pu seul demander la grande Charte; et la grande Charte seroit inutile à un peuple étranger à la liberté*"[44]. Consequently, Maistre stresses that, being "*une pure abstraction* […], *une constitution qui est faite pour toutes les nations n'est faite pour aucune*"[45]. The intention itself of making a constitution is wrong, since the constitution always exists before being written. According to

[41] Joseph de Maistre, *Contre Rousseau (De l'état de nature)*, Éditions mille et une nuits, département de la Librairie Arthème Fayard, Paris, 2008, p. 61.
[42] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 96.
[43] Joseph de Maistre, *Contre Rousseau (De l'état de nature)*, p. 8.
[44] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p.144.
[45] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, in *Œuvres*, Édition établie par Pierre Glaudes, Éditions Robert Laffont, Paris, 2007, p. 235.

Maistre, a nation "*ne doit son caractère à son gouvernement*" but "*doit son gouvernement à son caractère*"[46], and "*jamais nation*", Maistre argues, "*ne tenta efficacement de développer par ses lois fondamentales écrites d'autres droits que ceux qui existaient dans sa constitution naturelle*"[47]. In the true sense of the word, Maistre argues, the constitution represents the character of a nation, which is an infinitely complex historical construction controlled by Providence. Therefore, a good constitution does not try to legislate the character of a nation, this being "*la profonde imbécilité*"[48] of the promoters of the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*, but simply declares what has already been written for centuries in the consciousness of a people by Providence itself[49]. Maistre confronts the will of the French revolutionaries to establish a new nation through the writing of a constitution with his providential historicism. According to this perspective, man can never make a constitution and no man-made constitution will ever be respected, for man can never respect what has been made by the hands of man. Instead, a constitution is the extremely complex outcome of thousands of historical events, in which the agents act freely, but without coordinating their actions. It is Providence, Maistre argues, that coordinates all these actions[50]. Consequently, Maistre makes the observation that while men have disputed "*avec chaleur pour savoir si la souveraineté venoit de Dieu ou des hommes*", they ignore the fact that "*les deux propositions peuvent être vraies*"[51].

[46] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 276.

[47] Joseph de Maistre, *Essai sur le principe générateur des consitutions politiques et des autres institutions humaines*, in *Œuvres*, Édition établie par Pierre Glaudes, Éditions Robert Laffont, Paris, 2007, p. 365.

[48] *Ibidem*, p. 378.

[49] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, pp. 279-280.

[50] We can notice the fact that here, the Maistrian critique of modernity appeals to an idea that otherwise plays a fundamental role in modern thought: the idea of a providential ordination of human existence, which we encounter for example in the thought of Adam Smith and G. W. F. Hegel.

[51] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 92.

For Maistre, at its origin, any sovereignty represents a usurpation, which, if confirmed by time, becomes legitimate[52]. If any legitimate sovereignty is originally a usurpation, not every usurpation proves to be legitimate in the end, although in every usurpation Maistre sees the governing hand of Providence, as there is no human action that can escape its universal government. Thus, "*si dans son principe, la légitimité a pu sembler ambiguë*", nevertheless, Maistre agues that "*Dieu s'explique par son premier ministre au département de ce monde*, le Temps"[53]. Likewise, Maistre acknowledges the fact that sovereignty depends on the consent of the people and does not rule out an initial transfer of sovereignty from the people to the sovereign. However, like Hobbes and unlike the Catholic theoreticians of natural law, he insists that this transfer is complete, unconditional, and irrevocable, so that the sovereigns cannot be subject to the judgment of those over whom they rule in any circumstance. If, according to Maistre "*il n'y a point de gouvermement qui puisse tout*",[54] for the ultimate force that limits absolute sovereignty everywhere is public opinion, he however argues that "*dire que la souveraineté ne vient pas de Dieu parce qu'il se sert des homes pour l'établir, c'est dire qu'il n'est pas le créateur de l'homme parce que nous avons tous un père et une mère*"[55]. "*Nous sommes tous attachés au trône de l'Être suprême par une chaîne souple qui nous retient sans nous asservir*", writes Maistre. "*Ce qu'il y a de plus admirable dans l'ordre universel des choses*", he continues,

> *c'est l'action des êtres libres sous la main divine. Librement esclaves, ils opèrent tout à la fois volontairement et nécessairement: ils font réellement ce qu'ils veulent, mais sans pouvoir déranger les plans généraux. Chacun de ces êtres occupe le centre d'une sphère*

[52] Joseph de Maistre, *Essai sur le principe générateur des consitutions politiques et des autres institutions humaines*, p. 366.
[53] *Ibidem*, p. 382.
[54] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 200.
[55] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 93.

d'activité, dont le diamètre varie au gré de l'éternel géomètre, qui sait étendre, restreindre, arrêter ou diriger la volonté, sans altérer sa nature[56].

According to Maistre, God "*a décrété*" not only "*l'ordre social et la souveraineté*" but also "*différentes modifications de la souveraineté suivant les différents caractères des nations*"[57]. Thus, for him, sovereignty derives its origin first of all indirectly from the social nature created by God, and second, directly from God's active participation in the formation of each sovereignty. "*Il est écrit*", Maistre declares, "*C'EST MOI QUI FAIT LES SOUVERAINS*" (Proverbs 8, 15). "*Ceci*", Maistre continues, "*n'est point une phrase d'église, une métaphore de prédicateur: c'est la vérité littérale, simple et palpable […]. Dieu fait les rois, au pied de la lettre. Il prépare les races royales; il les mûrit au milieu d'un nuage qui cache leur origine […]. Voici le plus grand signe de leur légitimité*"[58]. Sovereignty is also the result of man's sin and, in this sense, Maistre underlines the fact that the extent of sovereignty varies according to the degree of sinfulness. In this sense, in tune with Machiavelli and Rousseau, Maistre highlights the fact that the possibility of a Republic is directly proportional to the degree of religiosity of the people concerned. *"[M]oins un peuple a de sagacité pour apercevoir ce qui est bon, et de vertu pour s'y porter de lui-même*" (wisdom and virtue, which for Maistre are impossible without religion) "*moins il est fait pour la république*"[59]. If in *Political Theology* (a book whose author claims to have been inspired by Maistre) Carl Schmitt has argued that the modern contestation of sovereignty originates in the deistic denial of divine Providence and the Pelagian (although Schmitt does not specifically use this term) denial of the original sin[60], we can notice that this

[56] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 199.
[57] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 106.
[58] Joseph de Maistre, *Essai sur le principe générateur des consitutions politiques et des autres institutions humaines*, p. 366.
[59] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 219.
[60] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology – Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, translated by George Schwab, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 1985, pp. 36, 55, 64-65.

interpretation of political modernity is, indeed, already present in Joseph de Maistre's work. Maistre however is differentiated from Schmitt, as well as from the Augustinian tradition, by the fact that he does not strictly relate sovereignty to sin but he relates it also to man's social nature[61].

Maistre's critique of modern natural law is up to a certain point in accordance with the Roman Catholic conception of natural law. In the article *Civil Authority* from the *Catholic Encyclopedia* it is underlined that

> all errors in the theory of authority are rooted in the assumption that man's living in society, and thereby coming to be governed by social authority, is something purely optional and conventional, a fashion which man could very well discard if he would, as he might discard the wearing of green clothes. Men who would make society a conventional arrangement, and authority a fashion of the hour, have appealed to the noble savage as the standard of humanity proper, forgetting that the savage is no solitary, but a member of a horde, to separate from which would be death, and to ignore the control of which would be death also. Man must live in society, and, in point of historical fact, men have always lived in society; every human development is a social progress. It is natural to man to live in society, to submit to authority, and to be governed by that custom of society which crystallizes into law[62].

However, the author of the article emphasizes the fact that "civil authority is of God", but "not by any revelation or positive institution, but by the mere fact that God is the Author of Nature, and Nature imperatively requires civil authority to be set up and obeyed". "The divine

[61] In this sense, one may argue that, to the two theologico-political heresies of modernity to which both Maistre and Schmitt refer, Maistre adds another one: the individualistic denial of society that appears as a reflection of Protestant ecclesiology. On the other hand, we should once again recall the fact that, for Maistre, the Protestant character of modernity is essentially related to the Protestant principle of individual judgment, and not to the specific formulations of Protestant theologians. Indeed, one may argue for example that, far from denying the doctrine of original sin, Luther and Calvin have, on the contrary, defended a view of human nature that was far more pessimistic than that of Roman Catholic anthropology. Nor were the German and Swiss initiators of the Reformation deists. Yet, for Maistre, Pelagianism and deism, like all other theologico-political heresies, are legitimate developments of the founding principle of Protestantism, which is the right of individual judgment. If all the French would have strictly followed Luther's theologico-political views, there would have certainly been no French Revolution. However, for Maistre, while Luther was not, and could not be an authority, yet, instigating to rebellion against the principle of Papal infallibility, he had attacked the institution on which both the fate of sovereignty, and that of orthodoxy (in the Roman Catholic sense of the term) depended, and he has thus laid the foundation for all the other modern developments.

[62] Joseph Rickaby, "Civil Authority." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*.Vol. 2. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907. http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02137c.htm .

right of kings", which presupposes that "the civil ruler" is "as much an institution of Christ as the pope himself, and, like the pope, enjoyed a God-given authority, no portion of which could validly be taken from him, has never been sanctioned by the Catholic Church"[63]. Thus, as stressed by Jean-Luc Chabot, Joseph de Maistre ignores the fact that "*[t]andis que l'Eglise a été explicitement voulue et fondée par le Christ* ('de jure divino')*, il n'en est rien pour l'Etat qu'il laisse à la libre gestion des hommes […] Dieu […] est le législateur suprême de toute chose, mais alors que la société politique relève du droit naturel, l'Eglise relève du droit divin positif*"[64]. Moreover, some theologians, like Max Huber, have argued that Maistre's theory concerning the providential origin of sovereignty effectively denies both human freedom as well as the existence of a nature distinct from God, which can serve as the normative basis for the evaluation of the different existing sovereignties. As a consequence, Maistre's providentialism would eventually degenerate into some form of pantheism, which transforms all natural processes and all human actions into a direct manifestation of the will of God[65]. Robert Triomphe also argues that the basis of the Maistrian system of thought is a confusion between God and nature, which transforms his whole vision of the world into a "*matérialisme mystique (ou syncrétisme pagano-chrétien) sur lequel Maistre a mis l'étiquette de l'orthodoxie catholique*"[66]. While admitting that many passages from Maistre's work may justify such an interpretation,

[63] *Ibidem*.

[64] Jean-Luc Chabot, "Théologie et politique chez Joseph de Maistre: Les insuffisances théologiques de la pensée maistrienne", in *Revue des études maistriennes*, no.14, 2004, p. 315.

[65] Richard Lebrun, *Throne and Altar: The Political and Religious Thought of Joseph de Maistre*, University of Ottawa Press, Ottawa, 1965, pp. 33-34, 70-75, 93-96, 102 (In *Throne and Altar*, Lebrun resumes Huber's position expressed in his book written in German, *Die Staatsphilosophie von Joseph de Maistre im Lichte des Thomismus*, Basel, Helbing and Lichtenhahn, 1958, book which has not been translated). More precisely, Huber argues that Maistre's thought is marked by the heresy of occasionalism, "the metaphysical theory which maintains that finite things have no efficient causality of their own, but that whatever happens in the world is caused by God, creatures being merely the *occasions* of the Divine activity" (Moore, Thomas. "Occasionalism."The Catholic Encyclopedia.Vol. 11. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911. 27 May 2012 http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11195b.htm)

[66] Robert Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre: Étude sur la vie et la doctrine d'un matérialiste mystique*, Librairie Droz, Genève, 1968, pp. 434, 592.

Richard Lebrun expresses reservations with regard to the harshness of the above mentioned accusations, pointing towards other passages from Maistre's work that may contradict this interpretation. Furthermore, Lebrun stresses the fact that Maistre wrote in a period when the Catholic tradition of natural law had fallen into oblivion, and that his tendency to exaggerate the role played by God in the establishment of sovereignty should be understood as an understandable reaction to the modern conception of natural law. The more so since Maistre explicitly stated that he will retract immediately any theory that may be condemned by the *Magisterium* of the Catholic Church[67].

If, according to Maistre, Providence ordains to each nation its own specific regime, then just as freedom is natural and legitimate for England, likewise, tyranny is natural and legitimate in Asia. In fact, Maistre's providential historicism presupposes not only that "*il n'y a point d'homme dans le monde*" but only French, Russians, Italians[68], etc., but also that "*chaque peuple remplit sa mission*". *"[N]ous méprisons les Orientaux, et ils nous méprisent*". And yet, Maistre asks himself, "*où est le juge entre nous?*"[69]. The Islamic religion itself is willed by God![70] One clearly sees the relativistic implications of Maistre's providential historicism. One may even argue that in the above quoted instances Maistre comes extremely close to what may be regarded as a postmodern sensitivity[71]. It seems that by pointing to the existence of multiple historical

[67] Richard Lebrun, *Throne and Altar*, pp. 34, 73, 93, 96, 112-113.
[68] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 235.
[69] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 277.
[70] *Ibidem*, pp. 271-280.
[71] In the last chapter of *De la souveraineté du peuple*, where he describes in epic terms the military glory of Islam, Maistre practially criticizes Eurocentrism with the argument that "chaque peuple remplit sa mission". Delcaring that Europeans should not think that their civilization is always, and in every of its apsects, better than other civilizations, Maistre also argues that *"[l]es Turcs sont foibles dans ce moment, et d'autres peuples les écrasent parce que ces disciples du Coran*" are trying to Europeanize themselves (*Ibidem*, pp. 274, 277). While such statements seem to indicate that the ultra-reactionary Maistre has much more to do with contemporary multiculturalists than with contemporary neoconservatives, a totally different attitude sems to be manifested by the author in *Du Pape*, where, refering to the crusades, he declares that "*sans ces guerres saintes toute la race humaine serait peut-être encore de nos jours dégradée jusqu'aux plus profonds abîmes de la servitude et de la barbarie*" (Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 316). The two apparently conflicting positions are reflective of the tension between

differences that cannot be evaluated with a single universal human standard, Maistre lays the ground for a historicist rejection of the idea of natural law. And if in the case of Nietzsche's historicism the common denominator that reunited all historical societies was the universality of the will to power, Maistre's common denominator and, as such, the Maistrian "natural law", is the fact of sovereignty. For Maistre, the fact of sovereignty is the single universal law that can be deduced from the multitude of particular histories that compose the totality of the human experience. Before being an "ought", sovereignty "is". And given the fact that it has existed always and everywhere, Maistre deduces that sovereignty represents an expression of the divine will and, as such, also represents what "ought" to be. However, Lebrun argues that Maistre does not deny the existence of natural law in the traditional understanding of the term and does not consider a law to be just simply for the fact that it has been issued by the legitimate authority. According to Pranchère, in order to understand Maistre, one must take into account the fact that "*le paradoxe constitutif de son providentialisme […] oblige à identifier le mal au Bien en tant qu'instrument de Dieu*", and at the same time, "*ne peut cependant renoncer à reconnaître le mal dans son caractère maléfique*"[72]. Thus, although legitimate in specific historical circumstances as the work of Providence, tyranny remains for Maistre bad in itself. More specifically, Pranchère makes the distinction between a natural law that can limit the rights of sovereignty, which Maistre completely rejects, and "a divine or morally innate law", in which Maistre believes; a moral law that manifests itself infallibly to each individual conscience, separating right from wrong[73]. It appears therefore that Maistre's system of thought remains essentially contradictory and unstable, suspended between a historicist conception that invites moral relativism, on the one

Maistre's Catholic universalism and his providential historicism, a tension that, as we shall see, marks his whole religious and political thought.

[72] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 30.

[73] *Ibidem*, p. 159; See also Richard Lebrun, *Throne and Altar*, pp. 52-53.

hand, and the concomitant rejection of the latter through the affirmation of universal moral norms, on the other hand. But although the individual conscience is infallible when it comes to moral judgments, so as to always condemn those who commit immoral deeds, Maistre refuses under any circumstances the right of the citizen or of the magistrate to refuse to obey the sovereign, with the exception of the passive refusal to commit a crime if ordered so. According to Lebrun, Maistre's refusal is based on two reasons: first of all because this would inevitably lead to anarchy, and second, because of "the practical difficulties of discovering the content of the natural law"[74]. Maistre says that he does not know "if there are five or six laws in the world that haven't been criticized by someone". "But I know well", he adds, "that no writer attacks one without deducing his reasoning in a straight line from the natural law"[75]. Otherwise said, not having a voice of its own, nature is subject to interpretation. Hence, a regime based on the natural law, without the indication of the infallible authority that alone possesses the right of interpreting this law, is what Maistre calls, with a pejorative connotation, a philosophical regime, the kind of regime that can only lead to a generalized war between conflicting interpretations, and hence, to the inevitable dissolution of the social bond.

Lebrun has argued that the Maistrian understanding of natural law and the theory of sovereignty attached to it differ from the Thomistic tradition. The Catholic doctrine of natural law presupposes that sovereignty resides initially in the people that transfers it to the sovereign power. "Civil authority", as indicated by Joseph Rickaby, "is not the immediate gift of God to the king, but is given by God to the people collectively, and by them bestowed on the

[74] Richard Lebrun, "Maistre and Natural Law", in *Maistre Studies*, translated and edited by Richard Lebrun, University Press of America, Lanham, New York, London, 1988, pp. 201-202.

[75] Joseph de Maistre, quoted in Richard Lebrun, "Maistre and Natural Law", p. 201. (Lebrun quotes from an unpublished manuscript written by Maistre sometimes between 1786 and 1789).

monarch"[76]. For Maistre, an initial transfer of sovereignty is only a possibility, which does not affect the fact that ultimately, independently of the fact that it uses a people as its agent, it is still the divine Providence that represents the direct source of sovereignty. According to Richard Lebrun, Maistre's theory concerning the origin of sovereignty corresponds to what Heinrich Rommen names "the mystical divine right of kings", a theory that did not have any influence in Catholic political philosophy, although there have been some Catholic authors that have defended it[77]. However, even in the case of a transfer of sovereignty, Maistre insists on the fact that once transferred, sovereignty belongs completely to the sovereign, so that the people's attempt to re-appropriate it is illegitimate and contrary to the will of God, whatever the circumstances. Trying to convince the Tsar that the Catholic Church is the irreducible opponent of the right to insurrection, Maistre wrote in *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie* that, in what concerns sovereignty, "*Dieu lui-même en est l'auteur, et c'est à lui qu'on obéit dans la personne du souverain. Pour nulle raison*", Maistre continues, "*on ne peut le juger, et pour nulle raison on ne peut lui désobéir, sauf le crime; et s'il commande un crime, il faut se laisser tuer; mais la personne du souverain est sacrée, et rien ne peut excuser une révolte*"[78].

Limiting sovereignty by the doctrine of natural law, the Catholic Church teaches that the sovereign power preserves its legitimacy as long as sovereignty is exercised in accordance with the law of nature, for the common good. "Natural law", is supposed to be "the foundation of all human law inasmuch as it ordains that man shall live in society, and society for its constitution requires the existence of an authority, which shall possess the moral power necessary to control the members and direct them to the common good". However, "human laws are valid and equitable only in so far as they correspond with, and enforce or supplement the natural law; they

[76] Joseph Rickaby, "Civil Authority."
[77] Richard Lebrun, *Throne and Altar*, pp. 106-108; see also Richard Lebrun, "Maistre and Natural Law", p. 196.
[78] Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, p. 186.

are null and void when they conflict with it"[79]. Moreover, according to Thomas Aquinas, if the purpose of government is not the common good, unlike what Maistre argues, rebellion becomes legitimate. According to Aquinas, "a tyrannical government is not just, because it is directed, not to the common good, but to the private good of the ruler", and as a consequence, Aquinas argues that "there is no sedition" (sedition which otherwise is defined by Thomas Aquinas as a mortal sin) "in disturbing a government of this kind, unless indeed the tyrant's rule be disturbed so inordinately, that his subjects suffer greater harm from the consequent disturbance than from the tyrant's government"[80]. Paradoxically, it is Luther, the archenemy of sovereignty according to Maistre, and not Thomas Aquinas, who has taught that rebellion against the secular power is completely unacceptable whatever the circumstances. Thus, Maistre seems to deviate from Catholic doctrine when he separates morality from legitimacy, distinguishing in a sense between a private natural law and a public natural law. And this distinction represents the basis for his absolute rejection of the right to insurrection, as well as for his contention that Protestantism is "*l'ennemi de toute espèce de souveraineté*", while Catholicism is "*l'ami, le conservateur, le défenseur le plus ardent de tous les gouvernements*"[81].

Maistre's theory of sovereignty and his providential historicism converge in the attempt to demonstrate that "*tout gouvernement est bon lorsqu'il est établi et qu'il subsiste depuis longtemps sans contestation*"[82]. It is good because it preserves society which without monarchic sovereignty is condemned to end in anarchic dissolution, and it is good because its authority comes from God. However, Maistre's deviation (of which Maistre seems not to have been

[79] James Fox, "Natural Law." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 9. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910. http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09076a.htm

[80] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1920, translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Second Part of the Second Part, Question 42, Article 2, Reply to Objection 3. http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3042.htm

[81] Jospeh de Maistre, *Sur le protestantisme*, p. 324.

[82] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 199.

aware) from the Catholic conception of natural law seems to bring Maistre's thought into some difficulties. In his struggle against modern natural law, Maistre risks throwing overboard all natural law. As we said before, Maistre's historicist rejection of natural law threatens to end in a relativistic/nihilist conception of the world that identifies "what is" with "what must be"[83]. This fact is mirrored also by the dialectic of his theory of sovereignty that threatens to suffer shipwreck on the shore of decisionism. Arguing that the Church constitutes a juridical order analogous to that of the state, Maistre insists on the fact that, in both cases, "*il faut absolument en venir à une puissance qui juge et n'est pas jugée*". Independently of whether the final decision is just or not, there is "*un point où il faut s'arrêter*". For, "*les longueurs interminables, les appels sans fin et l'incertitude des propriétés, sont, s'il est permis de s'exprimer ainsi, plus injustes que l'injustice*"[84]. The modern crisis of political legitimacy, inaugurated by the modern doctrine of natural law, may then be dissolved in a purely arbitrary decision whose only justification is the need to reach a decision. Decisionism, as far as the theory of sovereignty is concerned, is paralleled then by a providentialism according to which, no matter how unjust, the decision of the sovereign must be identified with the will of an incomprehensible God.

According to Carl Schmitt, confronted with the liberal attempt to dissolve sovereignty in an infinite discussion that cannot reach a decision, the counter-revolutionary thinkers, and among them Joseph de Maistre, have "heightened the moment of the decision to such an extent that the notion of legitimacy, their starting point, was finally dissolved"[85]. If this is the case, Pranchère rightly argues that although liberalism, according to Schmitt's famous formula, appears to be

[83] Jean-Yves Pranchère, "Joseph de Maistre's Catholic Philosophy of Authority", pp. 147-150 .
[84] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 36.
[85] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 65.

nothing more than "a critique of politics"[86], on the other hand, "the counter-revolution in itself is nothing other than a critique of liberalism"[87]. Together with Schmitt, the Counter-Revolution would then be confronted by Leo Strauss' critique of Schmitt's decisionism. In a short critical analysis of Carl Schmitt's *Concept of the Political*, Strauss has also argued that, trapped "within" the "horizon of liberalism", Schmitt's "critique of liberalism" appears as nothing more than "liberalism preceded by a minus sign"[88]. For Strauss, the liberal critique of politics can be overcome only when one's political theology exits the closed sphere of juridical concepts and manages to relate sovereignty to a transcendent moral order that ethically justifies sovereignty, making it something more than the logical solution to the immanent contradictions of the liberal order. However, it is important to stress that Maistre is aware of the fact that the great risk which threatens the Counter-Revolution is that of being caught in a vicious circle, which would happen in case the arbitrary Revolution would be confronted with a no less arbitrary Reaction, whose only justification would be the need to reinstate order. The Counter-Revolution would be condemned to replicate dialectically the Jacobin tyranny, both in its methods and in its substance, and to become itself nothing more than "*une nouvelle Révolution*"[89]. For Maistre, this would represent the absolute catastrophe, for the untainted Counter-Revolutionary shadow of the Revolution would then be completely absorbed by the Revolution, making the triumph of the latter complete. Maistre is deeply aware of the fact that "*l'arbitraire […] est […] un domaine commun, auquel tout le monde a un droit égal*"[90].

[86] Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1976, translated by George Schwab, p. 70.

[87] Jean-Yves Pranchère, "The Social Bond According to the Catholic Counter-Revolution: Maistre and Bonald", in *Joseph de Maistre's Life, Thought and Influence,* p. 219.

[88] Leo Strauss, "Carl Schmitt's Concept of the Political", postface to *The Concept of the Political*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1976, translated by George Schwab, pp. 102-105.

[89] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, pp. 249-250.

[90] *Ibidem*, p. 250.

In what concerns Maistre's contention that "*tout gouvernement est bon lorsqu'il est établi et qu'il subsiste depuis longtemps sans contestation*"[91], the main threat may be not so much that of defending a sovereignty without content. For, after all, the invocation of the providential action of a God who remains transcendent in His essence implicitly contains the relativistic and nihilistic tendencies that every historicism presupposes. The real problem is that the regime which Maistre defends no longer exists, and, more than this, that the Revolution seems to have won completely. Consequently, two possibilities arise: the Counter-Revolution acts, but then, implicitly, by adopting the position of the rebel against the existing sovereignty it looses its providential anchor that connects sovereignty to a theologico-political order that surpasses the horizontality of modern politics. However, in the second case, that is, in case the Counter-Revolution does not act because it wants to preserve its providential anchor, given the fact that history seems to be on the side of the revolutionaries, the Counter-Revolution seems to be condemned by the same Divinity that it invokes. Such at least would be the conclusion of conservative authors like Alexis de Tocqueville or Pierre-Simon Ballanche. In both cases, the tragedy of the Counter-Revolution consists in the fact that it is condemned by the same theologico-political categories it invokes. This is the reason why Gérard Gengembre has characterized the Counter-Revolution as "*une histoire désespérante*". As stressed by Gengembre, the tragic contradiction of the Counter-Revolution consists in the fact that while on the one hand "*elle se bat pour Dieu et pour le roi*", on the other hand "*l'un et l'autre sont morts ou agonisants. Ils ne peuvent renaître que comme Dieu de la religion privée et roi dépendant (constitutionnel)*"[92]. As a consequence, either the Counter-Revolution "*entérine cette mort provisoire d'un Dieu politique, et accepte la politique moderne; soit elle y lit la fin annoncée de*

[91] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 199.
[92] Gérard Gengembre, *La Contre-Révolution ou l'histoire désespérante*, Éditions Imago, Paris, 1989, p. 264.

l'Histoire, mais se condamne alors à n'être plus qu'un prophétisme et non une action dans le siècle"[93].

1.4. - The crisis of monarchical absolutism and its theocratic resolution

All of the above mentioned contradictions that mark the articulation of a counter-revolutionary theory and practice determine Joseph de Maistre to seek the theoretical and practical rehabilitation of the monarchy through the mediation of the only institution of the *Ancien Régime* that has survived the Revolution: the Church, or more precisely, the Papacy. As underlined by Robert Triomphe, confronted with the desolating picture of a history that is not going their way, the French aristocratic emigration milieus have naturally oriented themselves towards the Church and more specifically towards the Pope. The Pope, Triomphe argues, appeared to them as "*la seule bouée de salut où l'Église demeurât visible, au milieu du bouleversement universel, la seule espérance invincible à ceux qui avaient tout perdu*"[94].Taking into account that the Revolution has originated in the Protestant contestation of the Pope's authority, Maistre will try to re-legitimize the monarchical order through a theocratic detour. Beyond the fact that Maistre seeks support for monarchical absolutism in Catholic theology, the fact that the society instituted by Christ is itself a monarchy[95] naturally indicates that the Revolution, in Maistre's view, is a regression away from the perfect order and the perfect civilization towards irrationality and barbarism. While the French monarchy has fallen, thus signaling the beginning of the end for the monarchical order in Europe, paradoxically, the only surviving monarchy is the most sublime of all and the one which, Maistre argued, represented

[93] *Ibidem*,p. 296.
[94] Robert Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre: Étude sur la vie et la doctrine d'un matérialiste mystique*, p. 167.
[95] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 322.

the midwife of all European monarchies and of the European civilization as a whole. In this, Joseph de Maistre perceived the mysterious and magnificent work of Providence, which was now revealing, precisely through the Church's capacity to prevail in front of the unleashing of the gates of hell, the truth of the Catholic faith. The providential reading of the revolutionary event sees behind the apparent defeat the signs of a greater victory. "*Une vie d'un siècle*", Maistre wrote, "*fut donnée à Voltaire, le bouffon sacrilège, afin que l'Église sortît victorieuse des trois épreuves auxquelles nulle institution fausse ne résistera jamais, le syllogisme, l'échafaud et l'épigramme*"[96]. Thus, in the case of Joseph de Maistre's political theology, the scale of the political disaster, or more precisely the disastrous fate of the monarchy, is directly proportional with the degree of exaltation of the papal institution through which the redeeming of the actual history is attempted. This paradox has been acknowledged by Dostoyevsky who noted in the *Diary of a Writer* that the proclamation of papal infallibility has occurred precisely at the moment when the Pope has been completely deprived of all earthly power[97].

Maistre was aware of the fact that by its progressive emancipation from the tutelage of the popes, the European monarchy has gradually sunk into a crisis of legitimacy whose final outcome was the French Revolution, which by raising the veil from the dead body of the French monarchy, has inaugurated an age in which no legitimacy whatsoever was possible. If the greatest threat confronting the Counter-Revolution is that of succumbing into a decisionistic resolution of the revolutionary crisis, this problem has in fact roots that predate the Revolution, and from which the Revolution itself has developed. As stressed by Domenico Fisichella, one of the effects of the Reformation was that, given the destruction of the unity of Christendom, the divine right of kings itself has changed, no longer resting on the monarch's obedience to the will

[96] *Ibidem*, p. 381.
[97] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, translated by Boris Brasol, Octagon Books, New York, 1973, Vol. 2, p. 735.

of God, but simply becoming its expression independently of the way in which it manifested. Fisichella stresses the fact that monarchic absolutism represents the historical stage "in which the reduction of the divine will to the will of the sovereign authority has first been attempted", with the consequence that later on "the problem of a divine will operating in the normative reality has been cancelled *tout court*"[98]. If Maistre's rejection of natural law has determined some Catholic theologians to accuse Maistre of heresy[99], Lebrun argues that, although Maistre did not use the terminology of traditional natural law, "his fundamental assumptions and concerns remained those of traditional Catholic moralists and political theorists". Thus, "Maistre may have avoided the term 'natural law', but his 'project' was not that different from that of traditional natural law philosophers".[100] Stressing the fact that Maistre's argument, according to which sociality is the natural condition of men, clearly differentiates the Savoyard author from the modern natural theorists and integrates him in the Roman Catholic tradition of natural law, Domenico Fisichella also argues that one legitimate interpretation of Maistre is the one that sees in him a critic of modern natural law, from the position of traditional Catholic natural law. According to Fisichella, Maistre's project of a universal Christian Republic, headed by the Pope, faithfully follows the medieval institutional order that made possible the limitation of monarchic sovereignty. The idea of a natural law that was interpreted by the Pope, Fisichella argues, conferred a primacy to the universal order, grounded in one law, over the plurality of historic specificities characteristic of the various kingdoms. Thus, this idea seems to neutralize Maistre's

[98] Domenico Fisichella, *Il pensiero politico di Joseph de Maistre*, Editori Laterza, Roma, Bari, 1993, p. 69 (my translation).

[99] See Richard Lebrun, *Throne and Altar*, pp. 49, 70-73, 82-83, 93, 102, 111.

[100] Richard Lebrun, "Maistre and Natural Law", p. 205.

historicism, for it is in the nature of such a regime to reduce the multiple historical differences to one common divine or/and natural law[101].

For Maistre, the attempt to limit sovereignty is in itself self-defeating, for "*[t]oute espèce de souveraineté est absolue de sa nature*". Although it may be divided officially, Maistre argues that in the last instance "*il y aura toujours, en dernière analyse, un pouvoir absolu qui pourra faire le mal impunément … et contre lequel il n'y aura d'autre rempart que celui de l'insurrection*"[102]. Thus, if one wants to limit an absolute sovereign, the only way he can do it is by placing another sovereign on top of him. But this way, Maistre believes, the only result that one gets is political instability. For the one placed above will need another one placed above him, and so on. Therefore, according to Maistre, the theoreticians of liberal constitutionalism are simply missing the point. If*"toute souveraineté est nécessairement* une *et nécessairement* absolue*, [l]e grand problème ne seroit donc point d'empêcher le souverain* de vouloir invinciblement*, ce qui implique contradiction; mais de l'empêcher* de vouloir injustement"[103]. Maistre specifically states that he has never said "*que le pouvoir absolu n'entraîne des grands inconvénients sous quelque forme qu'il existe dans le monde [...]; je dis seulement qu'on se trouve placé entre deux abîmes*"[104]. More specifically, Maistre is trying to find the middle way between the abuses of the sovereign power and the opening of the Pandora box through insurrection, which for Maistre represents the absolute catastrophe. Or, for Maistre, Papal theocracy is seen as the means to provide a positive content to the absolute sovereign power.

Confronted with the above mentioned paradox of sovereignty, Maistre argues that the only way in which the injustice of the otherwise inevitably absolute sovereignty can be kept in check

[101] Domenico Fisichella, "Diritto Naturale e Sovranità in Joseph de Maistre", in *Politica e Mutamento Sociale*, Casa Editrice G. D'Anna, Messina-Firenze, 1981, pp. 172-178, 200-202 (my translation).
[102] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 179.
[103] *Ibidem*, p. 183.
[104] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 148.

is if the latter is subordinated to another sovereign authority that is independent from it, but which, not having political ends, does not therefore intend to infringe on the legitimate rights of the sovereign. Sovereignty is "*une autorité divine et sacrée qui ne peut être contrôlée que par une autorité divine aussi, mais d'un ordre supérieur*"[105]. Therefore, it is only the supranational authority of the Pope that is able to draw the line between legitimate self-defense and illegitimate rebellion and therefore reestablish the order of the European societies which are thrown into chaos by the Protestant right of individual judgment. "*Je prends la liberté de dire à mon siècle*" Maistre declares, "*qu'il y a contradiction manifeste entre son enthousiasme constitutionnel et son déchaînement contre les Papes*"[106]. If by overthrowing the legitimate monarchy the French Revolution has thrown France and Europe into an annihilating dialectic of tyranny and anarchy, Maistre argues that Europe's salvation can come only from Rome in the form of a theocratic equation: "*les rois abdiquent le pouvoir de juger par eux-mêmes, et les peuples en retour déclarent les rois INFAILLIBLES ET INVIOLABLES*"[107]. Thus, the conflict between popular sovereignty and monarchic sovereignty that threatens to destroy Europe can only be solved if the two parties will renounce their claims in favor of a third party, the Pope, which would grant to each party its legitimate rights. As the crisis of the European civilization has its origins in a heresy that has replaced the duty of obedience with the right of individual judgment, Maistre declares at the end of *Du Pape* that "*pour rétablir une religion et une morale en Europe ; pour donner à la vérité les forces qu'exigent les conquêtes qu'elle mérite ; pour raffermir surtout le trône des souverains et calmer doucement cette fermentation générale qui nous menace des plus grands malheurs, un préliminaire indispensable est d'effacer du dictionnaire européen ce mot*

[105] *Ibidem*, p. 151.
[106] *Ibidem*, p. 152.
[107] *Ibidem*, p. 301.

fatal PROTESTANTISME"[108]. Thus, the indispensable premise for solving the crisis of the European civilization is the firm reaffirmation of the absolute authority of the Pope in the spiritual sphere; the recognition of the Pope as the single authority that can make infallible theological judgments.

According to Maistre, limited in its excesses by the disciplining authority of the popes, the European monarchy, was not weakened but, on the contrary, it was rendered more venerable and more firm[109], as the judgment of the monarch was compelled from being the expression of the selfish will of a despot to being an image of the justice of God himself. In a rather idealized depiction of the history of the Roman Church, Maistre describes the papacy as the institution that has repressed the sovereigns for their own good, "*qui a protégé les peuples, apaisé les querelles temporelles par une sage intervention, averti les rois et les peuples de leurs devoirs, et frappé d'anathèmes les grands attentats qu'ils n'avaient pu prévenir*"[110]. However, the paradox that confronts Maistre is that it is precisely the absolute monarchy, which Maistre is defending, that has prepared the ground for the emergence of the Rousseauist arbitrary popular will[111]. Pranchère emphasizes the fact that Maistre was well aware of the complicity relating monarchical absolutism, on the one hand, and Enlightenment, on the other hand. If from a political point of view Maistre is opposing to the malefic trinity represented by individualism, republicanism and secularism the redeeming trinity formed of hierarchy, monarchy and theocracy, as indicated by Pranchère, there are three instances in which

> *l'absolutisme contredisait sa propre dimension autoritaire, inégalitaire et théocratique* : *par son opposition à la féodalité et par sa visée d'une 'égalisation' des sujets devant le monarque, il avait une signification 'démocratique' ; par sa volonté affichée de garantir la sécurité des individus, il avait une signification 'libérale'; enfin, dans la mesure où le*

[108] *Ibidem*, p. 375.
[109] *Ibidem*, pp. 155-156.
[110] *Ibidem*, p. 202.
[111] Gerard Gengembre, *La Contre-Révolution ou l'histoire désespérante*, p. 264.

droit divin du souverain signifiait l'émancipation du pouvoir temporel vis-à-vis du pouvoir spirituel de la papauté, sa signification était 'laïque'[112].

But above all, for Maistre, the great sin born out of the ignorance of the monarchy was that of raising in its bosom the snakes that have freely spread their poison under its protection, and have in the end strangled their own protectors and benefactors: *les philosophes*[113].

According to Pranchère, confronted with the weaknesses and inner contradictions of monarchical absolutism, Maistre's attempt to reestablish the absolutist monarchy would implicitly turn into an attempt to redefine it. Therefore, just as Maistre's argument in favor of theocracy rests on a mythologized history of the relations between the papacy and the monarchy, likewise, confronted with the crisis of the monarchy that has culminated in the French Revolution, Maistre will propose what Pranchère has defined as "*une monarchie fantastique*"[114], a monarchic utopia that never existed. Thus, paradoxically, Maistre's conservative thought itself takes clearly a revolutionary, futurist turn. Ultimately, insisting on the role played by the absolute monarchy in the development of modern secularism and individualism, Maistre wants to show that the modern claim of autonomy is contradicted by its heteronomous preconditions. Defined by its opposition to absolute sovereignty, the modern individual is nevertheless the product of the absolute monarchy that has emancipated him from the feudal bonds and from the authority of the Church. As stressed by Pranchère, Maistre's argumentative strategy is justified first of all by the fact that Maistre wanted "*que les arguments en faveur de la monarchie absolue fussent fournis par les penseurs des Lumières eux-mêmes, de façon que les révolutionnaires fussent condamnés par leurs propres maîtres à penser*". Second, Maistre wanted "*que la dénonciation des contradictions de Lumières servît à éclairer, par contre-coup, les vrais*

[112] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 124.

[113] In the following sections, we shall deal in greater detail with Maistre's critique of *les philosophes*, and with Maistre's views concerning the latter's responsibility for the French Revolution.

[114] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 187.

principes de l'idéal absolutiste". Finally, Maistre "*a voulu que le développement de ces principes permît de corriger la 'déviation', commencée dès le XVIIe siècle avec le gallicanisme, qui avait conduit l'idéal absolutiste dans la proximité des idéaux libéraux*"[115]. If popular sovereignty represented the final outcome of a theologico-political chain reaction triggered by the contestation of papal infallibility, Maistre will try to reconstruct the theologico-political order of Catholic Christianity by deconstructing the Enlightenment.

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To summarize the arguments developed thus far, in the first three sections of this chapter I have presented Maistre's view of modernity as critique of authority, which, both synchronically and diachronically, is directed against papal infallibility, as well as against the absolute monarchy, two European institutions that for Maistre are inherently related to each other, since both have a common divine origin. For Maistre, developed in the theological sphere, and grounded on the right of individual judgment in matters of faith, the Protestant contestation of Papal authority inevitably spills over into a political contestation of the authority of the monarchs, for by itself, the Protestant right to criticize the decision of the existing authority cannot be limited. Consequently, locating the origins of the French Revolution in the Protestant Reformation, Maistre establishes a series of theologico-political analogies, on the basis of which he develops his interpretation of modernity: infallibility/sovereignty; heresy/rebellion; conciliar ecclesiology/republicanism; Reformation/Revolution. Given the impossibility of setting limits to the Protestant/Revolutionary principle, the modern critique of authority must inevitably lead to the dissolution of society itself. For the Protestant critique of authority, continued by modern

[115] *Ibidem*, p. 125.

liberalism, presupposes the gradual dissemination of an ever more radical corrosive individualism, whose action is purely negative. Criticizing the social contract theory, Maistre defends both the natural character of sovereignty, as well as its divine origin. Maistre insists that authority is natural and indispensable for a being, man, who is both social and evil. Likewise, the impossibility of modern man constituting a political order according to the principles of abstract reason, indicates, according to Maistre, that nations, like governments, represent the providential creations of a divinity that alone is able to direct towards a providential purpose, the multitude of free actions that it coordinates. Deviating from the Roman Catholic conception of natural law, Maistre argues that God plays both an indirect and a direct role in the institution of sovereignty, mysteriously willing both the European monarchy as well as the Oriental despotism. Hence, in response to the contestations of monarchical sovereignty based on the modern doctrine of natural law, Maistre will develop a problematic historicism with relativist tendencies that parallel the decisionist tendencies of his theory of sovereignty, problematic tendencies of which Maistre is nevertheless anxiously aware. Consequently, Maistre will try to strengthen the legitimacy of the otherwise fallible monarchical authority by subordinating its political decisions to the infallible authority of the Pope. While the Maistrian critique of natural law has determined some Catholic theologians to characterize Maistre as a heretic, other authors have argued that, on the contrary, together with other aspects of his thought, Maistre's theocratic ideal integrates him in the Medieval Roman Catholic tradition of natural law. Ultimately, Maistre's defense of the absolute monarchy presupposes a constructive critique of the actual history of this institution, which has created the premises for its collapse by gradually emancipating itself from the beneficial tutelage of the Papacy. If the crisis of the European civilization has its origins in the failure of the theocratic ambitions of the Medieval papacy, failure owed to the unwise disobedience of the

monarchs, the contemporary crisis of the European civilization, caught in a destructive dialectic of tyranny and anarchy, can be solved only by a theocratic authority, which would arbitrate the conflicts between the monarchs and the peoples, as well as the conflicts between different nations. Thus, if in its attempt to unify mankind on secular principles, the French Revolution has created only chaos and division, order and harmony can be restored only through the theocratic elimination of the causes of the Revolution, and through the theocratic guidance of the sovereign power, which for Maistre, as for Rousseau, is both indivisible and absolute.

1.5. - From the contradictions of Rousseau's *Social Contract* to the justification of Maistre's theocracy

In the interpretation of Pranchère[116], the aim of Maistre's counter-revolutionary philosophy is "le renversement *des Lumières*", and one of the most important paradoxes of Maistrian thought, consists in the fact that "*son argumentaire* […] *est pour l'essentiel composé de thèses empruntées aux penseurs des Lumières et retournées contre leurs auteurs*"[117]. The epicenter of Maistre's attempt to beat the Enlightenment with its own weapons is located around the concept of sovereignty which Maistre takes over from the modern theorists of sovereignty and in particular from Jean-Jacques Roussseau. Consequently, "*c'est dans le renversement de la philosophie de Rousseau que Maistre a trouvé le moyen d'opérer le retournement des Lumières qu'il se proposait […]Les apories sur lesquelles débouchait le Contrat Social, apories reconnues par Rousseau lui-même, constituaient aux yeux de Maistre la meilleure réfutation qui fût del'idée contractualiste*" and "*la démonstration involontaire de la vérité théocratique*"[118].For

[116] In this section, I largely follow the argumentation of this author.
[117] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 19.
[118] *Ibidem*, pp. 126-127.

Maistre considered that "*la théorie rousseauiste*" was "*la forme la plus conséquente du contractualisme: de sorte que la démonstration de l'incohérence de cette théorie vaudra pour une réfutation de la notion même de pacte social*"[119].

According to Pranchère, "*Maistre partage avec Rousseau une même thèse, celle de l'illimitation de droit de la souveraineté, et une même exigence, celle de l'unité du corps social en une même volonté souveraine*"[120]. For Rousseau, if sovereign power is divided then the people are not free. They are not subject to the general will but to the particular will of a group or of a person. If in the first case the regime is aristocratic, in the second case, the people find themselves under the rule of a tyrant. For Rousseau, *"un tyran"* is *not "un roi qui gouverne avec violence et sans égard à la justice et aux lois"*, but *"un particulier qui s'arroge l'autorité royale sans y avoir droit"*[121]. More precisely, since for Rousseau sovereignty belongs to the people, a tyrant is a king who does not govern by popular consent. On the other hand, for Maistre, the contestation of the legitimate monarch, whose legitimacy is of divine origin, paves the way for tyrannical government and ultimately for the disintegration of society into as many particular wills as there are individuals. Thus, if Rousseau and Maistre agree on the unitary and unlimited nature of sovereignty they are divided by the way in which they are trying to articulate it. For Rousseau, the people can be both united and free. Moreover, it will be free only if it is united. For Maistre, the unity of the people requires their subjection under the rule of a single leader. Thus, if for Maistre sovereignty must be the expression of the will of the one monarch, for Rousseau, the will of the monarch is replaced with the general will, which is defined as *"l'intérêt commun"* or as *"[la] somme des différences"* of all the particular wills[122]. The general will

[119] *Ibidem*, p. 199.
[120] *Ibidem*.
[121] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social*, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1972, pp. 183-184.
[122] *Ibidem*, p. 127.

articulates itself horizontally or, otherwise said, it has egalitarian presuppositions, essentially opposed to the notion of hierarchy that is central in Maistre's counter-revolutionary system of thought.

Identifying the general will with the common interest, Rousseau underlines the fact that *"[c]'est ce qu'il y a de commun dans ces différents intérêts […] forme le lien social; et s'il n'y avait pas quelque point dans lequel tous les intérêts s'accordent, nulle société ne saurait exister"*[123]. For Maistre, this point is identifiable only if it takes the form of a personal sovereign, and only a personal sovereign can secure the common element that makes society possible. Thus, if we are to start from Maistre's premises, it appears that the only coherent alternative to monarchical absolutism and to the type of social bond that characterized the Old Regime is the unanimity of the people. For according to Maistre, once the right of the individual to disobey the sovereign becomes legitimate, it is only a matter of time until the centrifugal tendencies break society apart. However, if one sets aside Maistre's monarchism, Maistre and Rousseau appear to be reasoning much the same way. In this sense, Rousseau argues that "*il n'y a qu'une seule loi qui, par sa nature, exige un consentement unanime"* and that this law is the fundamental law itself: *"le pacte social"*, which must be accepted by all citizens and, more specifically, by all generations. For, *"tout homme étant né libre et maître de lui-même, nul ne peut, sous quelque prétexte que ce puisse être, l'assujetir sans son aveu"*[124]. According to Rousseau, *"aucun homme n'a une autorité naturelle sur son semblable, et puisque la force ne produit aucun droit, restent donc les conventions pour base de toute autorité légitime parmi les hommes"*[125].

In the first two chapters of the 4th Book of the *Contrat Social*, Rousseau has stressed the fact that in a perfectly ordained society the general will corresponds to the will of all. Each individual

[123] *Ibidem*, p. 124.
[124] *Ibidem*, p. 201.
[125] *Ibidem*, p. 108.

then completely identifies his personal will with the general will. Although the general will can still be expressed through a majority of votes, Rousseau is nevertheless aware of the fact that the majority of votes may not express the general will, and when that happens *"il n'y a plus de libérté"*[126]. In *Du Contrat Social*, the exact mechanism for the identification of the general will, once the social compact has been made, remains unclear, an uncertainty that will be exploited by Maistre. However, Rousseau stresses the fact that *"[p]lus le concert règne dans les assemblées, c'est-à-dire plus les avis approchent de l'unanimité, plus aussi la volonté générale est dominante; mais les longs débats, les dissensions, le tumulte, annoncent l'ascendant des intérêts particuliers et le déclin de l'État"*[127]. It is a sign that the republican order approaches the moment when it will collapse and degenerate into anarchy or tyranny. For this reason, like Maistre, Rousseau will manifest the same animosity towards the individualistic and sectarian spirit that Maistre associates with the spirit of Protestantism and with its descendent, *philosophisme*. Although both Maistre and Rousseau are opposed to individualism, which they regard as a mortal threat to the state, nevertheless, while Maistre's system is based on the principle that authority is both natural and divine, individual freedom remains the fundament of Rousseau's system. Consequently, Maistre will try to demonstrate the inconsistency of Rousseau's system. More exactly, he will argue that once recognized, the principle of individual freedom cannot be limited and thus, sovereignty and society itself become impossible. Moreover, Maistre will argue that individual freedom and sovereignty are mutually exclusive.

Rousseau and Maistre not only agree that sovereignty is *indivisible* and *unlimited*. They also agree that sovereignty is *inalienable*. In this sense, for both authors, the legal sovereign must exercise power directly and cannot be represented by another person or group of persons.

[126] *Ibidem*, pp. 201-202.
[127] *Ibidem*, p. 200.

According to Rousseau, *"la volonté générale […] ne se représente point: elle est la même, ou elle est autre ; il n'y a point de milieu"."Le peuple anglais"*, Rousseau argues, *"pense être libre"* but *"il se trompe fort: il ne l'est que durant l'élection des membres du parlement; sitôt qu'ils sont élus, il est esclave, il n'est rien"*[128]. Maistre also ridicules, at the beginning of his essay dedicated to the rejection of Rousseau's theory of popular sovereignty, the idea of a sovereign people "*qui ne peut exercer la souveraineté*"[129]. Anticipating Marx, Maistre emphasizes the fact that in the new French Republic, the sovereignty of the people was "metaphysical". The "palpable" sovereignty was in the hands of the government representatives, and would remain completely in their hands until "*le peuple jugera à propos de se remettre, par l'insurrection, en possession de la souveraineté*"[130]. Thus, for Maistre, if democracy were to be possible, it would necessarily need to take the form of Rousseau's direct democracy, and that is why the rejection of Rousseau's *Social Contract* would equate the rejection of all contractualist philosophy.

According to Maistre, in the real world, inevitably, "*la démocratie n'est qu'une aristocratie élective*"[131]. More exactly, for Maistre, democracy can only be representative, which means that there can be no democracy since representative democracy is pseudo-democracy. "*Qu'est-ce qu'une république*", Maistre asks himself, "*dès qu'elle excède certaines dimensions?*[132]*C'est un pays plus ou moins vaste, commandé par un certain nombre d'hommes, qui se nomment la* république *[…] car il n'y a pas, et même il ne peut y avoir de république disséminée*"[133]. Inevitably, all political regimes are then divided between two types of sovereignty: the perfect

[128] *Ibidem*, p. 190.
[129] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 92.
[130] *Ibidem*, p. 181.
[131] *Ibidem*, p. 207.
[132] Maistre argues that the Ancient Republics represent a historical episode that can never be repeated, a historical accident one might say, as it depended on unique historical circumstances.
[133] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 37.

type, which is the monarchy, and the imperfect type which is the aristocratic regime. If Maistre agrees with Rousseau that, independently of the attempts to divide it, sovereignty always remains one, on the other hand, for Maistre, the unity of sovereignty means that it is always *de facto* exercised by a single person. As indicated by Pranchère, this means that the monarchical regime "*est le seul régime dont les institutions désignent clairement le détenteur légitime de la souveraineté […], le seul régime capable de faire que le souverain de fait soit le souverain de droit*"[134]. When sovereignty is divided, "*une part de ceux qui composent le souverain peut s'opposer à l'autre part, de sorte que le souverain peut y résister au souverain*"[135]. Republics are therefore essentially polytheistic, since only the monarchy is according to the image of the one God.[136]

Ultimately, Maistre underlines the absurdity of the concomitant representation of the people as sovereign and as subject, and thus the absurdity of Rousseau's direct democracy. As stressed by Pranchère, true democracy would require the absence of the distinction between the sovereign people and the people subject, and the absence of sovereignty as such, which presupposes the exercise of an exterior authority over a *subject*. Thus, in reply to Rousseau's ambiguities concerning the identification of the general will when there is no unanimity, Maistre insists that the elimination of the division between the sovereign people and the people subject requires perfect homogeneity. This in turn requires exceptional circumstances, in particular a state of a very small dimension. For Maistre, "*le peuple ne peut être un que par* l'exclusion de l'hétérogène", whether the latter is the rich or the stranger. "*Plus la démocratie est 'pure'*", Pranchère continues,

[134] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 146.
[135] *Ibidem*, p. 153.
[136] *Ibidem*, pp. 153-154; *Cf.* Louis Ambroise de Bonald, *Théorie du pouvoir politique et religieux*, Union Générale d'Éditions, Paris, 1966, pp. 51-52.

plus elle doit être –dirions-nous – 'totalitaire'. Mais comme l'homogénéité sociale est en fait irréalisable, la forme normale de la démocratie sera le pouvoir des assemblées. Ce qui signifie que la démocratie, ne pouvant être réalisée par l'exclusion des riches, est réalisée par l'exclusion du peuple : celui-ci est remplacé, c'est-à-dire expulsé de la sphère politique, par les assemblées qui le 'représentent'. La démocratie réelle, quand elle n'est pas totalitaire, est oligarchique[137].

Thus, it follows that for Joseph de Maistre, the French Revolution has preserved the basic structure of the problem of government, which can be either monarchic or aristocratic, but has inevitably altered the content of both the aristocratic and the monarchical regime. For Maistre, political modernity transforms the alternative between monarchy and aristocracy, into an alternative between tyranny and oligarchy. And in this sense, there are three essential elements that are lost in modernity. First of all, given the revolutionary overthrow of the divine right, the Revolution inevitably leads to a loss of legitimacy. That is why modern political regimes are essentially instable, for as Maistre argues, an insurgent "*n'a plus le droit de prêcher l'obéissance sous prétexte qu'il est ou moins ou autrement révolté qu'un autre*".[138] Once the Church and the traditional laws of the kingdom have been rejected, there is no limit either to the abuses of power, or to the radical democratic demands that, according to Maistre, end up in the perception of any form of authority as an abuse of power[139]. This abuse of power is the more unbearable since it does not rest on any sacral legitimacy and is not combined with the rituals and values of the old aristocratic regime, such as chivalry, bravery, self-sacrifice, etc. In this sense, modern political regimes also lack nobility. As stressed by all major representatives of the Counter-Revolution, revolutions bring to power what is worst in society, for it is only demagogues and tyrants that eventually manage to take control of a chaotic assembly that has lost its head. Or, political power will eventually be controlled by the new bourgeois elite that had replaced the old

[137] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, pp. 189-190.
[138] Joseph de Maistre, *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*, p. 331.
[139] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, pp. 72-77.

codes of honor with the ideal of economic gain alone. Finally, inevitably representative and therefore undemocratic, modern "democratic" regimes are also necessarily non-transparent. Given the fact that the legitimacy of modern regimes stems from a popular insurrection directed against the arbitrary power of the monarchy, modern oligarchies and tyrannies are compelled to represent themselves as regimes expressing popular aspirations. They are therefore condemned to demagogy and productive of an ideology whose purpose is to render non-transparent the true nature of the social equation.

As already indicated, if on the one hand Maistre rejects Rousseau on the basis of the contradictions of the *Contrat Social*, on the other hand, Rousseau himself is deeply aware of these contradictions. According to Pranchère, the most striking instance is the one that concerns the problem of the legislator. Pranchère underlines the fact that "*la cohérence de la théorie rousseauiste de la volonté générale est suspendue à la possibilité du législateur*"[140], for it depends on the legislator to guide the general will. For Rousseau, the general will cannot be corrupted but it can be misguided[141]. Moreover, Rousseau and Maistre agree on the fact that the question of government is not how to limit the sovereign will which cannot be limited, but how to make the sovereign power will only that which is good. In Maistre's system of thought, this function of guidance was fulfilled by the Pope. Just like Maistre's Pope, Rousseau's legislator should represent an authority situated above the political community, which is not part of it and does not seek to exercise rule over it. In a word, it should represent an authority of a higher nature that does not have political goals, and which is only interested in the good of the people for which it legislates. As indicated by Rousseau,

> *[p]our découvrir les meilleures règles de la société qui conviennent aux nations, il faudrait une intelligence supérieure qui vît toutes les passions des hommes et qui n'en*

[140] *Ibidem*, p. 205.
[141] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social*, p. 127.

> *éprouvât aucune; qui n'eût aucun rapport avec notre nature et qui la connût à fond; dont le bonheur fût indépendant de nous et qui pourtant voulût bien s'occuper du nôtre; enfin qui, dans le progrès des temps se ménageant une gloire éloignée, pût travailler dans un siècle et jouir dans un autre*[142].

Ultimately, Rousseau concludes that "[i]l faudrait des dieux pour donner des lois aux hommes"[143]. More precisely, for Rousseau, the legislator has to be a person who *"[fait] parler les dieux".* But most importantly, the legislator is compelled to appeal to religion because he would not be otherwise obeyed by a *"vulgaire"* crowd which has not yet become a people: *"chaque individu, ne goûtant d'autre plan de gouvernement que celui qui se rapporte à son intérêt particulier, aperçoit difficilement les avantages qu'il doit retirer des privations continuelles qu'imposent les bonnes lois"*[144]. According to Rousseau,

> *[p]our qu'un peuple naissant pût goûter les saines maximes de la politique et suivre les règles fondamentales de la raison d'État, il faudrait que l'effet pût devenir la cause; que l'esprit social, qui doit être l'ouvrage de l'institution, présidât à l'institution même; et que les hommes fussent avant les lois ce qu'ils doivent devenir par elles. Ainsi donc le Législateur ne pouvant employer ni la force ni le raisonnement, c'est une nécessité qu'il recoure à une autorité d'un autre ordre, qui puisse entraîner sans violence et persuader sans convaincre*[145].

All legislators, Rousseau concludes, were then compelled *"de recourir à l'intervention du ciel et d'honorer les dieux de leur propre sagesse, afin que les peuples […] obéissent avec liberté et portassent docilement le joug de la félicité publique"*[146].

For Maistre, the dependency of the constitution of the autonomous general will on a legislator who, by virtue of his divine legitimacy, is situated above the social body, reveals the fact that given its heteronomous presuppositions, the modern project of political autonomy is in fact illusory. Moreover, given the fact that the education of the autonomous subject –whose

[142] *Ibidem*, p. 138.
[143] *Ibidem*.
[144] *Ibidem*, p. 140.
[145] *Ibidem*.
[146] *Ibidem*.

autonomy rests on the subject's capacity to rightly judge by himself – cannot be made by appealing to the rationality that can only be the outcome of education, it necessarily follows that the educator has to speak from a position of authority. If the genesis of autonomy has heteronomic preconditions, to the extent that the genesis of reason rests on mystification, as Rousseau's reflections on the role of religion in the formation of a people seem to suggest, rationality and myth are likewise dialectically united. Rousseauist thought arrives precisely in the position where Maistre can make the winning move. For Rousseau demonstrates that there can be no society without sovereign authority and no sovereign authority without religious authority, a phrase which basically resumes Maistre's political thought. For Maistre, Rousseau's contradictions appear as the best justification for a hierarchical political order in which the unity of the sovereign will is assured by the concentration of all power in the hands of the monarch, while the good exercise of sovereignty is assured by the theocratic authority of the Pope, which in turn derives his authority from the authority of God Himself.

Indeed, in the chapter dedicated to the legislator, Rousseau was forced to acknowledge a blatant contradiction: *"l'ouvrage de la législation"* implies *"deux choses qui semblent incompatibles: une enterprise au-dessus de la force humaine, et, pour l'exécuter, une autorité qui n'est rien"*[147]. In the end, Rousseau is compelled to admit that, *"[a] prendre le terme dans la rigueur de l'acception, il n'a jamais existé de véritable démocratie, et il n'existera jamais"* for *"[i]l est contre l'ordre naturel que le grand nombre gouverne et que le petit soit gouverné"*[148]. As we remember, it was precisely this historically revealed natural order that Maistre has

[147] *Ibidem*. More specifically, if on the one hand Rousseau argues that *"selon le pacte fundamental, il n'y a que la volonté générale qui oblige les particuliers"*, on the other hand, he argues that *"on ne peut jamais s'assurer qu'une volonté particulière est conforme à la volonté générale qu'après l'avoir soumise aux suffrages libres du peuple"*(*Ibidem*.). Thus, in principle, only the general will, and not the legislator, has the authority to compel individuals. But the conformity between the work of legislation and the general will can be decided only by a free vote of all the individuals reunited as a people, in the conditions in which, only the work of legislation turns a sum of individuals into a people. The contradiction is obvious.

[148] *Ibidem*, pp. 163-164.

invoked against the modern claims of autonomy and, in particular, against the political philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. For Maistre, precisely because he was everywhere in chains, man was not and could not be born free, and as a consequence, for Maistre, Rousseau's famous contention form the beginning of *Du Contrat Social* practically synthesized all the absurdity of his thought. Hence, if Rousseau finally concludes that democracy would require *"un peuple de dieux"*[149], bewildered, Maistre emphasizes the absurdity of the following practical conclusion of Rousseau's *Contrat Social*: "*un gouvernement qui n'est fait que pour* des dieux, *est cependant proposé à* des hommes *comme seul gouvernement légitime*"[150]. However, for Maistre, Rousseau's work not only reveals the incoherence of an argumentation "*dont la véritable maladie est l'horreur du bon sens*"[151], but it is also the expression of a criminal guilt. From this point onwards, Maistre's critique of Rousseau and of the Enlightenment changes its repertory and becomes an indictment. For according to Maistre, Rousseau's idealistic aberrations have served as the ideological basis for the insurrection directed against the government that God Himself has made for man, according to the image of His own government: the monarchical government. Maistre argues that the recognition of the divine origin of government only required humility and common sense. As Rousseau has labeled any monarch who does not rule by popular consent a tyrant, his argument has served as a justification for the execution of Louis XVI. In the first *Discours sur le jugement du roi*, Saint-Just stated that Louis XVI must not be judged for the crimes of his government "*mais pour celui d'avoir été roi, car rien au monde ne peut légitimer cette usurpation*". "*La royauté*", Saint-Just argued, "*est un crime éternel*". Since the social contract was a contract between citizens and since, as a king, Louis XVI could not be a citizen, the latter, Saint-Just concluded, needed to be judged not as a citizen but as an enemy of

[149] *Ibidem*, p. 165.
[150] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 229.
[151] *Ibidem*, p. 101.

the nation. Each individual citizen, and not only the people as a whole, was a victim of Louis' crime, and for this reason Saint-Just argued that "*il n'est pas de citoyen qui n'ait sur*" Louis XVI "*le droit que Brutus avait sur César*"[152]. For Maistre, it made no difference that "*Rousseau, foible, timide et cacochyme, n'ait jamais eut la volonté ou le pouvoir d'exciter des séditions*". And in general, it made no difference for Maistre that "*durant l'épouvantable tyrannie qui a pesé sur la France, les philosophes, tremblant pour leurs têtes, se soient renfermés dans une solitude prudente*". As argued by Maistre, *"[d]ès qu'ils ont posé des maximes capables d'enfanter tous les crimes, ces crimes sont leur ouvrage, puisque les criminels sont leurs disciples*".[153]Maistre's attack against Rousseau culminates with the example of a certain Lebon, also known as "*le bourreau d'Arras*", who, when brought to trial in front of the National Convention for the abuses committed during the terror, has declared that he has only followed "*les principes de J.-J. Rousseau*". According to Maistre, "*il avait raison*" for, Maistre continues, "*le tigre qui déchire fait son métier*". Since "*toute société renferme des scélérats qui n'attendent pour la déchirer, que d'être débarrassés du frein des lois*", "*le vrai coupable est celui qui […] démuselle [le tigre] et le lance sur la société*"[154]. "*Philosophes*!" Maistre cries out, in an accusation that is directed not only against Rousseau, but against all the representatives of the Enlightenment and all their precursors beginning with the Reformation: "*jamais vous ne vous disculperez, en vous apitoyant sur l'effet, d'avoir produit la cause*"[155]. "*Le seul fruit de vos veilles*", Maistre continues, "*fut d'apprendre au crime à se couvrir d'un langage poli pour porter des coups plus dangereux*"[156].

[152] Louis Antoine Léon de Saint-Just, "Sur le jugement de Louis XVI", in *Les plus beaux discours de Saint-Just*, Éditions du Centaure, Paris, 1909, pp. 19-25.
[153] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 177.
[154] *Ibidem*, p. 178.
[155] *Ibidem*, p. 177.
[156] *Ibidem*, p. 169.

But, perhaps the strongest argument brought against the social contract theorists by the Catholic counter-revolutionaries is the argument of language. All contracts presuppose a prior deliberation, while deliberation presupposes a common language. Moreover, we cannot deliberate without thinking, and we cannot think if we don't know, or, more specifically, if we haven't been taught, how to speak. Language is then the proof of our sociality and of the fact that we are constituted in a regime of heteronomy. As indicated by Walter Jay Reedy, for Maistre and Bonald, "the first means of all knowledge is the word received from faith without examination, and the first means of instruction is authority"[157]. The modern authority of evidence, to use Bonald's terms, is therefore confronted with the counter-modern evidence of authority. This means that rational examination, the methodological principle of Protestantism and of all modernity, appears as a rebellion against the only true evidence, which is the evidence of authority. As the ontological priority of faith and authority is being affirmed, individual reason is revealed as a rebellion against its own conditions of existence. Ultimately, the idea that society is the result of a contract would presuppose the previous existence of another contract for the establishment of language and so on, a dilemma recognized by Rousseau himself in *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*. But as Maistre underlines in his critique of the Rousseauist theory concerning the state of nature, a language cannot be invented by a group of people, for in order to understand each other, the group needs to already have a common language. Moreover, languages could not have been invented either by one individual, who "*n'aurait pu se faire obéir*"[158].

For the Catholic counter-revolutionaries, beyond the fact that it dismantles the contractualist theory and the modern claims of autonomy, the paradox of language also leads to a

[157] Walter Jay Reedy, "Maistre's Twin? Louis de Bonald and the Counter-Enlightenment", in Richard Lebrun (ed.), *Joseph de Maistre's Life, Thought and Influence*, p. 180.
[158] Joseph de Maistre, *Contre Rousseau (De l'état de nature)*, p. 51.

demonstration of the existence of God. If neither one nor several men can invent a language, in as much as it exists, language, transmitted to men through a primitive revelation, reveals therefore its divine origin. In the same manner, if Rousseau's reflections concerning the extraordinary character that is required of the legislator determine him to proclaim that *"il faudrait des dieux pour donner des lois aux hommes"*[159], bringing together Rousseau's contention and the observation that men have laws, Maistre draws the conclusion that God is at the origin of human laws. Maistre underlines the fact that, when referring to its own history, no nation speaks of an initial contract but, instead, all nations (and for Maistre, the universal consensus of mankind is infallible) refer to an initial divine intervention[160]. "*Les volontés réunies*", Maistre argues, "*forment le Règlement et non la Loi, laquelle suppose nécessairement et manifestement une volonté supérieure qui se fait obéir*". And precisely because they are a result of human agreement, regulations, and first and foremost the *Contrat Social* itself, cannot compel anybody, reducing society to power relations, making it essentially unstable and at the limit impossible. "*De là vient*", Maistre argues, "*que le bon sens primordial, heureusement antérieur aux sophismes, a cherché de tous côtés la sanction des lois dans une puissance au-dessus de l'homme, soit en reconnaissant que la souveraineté vient de Dieu, soit en révérant certaines lois non écrites, comme venant de Lui*"[161]. As we have seen, Rousseau himself has admitted that it was necessary for the Law to be of divine origin. However, aware of the fact that he was contradicting himself, he also argued that the Law must represent the expression of the general will of the people. The Law therefore had to be different from the Regulation, and yet it had to be the same thing. Rousseau was therefore a sophist from Maistre's point of view.

[159] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social*, p. 138.
[160] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, pp. 110-111.
[161] Joseph de Maistre, *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques et des autres institutions humaines*, pp. 368-369.

In the same sense, if Rousseau is forced to admit that society presupposes the division between an emancipating authority and a subject of emancipation, for Maistre, this division is reflective of the fact that man himself is divided, because of the original sin, between his solidarity instinct and his antisocial and criminal instincts. If in *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes,* Rousseau has argued that man is naturally good but is corrupted by society, Maistre will argue instead that society is both good and evil because man himself, in his fallen condition, is both good and evil. Maistre specifically rejects the radical pessimism of Hobbesian anthropology, arguing that Hobbes is only partially right. But "*pourvu qu'on ne donne point trop d'extension à ses principes*", Maistre argues, "*[l]a société est réellement un état de guerre*" that requires "*un souverain et des lois*".[162] More specifically, Maistre situates himself between Hobbes and Rousseau. For Maistre, man is an ambiguous being and an enigma: "*un scélérat*" in whose heart "*les lois de la justice et du beau*" remain nevertheless "*gravées […] en caractères inéffaçables*"[163]. Corrupted by original sin, man and society remain divided and in need of both government and religion. And once again, Maistre tries to use Rousseau's own arguments against Rousseau, declaring that sometimes he was "*plus raisonnable*" although unable to avoid arriving at "*pitoyable*" final conclusions. Thus, Maistre quotes in the second chapter of *De l'état de nature*, Rousseau's *Emile,* where Rousseau himself seems to confess the Paulinic wisdom from Romans 7, 19: "The good that I will to do I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice". "*En méditant sur la nature de l'homme*", Rousseau wrote, "*j'y crus découvrir deux principes distincts… En me sentant entraîné, combattu*

[162] Joseph de Maistre, *Contre Rousseau (De l'état de nature)*, p.60.
[163] *Ibidem*, p.62.

par ces deux mouvements contraires, je me disais: Non, l'homme n'est point un: je veux et je ne veux pas; je me sens à la fois esclave et libre, je vois le bien, je l'aime, et je fais le mal"[164].

Thus, for Maistre, Rousseau's *Contrat Social* represents an aberration from one end to the other. For "*le* Contrat Social *nie d'un bout à l'autre la nature de l'homme, qui est, – pour expliquer le* pacte social, *qui* n'existe pas"[165]. For Maistre, "*[i]l est impossible que l'homme soit ce qu'il est et qui ne soit pas gouverné*". Speaking for all "*les philosophes de ce siècle*", Rousseau has argued in *The Discourse concerning the origin of inequality among men* that people " '*se sont donnés des chefs pour défendre leur liberté et non pour les asservir*' ". "*C'est une erreur grossière*", Maistre argues, "*mère de beaucoup d'autres. L'homme ne s'est rien* donné*; il a tout reçu: il a des chefs parce qu'il ne peut pas s'en passer, et la société n'est ni ne peut être le résultat d'un pacte, elle est celui d'une loi*"[166]. And, as already indicated, like language, the law ultimately indicates a divine origin. Pranchère therefore concludes that the *Contrat Social* represents

> *la meilleure introduction possible à la doctrine théocratique, parce que les paradoxes avoués par Rousseau obligent à reconnaître que la souveraineté et ses lois doivent être fondées en Dieu […]. L'impossibilité de l'autonomie ne prouve pas seulement que la démocratie est impossible, c'est-à-dire que les hommes ne peuvent pas se gouverner eux-mêmes; elle prouve aussi, du même coup, que les hommes ne peuvent pas être gouvernés par un pouvoir simplement humain*[167].

Counter-Revolutionary thought closes therefore the circle of modernity by demonstrating rationally the necessity of the religion that modern reason has criticized. "The Revolution",

[164] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*, livre IV, quoted in Joseph de Maistre, *Contre Rousseau (De l'état de nature)*, p. 59.
[165] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 100.
[166] Joseph de Maistre, *Contre Rousseau (De l'état de nature)*, p. 61.
[167] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 209.

Bonald will argue, "began by the *Declaration of the rights of man* and it will end only by the declaration of the rights of God"[168].

1.6. - The nihilism of modernity

Rousseau was forced to admit that autonomy required an emancipating authority. This authority inevitably instituted a social division between those who govern and those who are governed. Like autonomy, the unity of the social body in a single will, or more precisely man's socialization, had hierarchical preconditions. For if man became free through the education of his autonomy, likewise, he became social by being taught how to speak by the educational authority. Whether it is the case of the sovereignty of the people over itself or of the individual's sovereignty over itself, Maistre stresses the fact that there is contradiction in the fact that the people/individual is both sovereign and subject. As stressed by Pranchère, Maistre's rejection of the modern claim of autonomy ultimately underlines that subjectivity itself, "*ce qui fait d'un individu le sujet responsable de ses actes – n'est possible que sur le fond d'une sujétion ou d'un assujettissement*"[169]. This would imply that both the fundament of Rousseau's political philosophy, which is the affirmation of the natural character of individual freedom, as well as its political goal, which is the elimination of the division between those who govern and those who are governed, is compromised. Maistre concludes that it is not freedom that is natural but authority. Authority is not a deviation from natural freedom, but freedom, in as much as it is possible, is a product of natural authority. Freedom for Maistre is nothing else than enlightened,

[168] Louis Ambroise de Bonald, *Législation primitive considérée dans les derniers temps par les seules lumières de la raiso*n in *Oeuvres complètes* (Geneva: Slatkine 1982), 2:250, quoted in Jean-Yves Pranchère, "The Social Bond According to the Catholic Counter-Revolution: Maistre and Bonald", p. 193.

[169] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 209.

non-tyrannical authority. Thus, Rousseau's natural freedom was nothing else than an unnatural/anti-natural rebellion against authority. For if authority, confirmed as such by the historical experience of humanity, is natural, then this means that despite its fundamental claims, the Enlightenment does not oppose religion in the name of nature, but instead, opposes an impossible autonomy to the natural hierarchy that is willed by God. The Enlightenment's ideal of autonomy becomes then nothing else than the expression of man's sinfulness, and for this reason, Maistre believes that all philosophy that is attacking religion and authority in the name of reason and freedom serves in fact as a justification mechanism for man's wicked passions. If Maistre accused *les philosophes* of offering a philosophical justification to a criminal instinct that preceded the philosophical reflection and was in search of a legitimizing sophistical discourse, for Louis de Bonald, the Revolution was a rebellion of the subjective passions against the social rationality – the authentic rationality – which rested on the authority of God, and which required the socialization of the individual and the repression of the pseudo-rational and anti-social manifestations of individual reason[170]. The first Revolution, Bonald argued, happened in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve had rebelled against the authority of God[171].

In Maistre's view, the fact that for the modern world, the only legitimate social order is the result of a contract signed by all the individuals that compose a society, means that this world is condemned to a perpetual revolution[172]; for the social contract can truly be a contract only if it is accepted by each individual and each generation. Each generation, as Rousseau himself has argued in *Du Contrat Social*, has therefore the right to rewrite the constitution. Thus, for Maistre, modernity's claim for autonomy, rendering impossible all forms of authority, automatically renders impossible the transmission of any tradition and the duration of any institution. Maistre

[170] Domenico Fisichella, *Politica e Mutamento Sociale*, p. 184.
[171] Louis Ambroise de Bonald, *Théorie du pouvoir politique et religieux*,p. 184.
[172] Richard Lebrun, *Throne and Altar*, p. 99.

insists on the fact that the impossibility of ending the Revolution in any of its intermediary phases derives directly from the very essence of the revolutionary phenomenon and from its intrinsic arbitrariness. As stressed by Pranchère, for Maistre, the Revolution can last "*mais uniquement au sens où un processus de destruction et de décomposition peut durer*. *Les institutions révolutionnaires, elles, ne durent pas: elles sont sans cesse renversées ou transformées*"[173]. Thus, to the extent that one can speak of a "revolutionary tradition", this is translated in the fact that every new generation is, so to speak, condemned to make a new revolution, and so on, until the positive content of tradition is completely consumed by the pure negativity of the Revolution. Humanity is set to reinvent itself perpetually to the point of complete dehumanization[174]. Ultimately, the fact that the sovereign will, be that of the individual or of the collective, cannot, by definition, be limited by any aprioric finalities that are given and not chosen, opens the way to the possibility of individual or collective suicide. In this sense, Maistre quotes with horror Rousseau's contention from *Du Contrat Social* that *"il n'y a dans l'État aucune loi fondamentale qui ne se puisse révoquer, non pas même le pacte social"*[175], up to the point where the people has the right *"de se faire mal à lui-même"*, and nobody has the right *"de l'en empêcher"*[176]. If the constitution of the self presupposes the existence of authority, pushed to the end, the modern rebellion against all forms of authority can only end with the destruction of the preconditions that make possible the existence of a self, and in particular, of a rebel self. For Bonald, the modern insurrection against authority then means that "*la société peut vouloir se détruire elle-même, lorsque la nature veut qu'elle existe*". "*Et qu'on n'oublie pas de remarquer*", Bonald adds, "*que ce suicide social a pour défenseurs les partisans du suicide*

[173] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 371.
[174] Gerard Gengembre, *La Contre-Révolution ou l'histoire désespérante*, pp. 286-287.
[175] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social*, p. 196.
[176] *Ibidem*, p. 151.

naturel"[177]. Pushed to its ultimate limit, the affirmation of the self, in its rejection of all forms of heteronomy, becomes self-destruction. For Maistre, Rousseau's attack against all forms of possible sovereignty in the name of an impossible popular sovereignty betrays the fact that, like in the case of the Protestants, the secret of the philosophers consists in a purely negative force of rebellion, whose essence is ultimately satanic:

> *Les philosophes […] ne veulent aucun gouvernement, parce qu'il n'en est point qui n'ait la prétention de se faire obéir; ce n'est pas cette autorité qu'ils détestent, c'est l'autorité […]. Ennemis mortels de toute espèce d'association, possédés d'un orgueil repoussant et solitaire, ils ne s'accordent que sur un point : la fureur de détruire ; et, chacun voulant substituer à ce qui lui déplaît ses propres conceptions qui ne sont approuvés que par lui, il en résulte que toute leur puissance est négative, et que tous leurs efforts pour édifier sont impuissantes et ridicules*[178].

For Joseph de Maistre, if the Protestant contestation of the ecclesial sovereignty of the Pope makes the Church impossible, likewise, the liberal contestation of the authority of the monarch makes the Republic (that which is common) impossible. Given the fact that, as well noticed by Rousseau, a Republic inevitably appears as a form of "transcendence" situated above the individual will, real autonomy is always in the last instance subjective, opposed to all authorities, and, due to this fact, it is opposed not only to sovereignty but also to society. The Enlightenment's ideal was to make everybody a philosopher: to "disseminate the spirit of rational respect for personal value and for the duty of all men to think for themselves […] without the guidance of another"[179]. For Maistre, this represented only the natural continuation of Protestantism. Unlike Kant, Maistre regarded the Enlightenment as a Pandora box: once opened, the nature and the extent of the critique of authority could no longer be contained, for ultimately, authority and individual reason, defined first and foremost by its independence in relation to

[177] Louis Ambroise de Bonald, *Théorie du pouvoir politique et religieux*, p. 57.
[178] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 260.
[179] Immanuel Kant, *What is Enlightenment*, in Hans Reiss (ed.), *Political Writings*, translated by H. B. Nisbet, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970, pp. 54-55.

religious dogma and the ecclesial authority, mutually exclude each other. "*Je sais*", Maistre argues, "*que la philosophie, honteuse de ses effroyables succès, a pris le parti de désavouer hautement les excès dont nous sommes les témoins*", that is, the crimes of the French Revolution ; "*mais ce n'est point ainsi qu'on échappe à l'animadversion des sages*". For, "*les succès de la raison n'étoient que l'état intermédiaire par lequel il falloit passer pour arriver à toutes les horreurs que nous avons vues*"[180].

As stressed by Pranchère, for Maistre, "*Réforme, Lumières et Révolution sont les étapes d'un même refus de la transcendance de l'autorité, d'une même volonté d'autonomie individuelle et collective*"[181], whose ultimate substance is nihilist. According to the same author, for Maistre, the true catastrophe brought by the French Revolution was a symbolic catastrophe[182]. "*Les massacres, les pillages, les incendies*" Maistre argues already in 1791, "*ne sont rien, il ne faut que peu d'années pour guérir tout cela; mais l'esprit public anéanti, l'opinion viciée à un point effrayant; en un mot la France pourrie, voilà l'ouvrage de ces messieurs*"[183]. Maistre realized that the above mentioned symbolic catastrophe made the Restoration impossible, as it had destroyed the theologico-political imaginary that made authority possible[184]. Nevertheless, as argued by Pranchère, Maistre's view of the damage done by the French Revolution goes beyond the fact that the monarchy has become impossible because public opinion "*étant devenue démocratique, la légitimité serait désormais du côté de la démocratie*". "*Car l'assentiment universel qui fonde la légitimité*", Pranchère continues, "*suppose l'unité de l'opinion publique,*

[180] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, pp. 176-177

[181] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières,* p. 21.

[182] *Ibidem*, p. 77.

[183] Joseph de Maistre, *Œuvres complètes*, Vitte, Lyon, 1884-1886, IX, p. 11, quoted in Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 77.

[184] More precisely, Maistre realized that, speaking in strictly human terms, the Restoration was impossible. However, "with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1, 37). This is the reason why Joseph de Maistre will argue that while the Revolution can be understood only as a miraculous, providential event, the overcoming of the Revolution likewise requires a divine, providential miracle. We will approach this aspect of Maistrian thought in the following sections.

c'est à dire l'unité de la croyance dans ce que Maistre nomme les 'dogmes nationaux' autour desquels se constitue, à la manière d'une véritable foi, l'unanimité de l'opinion nationale"[185]. However, for Maistre, the biggest problem consists in the fact that by eroding "*le ciment qui unissait les hommes*", the philosophical spirit has created a universe where "*il n'y a plus de coutume; il n'y a plus de maître [...] il n'y a plus d'agrégations morales*", where "*l'esprit de chaque homme est à lui*"[186]. Consequently, Pranchère agues that for Maistre "*la diffusion de la mentalité révolutionnaire ne signifie pas la constitution d'une nouvelle opinion publique organisée autour des valeurs 'démocratiques'* ". Instead,

> *elle signifie la dispersion de l'opinion publique en une multitude d'opinions divergentes – ce que Maistre décrira peu de temps avant sa mort comme l'avenir apocalyptique de l'Europe: 'cette profonde et effrayante division des esprits, ce morcellement jusqu'à l'infini de toute les doctrines, le protestantisme politique poussé jusqu'à l'individualisme le plus absolu'. L'avènement de l'individualisme ne marque pas l'émergence d'une nouvelle légitimité; il signifie au contraire que 'l'opinion, qui fait tout, est morte' et que 'les nations en corps sont devenues folles'*[187].

Maistre's reflection on modernity ends therefore in an apocalyptic key. If towards the end of his life Maistre was declaring that he dies together with Europe[188], already in *Considérations sur la France*, the same Maistre was warning his readers: "*s'il ne se faisait pas une révolution morale en Europe, si l'esprit religieux n'est pas renforcé dans cette partie du monde, le lien social est dissous. On ne peut rien deviner*", Maistre continues, "*et il faut s'attendre à tout*"[189]. "*Si ce n'est la fin du monde qui approche*", Bonald wrote towards the end of his life, "*c'est la fin de la société*"[190]. For Maistre, "*la modernité est essentiellement protestante; elle est le*

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[185] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 181.

[186] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 231.

[187] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 181 (Pranchère quotes Maistre from *Oeuvres complètes*, XIV, p. 286; XI p. 238 et 496).

[188] "*Je meurs avec l'Europe; je suis en bonne compagnie*", quoted in Robert Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre: Étude sur la vie et la doctrine d'un matérialiste mystique*, p. 328.

[189] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 211.

[190] Louis Ambroise de Bonald, quoted in Gerard Gengembre, *La Contre-Révolution ou l'historie désespérante*, p. 281.

protestantisme devenu universel"[191]. From Protestantism to the Enlightenment, modernity is viewed by Joseph de Maistre as a progressive growth of a corrosive individualism that erodes the social bond. Protestantism cannot stop protesting "*sans cesser d'être*"[192]. Therefore, the only definition that Maistre can find for Protestantism is a negative one: "*le protestant est* un homme qui n'est pas catholique". More exactly, "*le protestantisme n'est qu'une négation*"[193]. "*La religion de tous les négatifs quelconques*", Protestantism, is nothing more than "*une haine commune contre l'affirmation*"[194]. "*Que reste-t-il*", Maistre asks himself, "*une fois que l'on vient à supprimer l'objet d'une haine? Rien*"[195]. Essentially Protestant, modernity is ultimately characterized by nihilism. All choices are ultimately reduced to a single choice: the choice between "*catholicisme ou rienisme*" (it seems that Maistre's term "*rienisme*" is the first version of what we now know as nihilism)[196], a choice which Maistre translates as the choice between authority and its rejection. Thus, as indicated by Pranchère, for Maistre, Protestant individualism "*n'est qu'un nom du mal – puisque le mal s'oppose au bien comme la division à l'unité; en lui se manifeste l'essence diabolique du projet moderne*"[197].

[191] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 282.
[192] Joseph de Maistre, *Lettres à un gentilhomme russe sur l'inquisition espagnole*, p. 132.
[193] Joseph de Maistre, *Sur le protestantisme*, p. 329.
[194] Joseph de Maistre, *Lettres à un gentilhomme russe sur l'inquisition espagnole*, p. 128.
[195] *Ibidem*, p. 132.
[196] Jean Yves-Pranchère, "Maistre's Catholic Philosophy of Authority", p. 144.
[197] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 305.

Chapter 2 – The contradictions of Maistre's counter-modern project and his vision of history and providence

2.1. - Introduction

If in the first chapter I have presented Maistre's view concerning the origin and the nature of modernity, underlining as well the coordinates of Maistre's theocratic project, in this chapter I will continue with an in-depth analysis of Maistre's response to the modern crisis. First of all, it should be underlined that Maistrian thought is profoundly paradoxical, often operating through contradictions. It is important to keep in mind that the reading of Maistre often requires that aspects of his thought be simultaneously regarded from different angles and understood within the context of the inner dynamic of Maistrian thought. More specifically, reacting against the modern crisis, Maistre seems to engage in a counter-modern project that may seem self-defeating. But having a profound awareness of the problematic nature of this project, Maistre seeks to neutralize its self-defeating contradictions by an appeal to a providentialist interpretation of history. In this sense, Maistre's response to modernity ultimately operates on two levels, assuming the tension existing between these two levels. We have first of all an attempt to overturn the Enlightenment, as paradigm, by rationally demonstrating the need for traditional authority. This strategy is paralleled and completed by an attempt to overcome modernity as historical age, through a providential perspective of history, which also invests with a divine meaning the decisions of the theologico-political authority whose necessity is demonstrated by Maistre in the first type of counter-modern argumentation. I argue in this chapter that, conceived as a reaction to the modern anomy that has been described in the previous chapter, Maistre's

attempt to reestablish the authority of the monarchy and of the Catholic Church risks arriving at a decisionist position, which is ultimately transferred from his political theory to his ecclesiology. But while decisionism remains a possible reading of Maistre, the main dimension of his thought is represented by his providential understanding of history, which secures the truthfulness of the papal dogmatic statements.

I begin my analysis in section 2.2 by briefly exploring what appears to be a decisionistic implication of Maistre's ecclesiology, resulting from the theological methodology used in *Du Pape*. In section 2.3 I indicate the way in which Maistre arrives at the above mentioned position, but also the contradictions of his attempt to overturn Rousseau's political philosophy, which lead him to the position where he is forced to suspend judgment in the eventuality of a conflict between papacy and monarchy. This position, in turn, finally pushes Maistrian thought towards a position similar to that of Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor, which will be analyzed in section 2.4. In section 2.5 I return to the issue that concerns the decisionistic implications of the Maistrian ecclesiology, stressing the fact that these are kept in check by the fact that Maistre practically uses a two-level argumentation in support of the principle of papal infallibility. This section, where I also briefly analyze in parallel Maistre's epistemology, ends therefore with a return to the providential dimension of Maistre's thought. In section 2.6 I analyze the way in which the appeal to Providence, made in the conditions of the awareness of the inner limits of the counter-revolutionary project, leads to Maistre's detachment from the horizontality of modern politics, and to the prophetical contemplation of the growing decadence of the modern age. After analyzing, in section 2.7, Maistre's interpretation of the French Revolution, which represents the prelude to his sacrificial understanding of human history, I present, in section 2.8, Maistre's view of history as a conflict between the unifying religious principle (Pentecost) and the dividing

philosophical principle (Babel), after which I analyze the eschatological vision from Maistre's *Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, which represents the final stage of his critique of modernity. Section 2.8 includes two subsections. Taking into account that Maistre's prophetical discourse from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* intersects the heterodox ideas of Joachim of Fiore, I analyze in subsection 2.8.1 the genealogy of these ideas within Maistrian thought, referring within this context to Maistre's activity as a Mason, and to the theosophical doctrines related to this affiliation. This gives me the possibility to better explain, in subsection 2.8.2 the exact meaning of Maistre's chiliast eschatology from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, and also to identify the implications of this type of eschatology for the overall economy of his theologico-political system.

2.2. - The decisionist moment of Maistre's ecclesiology

As it has been indicated in the previous chapter, confronted with the modern critique of authority and with its catastrophic consequences, Joseph de Maistre will try to revive the political authority destroyed by the French Revolution. And since the source of the revolutionary crisis consisted in the Protestant insurrection directed against the principle of Papal infallibility, the restoration of the original principle and the subsequent subordination of political authority to it appeared to Maistre as the only possibility for overcoming the modern crisis. If the crisis of authority has its origins in the emancipation of the political from the theological, then the theologico-political resolution of the crisis of authority requires the reconstruction of the original hierarchical structure: political order must be restored by subordinating the political to the theological, and, more specifically, by subordinating the monarchy of the future to the papacy.

Likewise, the fact that the crisis of political authority structurally reproduces the crisis of theological authority explains why Maistre's ecclesiology from *Du Pape* appears as the logical continuation of his theory of sovereignty, as expressed in *De la souveraineté du peuple*. Nevertheless, it is legitimate to ask whether Maistre's theologico-political project is coherent, and ultimately, whether it is compatible with Roman Catholic orthodoxy itself.

First of all, it is very important to mention the fact that Maistre has unequivocally declared that he will retract immediately any theological statement which will be qualified as unorthodox by the teaching authority of the Church. Maistre submitted *Du Pape* for review to the Vatican right after the book was published in 1819, underlining the fact that he will include all the critical commentaries in the second edition. The Vatican formulated several objections with regard to the treatise, among which one alone can be considered as crucial, for it touches the essence of Maistre's argumentation. In this sense, Maistre "gave the appearance of basing the infallibility of the Church, and the pope on the fact that their judgments", like the judgments of political sovereigns, "were without appeal". Maistre tried "to lead his readers from their understanding and acceptance of the concept of sovereignty in the secular order to the logical necessity of acknowledging papal infallibility in the spiritual order"[198]. The analogy risked however leading to a confusion between the potentially fallible judgment of the sovereign, and the necessarily infallible judgment of the Pope. Precisely because it may well have been mistaken, the judgment of the sovereign may have always been subject to review. The sovereign can come back on his former decision and annul it. But, precisely because he is the organ of truth, the Pope cannot come back on his former decision. In this sense, while Rousseau's absolute sovereignty, on the basis of which Maistre constructs his defense of infallibility, is not limited by former decisions of

[198] Richard Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre: An Intellectual Militant*, McGill – Queen's University Press, Kingston and Montreal, 1988, p. 243.

the sovereign or of former generations, papal infallibility is limited by the Church teaching that has been legitimized once and forever by the infallible judgment of the Bishop of Rome[199]. From this point of view, Maistre's demonstration of papal infallibility on the basis of the analogy with political sovereignty falls short of Catholic orthodoxy, for in the end it reduces the institution through which the divine promise of infallibility is fulfilled to a mere mechanism for maintaining church unity. In other words, the organ of truth is reduced to an instrument of order.

Developed as a scientific justification of authority in response to the contradictions issued from the revolutionary overthrow of the legitimate monarchy[200], Maistre's political theology presents the risk of projecting the arbitrary content of modern sovereignty on the content of Catholic theology itself. As noticed by Massimo Boffa, the problem with Maistre's political theology consists in the fact that political authority is not derived from the natural legitimacy which is conferred by a perfectly organized society, but on the contrary, from the very anomy

[199] Jean-Yves Pranchère, "Maistre's Catholic Philosophy of Authority", pp. 146-147.

[200] In *Lettres d'un Royaliste savoisien à ses compatriotes*, written in 1793, Maistre exhorted his fellow subjects of the savoyard monarchy in the following way: "sachez être royalistes: autrefois c'était un instinct, aujourd'hui c'est une science [...]. Aimez le souverain comme vous devez aimer l'*ordre*: avec toutes les forces de votre intelligence" (Joseph de Maistre, *Lettres d'un Royaliste savoisien*, 3, *OC* VII, p.155-157, quoted in Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 78). Commenting on this passage, Richard Lebrun underlines the fact that "the most striking characteristic of the *Lettrres d'un Royaliste savoisien* considered as counter-revolutionary propaganda designed for circulation in Savoy is the way Maistre tried to appeal to the reason and self-interest of his compatriots [...]. Appealing to their reason, Maistre sought to persuade them that support for the traditional order was really in their own best interests [...]. But this was appealing to the very rationalism that had repudiated the old order". Thus, "Maistre's Lettres exemplify the dilemma of a purely political royalism in an age of democratic revolution. Much of the strength of traditional society lies in the fact that its structure and values are unquestioned – indeed unquestionable. It is only when the status quo has been attacked and disrupted that the need to defend it becomes imperative. The conservative theorist almost inevitably finds himself in a defensive posture, involved in a debate of the relative merits of the old order versus the new, and impelled to base his arguments on the assumptions of the innovators. And by engaging in the argument at all, he easily becomes suspect to the members of the traditional élite who have always simply assumed the rightness of existing structures and values and their own privileged place in the traditional order." (Richard Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre: An Intellectual Militant*, McGill – Queen's University Press, Kingston and Montreal, 1988, pp. 123-124). Taking into account the structural analogy between Maistre's defense of monarchical sovereignty and of papal infallibility, these controversial aspects of Maistre's defense of the traditional institutions are inevitably transferred from the first type of argumentation to the second type of argumentation.

created by the Revolution, to which Maistre wants to put an end[201]. Paradoxically, the attempt to reverse this state of anomy reproduces and confirms within the theologico-political order the same anomic principle that is being combated. Thus, "the modern concept of sovereign authority, applied to Catholicism, tends to produce a de-theologized representation of the theological itself"[202]. As argued by Pranchère, Maistre confronts us with the paradox of a demonstration that legitimizes the principle of papal infallibility through the principle of monarchic sovereignty, although the latter principle depends on the truth of the former. As a consequence, "the ontological foundation of sovereign authority appears finally […] as founded by that very thing that it must found"[203].

If the essence of the Revolution consists in a pure denial, Maistrian thought risks reproducing in itself the same nihilism that it intends to reject. Following this logic, "papal infallibility" stops being "the infallibility of the word of truth" and simply becomes "the infallibility of an arbitrary word whose sole function is to assure, by its very arbitrariness, the unity of the Church"[204]. The question of truth is then simply absorbed in the fact of sovereignty. If in the conflict between Rome and Geneva, "*il ne s'agit point de savoir qui [a] tort ou raison, mais seulement qui [est] souverain ou rebelle*"[205], then the word of the Church "*n'est plus la parole du Christ, mais la parole de l'autorité opposée aux rebelles*"[206]. The demonstration of papal infallibility on the basis of the analogy with sovereignty determines Maistre to specifically state that since hierarchy is the basis of dogma, the principle of hierarchy is therefore more important than the positive content of dogma. According to Maistre, "*il importe peu, avant la décision, qu'on croie que* le

[201] Massimo Boffa, "La Défense de la souveraineté" in *Le Débat*, no.39, mars-mai 1986, pp. 92-93, quoted in Gerard Gengembre, *La Contre-Révolution ou l'histoire désespérante*, note 15, pp. 287-288.
[202] Jean-Yves Pranchère, "Joseph de Maistre's Catholic Philosophy of Authority", p. 133.
[203] *Ibidem*, p. 134.
[204] *Ibidem*, p. 144.
[205] Joseph de Maistre, *Sur le protestantisme*, p. 315.
[206] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 434.

Saint Esprit procède du Père ou du Fils, ou du Père par le Fils*; mais il importe infiniment qu'aucun particulier n'ait droit de dogmatiser de son chef, et qu'il soit obligé de se soumettre des que l'autorité a parlé; autrement, il n'y a plus d'unité ni d'Église*"[207]. The decisionistic tendencies of Maistre's Catholicism culminate with this affirmation from *Du Pape*, quoted by Schmitt in *Political Theology* : when a dogmatic issue is being debated, "*notre intérêtn'est point qu'elle soit décidée de telle ou telle manière, mais qu'elle le soit sans retard et sans appel*"[208].

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* *

As it will later be demonstrated in this chapter, while Schmitt can be accused of putting forward a reductionist interpretation of Maistre based on a selective reading of the latter, Maistre's ecclesiological position, although profoundly ambiguous, cannot be simply reduced to a decisionist distortion of the Catholic concept of infallibility. For Pranchère, "decisionism represents only a subordinate moment in Maistrian thought"[209]. To be more specific, and as it will be revealed later in the thesis, we are dealing here with a recurring moment that haunts Maistrian thought from its beginning to its end, not being clear, in the end, the extent to which Maistre manages to finally overcome this moment. For the moment however, it should be argued that Maistre does not simply assume in a non-problematic manner a decisionist position, but struggles to contain the possible decisionist deviation of his authoritarian political philosophy.

[207] Joseph de Maistre, *Œuvres complètes*, Vitte, Lyon, 1884-1886, vol. VIII, pp. 141-142, quoted in Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 344.
[208] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 135.
[209] Jean-Yves Pranchère, "Joseph de Maistre's Catholic Philosophy of Authority", p. 145.

2.3. - The contradictions of Maistre's attempt to overturn the Enlightenment

As indicated by Pranchère, highlighting the inner contradictions of the Enlightenment, Maistre attempts to turn the latter on its head, pointing to the fact that the contradictions of individual reason end up by rationally justifying the authoritarian stance. Yet, based on Enlightenment themes turned against the Enlightenment, "*la critique maistrienne des Lumières, est dans la dépendance des Lumières*", Maistre himself becoming a moment of the dialectic of the Enlightenment, through which, as observed by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, the Enlightenment turns into its opposite[210]. But the effect of this dependency, Pranchère stresses on the traces of Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, is the fact that Maistre's attempt to overturn the Enlightenment is condemned to the same fate as Nietzsche's attempt to overturn Platonism. Namely, it inevitably reproduces its structure. Thus, according to Pranchère, if the Enlightenment cannot escape the specter of Maistre, Maistre's own thought inevitably gets trapped itself in the dialectic of the Enlightenment. Thus, "*parce qu'il veut démontrer la supériorité de la tradition sur la raison, le traditionalisme soumet la tradition à l'autorité de la raison et prouve ainsi que la tradition a perdu son évidence; en s'efforçant de la justifier, il lui donne une forme rationnelle qui en est la négation*"[211].

As already indicated, the epicenter of Maistre's attempt to overturn the Enlightenment was concentrated around a refutation of the political philosophy of Rousseau, which was nonetheless dependent on Rousseau's own concepts, and in particular on Rousseau's concept of sovereignty. But as argued by Pranchère, "*fondée sur les contradictions Du Contrat Social, l'idée*

[210] *Ibidem*, pp. 18-21.

[211] *Ibidem*, pp. 19-20. In the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer have argued that "*la critique de la contre-révolution catholique prouva qu'elle avait raison contre l'Aufklärung, tout comme l'Aufklärung avait raison contre le catholicisme*" (Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, *La dialectique de la Raison*, tr. E Kaufholz, Gallimard, Paris, 1983, p. 100, 228 sq. Cf également p. 25, 271, quoted in Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 20).

théocratique reproduisait en elle-même ces contradictions"[212]. In this sense, one should once again underline the astonishing resemblances between Rousseau's political philosophy and Maistre's political philosophy. However, the unity of content between the thought of the two authors should not conceal the fact that Maistre wants to confer to Rousseau's thought a totally different fundament and a fundamentally different finality.

In agreement with Rousseau, Maistre affirms that "*toutes les institutions imaginables reposent sur une idée religieuse, ou ne font que passer. Elles sont fortes et durables à mesure qu'elles sont divinisées*"[213]. In the chapter from *Du Contrat Social* dedicated to the legislator, while expressing his admiration for the religious genius of Moses and Muhammad, Rousseau has rebuked *"l'orgueilleuse philosophie"* which sees in these men *"que d'hereux imposteurs"*, while failing to see their *"grand et puissant génie qui préside aux établissements durables"*[214]. Moreover, already in the *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, Rousseau attacked "*cette foule d'Ecrivains obscurs et de Lettrés oisifs, qui dévorent en pure perte la substance de l'Etat. […] Ces vains et futile déclamateurs*", Rousseau argued, "*vont de tous côtés, armés de leurs funestes paradoxes; sapant les fondements de la foi, et anéantissant la vertu*". "*Ils consacrent leurs talents et leur Philosophie à détruire et avilir tout ce qu'il y a de sacré parmi les hommes*", and above all men's sacred attachment to "*Religion*" and "*Patrie*"[215]. Once again, Rousseau seems to have supplied Maistre with the necessary munitions. For like Rousseau, Maistre affirms that "*non seulement la raison humaine, ou ce qu'on appelle la philosophie, sans savoir ce qu'on dit, ne peut suppléer à ces bases qu'on appelle superstitieuses, toujours sans savoir ce qu'on dit;*

[212] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, pp. 126-127. See also Richard Lebrun, *Throne and Altar*, p. 105. In this section, I follow in general the argumentation of Jean-Yves Pranchère.
[213] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 226.
[214] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social*, p. 141.
[215] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, Kraus Reprint Corporation, New York, 1966, pp.132-133.

mais la philosophie est, au contraire, une puissance essentiellement désorganisatrice"[216]. Daughter of Protestantism, since like the latter it recognizes no other authority above the individual judgment, philosophy, or more precisely "*la raison humaine réduite à ses forces individuelles*" produces only "*des disputes*" and consequently destroys the unity of each city and of mankind as a whole. Acording to Maistre, "*le plus grand fléau de l'univers a toujours été, dans tous les siècles*", Maistre will argue, "*ce qu'on appelle* Philosophie *[…] dont toute la puissance se réduit à détruire*"[217]. The Enlightenment has sought in reason a basis for the unity of mankind that would surpass the religious divisions. Overturning the Enlightenment, Maistre will argue to the contrary, that while social unity is assured by religion, philosophy has been associated from the very beginning with the Tower of Babel. "*La Tour de Babel*", Maistre writes in *De la souveraineté du peuple*, "*est l'image naïve d'une foule d'hommes qui s'assemblent pour créer une constitution*"[218]. Summoned in order to grant France a Constitution according to the natural law, after France's historical constitution has been obliterated by the revolutionary insurrection, philosophy was inevitably condemned to degenerate into an infinite discussion concerning the natural law where "*chacun parle* sa langue*; personne ne s'entend, et la* dispersion *est inévitable*"[219]. Moreover, founded on this principle, the philosophical regime can only lead to skepticism, which implicitly erodes the patriotic spirit. "*Voulez-vous éteindre cet enthousiasme qui inspire les grandes pensées et les grandes entreprises, glacer les cœurs et mettre l'égoïsme à la place de l'ardent amour de la patrie?*", Maistre rhetorically asks. He answers : "*ôtez à un peuple sa croyance, et rendez-le philosophe*", Maistre continues, and you will get this result.[220] Eroding all the myths, philosophy makes man prideful, vicious, disobedient and as a result "*elle*

[216] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 226.
[217] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, pp. 147, 132-133.
[218] *Ibidem*, pp. 141-142
[219] *Ibidem*, p. 142.
[220] Joseph de Maistre, *Lettres à un gentilhomme russe sur l'inquisition espagnole* , p. 107

tend donc nécessairement à tuer l'esprit public et à nuire à la société"[221]. Destroying the myths of the community, philosophy then destroys the happiness of societies as well as of individuals[222].

All these lead Maistre to the practical conclusion that "*celui qui parle ou écrit pour ôter un dogme national au peuple, doit être pendu comme voleur domestique. Rousseau même*", Maistre continues, "*en est convenu, sans songer à ce qu'il demandait pour lui*"[223]. According to Maistre, "*le premier besoin de l'homme c'est que sa raison naissante soit courbée sous ce double joug*" of "*foi et patriotisme*", "*qu'elle se perde dans la raison nationale, afin qu'elle change son existence individuelle en une autre existence commune, comme une rivière qui se précipite dans l'Océan existe bien toujours dans la masse des eaux, mais sans nom et sans réalité distincte*"[224]. Maistre thus confronts the critical reason of the Enlightenment with "*les deux grands thaumaturges de ce monde*", "*la foi et le patriotisme*". When confronted with "*examen, choix, discussion*", these two reply with the accusation of blasphemy, for "*ils ne savent que deux mots:* soumission *et* croyance".[225]Against the Republic of the philosophers, Maistre will invoke, like Rousseau, the divinization of politics manifested in the Bible and the Quran, which by neutralizing the poisonous effect of philosophy, make of citizens "*des croyants dont la fidélité est exaltée jusqu'à la foi, et l'obéissance jusqu'à l'enthousiasme et le fanatisme*"[226]. To the impotence of the modern legislators whose result cannot be other than a man "*qui ne vaut rien*" "*parce qu'il ne croit rien*"[227], Maistre will oppose the legendary accomplishments of the great creators of values such as Moses or Muhammad, legislators who have been capable of giving

[221] Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, p. 38.
[222] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, pp. 140, 148.
[223] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, in *Oeuvres*, Édition établie par Pierre Glaudes, Éditions Robert Laffont, Paris, 2007, p. 701
[224] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 148.
[225] *Ibidem*.
[226] *Ibidem*, p. 136.
[227] Joseph de Maistre, *Examen de la philosohie de Bacon*, p. 263.

"*une âme commune à plusieurs millions d'hommes*" and to light "*ce feu sacré qui anime les nations*."[228]

Here, however, a major problem arises, for Maistre's theocratic resolution of the contradictions of *Du Contrat Social* paradoxically puts him in the position where, like Rousseau, Maistre has to defend what he calls "*[les] dogmes nationaux*"[229]. Otherwise said, Maistre would have to reduce God to nation[230]. But this implicitly compromises both his Catholic faith, which is universal, as well as his argument concerning the natural alliance of Catholicism and sovereignty. For the corollary of the thesis according to which the first need of man is to have his conscience absorbed by the national faith, is the fact that the civil authority must persecute the Catholic religion wherever it represents an innovation. This tension between a nationalism that Maistre recuperates from Rousseau, and a universal Catholic faith that is meant to put an end, not only to the individualistic erosion of the national polity, but also to the divisions occurring among European nations, puts Maistre in the situation where he contradicts himself. Thus, whereas in *De la souveraineté du peuple*, Maistre praises the mixture of religion and nationalism, and the national-religious prejudices that repress "*les aberrations de la raison individuelle*"[231], in *Du Pape*, where he tries to bring Europe to unity under the leadership of the Pope, Maistre complains about the aberrations of national pride that determine Greeks and Russians to reject the otherwise perfectly logical arguments in favor of Papal infallibility. To be more specific, in *De la souveraineté du peuple*, Maistre has argued that "*les aberrations de la raison individuelle*" have to be repressed by "une raison *universelle* ou *nationale*". For Maistre, national prejudices

[228] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, pp. 150, 149.
[229] *Ibidem*, p. 148.
[230] Here, Maistrian thought comes close to the theologico-political thought of one of Dostoyevsky's most important characters from the novel *Demons*, namely Shatov. I will analyze the thought of this character in the section dedicated to Dostoyevsky. As we shall see, it is interesting to note the fact that Shatov's thought also represents a theological reaction to the nihilism of modernity that reproduces and confirms the latter.
[231] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 147.

do not necessarily represent "*des idées fausses, mais seulement [...] des opinions quelconques adoptées avant tout examen*", which are fundamental for man's social existence[232]. Moreover, for Maistre, within the sum of national prejudices is contained the universal wisdom of mankind, the authentic universal reason, ignored, at a terrible cost, by the sophistic superficiality of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, while they intersect each other, and they are both opposed to individual reason, the main object of Maistre's critique, national reason and universal reason are nevertheless distinct. As a consequence, the conflict between the two, and more generally, the conflict between the national idea and the universal idea, may be impossible to avoid.

Thus, if in the first chapter we have indicated how Maistre has speculated on Rousseau's contradictions, it is important to stress here that, as far as the present argument is concerned, Rousseau's reflections from *Du Contrat Social* practically highlight, in anticipation, Maistre's own contradictions. If the latter wants to solve the crisis of modernity by an alliance between faith and patriotism, Rousseau has argued that it is precisely Christianity, defended by Maistre, that has made impossible the existence of this alliance. At the end of *Du Contrat Social*, Rousseau was concluding that the republican order has become impossible because Christianity, with its idea of universal brotherhood, has forever undermined the closed universe of the Ancient City-State. Paradoxically, Rousseau himself has admitted that while Christianity was "*sainte, sublime, véritable*", nevertheless, its otherworldliness, opposed to the republican virtues, and its universality, which inevitably created theologico-political instability, determined him to argue that he knows of nothing "*de plus contraire à l'esprit social*"[233]. Maistre, instead, affirmed the exact opposite. He regarded Catholicism as the perfect expression of social order. However, Rousseau's paradox is symmetrically reproduced in Maistre's thought. For Maistre speaks of two

[232] *Ibidem*.
[233] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social*, p. 227.

absolute sovereignties: the absolute sovereignty of the Monarch over the Kingdom, and the absolute sovereignty of the Pope over the Church, which are both absolute and of divine origin. Thus, if Maistre's thought starts with a defense of political sovereignty, which is absolute or it is not, the attempt to confer a Christian theological grounding to political sovereignty paradoxically ends with the proclamation of two absolute sovereignties that have a common sphere of authority. Yet, Maistre himself stresses the fact that a shared/divided sovereignty is a contradiction in terms. According to the Maistrian theory itself, as long as there is a potential conflict between the Christian and the Citizen, there is no sovereignty. As Pranchère notices, a theologico-political thought that has been able to inspire Carl Schmitt's decisionism seems to culminate in the impossibility to decide[234]. For Maistre never clearly answers the following question: "who in the last instance, must be sovereign, the king or the pope"?[235] Or, more precisely, although Maistre advocates a pan-European theocracy and wholeheartedly advices the monarchs to obey the Pope, he never clearly says who should be obeyed in case a conflict of sovereignty eventually takes place.

But while the attempt to provide a theocratic resolution to the contradictions of Rousseau's theory of sovereignty leads Maistre towards a decisional void, the critique of individual reason in the name of faith and patriotism – which is shared by Rousseau and Maistre – seems, on the contrary, to lead the latter directly towards the decisionist stance. As far as this shared dimension of Rousseau's and Maistre's thought is concerned – the subordination of the individual to the community and the exaltation of the belief in "the national dogmas" –, one clearly sees the authoritarian tendencies, of which Rousseau has been accused by liberal authors, reflected in Maistre's thought and, moreover, exacerbated by it, in as much as Maistre practically cleanses

[234] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, pp. 252-258.

[235] Jean-Yves Pranchère, "The Social Bond According to the Catholic Counter-Revolution: Maistre and Bonald", pp. 215-217.

the *Contrat Social* of all traces of humanist sensitivity. Moreover, in the view of Isaiah Berlin, Maistre is an ultramodern, revolutionary thinker whose thought strongly resembles that of Nietzsche[236]. Anticipating Nietzsche, Maistre points to the fact that reason's inner development necessarily ends with a discovery and exaltation of the vital force which constitutes the essence of life, which is supposed to be threatened by the dissolving power of philosophy. This vital element, which is expressed in myths, is revealed as the necessary basis for the constitution of any historical society or of anything that is great and lasting. Anticipating Leo Strauss, Maistre realized that philosophy represents a great threat to the life of the city, in as much as it threatens the national dogmas on which the virtues of a people and its political unity are based. Defined by Strauss as the unassisted human reason's "quest for universal knowledge"[237], philosophy, Strauss argues, can only suspend judgment in front of an unproven assumption. But unless it stops being philosophy and turns into what may be termed rationalist dogmatism, philosophy can never surpass the stage of the Socratic "I know that I know nothing"; "it will never go beyond the stage of discussion and disputation and will never reach the stage of decision"[238]. Confronted with the claims of revelation, a true philosopher "refuses assent to anything which is not evident to him, and revelation is for him not more than a possibility"[239]. This is why Strauss argues that "opinion, and not knowledge, is the very element of human or social or political life"; and if so, then "philosophy which questions opinions as such, dissolves the very element of social life". "Philosophy", Strauss concludes, "is essentially subversive". For if on the one hand "the quest for knowledge implies that in all cases where sufficient evidence is lacking, assent must be

[236] Isaiah Berlin, "Joseph de Maistre and the Origins of Fascism", in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*, John Murray (Publishers) Ltd, London, 1990, pp. 126-127.

[237] Leo Strauss, "What Is Political Philosophy", in *An Introduction to Political Philosophy: Ten Essays by Leo Strauss*, edited by Hilal Gildin, Wayne State University Press, 1989, p.4.

[238] *Ibidem*, p.5.

[239] Leo Strauss, "Progress or Return? The Contemporary Crisis in Western Civilization" in *An Introduction to Political Philosophy: Ten Essays by Leo Strauss*, p. 296.

withheld or judgment must be suspended", on the other hand, "it is impossible to withhold assent or suspend judgment in matters of extreme urgency which require immediate decision: one cannot suspend judgment in matters of life and death"[240]. Thus, reflecting on the development of Carl Schmitt's thought, Strauss argues that "if reason and argument are incapable of supplying people with the minimum of mutual understanding required for living together, if mutual understanding as regards the practical basis of common life cannot be reached by reason and argument", then people have "no other choice but to turn from reason to authority"[241].

Maistre's attack against the modern philosophical city, which *les philosophes* have built on the basis of the assumption that the Christian revelation is refuted by reason, seems to follow a similar path. According to Pranchère, while the Enlightenment cannot be reduced to a unique stance on religion – Voltaire was an anti-Christian deist, D'Holbach was an atheist, Rousseau was a Christian deist –,

> *il n'est pas exagéré de dire que les Lumières se définissent par leur opposition au catholicisme […]. Philosophiquement elles visent à renverser la foi dans les dogmes du péché originel, de l'éternité de l'Enfer, de la rédemption par la grâce et les sacrements: politiquement, elles refus[ent] la subordination du pouvoir temporel au pouvoir spirituel de l'Eglise et réclament pour chacun la liberté de conscience que l'Eglise catholique d'alors refuse expressément*[242].

But for Maistre, like the Protestants, *les philosophes* are united only by their critique of the religious authority. Otherwise, by itself, philosophy "*ne produit que des disputes*", never reaching the stage of affirmation[243]. Thus, Maistre believed that the anti-Catholicism of the Enlightenment, and the subsequent anti-monarchism, could only lead to anarchy, and this in turn was inevitably leading to a tyrannical resolution of the crisis of sovereignty. This fact, Maistre

[240] Leo Strauss, "Reason and Revelation", Appendix to Heinrich Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem*, Cambridge University Press, 2006, translated by Marcus Breinard, pp. 146-147.

[241] Leo Strauss, "The Living Issues of German Postwar Philosophy", Appendix to Heinrich Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem*, p. 127.

[242] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, pp. 223-224.

[243] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 147.

thought, has been confirmed by the Jacobin episode. And Maistre believed that the latter was announcing even greater future experiences of tyrannical rule.

Maistre insisted that "*il n'y a de société que par le souverain*"[244], and that the authority of the sovereign requires a religious authority that nobody has the right to contest. Maistre then arrives at the conclusion that "*jamais la raison humaine ne fit un plus grand effort et jamais elle ne fut plus absurde que lorsqu'elle a mis la discussion à la place de l'autorité et le jugement particulier de l'individu à la place de l'infaillibilité des chefs*"[245]. The fact that philosophy cannot reach a final decision leads either to the dissolution of society, or to the ending of this process of dissolution through a purely arbitrary decision, which has to impose itself through an irreducible violence. If the outcome of the ambition to build a moral and political order grounded in reason only is the generalized war of opinions that ends in skepticism, then it is reason's own development that, demonstrating the necessity of authority, ends up by condemning reason. This dialectic of counter-revolutionary thought finds its ultimate development in the thought of Carl Schmitt, where the contradictions of a regime based on discussion serve as a justification for the authoritarian decision that manifests the force of sovereignty that secures the existence of the political community. On the basis of the analogy between sovereignty and infallibility, Maistre demonstrates that *"comme dans la Religion, il y a un point où la foi doit être aveugle, il y a de même dans la Politique, un point où l'obéïssance doit l'être […] [L]e chef - d'oeuvre du raisonnement"*, Maistre further argues, *"est de découvrir le point où il faut cesser de raisonner"*[246].

[244] *Ibidem*, p. 105.
[245] Joseph de Maistre, *Sur le protestantisme*, p. 318.
[246] Joseph de Maistre, *Lettres d'un royaliste savoisien a ses compatriotes,* 1793, p. VII. http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8615771v/f9.image.r=lettres%20d%27un%20royaliste%20savoisien%20a%20ses%20compatriotes.langEN

Thus, caught in the dialectic of the Enlightenment, the counter-revolutionary rationalization of tradition transforms the latter into a conscious cult of irrationalism, cult which may at the same time be regarded, as John Milbank emphasizes, as a form of hyper-rationalism mixed with Nietzschean elements[247]. If Emil Cioran has named Maistre "le Machiavel de la théocratie"[248], Milbank will characterize Maistre's thought as a Machiavellianism that affirms the brutal nature of the founding act and the subsequent necessary mystification that hides the substance of power. Moreover, Milbank argues that what further distinguishes this *sui generis* form of Machiavellianism is the fact that it ends up by affirming that founding violence and mystification correspond precisely with the divine will[249]. But most importantly, if, as seen, the decisionistic rational denial of reason represents the conclusion of the dialectic of reason, then we must conclude that the content of the tradition is completely absorbed by the function it performs. The first problem resulting from Maistre's attempt to overturn the Enlightenment was the tension between the imperative of national unity and the universality of the Catholic faith. The second problem, however, is represented by the tension between the obvious social necessity of the religious authority and its claim for truth that remains unproven.

For Maistre, *"le choc des opinions particulières livrées à elles-mêmes ne produit que le scepticisme qui détruit tout: Morale universelle et particulière, religion, lois, coutumes vénérées, préjugés utiles*". In a word, this "*dissolvant universel*" (the same term that Maistre uses to define Protestantism), destroys all institutions[250]. "*Vraies ou fausses*", Maistre argues, "*les idées*

[247] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 1990, p. 55.

[248] Emil Cioran, "Joseph de Maistre. Essai sur la pensée réactionnaire", in *Exercices d'admiration: Essais et portraits*, Gallimard, Paris, 1968, p. 56.

[249] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, p. 57.

[250] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 172.

religieuses [...] forment la base unique de toutes les institutions durables"[251]. Consequently, Maistre will argue that since the absence of religion leads to the ruin of all moral and social order, the truth of religion could be decided from the perspective of utility alone, "*car jamais l'erreur ne peut manquer de nuire, ni la vérité d'être utile*".[252] This suspicious sentence seems to indicate that Maistre's approach to religion, as underlined by Cioran and Milbank, may become in the end a form of Machiavellian Catholic atheism, which completes the arbitrary moment of decision by a necessary mystification. If in general religion is justified not by the truth of its content (its transcendent rationality) but by the function it performs (its immanent rationality), if the question of truth is completely absorbed by the fact of authority and if Catholicism is justified for being the highest possible manifestation of the otherwise indispensable authority, then Maistre's Catholic discourse bears striking similarities with the discourse of one of Dostoyesvky's most famous and most fascinating characters: The Grand Inquisitor.

2.4. - From decisionism to a "philosophy of mystification": Joseph de Maistre as Grand Inquisitor

If social order is impossible without authority while the decision for authority cannot be justified by the authority of evidence, for there is no other evidence than authority, it seems that the functioning of every society inevitably rests on a dissimulation mechanism which hides the true nature of the gods of the City. Thus, it is precisely the revelation of what had to remain forever hidden that represents the great catastrophe of the French Revolution and that makes the latter not only an event that forever shatters the symbolical horizon of the Ancien Régime, but an event that revolutionizes the fundamental structures of political anthropology. Reflecting on

[251] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 227.
[252] Joseph de Maistre, *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*, p. 263.

Jules Michelet's interpretation of Louis XVI's trial, Claude Lefort argued that the institution of democratic modernity as a regime characterized by the sovereignty of the people, and at the same time by the loss of the possibility of symbolically representing the unity of the people (that is to conceive the people as one body), has required a symbolical regicide that had two main consequences. In the first case, sovereignty was relocated in the people by transforming it into the judge of the sovereign. For, as Maistre stressed, he who judges the sovereign is the sovereign. But beyond this aspect, as stressed by Lefort, the aim of the trial was to destroy the Christological symbolism of the French monarchy; to destroy the belief in royalty's incarnation in one man and in the mystical union between king and people; to make it impossible that a man will ever again be king. In this sense, Louis XVI's trial becomes truly a "show trial" whose purpose, in Michelet's words, is "*de mettre en lumière ce ridicule mystère dont l'humanité barbare a fait si longtemps une religion, le mystère de l'incarnation monarchique, la bizarre fiction qui suppose la sagesse d'un peuple concentrée dans un imbécile*"[253]. The destruction of the political imaginary of the Ancien Régime required that together with the faith in the incarnation, the faith in the monarchy's future resurrection be destroyed as well. What was required, Lefort argued, was "*faire voir l'idole comme idole [...] le mettre à plat et du même coup en morceaux*"[254]. Or, in Michelet's words, "*il fallait que la royauté fût traînée au jour, exposée devant et derrière, ouverte et qu'on vît le dedans de l'idole vermoulue, la belle tête dorée, pleine d'insectes et des vers. La royauté et le roi devaient être utilement condamnés, jugés et mis sous le glaive*"[255].

[253] Jules Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, Livre IX, 7, quoted in Claude Lefort, "Permanence du Théologico-Politique?", in *Le Temps de la Reflexion*, Gallimard, Paris, 1981, p. 49.

[254] Claude Lefort, "Permanence du Théologico-Politique?", p. 50.

[255] Jules Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française,* Livre IX, 7, quoted in Claude Lefort, "Permanence du Théologico-Politique?", pp. 49-50.

Maistre realized that by unveiling "*ce qui devait rester voilé*", the French revolutionaries have reversed "*les conditions de l'autorité*"[256]. According to him, the revolutionaries have behaved with their government as a child behaves with "*un de ces jouets qui exécutent des mouvements inexplicables pour lui, au moyen d'un méchanisme intérieur; […] il le brise*, pour voir dedans". By doing this, *"ils ont mis à découvert les principes politiques, ils ont ouvert l'oeil de la foule sur des objets qu'elle ne s'étoit jamais avisée d'éxamier, sans réfléchir qu'il y a des choses qu'on détruit en les montrant"*[257]. Commenting on this passage, Emil Cioran argues that Maistre betrays an "*insolente*" and "*agressive lucidité*", as he openly acknowledges that

> *tout ordre qui veut durer n'y réussit que par une certaine obscurité dont il s'entoure, par le voile qu'il jette sur ses mobiles et sur ses actes, par un rien de 'sacré' qui le rende impénétrable aux masses. C'est là une évidence dont les gouvernements 'démocratiques' ne sauraient se prévaloir, mais qui, en revanche, est proclamée par les réactionnaires, lesquels, insoucieux de l'opinion et du consentement des foules, profèrent sans vergogne des truismes impopulaires, des banalités inopportunes*[258].

Indeed, Maistre specifically argues that "*le principe de la souveraineté du peuple est si dangereux que, dans le cas même où il serait vrai, il ne faudrait pas lui permettre de se montrer*"[259]. If the disenchanting power of reason inevitably associates Revolution and demystification, then the Counter-Revolution must take the form of a conscious and therefore cynical re-mystification. Therefore, Maistre's "*aveu cynique qu'il peut exister des vérités qu'on doit refuser de reconnaître*"[260] appears as an indicator of the fact that, confronted with the nihilism of reason, Maistre proposes a "*philosophie de la mystification*"[261] and becomes the advocate of a *sui generis* form of nihilism. If the ultimate substance of modernity is nihilism, the

[256] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 77.
[257] Joseph de Maistre, *Lettres d'un royaliste savoisien a ses compatriotes,* p. V.
[258] Emil Cioran, "Joseph de Maistre. Essai sur la pensée réactionnaire", p. 36.
[259] Joseph de Maistre, *Œuvres complètes*, Vitte, Lyon, 1884-1886, vol. IX, p. 494 - quoted in Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 16.
[260] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 16.
[261] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 17.

highest expression of Maistre's self-defeating attempt to overturn the Enlightenment would be a reactionary nihilism which "*n'a pas d'autre contenu que la négation du nihilisme [...]. Si le protestantisme n'est qu'un anticatholicisme, le catholicisme n'est à son tour qu'un anti-protestantisme*". And thus, "*défini comme le nihilisme nié*", Maistre's Catholicism "*n'est qu'un nihilisme dénié; l'autorité est le choix aveugle qui n'a d'autre sens que d'éviter le nihilisme et qui par là même le confirme et le maintient*"[262]. It is relevant in this sense to refer to the statements made by Joseph de Maistre in one of his letters.

> *Puisqu'il est assez bien prouvé par l'histoire*", Maistre writes, "*qu'il faut une religion aux peuples, et que le sermon sur la montagne sera toujours regardé comme un code de morale passable, il importe de maintenir la religion qui a publié ce code. Si ses dogmes sont des fables, il faut au moins qu'il y ait unité des fables, ce qui n'aura jamais lieu sans l'unité de doctrine et d'autorité*[263].

Thus, Maistre concludes his letter with the following contention : "*si j'étais athée et souverain, Monseigneur, je déclarerais le pape infaillible par édit public pour l'établissement et la sûreté de la paix dans mes états*"[264].

Affirmations such as these, recurrent throughout the Maistrian work, have determined some commentators to argue that "if one wanted to find in the Catholic tradition a discourse that resembled the one that Dostoyevsky gave to the Grand Inquisitor [...] one would undoubtedly turn to Joseph de Maistre".[265] This tendency of Maistre's thought is very well reflected by his discourse concerning science, which at times seems to be directly extracted from the discourse of the Grand Inquisitor. Richard Lebrun has underlined the fact that almost all of Maistre's letters reflect a tension between his attraction towards the natural sciences and the fear with regard to

[262] *Ibidem*, p. 434.

[263] Joseph de Maistre, *Œuvres complètes*, t. XIII, pp.185 sqq., in Robert Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre: Étude sur la vie et la doctrine d'un matérialiste mystique*, pp. 333-334.

[264] *Ibidem*, p. 334. I will return to the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor later in the thesis, when I will analyze Dostoyevsky's view of Catholicism.

[265] Jean-Yves Pranchère, "Joseph de Maistre's Catholic Philosophy of Authority", p. 131; Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 17. A similar position has been expressed by Isaiah Berlin in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, p. 174.

the possible effects that these may have[266]. According to Maistre's own words, "*on peut hardiment dire des sciences ce que l'un des plus grands écrivains de l'antiquité a dit des métaux précieux: 'Qu'on ne sait si le ciel nous les a accordés dans sa bonté ou dans sa colère'* "[267]. An adornment of civilization that according to Maistre belongs to Europe above all civilizations, precisely for the fact that Europe's religion is Christianity, science can nevertheless be the cause of the generalized disorder signified by the biblical story of the Tower of Babel. According to Maistre, like philosophy, "*la science réduite à elle-même divise au lieu d'unir*"[268]. For this reason, Maistre argues that "*s'il y a une chose sûre dans le monde, c'est, à mon avis, que ce n'est point à la science qu'il appartient de conduire les hommes*"[269]. In fact, for Maistre, modern philosophy is nothing else than a monster that has escaped from the laboratory. Condorcet has praised the fact that the scientific methodology of Descartes and Locke has become "*celle de tous les philosophes, et c'est en l'appliquant à la morale, à la politique, à l'économie publique, qu'ils sont parvenus à suivre dans ces sciences une marche presqu'aussi sûre que celle des sciences naturelles*"[270]. Setting aside the fact that Joseph de Maistre admires Descartes and despises Locke, it should be underlined that the progress that pleases Condorcet appears to Maistre instead as a disaster that must urgently be contained. All the evils that have come upon Europe are owed to the fact that "*les savants*" have not been kept "*a leur place, qui est la seconde*"[271]. Instead, they have become the supreme authority in all the types of knowledge, including moral knowledge. According to Maistre, if ethics, economy and politics are deprived of their metaphysical and more specifically theological foundation, the consequence can only be

[266] Richard Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre : An Intellectual Militant*, p. 221.
[267] Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, p. 37.
[268] Joseph de Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint Pétersbourg*, p. 734.
[269] *Ibidem*, p. 701.
[270] Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas Caritat de Condorcet, *Esquisse d'un Tableau Historique des Progrès de l'Esprit Humain*, Georg Olms Verlag Hildesheim, New York, 1981, p. 237.
[271] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 701.

"*l'abrutissement absolu de l'espèce humaine*"[272]. In particular, Maistre attacked the empiricism of Bacon and Locke, believing that the ultimate consequence of this paradigm was absolute materialism and the subsequent denial of the spiritual dimension of man. Maistre therefore issues the following warning : "*si l'éducation n'est pas rendue aux prêtres, et si la science n'est pas mise partout à la seconde place [...] nous serons abrutis par la science, et c'est le dernier degré de l'abrutissement*"[273]. Maistre insists that science which is like fire, both useful and dangerous, "*ne doit point être remis aux enfants*". It must be locked up in the temple, from where it has originated, and covered by a veil of mystification[274]. For Maistre, the Catholic Church is the only institution which "*peut supporter l'épreuve de la science*"[275] and which therefore offers "*le spectacle de la science croyante et soumise*"[276]. The relationship of the Catholic Church with science constitutes another argument in favor of Maistre's theocratic project, whose purpose is to contain the disorder unleashed by modern free thinking.

Hearing Maistre one has indeed the impression that he hears the Grand Inquisitor, who prophesizes that "centuries of science" and "of the excesses of the free intellect" will lead modern mankind to "anthropophagy"[277]. Canibalism may rightly be characterized as "*le dernier degré de l'abrutissement*"[278], and in this sense, it is instructive to emphasize the fact that Maistre uses the same term – "*dernier degré de l'abrutissement*" – when he refers to Rousseau's state of nature[279]. If science is a product of civilization, the excesses of civilization lead men back into

[272] *Ibidem*, p. 570.
[273] Joseph de Maistre, *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques et des autres institutions humaines*, p.387.
[274] Joseph de Maistre, *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*, pp. 257-258.
[275] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 327.
[276] Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, p. 84.
[277] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Penguin Books, London, 1993, translated by David McDuff, p. 336.
[278] "*C'est le dernier degré de l'abroutissement que Rousseau et ses pareils appellent l'état de nature*" (Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p.495).
[279] *Ibidem*, p.495.

the state of savagery, as proven by the example of the French Revolution. Moreover, like Joseph de Maistre, the Grand Inquisitor argues that, emancipated from the authority of religion, science inevitably leads to disunity. Like Joseph de Maistre, Dostoyevsky uses the metaphor of the Tower of Babel in order to describe the modern ideal of a secular society. Modernity will end in "anthropophagy" because the moderns "[have] begun to erect their Tower of Babel"[280], without the Grand Inquisitor. In fact, only the latter can master the science of mystification, without which no social order is possible. Erected on the basis of reason, equality and individual freedom, the Tower is condemned to collapse, and its catastrophic collapse is what justifies the Grand Inquisitor's system based upon "miracle, mystery and authority"[281], or, more precisely, his policy of mystification. The Tower of Babel, as it is presented in the "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor", essentially incarnates the ideals of the Enlightenment and of the French Revolution: material progress and the equal distribution of its fruits, free thinking, freedom of conscience, and finally, a unity of mankind based on purely secular principles. What both Maistre and the Grand Inquisitor are affirming is that the unity of mankind, its harmonious integration, and the calming of the modern anarchy, that has its source in the Protestant principle of individual judgment, can be achieved only through the repentant return of the rebellious modern humanity to the Roman See. Warning of the catastrophic consequences, Maistre makes this appeal throughout his work. The Grand Inquisitor, on the other hand, is convinced that mankind will return to him after it "[has] suffered for a thousand years with [its] Tower", and in particular, after the raising of the revolutionary banner against Christ's "temple" will lead to catastrophic consequences[282]. Cynically, Joseph de Maistre and the Grand Inquisitor emphasize the fact that the modern quest for autonomy must be experienced as a trauma, and, moreover, that this trauma

[280] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 336.
[281] *Ibidem*, p. 335.
[282] *Ibidem*, p. 330.

fulfills a pedagogical function. Immanuel Kant has defined the Enlightenment as "man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity", through the overcoming of his "lack of resolution and courage" to use his reason "without the guidance of another"[283]. Like Maistre, the Grand Inquisitor prophesizes instead that this process of maturation, whose cornerstone according to Kant was the critique of religion[284], would necessarily lead humanity on a path of self-destruction. Both Joseph de Maistre and the Grand Inquisitor believe that the development of human knowledge leads humanity not on the path of progress and happiness, but to terrible truths that man cannot endure and that are therefore inimical to his happiness. This belief determines Maistre to argue that the children must be protected from the fire of science and philosophy, and that this protection should be provided by the Catholic clergy. The Grand Inquisitor, on the other hand, predicts that, after individual freedom will lead mankind into the "horrors of slavery and confusion", in the end, those that will manage to survive will abandon their conscience to the authority of The Grand Inquisitor, receiving instead "the quiet, reconciled happiness" of "pathetic children"[285]. The infantilism that the Grand Inquisitor cultivates, and the fanaticism that Maistre cultivates, may be different psychological attitudes. But they both have the same function: to provide for the happiness of the individual and of society, by insuring social cohesion through obedience, and by sparing the individual from the contact with an unbearable truth. Finally, both Maistre and the Grand Inquisitor argue that order can be reestablished only through a universal pontifical theocracy: "only when the popes shall be Caesars" and "shall give thought to the universal happiness of human beings"[286] the "Tower" will be "[completed]"[287] and "a universal […] *community* of bowing down" will be finally established[288].

[283] Immanuel Kant, *What is Enlightenment*, p. 54.
[284] *Ibidem*, p. 59.
[285] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 337.
[286] *Ibidem*, p. 335.

It may also be argued that Maistre's attack against the founding principle of Protestantism, the authority of the individual conscience in matters of faith, risks spilling over into an attack against Christ himself. According to the Grand Inquisitor, it is Christ himself who has asked man "to decide with a free heart what is good and what is evil", having only His "image before him to guide him"[289]. If Christ has required from man the heroism of faith, according to the Grand Inquisitor, only a minority of "Christian athletes" is able to bear the burden of freedom. For the rest of mankind, "there is nothing more tormenting than freedom"[290] and nothing which is more inimical to the social order that man needs. Thus, the Grand Inquisitor tells Christ that by bestowing upon man the gift of freedom, He himself has "laid the foundation for the destruction of his own "kingdom", "[splitting] up the flock and [scattering] it over the unknown ways"[291]. If Joseph de Maistre has justified the Inquisition as a means of opposing the Protestant heresy, the Inquisitor's decision to burn Christ himself "for having come to get in our way" indicates the fact that, for the Grand Inquisitor, Christ is the first Protestant and the true responsible for the "terrible new heresy" which had just arisen "in Germany"[292]. The Inquisitor's denunciation of Christ as a dangerous anarchist, whose subversive message must be contained and manipulated by a Church that is "compelled to lie"[293], and that builds, in the name of Christ, a system that excludes Christ, is a common feature of that "atheist Catholicism" that has found expression later in the thought of authors such as Carl Schmitt or Charles Maurras. If Carl Schmitt practically defends the juridical authority of the Grand Inquisitor over the Church, in the confrontation with

[287] *Ibidem*, p. 330.
[288] *Ibidem*, p. 331.
[289] *Ibidem*, p. 332.
[290] *Ibidem*, p. 332.
[291] *Ibidem*, pp. 333, 337.
[292] *Ibidem*, pp. 323, 339.
[293] *Ibidem*, p. 331.

what he considers to be Dostoyevsky's Protestant anarchism[294], more transparent than Schmitt, Charles Maurras spoke of the opposition between "*l'esprit chrétien*", on the one hand, that "*peut tolérer à la faveur de l'amour de Dieu un pieux anarchisme*", and "*l'esprit catholique*", on the other hand, that is "*l'ennemi de toute espèce de troubles et d'inharmonie*"[295]. Regarding apostolic Christianity as the source of modern individualism and egalitarianism, Maurras praised the Catholic Church for neutralizing the pernicious effects of the Gospels written by "*quatre Juifs obscurs*"[296].

2.5. - The providential overcoming of the decisionist moment of Maistrian thought

As we have seen until now, in his attempt to overturn the Enlightenment and to solve the modern crisis of sovereignty, the Maistrian political-theology is pushed towards a decisionist moment. Instead of being neutralized by the subordination of the political to the theological authority, in the end, the decisionism that threatens the political as a consequence of the erosion of the traditional legitimacy, threatens also to contaminate the theological authority that should otherwise remake the political order. Constructed on the basis of the analogy between sovereignty and infallibility, Maistrian ecclesiology apparently deviates from orthodox doctrine, heading towards a Catholicism of juridical order that is independent of truth. Moreover, since decisionism inevitably requires a complementary strategy of mystification, the Catholicism of Joseph de Maistre tends then to become the Catholicism described in Dostoyevsky's "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor". But Maistre's thought is distinguished by an acute awareness of its own

[294] Théodore Paléologue, *Sous l'Œil du Grand Inquisiteur : Carl Schmitt et l'Héritage de la Théologie Politique*, Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 2004, pp. 39-41, 52.

[295] Charles Maurras, quoted in Victor Nguyen, *Aux origines de l'Action Française : Intelligence et politique à l'aube du XXe siècle*, Librairie Arthème Fayard, Paris, 1991, p. 591 (reference not given).

[296] Charles Maurras, quoted in Victor Nguyen, *Aux origines de l'Action Française*, p. 643 (reference not given).

contradictions and of the risks presupposed by the latter, constantly struggling to contain, or at least to conceal, its own nihilistic potential. We may then argue that, for the moment, the decisionist reading of Joseph de Maistre remains only a possible reading. Moreover, one that refers to a direction that seems to occupy only a secondary place in the overall economy of the author's thought, and that is not simply followed, as such, to the end, without problematizations. Ultimately, the main dimension of Maistre's thought is not decisionism, but providentialism, and it is by a recourse to the latter dimension that Maistre would try to overcome the problems that originate from his key analogy between sovereignty and infallibility. Looked at from this angle, Maistre's ecclesiology, as well, seems much less unorthodox than at first sight.

In response to the objections of the Vatican, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Maistre clarified his position. Indeed, Maistre stated that "*on est forcé de supposer l'infaillibilité, même dans les souverainetés temporelles (où elle n'est pas), sous peine de voir l'association se dissoudre*". Strictly from this perspective, "*l'Église ne demande rien de plus que les autres souverainetés*". But Maistre also insisted on the fact that, compared with the temporal power, the Church "*[a] au-dessus d'elles une immense supériorité, puisque l'infaillibilité est d'un côté humainement supposé, et de l'autre divinement promise*"[297]. In fact, through the analogy between infallibility and sovereignty, Maistre was trying to show that the truth of revelation is also confirmed by rational judgment. Otherwise said, that revelation does not contradict reason. From this point of view, Maistre is perfectly orthodox and in harmony with the spirit of Catholic theology that insists on the fact that revelation is confirmed by reason[298].

Consequently, "Maistre's decisive argumentation in favor of papal infallibility does not hold, in the end, to the analogy between spiritual sovereignty and temporal sovereignty, but in the

[297] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 137

[298] Jean-Yves Pranchère, "Joseph de Maistre's Catholic Philosophy of Authority", p. 145; See also Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, pp. 279-282.

absurdity that would have to admit that God could found a Church without giving to it the infallibility of its leader"[299]. And for Maistre, "*il est plus absurde de supposer un Dieu absurde que d'en nier l'existence*"[300]. According to him, without "*un pouvoir suprême, unique, indéfectible, établi par CELUI qui ne nous aurait rien appris s'ils nous avait laissé le doute*"[301], Christ's promise to send into the world the Spirit of truth becomes a farce. Thus, Maistre's decisive argument in favor of papal infallibility is based on the conviction that Christ can "keep his word" only if He has "*only one word* – the infallible word of the Pope"[302]. Last but not least, one should also mention the fact that the implications of the Vatican's critical reception of *Du Pape* must not be overestimated. "[W]hile Joseph de Maistre may have been disappointed that his great work on the papacy was not more enthusiastically welcomed by Rome, there is nothing to suggest the Vatican's opposition in principle to the book. There was never any question either at that time or later, of condemnation of his work"[303]. Even more so, it has been argued that "the

[299] Jean-Yves Pranchère, "Joseph de Maistre's Catholic Philosophy of Authority", p. 146.

[300] Joseph de Maistre, *Sur le protestantisme*, p. 318.

[301] Joseph de Maistre, *De l'Église gallicane dans son rapport avec le Souverain Pontife*, p. 358 .

[302] Jean-Yves Pranchère, "Joseph de Maistre's Catholic Philosophy of authority", p.143. In the article "Infallibility" from *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, the following arguments are provided in favor of the dogma of papal infallibility: "Supposing, as we do, that Christ actually delivered a definite body of revealed truth, to be taught to all men in all ages, and to be guarded from change or corruption by the living voice of His visible Church, it is idle to contend that this result could be accomplished effectively — in other words that His promise could be effectively fulfilled unless that living voice can speak infallibly to every generation on any question that may arise affecting the substance of Christ's teaching". And "how, if not through such an organ, could infallible authority effectively express itself, unless indeed through the pope?" According to the author of the article, "it is consoling, no doubt, to cling to the abstract doctrine of an infallible authority but if one adopts a theory which represents that authority as unable to fulfill its appointed task during the greater part of the Church's life, it is not easy to see how this consolatory belief is anything more than a delusion". "Practically speaking", the author concludes, "the only alternative to infallibility", infallibility which, as argued, can express itself only through the Pope, "is private judgment, and this after some centuries of trial has been found to lead inevitably to utter rationalism" (Toner, Patrick. "Infallibility".*The Catholic Encyclopedia*.Vol. 7. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910. 19 Sept. 2011 http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07790a.htm). Needless to say, there is a perfect agreement, from this point of view, between Maistre's ecclesiology and the official ecclesiology of the Roman Catholic Church. It should also be mentioned that, although the dogma of papal infallibility has been proclaimed as late as 1870, it is presupposed that the First Vatican Council has only stated explicitly what has always been implicit in the Church: that the successor of Peter is infallible when he issues official judgments (*ex cathedra*) on matters concerning faith and morals. Otherwise said, in accordance with Catholic doctrine, if the dogma of papal infallibility has been proclaimed in 1870, this does not mean that the popes started being infallible from that point onwards.

[303] Richard Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre: An Intellectual Militant*, p. 245.

proclamation of the dogma of papal infallibility, in 1870" has represented "an authentic posthumous victory for Maistre"[304].

Maistre's awareness of the dangers presupposed by a decisionist resolution of the problem of sovereignty, is paralleled by his awareness concerning the dangers that are implicit in a radical rejection of human reason. For, we should remember, the authoritarian philosophy of Joseph de Maistre is a response to the Enlightenment's proclamation of individual reason as the unique authority capable of establishing the truth, and to the practical political consequences of this epistemological theory. Fideist anti-rationalism, in the epistemological sphere, and decisionism, in the political sphere, appear as two sides of the same coin. If the Enlightenment has dismissed tradition as a collection of prejudices that can and must be overcome through individual reason, the Catholic counter-revolutionaries from the traditionalist school have, on the contrary, stressed the fundamental importance of prejudices, not only from a moral and social point of view, but, first and foremost, from the perspective of the constitution of the knowing subject which, Bonald argued, receives all of his knowledge through the transmission of language, originally transmitted to man by God through the "primitive revelation" in which all knowledge is contained. The independence presupposed by reflection, which has been affirmed by the Enlightenment, is replaced then by the authority presupposed by transmission, as reflection is necessarily preceded by the reception of tradition trough faith, which represents the first act of knowledge. In this sense, George Sauvage has defined traditionalism as "a kind of fideism"[305]. However, Maistre's vituperations directed against "*les aberrations de la raison individuelle*"[306] should not mislead us into thinking that Maistre uncritically embraces a fideist stance, for once

[304] Jean-Yves Pranchère, "The Persistence of Maistrian Thought", pp. 303-304.

[305] George Sauvage, "Traditionalism." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 15. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912. http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15013a.htm

[306] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 147.

again, as revealed otherwise by his correspondence with Lamennais, Maistre was deeply aware of the dangers involved in the fideist position. The traditionalism of Bonald and Lamennais, which has been condemned by the Roman Catholic Church, presupposes "*que la raison humaine, d'elle-même, est foncièrement incapable de connaître aucune vérité avec certitude. Le premier acte de connaissance de l'homme doit être un acte de foi fondé sur l'autorité de la révélation, laquelle à son tour est transmise et garantie par la tradition*"[307]. Maistre appreciated the apologetic intentions of Bonald and Lamennais. Together with them, he emphasized "*le rôle inévitable de l'autorité dans l'établissement et la défense des convictions religieuses et politiques*", likewise praising "*les croyances et les traditions établies*"[308]. But unlike Bonald and Lamennais, Maistre did not believe that all our knowledge is transmitted together with language and he insisted on the capacity of human reason to ascertain, by itself, the validity of certain fundamental truths[309]. More specifically, unlike Bonald and Lamennais, Maistre did not want to separate reason from faith, being perfectly aware of the fact that a faith that is not reasonable, and is not confirmed to be as such by an independent faculty of reason, whose deliberation precedes and justifies the act of faith, becomes a purely arbitrary choice[310]. Catholic doctrine presupposes that, "in order" for authority "to be a rule of certitude, it must first be known as valid, competent and legitimate, and reason must have ascertained this before it is entitled to our assent". And, "unless we admit that our reason is of itself capable of knowing with certainty some fundamental truths, we logically end in skepticism – the ruin of both human knowledge

[307] Richard Lebrun, "L'Épistémologie maistrienne: rationalité et connaissance transcendante", *in Revue des études maistriennes*, no. 5-6, 1980, pp. 235-236.

[308] *Ibidem*.

[309] I discussed the Counter-Revolutionary theory of language in section 1.5.

[310] Richard Lebrun, "L'Épistémologie maistrienne: rationalité et connaissance transcendante", *in Revue des études maistriennes*, no. 5-6, 1980, pp. 235-236.

and faith"[311]. As in other cases, we see how, despite the fact that the inner development of his theologico-political thought seems to push him in heretical directions, Maistre constantly struggles to remain within the boundaries of Catholic orthodoxy. It may be argued, nevertheless, that it is the awareness of the above mentioned implications of the traditionalist theory of knowledge, that determines Maistre to manifest strong reservations towards the latter, and less so Maistre's personal confidence in the agreement between reason and revelation. Maistre's affirmations that seem extracted from the discourse of the Grand Inquisitor, appear to support this view. According to Pranchère, possessing, unlike Bonald, "*une conscience aiguë du paradoxe qui est à la base du traditionalisme*", Maistre distinguishes himself by "*une forme de traditionalisme particulièrement lucide ou (retorse) […], une étrange torsion de vérité et de mensonge*", capable "*d'affirmer tout en la niant la validité des idéaux de la raison*"[312].

Returning from epistemology to ecclesiology, it must be stressed that one "should not overestimate the scope of Maistre's decisionistic statements"[313]; nor confound Maistre with Schmitt or Maurras, authors who have assumed transparently and unequivocally the project of a secularized Catholicism, reduced to the status of an authoritarian philosophy of government. It is important to mention that, unlike Maistre, Schmitt and Maurras were excommunicated by the Vatican. Several authors, among which Domenico Fisichella, Graeme Garrard and Théodore Paléologue, have argued that Schmitt reads Maistre selectively, overlooking significant passages that would otherwise challenge the legitimacy of his interpretation of Maistrian thought as decisionist. According to Paléologue, Schmitt is "Hobbesianizing" the Catholic Counter-

[311] George Sauvage, "Traditionalism". *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 15, Robert Appleton Company, New York, 1912. http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15013a.htm

[312] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, pp. 30-31.

[313] Jean-Yves Pranchère, "Joseph de Maistre's Catholic Philosophy of Authority", pp. 144-145.

Revolutionaries just as he is Hobbesianizing Catholicism itself[314]. In his turn, Garrard argues that it is precisely the existence of a "broader moral context" that differentiates Maistre's political theology from Carl Schmitt's decisionism[315]. If Strauss was reproaching Schmitt the fact that his definition of the political as a friend/enemy relation ignores the ethical and consequently grants equal respect to all who are willing to fight[316], Fisichella stresses the fact that Maistre preserves the autonomy of the ethical, which in Schmitt's thought is absorbed in what Fisichella calls "panpolitism"[317]. More exactly, if in the case of Schmitt the question of truth is absorbed in the fact of sovereignty, in Maistre's thought, the fact of sovereignty itself is absorbed within a providential order that justifies it. For according to Maistre, God reveals Himself both through political history and through religious history.

As indicated by Pranchère, the contradictions of the analogy between sovereignty and infallibility bring Maistre to the position where he either models sovereignty on the model of infallibility, therefore limiting the absolute character of sovereignty, or, if he models infallibility on the model of sovereignty, he must admit that dogma itself is evolving[318]. The tension between the two types of argumentation in favor of papal infallibility, one based on the divine promise, and the other based on the problematic analogy between sovereignty and infallibility, that is, the tension between the idea of truth and the imperative of order, may be surmounted if truth itself is historicized, if there is a history of truth that gradually unfolds itself, and if the representatives of truth are the instruments of a Providence that guides their actions, often despite their intentions. In this sense, it is relevant to stress Maistre's affirmation, according to which "*durant trois bons*

[314] Théodore Paléologue, *Sous l'œil du Grand Inquisiteur,* p. 33.
[315] Graeme Garrard, "Joseph de Maistre and Carl Schmitt", in *Joseph de Maistre's Life, Thought and Influence*, pp. 222, 226, 228.
[316] Leo Strauss, "Carl Schmitt's Concept of the Political", pp. 102-103.
[317] Domenico Fisichella, *Il pensiero politico di Joseph de Maistre*, pp. 76-77.
[318] Jean-Yves Pranchère, "Joseph Maistre's Catholic Philosophy of Authority", pp. 146-147.

siècles", the first three centuries of Christianity, "*il resta des doutes dans l'Eglise sur l'éternité des peines et aussi sur la divinité du Saint-Esprit*"[319]. But most importantly, it seems that Maistre's dogmatic evolutionism "does not represent so much the explication of a content present from its origins as a process of historical invention, woven of variations and metamorphoses". Otherwise said, the history of truth may reveal itself through a series of succeeding interpretations, where each interpretation is "susceptible to [change] the meaning of the preceding one"[320].

Ultimately, for Maistre, it is only the providential governing of the Church that guarantees the correspondence between truth, the continuity of tradition and the decisions of the popes[321]. Thus, for Maistre, the analogy between sovereignty and infallibility goes to the point where, like any other institution, the institution of the papacy itself is considered to be the result of a process of historical evolution. "*Est née comme les autres, et s'est accrue comme les autres*", namely, in the circumstances in which the representatives of the institution themselves ignore that which the institution will become in the end[322]. Consequently, if the analogy between sovereignty and infallibility seems to lead to inevitable contradictions, Maistre attempts to escape these contradictions by an escape into the providential order. If the attempt to *overturn* modern nihilism seems condemned to end in counter-modern nihilism, then Maistre will try to *overcome* modernity through his appeal to Providence. Consequently, in Maistre's system of thought, the justification of authority must necessarily turn into a justification of Providence. Maistre therefore moves from a justification of Catholicism that is based on the analogy between

[319] *Amica collatio ou Echange d'observations sur le livre 'Du pape'*, (ed.) Dominique de Maistre, in *Etudes*, octobre 1897, t. 73, p. 14, quoted in Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 338

[320] Jean-Yves Pranchère, "Maistre's Catholic Philosophy of Authority", p. 147

[321] *Ibidem*.

[322] Joseph de Maistre, *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques et des autres institutions humaines*, p. 379.

theological and political structures, to a justification of Catholicism whose basis would be the history of the theologico-political problem.

2.6. - From the temptation of panpolitism to prophetic apolitism

The providential interpretation of history inevitably presupposes a metapolitical detachment from active engagement in counter-revolutionary political action, a radical devaluation of human agency as such. In fact, it presupposes a prophetical posture situated at the opposite pole from an authoritarian political philosophy heading towards decisionism. The latter appears as a radical exaltation of man as autonomous political agent that takes control of his own destiny, an idea that can be considered as specifically modern. Thus, it inevitably reproduces the revolutionary philosophy itself, against which it reacts. Maistre, as it will be shown in the next sections, had a profound awareness of this problem. Caught in the inescapable contradictions of the revolutionary logic, the counter-revolutionary authors can only contemplate, with prophetical detachment, the unfolding disaster. However, if Providence can provide a divine meaning to the decisions of the traditional authority, whose necessity has been demonstrated by Maistre, it can also invert the meaning of the modern crisis. As it will be shown in the next sections, it is only from a providential perspective that Maistre can process the French Revolution, the defining event of political modernity, and reverse its meaning.

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* *

Pranchère argues that the unsolvable difficulties related to the attempt of defending a monarchy which is both absolute and limited by the Church, determine Maistre in the end to

acknowledge one thing: the mixture of authority and freedom that has characterized the European monarchy has represented a historical miracle that does not justify itself through the social laws. The origin of this miracle is precisely the miracle of Christianity itself[323]. Like Donoso Cortés, Maistre believed that by destroying this miraculous work, namely the theologico-political architecture of Western Europe, the French Revolution has put an end to legitimate authority and, in general, has brought mankind from grace back to its natural condition, which is slavery[324]. We must realize, according to Maistre, that slavery is legitimate everywhere outside Christianity. Maistre confronts the philosophy of the 18th century, which has proclaimed the universal rights of man, with the fact that all pre-Christian philosophers did not raise any objections against slavery. From this point of view, like Cortés, and anticipating Nietzsche, Maistre's intuitions point to the fact that if true philosophy is nihilistic and then cruel, the philosophy of the 18th century is nothing but a parasite that feeds on the body of Christianity without admitting it[325]. "*Nous venons de voir l'état social ébranlé jusque dans les fondements*", Maistre wrote in *Du Pape*, "*parce qu'il y avait trop de liberté en Europe, et qu'il n'y avait plus assez de religion. Il y aura encore*", Maistre continues, "*d'autres commotions, et le bon ordre ne sera solidement affermi que lorsque l'esclavage ou la religion sera rétabli*"[326]. Like Donoso Cortés, Maistre believed that in virtue of a necessary social law, every society instinctively

[323] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 263.

[324] Juan Donoso Cortés, *Essai sur le Catholicisme, le Libéralisme et le Socialisme*, Imprimerie de J. G. Lardinois, Liège, 1851, pp. 21, 61.

[325] Donoso Cortés expresses the above problematic in particularly powerful terms: "*D'où tirez-vous que les hommes sont solidaires entre eux, frères, égaux et libres? Et cependant cette question qui s'élève même contre le catholicisme, qui est obligé de répondre à tout ce qu'on lui demande, s'élève surtout contre la plus rationaliste de toutes les écoles*". According to Cortés, liberals, socialists and anarchists alike cannot invoke history for history defends Hobbes' anthropology. If they invoke the state of nature, Cortés answers that since the state of nature is not obvious, the latter must be revealed. In conclusion, Cortés argues : "*pour me faire croire à la noblesse de ces foules stupides, il a fallu que Dieu me la révélât. D'où l'homme sait-il qu'il est noble, si Dieu ne le lui a dit?*" (Juan Donoso Cortés, *Essai sur le Catholicisme, le Libéralisme et le Socialisme*, pp. 189-191, 230-231). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche also wrote ironically "*'Ni dieu: ni maître!'* – that, also, is what you want; and therefore 'Cheers for natural law!' – is it not so?". (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, translated by Hellen Zimmern, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, Edinburgh, 1967, p. 32).

[326] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 256.

returns to order, and to the extent that the internal order based on religious authority decreases, this decrease is automatically compensated by a growth in the external state repression of the sinful actions[327].

If the decisionist epigones of Maistre and Cortés have solved the theologico-political equation of modernity in what are practically Hobbesian terms, justifying despotic power on the grounds that even the worst despotism is better than anarchy, Maistre and Cortés never take a definitive and unequivocal step in this direction. It is true that Cortés chooses the dictatorship of government instead of the dictatorship of anarchists, but he specifically underlines that this is only a provisory solution for ending a revolutionary crisis. In the long run, just like for Maistre, for Cortés, everything is lost without a Christian spiritual rebirth of the European continent. Ultimately, both Maistre and Cortés are aware of the fact that a decisive step towards decisionism, justified by the premise that any order is better than anarchy, would mean legitimizing slavery, proclaiming the superiority of pagan philosophy and, consequently, proclaiming the defeat of Christ (this being precisely the position of Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor). For the Catholic counter-revolutionaries, destroying legitimacy, the French Revolution has given birth to a vicious circle: the disintegration of society through absolute individualism or the preservation of society through absolute tyranny, in the circumstances in which, although formally opposed, individualism and tyranny in fact nourish each other. Therefore, the Revolution has inaugurated a new historical regime of decadence which prevents the Counter-Revolution from acting, since any counter-revolutionary action is compelled to integrate itself in the logic of the new political order. In his *Speech on Dictatorship*, Donoso Cortés declares that he is compelled to choose "the dictatorship of government" instead of the

[327] *Cf*. John T. Graham, *Donoso Cortés: Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist*, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, 1974, p. 148.

"dictatorship of rebellion", because he no longer can choose between freedom and tyranny. The former "is dead" and "it will revive neither on the third day, nor the third year, nor perhaps the third century"[328]. Likewise, in one of his letters, Joseph de Maistre expressed his exasperation with regard to "one of the great evils of the French Revolution", which is the fact that "a very great number of good people have been led to believe that there is no longer a mean between the strangest political absurdities and the revolutions we have just seen"[329]. Incapable of acting, the Counter-Revolution is condemned to the role of a powerless spectator of what Gerard Gengembre has named "*une histoire désespérante*":

> *[L]e pessimisme l'emporte alors, prophétisant pour le XIXème siècle la chute sans fin, jusqu'à la dissolution générale. Penser la Contre-Révolution s'avère tâche dénonciatrice et non plus constructrice. Elle signale impitoyablement la perte, implique un retrait symbolique du cours des choses. Discours de la négativité, la parole contre-révolutionnaire n'a plus d'autre avenir que dans la réitération d'elle même et sa sublimation dans le fidéisme*[330].

Gengembre has argued that the counter-revolutionaries had condemned themselves to marginalization, given their stubbornness in identifying the Revolution with the year 1793 and not with the year 1789. As such, Gengembre argues that the Counter-Revolution is dependent on Jacobinism and incapable of articulating itself against bourgeois liberalism[331]. To the extent that the essence of bourgeois liberalism is individualism, the affirmation is wrong, since as it has been indicated, for the Catholic counter-revolutionaries, individualism represents the essence of modernity. For his part, Pranchère has argued that Maistre's providential historicism has the

[328] Juan Donoso Cortés, *Obras completas de don Juan Donoso Cortés*, edited by Juan Juretschke, Madrid, 1946, Vol. II, pp. 197-204, quoted in John T. Graham, *Donoso Cortés: Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist,* pp. 147-149.

[329] Joseph de Maistre's letter to Vignet des Etoles, 17 September 1793, quoted in Jean-Louis Darcel, "Les Années d'apprentissage d'un contre-révolutionnaire; Joseph de Maistre à Lausanne, 1793-1797" in *Revue des études maistrennes*, no. 10, 1986-1987, p. 52.

[330] Gerard Gengembre, *La Contre-Révolution ou l'historie désespérante*, pp. 71-72.

[331] *Ibidem,* pp. 324-325.

potential to evolve towards the legitimation of Christian democracy. For, Pranchère argues, if Providence can do anything, and if it has managed to transform Gothic barbarism into the miracle of the European monarchy, why would it not be possible that the same Providence would transform the barbarism of the French Revolution into the miracle of Christian democracy?[332] Nevertheless, Maistre seems totally unwilling to accept the idea that a new democratic order can be born from the criminal usurpation of the revolutionaries. Is it from this "*Pandaemonium*", from this "*phalange sanglante que doit sortir un gouvernement durable? Qu'on ne nous objecte point*", Maistre writes in *Considérations sur la France*, "*les mœurs féroces et licencieuses des peuples barbares, qui sont cependant devenus ce que nous voyons. L'ignorance barbare a présidé, sans doute, à nombre d'établissements politiques; mais la barbarie savante, l'atrocité systématique, la corruption calculée, et surtout l'irréligion, n'ont jamais rien produit. La verdeur*", Maistre concludes, "*mène à la maturité; la pourriture ne mène à rien*"[333]. For Maistre, the French Revolution "*est* mauvaise *radicalement*"[334]. "*C'est la pure impureté*"[335]. "*Satanique dans son essence*"[336], "*sa force est purement négative*"[337], and for this reason it cannot create anything.

Although Maistre firmly rejects the attempt to reinstall the old order by force, he nevertheless insists on the fact that what has survived from the old order must surely be defended, by force, if necessary. Considering the French Revolution as the worst calamity to have ever hit mankind and as the inevitable outcome of Protestantism, Maistre praises the attempts to destroy Protestantism in its infant stages. "*Les rois d'Espagne*", he argues, "*qui arrêtèrent par quelques*

[332] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, pp. 431-432.
[333] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 225.
[334] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 117.
[335] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 224.
[336] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 30; Bonald affirms exactly the same thing about the French Revolution (Louis Ambroise de Bonald, *Théorie du pouvoir politique et religieux*, p. 130).
[337] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 224.

gouttes du sang le plus impur des torrents du sang le plus précieux", have rendered great service to humanity.[338] In his defense of the Spanish Inquisition, Maistre stresses the fact that "*la violence*" – and all sects for Maistre are inevitably violent – "*ne peut être repoussée que par la violence*"[339]. Moreover, Maistre argues that "*dans tous les cas de rébellion, les excès même de la puissance qui se défend sont à la charge du rebelle*". "*L'humanité en corps*", Maistre continues, "*a droit de reprocher la Saint-Barthélemy au protestantisme, car pour l'éviter, il n'y avait qu'à ne pas se révolter*"[340]. The Joseph de Maistre from *Considérations sur la France*, who rejects the Counter-Revolution with the argument that "*le plus grand malheur qui pût arriver à un homme délicat, ce serait d'avoir à juger l'assassin de son père*"[341], is completed by the figure of a much more ferocious defender of the old order. These two dimensions co-exist within Maistrian thought and the predominance of the former never implies the complete disappearance of the latter. But when asked what exactly has survived from the old order, Maistre's answer is: only God knows. Maistre argues that William of Orange was surely a usurper, and yet, he underlines, "who can doubt that George III is a very legitimate sovereign?"[342] Nevertheless, if asked when exactly the passage from the regime of usurpation to the regime of legitimacy has occurred, Maistre again declares his incapacity to answer the question[343]. From this point of view, the traditionalist right is caught in a radical contradiction: "*la théorie traditionaliste de l'action*

[338] Joseph de Maistre, *Lettres à un gentilhomme russe sur l'inquisition espagnole* , pp. 60, 125.
[339] *Ibidem*, p. 173.
[340] Joseph de Maistre, *Sur le protestantisme*, p. 314.
[341] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 205.
[342] Joseph de Maistre, Letter to Chevalier de Rossi, 16 June 1804 in Œ*uvres complètes*, Vitte et Perrusel, Lyon, 1884-1886, Vol. 9, pp. 188-191, quoted in Richard Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre*: *An Intellectual Militant*, p. 190.
[343] In November 1688, benefiting from the support of the English Parliament, the Dutch William III of Orange has invaded England, and took over the throne of King James II of England. While James II was a Catholic, William was a Protestant, and was married with the Protestant daughter of James, Mary II of England. Against the opposition of Parliament, James II wanted to impose on the throne, instead of Mary, his newborn son, James Francis Edward Stuart, born earlier that year and baptized Catholic. Essentially, the Glorious Revolution has marked the final victory of the English Parliament against the attempts to establish monarchical absolutism in England, as well as against the attempts to re-establish Catholicism as the official religion of the country. In its aftermath, various anti-Catholic laws were issued in England. George III, who reigned from 1760 until 1820, was the fourth successor of William of Orange.

politique doit confesser que seul Dieu sait ce qu'il faut faire ou ne pas faire. Mais cette aporie est aussi bien la thèse de tout traditionalisme: seul un Dieu peut nous sauver"[344] – this being the case both for the counter-revolutionary project, and for humanity as a whole, irrevocably engaged on the path of permanent revolution. Thus, ultimately, the Counter-Revolution must replace political action with eschatological hope. As stressed by Gengembre, the fact of the matter is that "*la contre-révolution doctrinale ne croit guère à la contre-révolution agissante. Si elle fait*", Gengembre continues, " *– ou plutôt tire – sa révérence aux exploits des Blancs, elle ne se plie qu'à un devoir moral et nullement politique. Ce serait d'ailleurs*", Gengembre continues, "*accorder aux hommes une part trop grande dans l'histoire*", and consequently, "*se placer sur le terrain même de la Révolution*"[345]. One must humbly admit his inability to reconstruct what human wickedness has destroyed, and put his confidence in the governing hand of Providence.

Thus, in Maistre's thought, avec la Providence, "*l'évacuation de la politique se réalise au profit de la métapolitique*"[346]. "*Il faut*", Gengembre argues, "*se détourner de l'Histoire mortifère, et descendre hardiment, le crucifix à la main, dans l'éternité*"[347]. One can draw an analogy between the ancient philosopher's relation with the city, and the Christian theologian's relation with history. In the case of Platonic philosophy, the exit from the cave was the necessary condition not only for the knowledge of the eternal forms. But in the light of the latter, the political life of the city (the scene of the confrontation of opinions) as a whole became transparent in its entirety for the philosopher who possessed the light of knowledge. The correct diagnostic of the city's illness required a metapolitical posture, and, implicitly, an abandonment of the ambition to change the city from within. In the case of Joseph de Maistre, the exit from

[344] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 388.
[345] Gerard Gengembre, *La Contre-Révolution ou l'histoire désespérante,* p. 219.
[346] *Ibidem*, pp. 62-63.
[347] *Ibidem*, p. 295.

history does not mean the conversion from politician to philosopher, but the conversion from politician to prophet. It is through the detachment from the horizontal world of modern politics that Maistre receives the gift of prophecy, which enables him to see the real history hidden behind the historical appearances that mislead the historical actors who "know not what they do". This prophetic reading of history sees behind the historical events the mysterious plans of Providence, to the extent that it is possible. And thus, it identifies in the present turmoil the preparation for the final victory of the City of God. Just as the contradictions of the absolute monarchy have led to an exaltation of the Pope, likewise, the theologico-political contradictions that are ultimately inherent to the historical deployment of Christianity ultimately lead to an eruption of optimistic eschatological fever in the midst of the political disaster. This would be, in *Les Soirées de Saint Pétersbourg*, Maistre's last word.

2.7. - The French Revolution as providential event and the providential character of violence

Counter-Revolutionary thought was born as a reflection that was triggered by a cataclysmic historical event: the French Revolution. Pointing to the paradoxical leap from humanism to atrocity, from reason to madness, and from the ideal of autonomy to tyrannical government, Maistre's *Considérations sur la France*, in the opinion of Pranchère, anticipate the 20th century reflections of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer concerning the tragic dialectic of an Enlightenment that turns into its own opposite[348]. This cataclysmic event confronts the partisans of the Ancien Régime, from the very beginning, with a crucial question: the Revolution represents only a crisis of the old order, which means that the Restoration is possible, or does it

[348] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, pp. 20-21.

represent instead a rent with the old order, which means that the Restoration is impossible?[349] The modality of answering this question differentiates Maistre from his fellow Catholic counter-revolutionary, Bonald. To be more specific, both authors believe in the Restoration, but not in the same kind of Restoration, and they diverge with regard to the manner in which the Restoration would be accomplished. This is owed to the fact that they interpret the Revolution differently. For Bonald, the Revolution was a transgression of the laws of nature, the laws of society being but a particular manifestation of these laws. Nature, Bonald argued, automatically brings by itself the transgressor back into its eternal order. As a consequence, Bonald believed that it was only a matter of time until the Ancien Régime would have been restored through the independent functioning of the laws of nature. Defined as "*sociétés non-constituées*", democratic regimes that result from insurrections "*tendent donc inévitablement à se constituer*". Defined as "*sociétés constituées*", monarchical regimes tend "*à devenir plus constitués*". For not only is restoration a natural tendency, but more than this, nature also tends to grow in perfection. Thus, if on the one hand the French Revolution has meant an attempt to destroy the natural order of society and to replace it with a man-made order, Bonald argues that "*la législation de la nature tend à détruire celle de l'homme, et à substituer ses lois ou rapports nécessaires à des rapports qui ne le sont pas*"[350], or, more precisely, which are arbitrary like the Revolution. For Bonald, there was, so to speak, an infallible social gravitation that was set to restore the natural order that had been disturbed by the irrationality of the Revolution. Moreover, Bonald further believed that, learning from the experience of the Revolution, the restored monarchy would have become even more perfect than the pre-Revolutionary monarchy. Paradoxically, we can say that Bonald's

[349] Gerard Gengembre, *La contre-révolution ou l'histoire désespérante,* pp. 71-72.
[350] Louis Ambroise de Bonald, *Théorie du pouvoir politique et religieux*, pp. 44-45.

confidence in nature and his rationalism confer him a truly progressivist perspective on history[351].

If Bonald has basically identified God with the fixed order of nature and society against which the revolutionaries have rebelled[352], Maistre sees precisely in the revolutionary suspension of the order of nature the epiphany of an incomprehensible God who challenges both the rationalism of the Enlightenment and the counter-rationalism of Bonald. Walter Jay Reedy has argued that whereas "the God of Bonald is presented as an abstract, almost Spinozistic, embodiment of the highest *ratio*", "Maistre's God is portrayed as acting in ways unfathomable for human rationality"[353]. As a consequence, Bonald's optimistic philosophy of history is replaced, in the case of Maistre, by a complex theory of decadence, which is "*terrifiante*" but also "*rassurante*"[354]. Thus, if late in his life, Bonald will exchange his scientific optimism for an apocalyptic mood, proclaiming the end of society[355], Maistre will come to realize earlier that the Revolution is unreal in its reality. The Revolution is incomprehensible because it lasts, although it should not. It therefore eludes the rules of the Bonaldian sociology, which otherwise are upheld by Maistre as well. Thus, the incomprehensibility of the revolutionary phenomenon compels Maistrian thought to take the form of a dualism that operates on two levels: a sociology, on the one hand, and a providential conception of history, on the other hand. Unlike Bonald, a very short time after the Revolution, Maistre comes to the conclusion that the latter represents an extraordinary event, unique in human history, which "*ne s'insère pas dans le tissu de l'histoire:*

[351] David Klinck, *The French Counter-Revolutionary Theorist Louis de Bonald(1754-1840),* Petersburg Publishing Inc., New York, 1996, pp. 97-98; Walter Jay Reedy, "Maistre's Twin? Louis de Bonald and the Counter-Enlightenment", p. 186.
[352] David Klinck, *The French Counter-Revolutionary Theorist Louis de Bonald(1754-1840),* pp. 12-59.
[353] Walter Jay Reedy, "Masitre's Twin? Louis de Bonald and the Counter-Enlightenment", pp. 180-183.
[354] Gerard Gengembre, *La Contre-Révolution ou l'histoire désespérante,* p. 253.
[355] *Ibidem,* pp. 281-284, 296; Emil Cioran, "Joseph de Maistre. Essai sur la pensée réactionnaire", pp. 45-46.

elle le déchire"[356]. Consequently, already in 1795, Maistre warns the partisans of the monarchy that they should put on their seatbelts, for the Revolution may very well reveal itself to be "*une petite aventure de cinq ou six siècles*"[357]. The inexplicable successes of the Revolution demonstrate that the laws of nature, and in particular Maistre's social science itself, have been suspended. It is inexplicable how a phenomenon that not only ignores, but utterly denies all the sound principles of social science, can move from one victory to another[358]. Hence, since the Revolution is miraculous, the Restoration also has to be miraculous. It is true that at a certain point in *Considérations sur la France*, Maistre does not say apparently anything else than what is said by Bonald: "*toutes les pièces de la machine politique ayant une tendance naturelle vers la place qui leur est assignée, cette tendance, qui est divine, favorisera tous les efforts du roi*"[359]. Yet the tendency is both natural and divine, because, unlike in the case of Bonald, for Maistre, who quotes Saint John Chrysostom, "*la nature n'est que l'action divine manifestée dans l'univers*"[360]. However, if the miraculous perspective of the events seems to appear as a metapolitical escape for a counter-revolutionary social science entered into crisis at the contact with historical reality, the perplexity of the social scientist is nevertheless doubled by the perplexity of the theologian. If the social scientist had to deal with the question concerning the incomprehensibility of a social order without authority, the theologian has to respond to the following question: "*Comment donc [...] les hommes les plus coupables de l'univers triomphent de l'univers! Un régicide affreux a tout le succès que pouvaient en attendre ceux qui l'ont*

[356] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 79.

[357] Joseph de Maistre, *Œuvres complètes*, Vitte, Lyon, 1884-1886, vol. XII, p. 60, quoted in Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 355.

[358] Practically speaking, the fact that we cannot understand the Revolution, the fact that it escapes reason, demonstrates that we are dealing with a historical miracle, and hence, with a providential intervention of God in human history. The meaning of this providential event can be understood only to the limited extent that Providence can be understood by men. Moreover, this meaning can no longer be understood rationally, but, as we shall see, on the basis of religious doctrines, which are no less true because they overcome human reason or even scandalize it.

[359] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 259.

[360] Joseph de Maistre, *Contre Rousseau (De l'état de nature)*, p. 19.

commis! [...] Tout réussit aux méchants! Les projets les plus gigantesques s'exécutent de leur part sans difficulté, tandis que le bon parti est malheureux et ridicule dans tout ce qu'il entreprend"[361]. The miracle is therefore double for, given its satanic character, the French Revolution defies not only the laws of the natural world, but also God himself. "*La Révolution française*", Maistre concluded in *Considérations sur la France*, "*et tout ce qui se passe en Europe dans ce moment est tout aussi merveilleux dans son genre que la fructification instantanée d'un arbre au mois de janvier*"[362]. Or, when reason stops working, reality can be explained only through God and the Devil[363]. Moreover, when the Devil is set loose and appears to take control of God's creation, the question which is instantly born in any Christian conscience is: "why does God allow it?"

Maistre held tightly to the belief that everything that was happening had a sense, and that all the evil caused by the French Revolution will not remain unredeemed. Moreover, in *Considérations sur la France*, Maistre will state that "*jamais la Divinité ne s'était montrée d'une manière si claire dans aucun événement humain*"[364]. Never is the divinity more present than where it seems to be totally absent. Paradoxically, for Maistre, the Revolution is horrific and incomprehensible, precisely because it is divine. More specifically, it is at the same time divine and satanic; and that is why it remains incomprehensible. Unlike in the case of Adam Smith, in Maistre's system of thought there is not one, but there are two "invisible hands" that manifest themselves in history: the hand of Satan and the hand of God[365]. Thus, there is an inferior satanic providence, and a superior divine providence. Freely committed to evil, "*les scélérats qui paraissent conduire la révolution [...] sans savoir ce qu'ils faisaient*", become without knowing

[361] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 200.
[362] *Ibidem*.
[363] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, pp. 78-79, 263.
[364] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 201.
[365] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 95.

it the instruments of Satan[366]. However, Satan himself becomes in turn the instrument of God, which is the supreme and true director of the historical play that has begun in 1789. Remaining sovereign over his creation, unlike in the Gnostic religious systems, God turns evil and its perpetrators into instruments that providentially accomplish the good. The apparent unleashing of Satan will prove itself to be only the means used in order to accomplish God's plan of regeneration. The providential perspective represents the way in which Maistre rationalizes a deeply irrational historical event that has been caused by the excesses of reason. Thus, the interpretation of the Revolution inevitably leads to a theodicy. It is precisely in the generalized effusion of blood, both guilty and innocent, manifested during the revolutionary terror, that Joseph de Maistre distinguishes the epiphany of both God and Satan.

The effusion of guilty blood represents for Maistre an act of punitive divine pedagogy to which are subjected "*les hommes de ce siècle*", who "*ont prostitué le génie à l'irréligion, et, suivant l'expression admirable de Saint Louis mourant, ILS ONT GUERROYÉ DIEU DE SES DONS*"[367]. It is above all the antireligious spirit of the Enlightenment that makes the French Revolution satanic, and it is this same antireligious spirit, whose mass revolutionary manifestation represents a radical historical novelty, that has consequently stirred God's anger as never before. Thus, for Maistre, the Jacobin terror, which comes as the irrational conclusion of the century of rationalism and whose irrationality is maximized precisely by its rational premises, represents a sermon preached by God to the impious assembly that has defied His power by the attempt to build the Tower of Babel. "*Délire inexplicable [...], mépris scandaleux de tout ce qu'il y a de respectable parmi les hommes [...], prostitution impudente du*

[366] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 201.

[367] Joseph de Maistre, *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques et des autres institutions humaines*, p. 399.

raisonnement et de tous les mots faits pour exprimer des idées de justice et de vertu"[368], the Revolution is first of all an "*insurrection contre Dieu*" whose motivation is "*la théophobie*"[369]. Thus, at the end of the *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques*, Maistre synthesises the discourse of "*une rage philosophique*" without limits, crying out "*au milieu de la coupable Europe*":

> *Laisse-nous! Faudra-t-il donc éternellement trembler devant des prêtres, et recevoir d'eux l'instruction qu'il leur plaira de nous donner? La vérité, dans toute l'Europe, est cachée par les fumées de l'encensoir; il est temps qu'elle sorte de ce nuage fatal. Nous ne parlerons plus de toi à nos enfants [...]. Tout ce qui existe nous déplaît, parce que ton nom est écrit sur tout ce qui existe. Nous voulons tout détruire et tout refaire sans toi. Sors de nos conseils; sors de nos académies; sors de nos maisons: nous saurons bien agir seuls, la raison nous suffit. Laisse-nous. […] Comment Dieu a-t-il puni cet exécrable délire ? Il l'a puni comme il créa la lumière, par une seule parole. Il a dit: FAITES! – Et le monde politique a croulé*[370].

Maistre's political theology culminates therefore in the prophetic posture. Just as in Christianity the Jews were seen as cursed by God for killing their king, likewise, the French are cursed by God for killing their king; and, together with them, "*la coupable Europe*" and modernity as a whole, whose birth is intrinsically related to the shedding of innocent blood. "*Un des plus grandes crimes qu'on puisse commettre*", Maistre writes in *Considérations sur la France*, "*c'est sans doute l'attentat contre la souveraineté, nul n'ayant de suites plus terribles […]. Mais si ce Souverain n'a mérité son sort par aucun crime ; si ses vertus mêmes ont armé contre lui la main des coupables, le crime n'a plus de nom*"[371]. Maistre insists on the fact that in what concerns the execution of Louis XVI, "*jamais un plus grand crime n'appartint (à la vérité avec une foule des gradations) à un plus grand nombre de coupables*". Although not all the

[368] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 225.

[369] Joseph de Maistre, *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques et des autres institutions humaines*, pp. 399-400; *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 593.

[370] Joseph de Maistre, *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques et des autres institutions humaines*, p. 401.

[371] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 204.

French have wanted the death of their king, "*l'immense majorité du peuple a voulu, pendant plus de deux ans, toute les folies, toutes les injustices, tous les attentats qui amenèrent la catastrophe du 21 janvier*". "*Commis contre la souveraineté, au nom de la nation*" the crime is therefore "*un crime national*" which demands therefore a national punishment. For this reason, "*chaque goutte du sang de Louis XVI en coûtera des torrents à la France*". "*Insurrection anti-religieuse et anti-sociale couronné par un régicide*", the Revolution has left behind, in the now empty place of sovereignty, "*un gouffre effroyable, et tout ce qui l'environne s'y précipite*"[372]. The Revolution therefore represents only the beginning of an age of divine wrath, and only the foretaste of future calamities that will hit France and Europe, exceedingly surpassing the horror of the ones that have just been witnessed.

At the end of the *Essay on Catholicism, Liberalism and Socialism*, which basically continues Joseph de Maistre's reflections on political modernity, Donoso Cortés has argued that punishment is the means used by God in order to restore the order of creation that has been disturbed by man's sin. Many transgressions have been permitted to man, Cortés wrote, but

> *ce qui n'a pas été donné à l'homme, c'est de suspendre pour un jour, pour une heure, pour un instant l'accomplissement infaillible des lois fondamentales du monde physique et moral, constitutives de l'ordre dans l'humanité et dans l'univers. Ce que le monde n'a jamais vu et ne verra jamais, c'est l'homme fuyant l'ordre par la porte du péché, et n'y rentrant pas par celle de la peine, cette messagère de Dieu, qui atteint toujours le but de ses messages*[373].

Maistre distinguished in the revolutionary event the accomplishment, through the Revolution itself, of the above mentioned law. The Revolution, which is divine, punishes "*les grands coupables de la Révolution*" that "*ne pouvaient tomber que sur les coups de leurs complices [...]. Il fallait que la grande épuration s'accomplît, et que les yeux fussent frappés*"[374]. The world is

[372] *Ibidem*, pp. 204-205.
[373] Juan Donoso Cortés, *Essai sur le Catholicisme, le Libéralisme et le Socialisme*, p. 253.
[374] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, pp. 205-206.

therefore offered the pedagogical spectacle of evil being destroyed by evil, of evil succumbing to its own self-destructive logic. In this sense, the regicide and the deicide naturally lead to collective suicide. Yet, for Maistre, through evil's self-destruction the world is not destroyed, something that God does not allow, but instead it is cleansed from evil and submitted to a process of regeneration. Unaware of what they are doing, the revolutionaries actually work for the Restoration, which would be a new order prepared by the purifying revolutionary fire. Consequently, if on the one hand the providential character of the Revolution is revealed by the fact that "*ce ne sont point les hommes qui mènent la révolution*", but "*c'est la révolution qui emploie les hommes*", on the other, "*si elle emploie les instruments les plus vils, c'est qu'elle punit pour régénérer*"[375]. Thus, if "*des hommes excessivement médiocres exercèrent sur une nation coupable le plus affreux despotisme dont l'histoire fasse mention*"[376], we can nevertheless admire "*l'ordre dans le désordre*"[377]. For, as Maistre argues, "*il n'y a point de désordre que l'AMOUR ÉTERNEL ne tourne contre le principe du mal*"[378].

However, one troubling issue still remains, and this issue concerns the blood shed by the innocent victims of the French Revolution. But what appears to be the most scandalous aspect of the French Revolution becomes for Maistre the privileged and most important manifestation of the providential logic. From this point onwards, the Revolution has to be understood in an eschatological perspective. "*Je sens bien*", Maistre writes in *Considérations sur la France*,

> *que dans toutes ces considérations nous sommes continuellement assaillis par le tableau si fatigant des innocents qui périssent avec les coupables. Mais, sans nous enfoncer dans cette question qui tient à tout ce qu'il y a de plus profond, on peut la considérer seulement dans son rapport avec le dogme universel, et aussi ancien que le monde, de la réversibilité des douleurs de l'innocence au profit des coupables […]. Ce fut ce dogme, ce me semble, que les anciens dérivèrent l'usage des sacrifices qu'ils pratiquèrent dans*

[375] *Ibidem*, 202.
[376] *Ibidem*, p. 201.
[377] *Ibidem*, p. 205.
[378] *Ibidem*, p. 218.

tous l'univers et qu'ils jugeaient utiles non seulement aux vivants, mais encore aux morts […]. Le christianisme est venu consacrer ce dogme, qui est infiniment naturel à l'homme, quoiqu'il paraisse difficile d'y arriver par le raisonnement […]. Ainsi, il peut y avoir eu dans le cœur de Louis XVI, dans celui de la céleste Élisabeth, tel mouvement, telle acceptation capable de sauver la France[379].

Thus, the suffering of the innocent victim not only attracts the punishment of the guilty, according to the decree of divine justice, but also mediates the salvation of the guilty, in accordance with the divine mercy that accepts the suffering of the just as a compensation for the sins of the guilty. This means that the physical and spiritual order of the universe reposes on violence, both repressive and sacrificial, which the Enlightenment has sought to eliminate from the world. In response to the ambitions of the Enlightenment, Maistre will stress the fact that "violence is […] both necessary and horrifying"[380]. Consequently, he will also emphasize the fact that a society that sins through "*excès de civilisation […] ne peut être retrempée que dans le sang*"[381]. As exemplified by the Revolution, which has both a repressive and a redeeming dimension, both of which are working towards the annihilation of evil, repressive violence and sacrificial violence are both satanic/scandalous and divine/necessary at the same time. In *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, Maistre emphasizes the fact that the sight of the "*instruments de la chirurgie*", such as "*la scie, le trépan, le forceps, le lithotome*", "*nous fait pâlir*", because we are aware of the fact that the doctor and the tormentor use the same instruments. For surgical instruments "*sont dans la main de l'homme pour la guérison du mal physique ce que le mal physique est dans celle de Dieu pour l'extirpation du véritable mal*"[382].

[379] *Ibidem*, pp. 217-218.
[380] Owen Bradley, "Maistre's Theory of Sacrifice", in Richard Lebrun (ed.), *Joseph de Maistre's Life, Thought and Influence*, p. 74.
[381] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 216.
[382] Joseph de Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersboug*, p. 713.

In defense of the Inquisition, Maistre had stressed the fact that "*la violence ne peut être repoussée que par la violence*"[383]. Sovereignty being of divine origin, the violence exercised by the sovereign power, for its conservation and for the conservation of society should be regarded as a work of God. The human justice is only an image of the divine justice, and thus, "*Dieu qui est l'auteur de la souveraineté, l'est donc aussi du châtiment […]. Le mal étant sur la terre il agit constamment; et par une conséquence nécessaire il doit être constamment réprimé par le châtiment*". Thus the epiphany of God on earth is made manifest in the midst and through the otherwise horrifying exercise of legitimate violence. Divinity, according to Maistre, is revealed in "*un silence horrible*", when "*on n'entend plus que le cri des os qui éclatent sous la barre, et les hurlements de la victime*"[384]. It is the moment when the executioner, agent of the divinity, is executing the criminal for the preservation of society. Horrifying and divine at the same time, the executioner is "*l'horreur et le lien de l'association humaine*"[385], performing what is defined by Owen Bradley as a "gruesome liturgy"[386] on the scaffold that, according to Maistre, "*est un* autel".[387]"*Ôtez du monde cet agent incompréhensible; dans l'instant même*", Maistre argues, "*l'ordre fait place au chaos; les trônes s'abîment et la société disparaît*"[388]. Thus, given the fact that, as insurrection against the sovereign, the French Revolution was also an insurrection directed against society, the wave of executions that accompanied the revolutionary event appear as a necessary compensation meant to maintain the natural order of society.

If the innocent victims of the executioner – in case of a judicial error – are a small minority, this being also the case, as we have seen, with the innocent victims of the French Revolution, the

[383] Joseph de Maistre, *Lettres à un gentilhomme russe sur l'inquisition espagnole,* p. 173.
[384] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, pp. 470-471.
[385] *Ibidem*, p. 471.
[386] Owen Bradley, "Maistre's Theory of Sacrifice", p. 75.
[387] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 731.
[388] *Ibidem*, p. 471.

situation is different, in what concerns war, another divine phenomenon according to Maistre. In this case, on the contrary, the majority of the victims are innocent people killed by other innocent people. War, according to Maistre, was revealing a series of paradoxes. First of all, Maistre contemplates horrified the phenomenon of war both in its atrocity and in its absurdity. The human being which, despite of all its sins, possesses a natural feeling of compassion and of love "*qui le porte vers ses semblables*", "*est […] toujours prêt, au premier coup de tambour, à se dépouiller de ce caractère sacré pour s'en aller sans résistance, souvent même avec une certaine allégresse […] mettre en pièces sur le champ de bataille son frère qui ne l'a jamais offensé, et qui s'avance de son côté pour lui faire subir le même sort*"[389]. The young man, "*élevé dans l'horreur de la violence et du sang*", which "*se serait trouvé mal s'il avait écrasé par hasard le canari de sa soeur*", is nevertheless able to experience "l'enthousiasme du carnage". And yet, despite all the unjust and useless wars, despite all "*injustices particulières, horreurs et atrocités inutiles*" of which all men are aware, war is being proclaimed so easily by sovereigns and encountering so little resistance, if any, from the peoples. "*Pour couper des barbes*" Maistre observes in *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, "*Pierre 1er eut besoin de toute la force de son invincible caractère*". But "*pour amener d'innombrables légions sur le champ de bataille […], il n'eut besoin, comme tous les autres souverains, que de parler*"[390]. Still, despite its absurdity and atrocity, war can regenerate nations, independently of whether the nation has won the war or not. The series of paradoxes continues. For "*non seulement l'état militaire s'allie fort bien en général avec la moralité de l'homme*", but what is most astonishing, as reflected by the example above with the young man and the canary, "*il n'affaiblit nullement ces vertus douces qui semblent le*

[389] *Ibidem*, p. 650.
[390] *Ibidem*, pp. 650-654.

plus opposées au métier des armes"[391]. The series of paradoxes attached to war culminates with the differences of social perception that concern the soldier and the executioner. Maistre declares himself astonished by the fact that while no one is more marginalized and despised by society as the executioner, no one else is more respected and loved as the soldier. Yet, the first is killing guilty people while the second is killing innocent ones. Moreover, while the activity of the latter is most often marked by a tragic absurdity, the activity of the former is, on the contrary, perfectly rational and absolutely necessary, since the social order itself is depending on it[392]. How is it, Maistre asks himself, that "*ce qu'il y a de plus honorable dans le monde, au jugement de tout le genre humain sans exception, est le droit de verser innocemment le sang innocent*"? Maistre's answer is that the only possible explanation of this incomprehensible aspect of human life is the existence of "*une loi occulte et terrible qui a besoin du sang humain*"[393]. In the horror of war, divinity is once again revealed, precisely for the fact that through war innocent blood is spilled, innocent blood through which the sins of the just and the wicked alike are expiated[394].

Anticipating the analyses of Schmitt, Maistre was horrified by the modern idea of a war whose cause was identified with the cause of humanity. Like Schmitt[395], Maistre argued that the ideology of human rights presupposed a universal declaration of total war. Maistre contemplated

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[391] *Ibidem*, p. 657.

[392] *Ibidem*, p. 651.

[393] *Ibidem*, pp. 654-655.

[394] Richard Lebrun indicates the fact that Maistre's theory concerning the reversibility of merits goes "a little beyond the bounds of orthodoxy" (Richard Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre – An intellectual millitant*, p. 150). For, as stressed by Jean-Louis Soltner, "*s'il est exact*", from a Catholic point of view, "*que la réversibilité des mérites est possible grâce à la communion des Saints (dogme de foi), il ne faut pas en oublier les conditions. La souffrance humaine n'a pas de soi valeur surnaturelle. Le sang versé n'est pas de soi sacrifice réparateur. Il ne peut acquérir cette valeur surnaturelle que par l'offrande qu'en fait l'homme à Dieu*", thus making "*siens les sentiments du Christ*" which has offered Himself as a sacrifice to the Father. "*Les monceaux de cadavres qui ont marqué les champs de bataille, les inombrables massacres d'innocents perpétrés depuis des millénaires n'ont pas par eux-mêmes de valeur réversible sur d'autres humains. S'il en est une pour telle ou telle victime, c'est selon la disposition de sa conscience et Dieu seul la connaît*" (Jean-Louis Soltner, "Le Christianisme de Joseph de Maistre" in *Revue des études maistriennes*, no. 5-6, 1980, pp. 109-110).

[395] *Cf.* Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 79. *Cf.* the chapter dedicated to Schmitt in Jean-Claude Monod, *La querelle de la sécularisation: De Hegel à Blumenberg*, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, Paris, 2002, pp. 164-166 .

in horror how the French Revolution was destroying the basis of international law by declaring that all princes are tyrants and thus enemies of humanity, and by declaring that, in virtue of their humanity, all men could have been regarded as rebellious French citizens[396]. For Maistre, if "*le droit public des monarchies européennes avait su civiliser la guerre, les droits de l'homme ne pouvaient que militariser la vie civile, n'instituant l'individu en citoyen que pour en faire le militant des droits de l'homme et, très logiquement, leur* soldat permanent". In the generalized military mobilization brought by the Napoleonic wars, Maistre, as argued by Pranchère, could only perceive "*l'horreur continue de la Terreur révolutionnaire*", whose horrifying character was amplified by the advances of military technology, in which Maistre couldn't see absolutely anything positive[397]. Indeed, one may hardly fail to regard Joseph de Maistre as a prophet of the political and humanitarian catastrophes of the 20th century. For Maistre, the French Revolution announced the beginning of a new age whose terrifying characteristic was the radically novel alliance between rationalism and terror. Reflecting on Maistre's considerations on the French Revolution, seen as the beginning of political modernity and as political modernity's defining event, George Steiner has declared that "with infinitely more depth than Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, and all the Enlightenment", Maistre "predicts, with an astounding exactitude, a black terrible clairvoyance, that the twentieth century will be bathed in blood and torture."[398]

For Maistre, "*en fondant le crime sur la raison*", the French Revolution "*a réalisé les possibilités extrêmes du mal*"[399]. Yet, taking into account the paradoxical providential identification between good and evil, extreme evil must also mean extreme good. "*Décadence*

[396] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité Contre les Lumiéres*, p. 55.
[397] *Ibidem*, pp. 57-59.
[398] George Steiner, in an interview with F. Ewald, *Magazine littéraire*, No. 285, (February 1991), p. 81, quoted in Jean-Yves Pranchère, "The Persistence of Maistrian Thought", in *Joseph de Maistre's Life, Thought and Influence – Selected Studies*, p. 293.
[399] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 117.

terrifiante dans son accélération" and, at the same time, and precisely for this reason, "*moyen privilégié de la régéneration*", the Revolution, for Maistre, is "*oxymorique comme Dieu*"[400]. For, taking into account that the suffering of innocent expiates the sins of the wicked, the revolutionary acceleration of history, bringing with it the accelerated accumulation of innocent blood, can only mean that, while mankind is at its lowest point of decadence, its redemption is closer than ever before. Thus, in *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, Maistre depicts an impressive landscape of the battle between good and evil that, with the Revolution, has entered in its final phase; a landscape that has led some to the conclusion that, for Maistre, this battle, occurring under the regime of the reversibility of merits, can only end with the universal redemption of all men, both wicked and good. "*D'un côté*", Maistre argues, we have "*tous les crimes, de l'autre toutes les satisfactions; de ce côté les bonnes œuvres de tous les hommes, le sang de martyrs, les sacrifices et les larmes de l'innocence s'accumulent sans relâche pour faire équilibre au mal qui, depuis l'origine des choses verse dans l'autre bassin ses flots empoisonnés. Il faut qu'à la fin le côté du salut l'emporte*"[401]. If history is defined by the conflict between good and evil, then for Maistre, "*l'histoire humaine, faite de la lutte du Bien et du Mal sous le régime de la réversibilité, montre une intensification croissante et corrélative du Bien et du Mal*"[402]. The growing accumulation of redeeming merits, as a result of the parallel growth of evil, is perhaps nothing else than the unseen expression of the paradoxical fact that, while Europe is civilized "*parce qu'en elle le christianisme se développe […], ce progrès, qui est le progrès du catholicisme se développant en lui-même, n'empêche nullement que, d'un autre côté, l'histoire moderne offre le spectacle d'une chute : tandis que le catholicisme se développe* en lui-même *en portant la vérité vers une perfection toujours nouvelle, le monde lui échappe et l'Europe même*

[400] Gerard Gengembre, *La Contre-Révolution ou l'histoire désespérante*, p. 255.
[401] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 751.
[402] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p.424.

chute hors du catholicisme"[403]. Thus, "*l'histoire […] n'est pas seulement* succession *de la chute et du salut; elle est,* dans la succession même *de la chute et du salut, le* progrès simultané *de la chute* et *du salut, de la perdition et de la rédemption,* du progrès et de la décadence"[404]. This existing tension "*conduit inévitablement l'histoire humaine vers une crise ultime qui doit décider de sa signification, la montée du Mal à son extrême appelant la montée du Bien à son extrême*"[405]. And thus, ultimately, as the Russian Senator states in the last dialogue from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, the revolutionary miracle, which has shaken the universe, can only be interpreted as a prophetic sign that announces "*que les temps sont arrivés*".[406]

2.8. - The Tower of Babel, Pentecost and the New Age of the Holy Spirit

Towards the end of his life, Maistre stopped hoping in the providential restoration of the French monarchy, which he announced in his first major work, *Considérations sur la France.* But the abandonment of this concrete hope meant that the object of hope had only become more mysterious and yet more absorbing and mystical, just like God. Apparently betrayed, the hope only becomes ever greater, to the point where the political is completely abandoned in favor of the complete immersion into an eschatological promise. In one of his late letters, Maistre was making the following confession:

> On the return of France to the truth, on the epoch of that return, on the causes that will lead to it, I cannot be as precise as the misfortunes I foresee; but I have in me a secret instinct that it will occur at a given moment like a last-but-one revelation of the truth in the mind of the masses. All will be astonished to see and understand that what had been

[403] *Ibidem*, pp. 418-419.
[404] *Ibidem*, p.419.
[405] *Ibidem*, p. 424.
[406] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 762 .

> sought in the discomfort of discussions and disputes is simple and easy, and on that day the revolution will be ended[407].

If the Revolution can be explained only as a miraculous event that has taken humanity into a radically different historical regime, this means that the Restoration as well can only be miraculous. If the Revolution has proven that history escapes the control of men and is governed by Providence, then this is the lesson that the partisans of the Ancien Régime need to assimilate. And thus, Maistre argues in *Considérations sur la France*, they need to stop making "*des efforts extérieurs*" in order to reinstate the old order. Maistre strongly emphasizes the fact that the political revolution is only the tip of the iceberg. The political revolution is only the accomplishment of a cultural revolution that has undermined the legitimacy of the French monarchy. Moreover, France as a whole is guilty and it needs to be punished in order to be regenerated. Forcing a counter-revolution would mean forcing the hand of Providence that has not yet accomplished its work. And what else was the Revolution than the foolish attempt to force the hand of God? This is the reason why a Counter-Revolution by force is neither possible, nor desirable.

Maistre realizes the fact that, within the new parameters of modernity, a Counter-Revolution is condemned to be a movement of the same nature with the revolution, but having the opposite sense. Therefore, it would be a new Revolution. Once legitimacy has been lost, the Counter-Revolution is constrained to operate within the arbitrary logic inaugurated by the Revolution, and in the same tyrannical manner. If the monstrous absurdity that forever condemns the Revolution is that of having proposed a freedom that has been established "*au bruit de chants infernaux, des blasphèmes de l'athéisme, des cris de mort et des longs gémissements de l'innocence égorgée*", a

[407] "Extrait d'une conversation entre J. de Maistre et M. Ch. de Lavau" in Joseph de Maistre, *Œuvres complètes*, Vitte et Perrusel, Lyon, 1884-1886, Vol. 14, p. 216, quoted in Richard Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre: An Intellectual Millitant*, pp. 253-254.

monarchy reestablished by monsters of the same kind as those who have destroyed it would be no less monstrous and absurd[408]. If the true revolutionary catastrophe has been the destruction of the symbolic framework of the French monarchy, the reconstruction of that framework has to be not an opposite destruction, but obviously, the opposite of destruction. "*La reconstruction*", Maistre underlines, "*est un autre ordre des choses*". For "*ce n'est pas par le chemin du néant que vous arriverez à la création*"[409]. The suffering caused by the Revolution is a consequence of the fact that the Revolution "*fut l'ouvrage de tous les vices*" that are "*très justement les bourreaux de l'homme*". "*Par la raison contraire*", Maistre writes addressing himself to the French, "*le retour à la monarchie*", which will be the work of virtues, "*loin de produire les maux que vous craignez pour l'avenir, fera cesser ceux qui vous consument aujourd'hui; tous vos efforts seront positifs; vous ne détruirez que la destruction*"[410]. "*Le mal*", Maistre argues, "*ne peut créer puisque sa force est purement négative*"[411]. On the contrary, as a second creation, as a *re*creation, regeneration is no less a miracle than creation, and it is only God that can give life and resurrect. If the Revolution has been made by men, or, more precisely, by the Devil himself who has employed men as his instruments, the counter-revolution, which "*ne sera point une révolution contraire, mais le contraire de la Révolution*"[412], can only have God as its author.

For Joseph de Maistre, the French Revolution represented both a global event and the beginning of a new age. Surpassing the frontiers of the French Kingdom, the Revolution was shaking the foundation of all Europe, and indeed of the whole world. The Revolution was at the same time dividing history and unifying the world, and this is what was revealing its eschatological substance. "*Une grande époque*", according to Maistre, "*ses suites, dans tous les*

[408] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, pp. 258-259.
[409] *Ibidem*, p. 260.
[410] *Ibidem*, pp. 258-260.
[411] *Ibidem*, p. 224.
[412] *Ibidem*, p. 276.

genres, se feront sentir bien au-delà du temps de son explosion et des limites de son foyer"[413]. Maistre believed that it was impossible, given the cosmic scale of the cataclysm that the Revolution would simply end with a return to the old order. For Maistre, "*le 'chaos' révolutionnaire doit avoir un sens à la mesure de sa démesure*"[414]. For this reason, already in *Considérations sur la France,* Maistre comforted the partisans of the Ancien Régime, by telling them that "*la longueur même des maux vous annonce une contre-révolution dont vous n'avez pas d'idée*"[415]. Maistre believed that France was the country that best manifested the Catholic idea of universality. Providence has granted France from the very beginning a universal mission, and has endowed it in view of this end with "*deux instruments [...], deux* bras*, avec lesquels elle remue le monde*": "*sa langue et l'esprit de prosélytisme qui forme l'essence de son caractère*". Situated at the top of the Catholic system, France naturally exerted over Europe "*une véritable magistrature [...], dont elle a abusé de la manière la plus coupable*"[416]. It was due to France's universal influence that "*les plus grands efforts de la déesse Raison contre le christianisme se sont faits en France: l'ennemi attaquait la citadelle*"[417]. More precisely, France was called to lead Europe and the whole world towards Catholic unity, but wanting to establish a new secular unity, it has instead spread chaos and disorder all over the world. For the same reason, the spiritual rebirth that would be the basis of a new universal unity, Maistre prophesized, was set to begin likewise in France. France was called again to lead the other nations to a renewed and definitive Catholic unity.

In his preface to *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, Jacques Bins, Comte de Saint Victor (1772-1858), a French royalist, wrote that human history is marked by two sins: superstition and

[413] *Ibidem*, p. 212.
[414] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 391.
[415] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 209.
[416] *Ibidem*, p. 202.
[417] *Ibidem*, p. 213.

unbelief. All of antiquity, with the (partial) exception of Israel, has fallen prey to the first sin. Unlike superstition, however, unbelief not only enrages God, but threatens the very existence of human societies. It is for this reason that God Himself had to descend to earth at the end of antiquity, when unbelief had manifested itself for the first time. For otherwise, the Comte de Saint-Victor argues, the whole world would have crumbled. But once superstition had been definitively destroyed by Christianity, unbelief had again raised itself against God. This process, he argued, culminated with the French Revolution, when "*Dieu lui-même fut nié par la société, ce qui ne s'était jamais vu*"[418]. The world was therefore once again set on the same pattern of destruction as at the end of Antiquity, and this was announcing the time of Christ's return as judge[419]. Saint Victor's observations are probably inspired by the last section from Maistre's *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques*. "*Comme c'est le principe religieux*", Maistre argued, "*qui a tout créé, c'est l'absence de ce même principe qui a tout détruit*". Thus, towards the end of Antiquity, "*la secte d'Épicure, qu'on pourrait appeler* l'incrédulité antique*, dégrada d'abord, et détruisit bientôt tous les gouvernements qui eurent le malheur de lui donner entrée. Partout* Lucrèce *annonça* César". "*Comme il ne peut y avoir*", Maistre further argued, "*de religion fausse sans aucun mélange de vrai, il ne peut y avoir d'impiété qui ne combatte quelque vérité divine plus ou moins défigurée*". However, for this very reason, "*il ne peut y avoir de véritable impiété qu'au sein de la véritable religion*". Thus, "*par une conséquence nécessaire, jamais l'impiété n'a pu produire dans les temps passés les maux qu'elle a produits de nos jours; car elle est toujours coupable en raison des lumières qui l'environnent. C'est sur cette règle qu'il faut juger le dix-huitième siècle; car c'est sur cette*

[418] Jacques Bins, Comte de Saint Victor, "Preface to Joseph de Maistre's *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*", in Joseph de Maistre, *Œuvres*, Éditions Robert Laffont, Paris, 2007 (Édition établie par Pierre Glaudes), p. 448.
[419] *Ibidem*.

point de vue qu'il ne ressemble à aucun autre"[420]. Maistre argues that *"les religions antiques ne valaient pas la peine que l'incrédulité contemporaine se fâchât contre elles*", and although "*l'attaque devint plus violente [...] lorsque la bonne nouvelle fut publiée dans l'univers*", it is only in the 18th century that "*l'incrédulité antique*" has been transformed into what Maistre defines as "*rage philosophique*". Now "*c'est une guerre à mort*"[421]. "*La GÉNÉRATION présente*", Maistre wrote in *Considérations sur la France*, "*est témoin de l'un des plus grands spectacles qui jamais ait occupé l'œil humain: c'est le combat à outrance du christianisme et du philosophisme*"[422]. From the sphere of politics, the battle moves into an eschatological horizon. But unlike for the Comte de Saint-Victor, it appears that for Maistre, it is not the final judgment which is approaching, but, instead, a new age of spiritual regeneration, which will be depicted in the last dialogue from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*.

For Maistre, all history is articulated around the conflict between Babel and Pentecost, between "*la puissance essentiellement désorganisatrice*"[423] of the philosophical spirit, and the opposing Spirit of unity, descending at Jerusalem on the feast of Pentecost in the guise of that

[420] Joseph de Maistre, *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques et des autres institutions humaines*, pp. 398-399. Maistre insisted on the fact that all Christian dogmas have been anticipated by the religious convictions of the pagan nations (Joseph de Maistre, *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*, in *Œuvres*, Édition établie par Pierre Glaudes, Éditions Robert Laffont, Paris, 2007, pp. 828-832), but that the advent of Christianity has purified these religious convictions of the superstitions which were mixed with the truth, revealing the truth in all its purity. Among the pagan superstitions, Maistre mentions *"l'horrible superstition des sacrifices humains"* (*Ibidem* p. 815). But according to him, even this horrible superstition was nevertheless an anticipation of the Christian dogma of redemption through the sacrifice of Christ. Although *"*l'idolâtrie était une putréfaction *[...] parmi les opinions les plus folles, les plus indécentes, les plus atroces, parmi les pratiques les plus monstrueuses et qui ont le plus déshonoré le genre humain, il n'est pas une que nous ne puissions* délivrer du mal *[...] pour montrer ensuite le résidu vrai, qui est divin"* (*Ibidem*, p. 817). Thus, the Enlightenment was guilty of attacking the wholeness of truth, and moreover, that truth which has delivered mankind from the horrors of pagan superstition. Moreover, in his analysis of the French Revolution, Maistre argued that by attacking Christianity, the Enlightenment has reactivated in a modern form, the old horrors of pagan superstition. It is interesting in this sense to mention the fact that, in *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*, Maistre states that "*l'impiété absolue*", promoted during the eighteenth century, is ultimately more pernicious than the practice of human sacrifice (*Ibidem*, p. 824).

[421] *Ibidem*, pp. 398-401.

[422] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 229.

[423] *Ibidem*, p. 226.

unifying fire "*qui* éclaire, *qui* échauffe *et qui* purifie"[424]. Catholicism for Maistre represents the highest incarnation of this spirit of unity. Moreover, both Babel and Pentecost are miraculous, incomprehensible events: "*division inexplicable et tendance vers une certaine unité tout aussi inexplicable*"[425]. If in *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* Maistre returns to his earlier intuitions from *Considérations sur la France*, this time, the vision of a miraculous restoration of the monarchy is surpassed and transposed into an apocalyptical vision of a transfigured world, which becomes ever more unified. For the same regime of historical acceleration that is revolutionizing the instituted order of all existing societies is also bringing the world to a degree of unification that was never before imaginable: "*L'Anglettere*", Maistre argues at the end of the second dialogue of the book, "*a porté nos langues en Asie; elle a fait traduire Newton dans la langue de Mahomet, et les jeunes Anglais soutiennent des thèses à Calcutta en arabe, en persan et en bengali*". France has learned all European languages "*tandis qu'elle forçait les nations d'apprendre la sienne. Ajoutez que les plus longs voyages ont cessé d'effrayer l'imagination; que tous les grands navigateurs sont européens; que l'Orient entier cède manifestement à l'ascendant européen [...] que les événements ont donné à l'Angleterre quinze cents lieues de frontières avec le Tibet et la Chine, et vous aurez une idée de ce qui se prépare*". "*La Providence*", Maistre continues, "*ne tâtonne jamais, et ce n'est pas en vain qu'elle agite le monde. Tout annonce que nous marchons vers une grande unité que nous devons* saluer de loin *[...]. Nous sommes douloureusement et bien justement broyés; mais si de misérables yeux tels que les miens sont dignes d'entrevoir les secrets divins, nous ne sommes* broyés *que pour être* mêlés"[426]. Paradoxically, just like at Antiquity's end, the Babylonic mixing of languages, the work of sinful men, which, nevertheless, does not escape the firm control of Providence,

[424] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 357.
[425] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 731.
[426] *Ibidem*, pp. 516-517.

prefigures a new divine unity. Just like the Revolution and the Reformation, the activity of the Protestant biblical society, which translates the Bible in all the languages of the world, is a manifestation of the spirit of Babel. Thus, the activity of the biblical society "*épouvante la religion au lieu de la réjouir*"[427]. Although justly regarded by Rome as "*une des machines les plus puissantes qu'on ait jamais fait jouer contre le christianisme*"[428], the biblical society is nevertheless an "*instrument aveugle de la Providence*"[429]. "*Lue sans notes et sans explication l'Écriture sainte est un poison*"[430], which can only produce division. However, by bringing the Bible to all nations, the Protestant translators, just like the elders who translated the Old Testament into Greek, are preparing the ground for the work of the Catholic apostles, who soon after, "*en vertu d'une mission légitime*" will explain the *written word*, turning it into the *living word*. And thus, without realizing what they are doing, "*les terribles ennemis de l'unité*", the Protestants and their descendents, *les philosophes*, "*travaillent à l'établir*"[431].

However, above all, it is the current spiritual drought that announces "*un événement immense dans l'ordre divin, vers lequel nous marchons avec une vitesse accélérée qui doit frapper tous les observateurs*"[432]. It is the current global chaos caused by a global Revolution that advances under the sign of the Tower of Babel, which renders imperative an equally global but divine Counter-Revolution, which would be nothing less than a new Pentecost. "*Il n'y a plus de religion sur la terre*", the Russian Senator argues in the last and most fascinating of the Saint-Petersburg dialogues. "*Le genre humain*", he continues, "*ne peut demeurer dans cet état*"[433]. Something must happen. For while the majority of the globe remains still unevangelized, in Europe, "*le*

[427] *Ibidem*, p.775.
[428] *Ibidem*, p.769.
[429] *Ibidem*, p.770.
[430] *Ibidem*, p.774.
[431] *Ibidem*, p.770.
[432] *Ibidem*, p.762.
[433] *Ibidem*.

christianisme est radicalement détruit dans tous les pays soumis à la réforme insensée du XVIe siècle", while in Catholic countries "*il semble n'exister plus que de nom*"[434]. Protestantism has been digging its own grave and it is on the point of disappearing. On the other hand, defeated in Europe, the Catholic Church appears as deprived of the means to preach the Gospel to all nations. This means that the fulfillment of the prophesy and the accomplishment of the complete and final unity of mankind in Christ requires a miracle comparable with the miracle of the first constitution of the people of God, through the revelation of the Law on Mount Sinai, and also with the subsequent miracle of the expansion of the people of God, as a result of the establishment of the Christian Church. The prelude of this expected eschatological event will be the collapse of Protestantism and the reconciliation of science and religion "*dans la tête d'un seul homme de génie*"[435]. The Enlightenment will then collapse "*et l'on parlera de notre stupidité actuelle comme nous parlons de la superstition du Moyen Âge*". *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* ends therefore with the expectation of "*une troisième explosion de la toute-puissante bonté en faveur du genre humain*", a new revelation, which would inaugurate a third and final age of the Holy Spirit[436]. The Russian Senator refers in this sense to the mystical intuitions of "*les illuminés*", the members of the Masonic lodges, to which Maistre himself has belonged during his youth. Reading Scripture esoterically, "*les illuminés*" were claiming to discover "*dans la révélation même des raisons de prévoir une révélation de la révélation*"[437], announcing, together with this, an imminent spiritual renewal of Christianity. Thus, it is not the last judgment that is envisioned in the light of the current turmoil, but rather a chiliastic

[434] *Ibidem*, p. 766.
[435] *Ibidem*, p. 765.
[436] *Ibidem*, p. 767.
[437] *Ibidem*.

eschatology triggered by "*une nouvelle effusion de l'Esprit saint*"[438]. Astonishingly, this perspective brings Joseph de Maistre, "*apôtre si severe de l'unité et de l'autorité*"[439] (as the Russian Senator names him), into the vicinity of Joachim of Fiore's prophecies, and of a Christian tradition that essentially has been in conflict with the institutional order of the Church[440].

2.8.1. - Josephus a Floribus and "transcendental Christianity"

Joachim of Fiore was a Cistercian abbot who lived between 1132 and 1202. Dedicated to the esoteric interpretation of Scripture, Joachim divided history into three ages: the age of the Father, which ended with Christ's incarnation, the age of the Son, which lasted ever since, and the age of the Holy Spirit, whose imminent arrival he announced. Similarly, just as the Old Testament has represented only the shadow of the New Testament, the New Testament itself would be accomplished by a third and final revelation of the Holy Spirit. More precisely, just as in the case of the relation between the letter of the Law and the spirit of the Law, the new age of the Holy Spirit would presuppose the revelation of the spiritual meaning of the New Testament, hidden behind the appearance of the Gospel's letter. The access to the spiritual meaning of the Gospel

[438] *Ibidem*, p. 769.
[439] *Ibidem*, p. 767.
[440] Chiliasm is a Christian heresy, considered as such by both the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. Chiliasts believe that, before the final judgment, Christ will gloriously return to earth, on which he will reign for a thousand years, together with his saints, after having imprisoned Satan. Only at the end of the period of one thousand years, after Satan is going to be again released and then finally defeated, will the final judgment occur. The term chiliasm comes from the Greek word *chilia*, which means thousand, and this doctrine is based on a literal interpretation of the first verses of chapter 20 from Saint John's *Revelation*. Present within the beliefs of some early Christians, chiliasm had later been condemned as a heresy by a series of Church Councils. Later, chiliasm has been revived by the Protestant sects. But the first reappearance of this early Christian heresy, although in a modified form, can be located in the High Middle Ages, more specifically, in the religious thought of Joachim of Fiore (1132-1202). However, it is important to stress the fact that, compared to early Christian chiliasm, and to later cases of Protestant chiliasm, in the case of Joachim of Fiore's age of the Holy Spirit, there is no mention of Christ actually reigning on earth, nor of the resurrection of the just, prior to the final judgment (Johann Peter Kirsch, "Millennium and Millenarianism". *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 10. http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10307a.htm). Thus, in the case of Joachim of Fiore, we may speak of a more moderate type of chiliasm.

would be paralleled by the transformation of the institutional Church into an autonomous contemplative community, organized strictly on the basis of brotherly love, a community whose members would no longer need the sacramental mediation of the hierarchical Church. The hierarchical Church would practically be replaced by the brotherly Church, and the New Testament revelation would be fulfilled and surpassed by a new revelation of the revelation. The new age of the Holy Spirit would bring about the reconciliation of Eastern and Western Christianity, divided already at that time, and an age of peace and justice would be established on earth until Christ's second coming.

Here, a short parenthesis is needed to clarify the origin of Maistre's Joachite ideas, as the latter appear in the last dialogue from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*. In this sense, it is necessary to refer to an important aspect of Maistre's spiritual and political life: his relations with the Freemasonry. Maistre became a Mason in 1773, at the age of twenty, and was active in the lodges until 1792. The Masonic name tht Maistre chose for himself, *Josephus a Floribus*, indicates the existence of a connection with Joachim of Fiore, and although in the last dialogue of *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, as elsewhere, no mention is made of the Cistercian monk, whose writings have been condemned as heretical, we can say that "*les écrits théosophiques que son initiation maçonnique l'a amené à étudier l'ont inévitablement mis en contact avec les traits les plus généraux de la doctrine joachimite*"[441]. Although heretical, in as much as it was based on theosophical teachings, the branch of Freemasonry to which Maistre adhered was firmly attached to the Christian principles. Maistre indicated that its purpose was to oppose the materialism and

[441] Jean-Yves Pranchère, "Joachim de Flore", in *Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre*, établi par Pierre Glaudes, avec la collaboration de Jean-Louis Darcel et Jean-Yves Pranchère, in *Œuvres*, Édition établie par Pierre Glaudes, Éditions Robert Laffont, Paris, 2007, p. 1204.

skepticism of the eighteenth century[442]. Later, in 1776, Maistre adhered to the Reformed Scottish Rite Masonry. This branch of Masonry concentrated on the acquisition of an esoteric knowledge, thought to have been transmitted from generation to generation, beginning with Adam, esoteric knowledge through which the initiated Mason would gain, although also with the assistance of Christ, the "wisdom that would lead towards an intimate vision of the spiritual principle of all creation"[443]. After the French Revolution, in the context in which governments became increasingly fearful of secret societies and took measures against them, Maistre ceased his Masonic activity, and later in life, whenever confronted with the issue of his Masonic past, he always minimized its importance[444]. Nevertheless, theosophical Masonic spirituality, especially the writings of Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin[445], had retained a significant influence in Maistre's thought. In *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, a memorial addressed to Tsar Alexander I[446] while Maistre was ambassador of Piedmont-Sardinia in Saint-Petersburg[447], among other political recommendations, Maistre informed the Tsar that he should make a distinction between two types of Freemasonry, and therefore, between two types "*d'illuminés*". Maistre argues that there

[442] More specifically, Maistre remained a practicing Catholic throughout his Masonic period. It is true that the Vatican had condemned Masonry twice during the eighteenth century. However at that point, these condemnations have been largely ignored both by Catholic laity as well as by Catholic clergy. So Maistre's case was far from being an extraordinary one (Richard Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre: An Intellectual Militant*, pp. 54-55).

[443] Richard Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre: An Intellectual Militant*, pp. 56-59.

[444] At that time, there was a widespread belief within right wing clerical and aristocratic circles, according to which the French Revolution was the result of a Masonic plot, belief which otherwise is also present, to a great extent, in Maistre's thought, although, as we shall see, Maistre distinguishes between a good, or at least inoffensive type of Masonry, and a bad and dangerous type of Masonry. Such distinctions, however, were not always clear to everybody, nor were they easily accepted in the context of a climate of suspicion which always characterizes the revolutionary periods. For this reason, it is understandable why Maistre stayed away from the lodges and tried to minimize the importance of this period from his life.

[445] Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin (1743-1803) was a mystical eighteenth century writer, whose theosophical conceptions are largely the same as those upheld by the mystical Freemasons, described by Maistre in this chapter. Although critical of his anticlericalism, Maistre appreciated Saint-Martin very much, and it appears that the religious doctrine from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* owes a great deal to the influence of Saint-Martin (*Cf.* Jean-Yves Pranchère, "Saint-Martin", in *Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre*, pp. 1279-1281).

[446] I will return to the analysis of this document in the next chapter.

[447] Although a French author, Maistre was not French, but Savoyard, and as such, he was a subject of the House of Savoy, which ruled over the Italian state of Piedmont Sardinia, with its capital in Turin. In 1803 he has been appointed ambassador of Piedmont Sardinia to Saint-Petersburg, a position that he would occupy until 1817.

exists, indeed, "*une classe […] d'illuminés, très mauvaise, très dangereuse, très active, et sur laquelle on ne saurait trop appeler l'attention des gouvernements"*. Practically speaking, this type of "*illuminisme est le philosophisme moderne greffé sur le protestantisme*"[448]. However, Maistre argues that there is another type of Freemasonry, the one with which he was associated in his youth, and here he practically amalgamates two spiritual doctrines followed by this category of Masons, "*le martinisme et le piétisme*", doctrines that "*se pénètrent mutuellement, en sorte qu'il serait bien difficile de trouver un sectateur de l'un de ces systèmes qui ne tienne aucunement à l'autre*" [449]. Maistre then lists the core beliefs of these two systems of thought. Martinists believe that there exists a "*véritable christianisme ou christianisme primitif, base de toutes leurs spéculations*", and that the official Christian doctrine preached by the Church is only an imperfect representation of this authentic Christianity, the relation between the two being practically the relation between the spirit and the letter. This authentic Christianity, also called "christianisme transcendant, *est une véritable initiation*", known by the first Christians and "*accessible encore aux adeptes de bonne volonté*", which has revealed "*et peut révéler encore de grandes merveilles*"[450]. Pietists, on the other hand,

> *rapportent tout à l'amour de Dieu*" and "*pensent assez communément que les chrétiens de toutes les communions sont sur le point de se réunir sous un chef qui, suivant l'opinion des plusieurs, doit résider à Jérusalem […]. [E]n attendant cette grande époque, le véritable christianisme réside dans l'intérieur de l'homme : ils le nomme le règne de l'intérieur, où l'amour seul nous conduit, sans égard à la diversité des dogmes*[451].

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[448] Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, p. 101. Maistre practically overlaps the terms Freemason and *"illuminé"*.

[449] *Ibidem*, p. 97. In *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, Maistre indicates the fact that, despite what is generally believed, the term Martinism does not come from Saint-Martin. Instead, it comes from another theosophist, Joachim Martinez de Pasqually (1727? – 1774), who was the founder of *l'Ordre de Chevaliers Maçons Élus Citoyens de l'Univers* . Saint-Martin was his disciple, but later withdrew from the lodges and pursued a mystical life on his own. Another disciple of Martinez de Pasqually was Jean-Baptiste Willermoz (1730-1824), the founder of the Reformed Scottish Rite Freemasonry, to which Maistre adhered in 1776. Maistre corresponded with Willermoz while a Mason and also met Saint-Martin.

[450] *Ibidem*, p. 95.

[451] *Ibidem*, pp. 96-97.

Taking into account the belief that Christian churches are divided due to ignorance, and that the future unity of Christianity can be accomplished only on the basis of the true, meta-confessional, spiritual principle, which for the moment is possessed only by a minority of initiates that expect the arrival of a new spiritual age, it is understandable, Maistre argues, why both Martinists and Pietists manifest "*une antipathie naturelle contre l'ordre sacerdotal et contre toute hiérarchie […]. Tous regardent les prêtres, sans distinction*, comme des officiers au moins inutiles qui ont oublié le mot d'ordre"[452]. Maistre, whose entire theologico-political thought represents a defense of the idea of hierarchy, tells the Tsar that political authorities should deal with this problem "*suivant l'importance qu'ils attachent aux croyances et aux formes nationales*"[453]. However, he stresses the fact that, due to the above mentioned problem, these secret societies are more dangerous in Catholic countries, for there, through their activity, they endanger "*le principe de l'unité et de l'autorité qui sont les bases de la croyance catholique*". But in non-Catholic countries, these Masonic organizations "*produi[sent] deux grands biens*": first of all, they "*tend[ent] à étouffer les dissensions religieuses et à réunir les chrétiens par l'indifférence même des initiés sur plusieurs points qui échauffaient jadis les esprits*". Second, they also oppose "*l'incrédulité générale*" and "*[le] matérialisme pratique très-remarquable à l'époque ou nous vivons*", getting men used to dogmas and spiritual ideas[454].

In a work entitled *Mémoire au Duc de Brunswick*, written at the age of twenty nine by Maistre, then a Mason, and addressed to one of his superiors, he "offered […] a grand vision of what Freemasonry could become"[455]. In this sense, Maistre proposed a three-level "scheme of a hierarchy of grades with different activities for each". While "[t]he first class" of Masons was

[452] *Ibidem*, p. 99.
[453] *Ibidem*.
[454] *Ibidem*, pp. 99-100.
[455] Richard Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre: An Intellectual Militant*, p. 60.

supposed to "undertake benevolent acts and the study of morals and politics", the second class was supposed to "aim for the reunion of Christian sects and the instruction of governments"[456]. From this point of view, we observe a perfect continuity between Maistre's 1782 memorial, addressed to the Duke of Brunswick, and his 1811 memorial, addressed to the Tsar. Instructing the Russian imperial authority how to defend itself in the face of the danger of Revolution, Maistre remains faithful to the ecumenical ideal of his youth, harmonizing it, as it can be seen, with his Roman Catholic ideal of unity under the authority of the Pope. Lebrun stresses the fact that while "[p]olitical reformism was common enough in eighteenth-century Masonry […], the notion of using fraternal ties of Masonry for ecumenical purposes seems to have been Maistre's own"[457]. Maistre argued that Masons should organize *"des comités de correspondance composés surtout des prêtres des differentes communions que nous aurons aggrégés et initiés"*, with the purpose of stealthily promoting a future reunification of the Churches[458]. Finally, as far as the organization of Masonry was concerned, noting the fact that "[m]any Masons […] lean towards democratic forms", Maistre argues instead that, as a consequence of the fact that "the Masonic order embraces vast distances and a diversity of languages, cults, and usages", democracy "would be impracticable" as a form of organization. Instead, Maistre argues that the best type of organization model for Freemasonry is "the government of the Catholic Church", whose cornerstone is the universal authority of the Pope[459]. As we can see, the structure of the argument from *Du Pape* is practically anticipated in this early Masonic writing of Joseph de Maistre[460].

[456] *Ibidem*, p. 62.
[457] *Ibidem*, p. 64.
[458] Joseph de Maistre, *Mémoire au Duc de Brunswick*, in Jean Rebotton (ed.), *Ecrits maçonniques de Joseph de Maistre et de quelques-uns de ses amis franc-maçons*, Slatkine, Geneva, 1983, p. 108.
[459] Richard Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre: An Intellectual Millitant*, p. 66.
[460] This bizarre combination of Catholic government and Masonic secrecy makes one think once again of Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor, especially since during the dialogue between Alyosha and Ivan, which follows Ivan's presentation of his Poem concerning the Grand Inquisitor, Ivan suggests that Freemasonry and Catholicism may be reunited by the same political philosophy, centered on the idea that there is a terrible mystery, known only

2.8.2. The paradox of a "heterodox orthodoxy"

In *Mémoire au Duc de Brunswick*, Maistre argues that the third and highest class of Masons should seek to discover *"la révélation de la révélation ou les connoissances sublimes, [car] [t]out est mistère dans les deux testaments, et les élus de l'une et de l'autre n'étoient que des vrais initiés"*[461]. With the term "*révélation de la révélation"*, we therefore return to the last dialogue from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, where exactly the same term appears again in the prophetic discourse of the Russian Senator. A conclusion that imposes itself is that, just as Maistre sought to bring Catholicism, as an organizational principle, within Freemasonry, he likewise sought to bring Masonic spirituality, strongly related to Joachimit spirituality, within Catholicism. For Sarrazin, Maistre's dialogue with the Senator from the last *Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* should be interpreted as a "*duel entre deux religions, religion de l'avenir, religion du passé, orthodoxie romaine et 'christianisme transcendant'* "[462]. Lebrun interprets the dialogue

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by a ruling minority, and that must be concealed from the governed masses, for their own sake. "The Catholics", Ivan argues, "hate the Freemasons so much because they see them as rivals, a division of the unity of the idea, while there must be one flock and one shepherd" (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 341). It is interesting to draw a parallel between Ivan's observation and the fact that, in *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, Maistre insistently advises the Tsar to rely on the support of the Jesuits in his struggle against Western liberal influence, and more precisely, against what Maistre describes as the bad type of Freemasonry. For, argues Maistre, in line with Ivan's analogy between Jesuitism (the worst type of Catholicism, according to Dostoyevsky, hence the closest to the Catholicism described in the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor) and Freemasonry, "*nulle association et surtout nulle association cachée, ne peut être facilement combattue que par une autre*" (Joseph de Maistre, Quatre *chapitres sur la Russie*, p. 185). Commenting on the letter, quoted in section 2.4, in which Maistre declares that if he were "*athée et souverain*", he would declare "*le pape infaillible par édit public*" for the sake of political stability, Robert Triomphe makes the following ironic observation: "*Nous nous représentons très bien le frère* Josephus a Floribus, *chef spirituel de la société maçonnique des nations […,] expliquant avec une aimable courtoisie aux frères anticléricaux qu'ils sont politiquement dans l'erreur et doivent agréger le pape à leur système*" (Robert Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre: Étude sur la vie et la doctrine d'un matérialiste mystique,* p. 334). Triomphe, who argues that Maistre's Catholicism is a Catholicism without Christ, deprived therefore of the authenticity of faith, believes that Maistre has sought within the Masonic lodges the divine secrets for governing the nations of the world and that ultimately, for him, Catholicism was "*la franc-maçonnerie suprême*" (*Ibidem*, p. 590).

[461] Joseph de Maistre, *Mémoire au Duc de Brunswick*, pp. 98, 109.

[462] Bernard Sarrazin, "Le Comte et le Sénateur ou la double religion de Joseph de Maistre", in *Romantisme*, 1976, no.11, p. 15.

as Maistre's dialogue with himself[463], while Pranchère stresses the fact that Maistre's religious thought reveals the paradox "*d'un conformisme non conformiste ou d'une orthodoxie hétérodoxe*"[464]. In fact, it is important to emphasize that Maistre was not only a non-conformist Catholic (who surprisingly distinguishes himself among Catholic authors as the most fervent defender of the principle of obedience), but was also a non-conformist Mason. In the context of this "double religion" of Maistre, to use Sarrazin's term, it is no wonder then that, in *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, Maistre shelters himself from possible suspicions, by attributing to an Orthodox the beliefs of his youth, which seem to have never left him completely, and which he sees as very useful from the perspective of the ecumenical spirit. Furthermore, it is important to note another paradox: it is through the mediation of the Joachite/Masonic heresy, an acknowledged danger for the established hierarchical Church, that Maistre wants to bring the Orthodox "*frères séparés*"[465] back to Catholic unity. In this sense, returning to Joachim of Fiore, it is relevant to recall the fact that for him, the new revelation of the Holy Spirit also had a profound ecumenical implication: the new age of the Holy Spirit would have brought with it also the reconciliation between the separated Greeks and Latins, reunited from now on in the new spiritual community that would have replaced the old hierarchical Church.

Overall, the impact of Maistre's Joachite tendencies must not be exaggerated. In the last dialogue from his last published work, the rigid Catholic institutionalism of Joseph de Maistre does not simply tip into a pneumocratic chiliastic enthusiasm. Rather, the last dialogue of his *magnum opus* reveals that Maistre's Catholicism escapes any facile categorization given the fact that, if the latter presents heretical tendencies, these do not manifest themselves in a single direction, but in several directions, and, surprisingly, even in opposite directions. However, while

[463] Richard Lebrun, *L'Épistémologie maistrienne : rationalité et connaissance transcendante*, p. 238.
[464] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 44.
[465] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 752.

it is the Senator who announces the new revelation of the Holy Spirit, the Count closes the last dialogue from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* with several remarks which are meant to moderate the enthusiasm of the former, reminding him of the risks presupposed by such expectations. Thus, addressing the Russian Senator, Count Maistre reaffirms the fact that, although it can contribute to the unification of churches, revealing itself as a useful tool in the service of Rome, "*l'illuminisme*" remains "*pas moins mortel sous l'empire de notre Église et de la vôtre même, en ce qu'il anéantit fondamentalement l'autorité qui est cependant la base de notre système*"[466]. Unlike Joachim of Fiore, Maistre also remains extremely vague with regard to the content of this new revelation. A footnote from *De l'Église Gallicane*, regarding the translation of verse 36, chapter 18 of Saint John's Gospel, where Christ tells Pilate that His Kingdom is not of this world, determines Pranchère to affirm that, it might be argued, in view of this footnote, that Maistre's perspective "*est bel et bien celle du millénarisme, dans l'esprit de Joachim de Flore: un règne* terrestre *de Dieu; non pas à proprement parler l'Apocalypse, le Jugement dernier, mais bien la venue* sur terre *de Dieu pour la réalisation d'un nouveau monde où la violence et l'injustice seraient abolies*"[467]. However, this interpretation is supported only by the elusive content of the above mentioned footnote from *De l'Église Gallicane*. According to another commentator of Maistre's work, if the latter "*spécule sur le troisième Règne, il voit dans cette nouvelle Révélation un accomplissement du catholicisme s'opérant au prix d'une*

[466] *Ibidem*, pp. 770-772.

[467] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 426. It is not clear, however, whether we can talk about a concrete coming of Christ on earth, as in traditional chiliasm, or merely of a reign of the Holy Spirit, as in Joachim's prophecies. In the mentioned passage, Maistre quotes Saint John's Gospel in the following way: "*mon royaume n'est pas MAINTENANT de ce monde*". Then he adds the following remarks: "*Je ne sais pourquoi certains traducteurs […] se sont donné la licence de supprimer ce mot de maintenant, qui se lit cependant dans le texte comme dans la Vulgate. Je n'ignore pas que la particule grecque* Nun *peut quelquefois n'avoir qu'une valeur purement argumentative, qui la rend alors à peu près synonyme de* mais *ou de* or *; ici néanmoins elle peut fort bien être prise littéralement ; et il n'est point permis de la supprimer. Comment sait-on que le Sauveur n'a pas voulu, par ce mystérieux monosyllabe, exprimer certaines choses que les hommes ne devaient pas encore connaître ?*"(Joseph de Maistre, *De l'Église gallicane*, pp. 140-141).

transfiguration, bien plus qu'un dépassement résultant d'une destruction préalable"[468]. This interpretation finds support in the Count's discourse from the last dialogue of *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*. The latter warns the Russian Senator against speculations concerning the content of the future revelation and, in general, against hermeneutical abuses, stressing the fact that the penetration of scriptural mysteries can only lead to a better understanding of what has been already revealed. Most importantly, the Count stresses the fact that what has already been revealed is sufficient for salvation. "*Cherchez tant qu'il vous plaira*", says Maistre: "*prenez garde cependant de ne pas aller trop loin, et de ne pas vous tromper en vous livrant à votre imagination[…]. J'irai cependant mon train, messieurs, […] et tandis que les pieux disciples de Saint-Martin […] entreprennent de traverser les flots à la nage, je dormirai en paix dans cette barque*", the Roman-Catholic Church, "*qui cingle heureusement à travers les écueils et les tempêtes depuis mille huit cent neuf ans*"[469]. In conclusion, while calling for prudence, humility and above all obedience, Maistre reassures his interlocutors that he also remains convinced of the approach of "*un grand événement*"[470]. Consequently, although a selective reading of Maistre may lead to the conclusion that we are dealing with "a purely political Catholicism, justified only by a concern for order", nevertheless, his thought is also marked by "the properly utopian and revolutionary ferment of Christianity"[471], revealing thus Maistre as a profoundly paradoxical and ambiguous religious thinker.

[468] Pierre Glaudes, "Eschatologie" in *Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre*, p. 1171.
[469] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, pp. 772-773.
[470] *Ibidem*, p. 774.
[471] Jean-Yves Pranchère, "The Persistence of Maistrian Thought", p. 310.

Chapter 3 – Russia and Orthodoxy in the thought of Maistre

3.1. - Introduction

After having presented Maistre's view of modernity, as well as his response to this historical phenomenon, the last chapter from this first part of my thesis will be dedicated to Maistre's view of the Orthodox world. The chapter is divided into three sections. In section 3.2, I analyze Maistre's views concerning Russia. I begin the section by presenting Maistre's vision of the Russian religious and political phenomenon, concentrating on Maistre's theories concerning the impact of Orthodoxy on Russia's historical evolution. Next, I compare Maistre's historical analysis of Russia with the similar analysis made by Pyotr Chaadayev, the father of Russian Westernism and an opponent of the Slavophiles, an author who had been influenced by Maistre. I close the section with an analysis of Maistre's political agenda for Russia, as expressed in *Quatre Chapitres sur la Russie*, a memorial addressed by the Savoyard ambassador to Tsar Alexander I. In the next section (3.3), I concentrate on Maistre's critique of Orthodox ecclesiology. I present also Maistre's analysis of the implications resulting form the historical gap that separates the Orthodox East from the Catholic and Protestant West, as well as his predictions concerning the future of the Orthodox Church. Finally, in the fourth section (3.4), I analyze Maistre's view of what may be defined as the Greek phenomenon, a cultural phenomenon originating in the Greek antiquity, which, according to Maistre, explains the subsequent historical evolution of Greek Christianity that has finally led to the 1054 Great Schism.

There are two reasons for the inclusion of this chapter within my thesis. First of all, since I am writing a comprehensive comparison between Maistre, on the one hand, and Dostoyevsky, on

the other hand, the analysis of Maistre's vision of the Orthodox world completes the overall picture of Maistre's political and religious thought. Moreover, in the light of this analysis, one can also understand better several key aspects of Maistrian thought that have been presented in the preceding chapters. First and foremost, Russia, where Maistre has been an ambassador for thirteen years, had played a very important role in his intellectual evolution. The great majority of Maistre's major works were written in Saint-Petersburg, in the context in which Russia represented a major actor on the European scene at that time, whose evolution had influenced Maistre's intellectual evolution. Moreover, it is in Russia, and more specifically near Tsar Alexander I, that Maistre has exercised, for the most part, and seemingly with the most concrete results, the role that he claimed for himself already in his *Mémoire au Duc de Brunswick*: that of adviser of the sovereign monarch[472]. The analysis of Maistre's critique of Orthodox ecclesiology leads to a better comprehension of his own ecclesiological thought, which, as demonstrated, is a fundamental component of his political theology, and likewise, as it will be seen, contributes to a better understanding of Maistre's view of Protestantism, which represents for him the main vector of modernity. Finally, as it will be seen, Maistre's analysis concerning Ancient, Byzantine, and modern Greece offers a better perspective of his overall critique of modernity.

But the main reason for the inclusion of this chapter in the part of the thesis dedicated to Maistre is related to the general organization of my comprehensive comparative study. In this sense, having the intention to set face to face the Maistrian theologico-political discourse and the Slavophile and Dostoyevskyan theologico-political discourse, I include in this chapter a section

[472] As indicated, in the first section of this chapter, I will concentrate on a memorial addressed by Maistre to the Tsar, entitled *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, in which the Savoyard ambassador proposes an ultra-conservative political agenda for the future of Russia. However, according to Jean-Louis Darcel, none of Maistre's works written in Saint-Petersburg were intially meant for publication. Instead, destined to a restricted audience surrounding the Russian sovereign, these works were all meant to ultimately influence the political agenda of Alexander I. All of these works, Darcel claims, "sont […] nées […] pour réfuter un projet politique d'Alexandre et doivent être interprétées d'abord comme des monitions addressées au souverain russe par son conseiller secret catholique" (Jean-Louis Darcel, "Alexandre Ier, empereur de Russie", in *Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre*, p. 1120).

on Maistre's view of Orthodoxy, because in the second part of my thesis, I will present the Slavophile and Dostoyevskyan view of Catholicism. While the basis of Maistre's critique of modernity is a Catholic critique of Protestantism (or at least a critique that claims to be Catholic), which, as we shall see, also intersects Maistre's critique of Orthodoxy, the basis of the Slavophile and Dostoyevskyan critique of modernity is an Orthodox critique of Roman Catholicism (or at least a critique that claims to be Orthodox). Moreover, Maistre, as well as Dostoyevsky and his Slavophile predecessors, all analyze in their works the nature of the Russian religious and political phenomenon. They also make predictions, and in some cases draw signals of alarm, concerning Russia's future. Finally, they all have a political agenda concerning Russia, hoping that the latter as a whole, or at least its leaders, will follow the path that they are prescribing for it.

3.2. - Joseph de Maistre and Russia

Maistre's opinions with regard to Russia are mainly concentrated in a short book entitled *Quatre Chapitres sur la Russie*, which actually represents a memorial addressed by Maistre to Tsar Alexander I, and which consists of a series of political recommendations derived from Maistre's analysis of the Russian historical and theologico-political context. All in all, from one end to the other, the document contains a political agenda profoundly opposed to the idea of modernization. Briefly, Maistre first of all urges the Tsar to reject all imaginable liberal reforms and to do everything possible in order to keep Russia a closed society. Second, Maistre insists that the only way in which Russia can overcome its current state of barbarism, while avoiding at the same time the catastrophe of modernity, is the reunification of the Russian Church with the

Roman Catholic Church. Obviously, Maistre insists that the *sine qua non* condition of this renewed unity was the recognition by the Russian Church of the primacy and infallibility of the Pope.

Maistre deeply appreciated the Russian people, while deeply despising the Greeks, on whom he laid the blame for the schism. According to Maistre, as a consequence of the schism, Orthodox Russia "*ne reçut donc point l'influence générale, et ne put être pénétrée par l'esprit* universel". "*Quel dommage*", Maistre wrote in *Du Pape*, "*que la plus puissante des familles slaves se soit soustraite, dans son ignorance, au grand sceptre constituant pour se jeter dans les bras de ces misérables Grecs du Bas-Empire; détestables sophistes, prodiges d'orgueil et de nullité, dont l'histoire ne peut être lue que par un homme exercé à vaincre les plus grands dégoûts*"[473]. Russia, Maistre wrote, was "*la nation la plus mobile, la plus impétueuse, la plus entreprenante de l'univers*"[474]. The Russian people was "*éminement brave, bienveillant, spirituel, hospitalier, entreprenant, heureux imitateur, et possesseur d'une langue magnifique*"[475]. To be more specific, according to Maistre, the Russian historical paradox consisted in the fact that Russia had huge, unaccomplished potential, while it was facing, as a society, great dangers. The influence of the Greek Church has kept Russia separated from "the universal spirit", which was coming from Rome. At the same time, Maistre noticed the fact that Russia's entry on the scene of universal history has coincided with "*l'époque de la plus grande corruption de l'esprit humain*". The frightening result of Russia's late encounter with the West was the fact that "*les premières leçons de français que ce peuple entendit furent des blasphèmes*"[476]. Thus, if Russia's historical misfortune consisted in the fact that it had been isolated from the West, paradoxically,

[473] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, pp. 310-312.
[474] Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, p. 21.
[475] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 311.
[476] Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, p. 26.

given the historical crisis that was now affecting the West, Russia needed to maintain its unfortunate isolation, this time in order to defend itself from the excesses of civilization. Suspended at the crossroads between a barbarian pre-modernity and a revolutionary modernity whose characteristic was "*la barbarie savante*"[477], Russia's salvation, like the salvation of all Christendom, could come, in Maistre's opinion, only from the Holy See[478]. That is, from what Maistre regarded as the non-modern, and more precisely anti-modern, West. Thus, for Maistre, Russia appeared as Rousseau's "good savage" or, in order to remain faithful to Maistre's terminology, as the good barbarian, which presented the opportunity for the accomplishment of a civilization that was both old and new. For, the same Russia that had been kept isolated from the European civilization, was representing, at the time when Maistre was the ambassador of Piedmont-Sardinia in Saint Petersburg, the main bastion of defense of old Europe in the face of Napoleonic France. But Maistre was also terrified by the perspective of a direct leap from barbarism to revolutionary barbarism. Russia represented therefore a great stake.

For Maistre, who perceived Russia as "the good savage", there simply does not seem to have existed a Russia before Peter the Great[479]. What existed at the time that he wrote his work, he considered to be only an artificial superstructure seated over a mass of illiterate peasants, whose religion was reduced to superstition and whose clergy was basically as ignorant and as oppressed as its flock. Referring to the social impact of religion in Russia, Maistre underlines the fact that there is a capital difference between "*la puissance de la religion sur l'homme*" and

[477] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 225.

[478] Here of course, we are referring to the institutional dimension of Maistrian thought, as reflected by the theocratic project from *Du Pape*, and not to the eschatological dimension presented in *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*. In *Du Pape*, Maistre argued that the crisis of order of the Western civilization could be solved only by a universal pontifical theocracy. Yet, as we have seen, in *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, he announced the overcoming of the modern division through a new revelation of the Holy Spirit. As indicated, while on the one hand we are dealing, in the case of Maistre, with a double theologico-political discourse, on the other hand, these two dimensions form the complex unity of Maistrian thought.

[479] Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, pp. 25-26.

"*l'attachement de l'homme à la religion*". "*Tel qui volera toute sa vie*", Maistre continues, "*ou qui vivra dans l'union la plus coupable en faisant régulièrement ses dévotions, pourra fort bien défendre une image au péril de sa vie, et mourir même plutôt que de manger de la viande un jour prohibé*"[480]. For Maistre, this is what the Russian Orthodox religiosity was reduced to. However, in *Du Pape*, Maistre argues that the power of a religion over man is measured according to the extent to which "elle change et exalte l'homme*, en le rendant susceptible d'un plus haut degré de vertu, de civilisaton et de science*"[481]. Ignorant and subjected to the abuses of the political power, the Orthodox religion was unable to exercise any influence whatsoever either on society or on government. Moreover, Maistre argued that this particular theologico-political context appears to be a form of Russian exceptionalism. If the Turks were governed through the Quran, while the Chinese were governed through the teachings of Confucius[482], in the absence of a religion, in the true sense of the word, the Russians were naturally governed only through slavery[483]. For, as Maistre writes to the Tsar, "*aucune souveraineté n'est assez forte pour gouverner plusieurs millions d'hommes, à moins qu'elle ne soit aidée par la religion, ou par l'esclavage, ou par l'une et l'autre*"[484]. More specifically, in *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, Maistre reiterates his thesis that everywhere outside Christianity slavery is legitimate, while stressing the fact that in the West, it was precisely the religious authority of the Catholic Church that has made possible the abolition of serfdom and the development of political freedom. As already indicated, like Cortés, Maistre believed that wherever religion does not have sufficient influence on customs, social order and sovereignty have to be maintained by force. And in this sense, the Maistrian theologico-political perspective reserved for Eastern Orthodoxy the status of

[480] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 310.
[481] *Ibidem*.
[482] Joseph de Masitre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, pp. 24-25.
[483] *Ibidem*, p. 13.
[484] *Ibidem*, p. 20 .

a Christianity that was unable to become incarnate. Or, more precisely, a Christianity that was unable to give birth to a Christian institutional order that would challenge and replace the institutions that resulted from humanity's natural condition of subjection. Consequently, Maistre concluded that the inevitable historical consequence of Russia's conversion to a form of Christianity, whose civilizing effects were almost null, has been Russia's disconnection from the "*mouvement générale de civilisation et d'affranchissement qui partait de Rome*"[485].

If, as we should see in the second part of this thesis, the Slavophiles have anchored their populist conservatism in a retrospective utopia projected on the Russian medieval past, Maistre's historical theses bear significant similarities with those of the Slavophiles' opponents, the Westernists. In this sense, it is extremely relevant to stress the fact that Maistre represents one of the sources of Russian Westernism which, it should be underlined, was born on the right of the political spectrum and not on the left. The first Russian Westernist, Pyotr Chaadayev, was pro-Catholic and a follower of Maistre. Like Maistre, Chaadayev saw Russia as a primitive nation whose Orthodoxy has condemned it to remain in a state of barbarism, isolated from the universal civilization whose center was Rome. This isolation meant that Russia was not truly a Christian nation, for the essence of Christianity, Chaadayev thought, consisted in the social transposition of the Gospel and the realization of Christ's kingdom in this world, a task that was being accomplished in the West[486]. Moreover, just like Maistre, Chaadayev considered that if there was nothing in the Russian past worthy of preservation (he argued that the Russian Church's acceptance of the introduction of serfdom was a sufficient argument for the irrevocable condemnation of Orthodoxy), Russia's post-Petrine civilization was, inevitably artificial. And

[485] *Ibidem*, pp. 10-14.

[486]It is interesting in this sense to underline that, criticizing Dostoyevsky's attack against the political Christianity of the Grand Inquisitor, Carl Schmitt makes use of the following affirmation of Hegel: "*le droit est l'Esprit se rendant effectif*" (Carl Schmit, *Glossarium*, p. 252, quoted in Théodore Paléologue, *Sous l'œil du Grand Inquisiteur*, p. 40).

yet, just as for Maistre, for Chaadayev, the Russian historical void represented not only the justification of a complex of inferiority, but also the promise of a new universal civilization, which could emulate the West while also enjoying the privilege of learning from its mistakes. Last but not least, like Maistre, Chaadayev regarded the modern revolution as an accident in the historical evolution of the West, believing that this accident would finally be surpassed, giving way to a renewed, universal Catholic civilization. However, one should stress the fact that Chaadayev's faith and hope was accompanied by the same anxiety that characterized Maistre's similar faith and hope. As noticed by Andrezj Walicki, the thought of Chaadayev represented a form of "revolutionary conservatism", which, while opposing the Revolution in the West, was nevertheless supporting the inevitably revolutionary westernization of Russia; a doctrine that was conservative abroad while being revolutionary at home. For just like Maistre, Chaadayev not only regarded the Russian past as *tabula rasa*, but he considered that Russia was the only country in the world without a past. Accordingly, Walicki argues that Chaadayev's doctrine played a decisive role in the development of Russian Westernism, and in particular of its later radical, revolutionary expressions[487].

Returning to Maistre, it must be underlined that, as in other cases that have been presented until now concerning his thought, his position with regard to Russia reveals itself, at a closer look, as much more ambivalent than it may seem at first sight. In this sense, it is interesting to mention an unpublished sketch of the closing section of *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg.* In this fragment, Maistre emotionally says farewell to the Russian Senator and to the Russian land, expressing his love for Russia and making the following solemn vow: "*Jusqu'à mon dernier soupir je ne cesserai de me rappeler la Russie, et de faire des voeux pour elle*". In this tender

[487] Andrezj Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy: History of a Conservative Utopia in the Nineteenth-Century Russian Thought*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1975, pp. 98-108.

atmosphere, the fanatic advocate of the universal pontifical theocracy seems to be replaced once again by the prudent conservative that counsels nations to stick to their traditions and identities. "Qu'allez vous devenir", Maistre asks himself,

> *au milieu de l'ébranlement général des esprits ? La foi aveugle, les cérémonies grossières, les doctrines philosophiques, l'illuminisme, l'esprit de liberté, l'obéissance passive, l'isba et le palais, les raffinements du luxe et les rudesses de la sauvagerie, que deviendront tant d'éléments discordants mis en mouvement par ce goût de nouveauté qui forme peut-être le trait le plus saillant de votre caractère, et qui, vous élançant sans cesse vers des objets nouveaux, vous dégoûte de ce que vous possédez ?*[488]

The modernization of the Russian society brings with it potentially catastrophic tensions, and what stirs Maistre's anxiety the most is the Russian enthusiasm for change, which represents a characteristic of the Russian national soul. As a consequence, Maistre expresses his admiration for the conservative genius of England, the nation that no other nation surpasses "*en force, en unité, en gloire nationale*", and advices the Russians to follow this example:

> *Voulez-vous êtres grands autant que vous êtes puissants? marchez sur ces exemples, contredisez sans cesse cet esprit de nouveauté et de changement, jusque dans les petites choses ; laissez pendre sur vos murs les tapisseries enfumées de vos aïeux ; chargez vos tables de leur pesante argenterie. Vous dites: 'Mon père est mort dans cette maison, il faut que je la vende !' Anathème sur ce sophisme de l'insensibilité ! dites au contraire : 'Il y est mort, je ne puis plus la vendre'. Placez sur la porte vos armes exprimées par le bronze, et que la dixième génération foule encore le seuil qui a vu passer la cendre des ancêtres*[489].

Thus, while one can establish a relation of filiation between Maistre's theses from *Du Pape* and Russian Westernism, in this unpublished fragment, Maistre appears instead to play the role of a Slavophile pedagogue. Like Joseph de Maistre, Aleksey Khomyakov was also a great admirer of England, hoping that, under the influence of the same Tory spirit that reigned in

[488] Joseph de Maistre, *Lettres et opuscules inédits*, Paris, A. Vaton, 1851, t. II, p. 340-343, quoted in Pierre Glaudes, "Introduction" to *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, pp. 442-443.
[489] *Ibidem*, p. 443.

England, Russia would abandon its tendency to superficially copy the Western model of civilization.

Chaadayev's Catholic option was based on the principle that the Catholic West was the civilization were the Gospel found its accomplishment in the progressive evolution from serfdom to freedom and equality. For Chaadayev, the modern West and its aspirations still remained the product of Catholicism, even in its opposition to it, and Chaadayev never ceased to hope that a final reconciliation between Catholicism and modernity would eventually come about as the ultimate fulfillment of the West's historical evolution. As a consequence, although Chaadayev disliked the anti-Catholic revolutionary agenda of the Western Enlightenment, his civilizing anti-Orthodox agenda inevitably favored Peter's Reforms and the subsequent subjection of the Russian peasant mass under the civilizing authority of imported institutions. If the religious culture of the Russian people made the latter incapable of freedom and civilization, then the Russian people could be civilized and liberated only from above, through the emancipating as well as dominating power of an artificial state apparatus. A premature liberation of the peasant mass, taking into account these cultural premises, may represent a political catastrophe that would throw Russia for centuries, if not forever, out of the European path on which it was set by Peter the Great. Maistre also considered that it was absolutely necessary to maintain the slavery of the peasants until the moment when Russia would have been brought under the civilizing authority of the Roman See[490]. Maistre's position with regard to the issue of serfdom has been

[490] However, although Maistre insisted that as a class, the nobility needed to be strenghtened, he also stressed the fact that it was necessary to combat the abuses committed against the peasants (Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, p. 32). As far as the inclusion of Russia within the Roman Catholic flock is concerned, it is important to mention the fact that Joseph de Maistre himself has made significant efforts in this direction. It is known that Maistre has played an important role in the conversion of several members of the Russian aristocracy, especially women, and it is this type of activity that actually led to his recall to Turin, at the Tsar's request, in 1816, and thus to the termination of his mandate as ambassador of Piedmont Sardinia to Saint-Petersburg. The Tsar's decision has been taken in the context of the strenghtening of Russian nationalist feeling in the aftermath of Napoleon's defeat. Moreover, the conversion of some leading figures of the Russian aristocracy to Catholicism had

the exact opposite of the position adopted by Dostoyevsky and the Slavophiles, who militated for the liberation of the peasants. Maistre believed that if the Russian peasants were to be liberated in the historical circumstances in which he was writing, the result would be that, under the influence "*d'une secte détestable qui ne dort jamais*" and which the Russian clergy, unlike the Jesuits (the sovereigns' "*chien de garde, qu'il faut bien vous garder*", Maistre advises the Tsar, "*de congédier*"[491]) does not have the capacity to confront, the peasants would inevitably move from superstition and slavery to atheism and anarchy[492]. Bad omens were already identifiable in the unrest associated with the old believers' "*rascolnisme*", which Maistre regarded as "*l'illuminisme des campagnes*"[493]. Thus, for Maistre, Russia was a powder barrel, and he related this situation with the extremism proper to the Russian character. According to him, once they

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been the main motive due to which the Jesuits had also been expelled from Saint-Petersbug in the same year. Maistre was "a supporter and associate of the Jesuits", who engaged in the same type of, often untransparent, activities, as the latter. As a consequence, the decree concerning the Jesuits had inevitably affected Maistre as well (Richard Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre: An Intellectual Militant*, pp. 222-226).

[491] Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, p. 185. As already indicated, Maistre advises the Tsar to make use of the Jesuits against the revolutionary conspiracy that is threathening Russia, arguing that "*nulle association, et surtout nulle association cachée, ne peut être facilement combattue que par une autre*" (*Ibidem*). According to Maistre, the best proof in support of this affirmation, is the fact that "*on ne trouvera pas un ennemi de l'Église et de l'État, un seul révolutionnaire, un seul illuminé, en un mot, un seul ennemi du système européen, qui ne le soit aussi de ces religieux*" (*Ibidem*, p. 166). Maistre, who has been educated by the Jesuits, greatly admired the Jesuit Order, for its "*esprit de corps*", whose perfection had not been equaled by any other organization, for its intellectual abilities, and for its determination in the struggle against Protestantism and its descendent, *Philosophisme.* In the opinion of Maistre, it was *"infinement probable"* that, without the suppression of the Order in 1773 (it will be later restored in 1814), at the pressure of the European monarchs who complained that the Jesuits meddled with the affairs of secular sovereigns (prior to the 1777 suppression, the Jesuits had been expelled, in the course of the century, from several European Kingdoms), the French Revolution would have never occurred (Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, pp. 159-161). Thus, for Maistre "*la suppression des Jésuites*" represents "*la véritable catastrophe du XVIIIe siècle*" (Jean-Yves Pranchère, "Jésuites", in *Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre*, p. 1202). The European monarchy has foolishly annihilated its strongest and, according to Maistre, most devoted guardian, transforming itself, as a result, into an easy prey for what Maistre calls "*la secte philosophique*" (Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 171).

[492] Jospeh de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, p. 26.

[493] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 330. Maistre refers here to the Russian Old Believers who had separated from the official Russian Orthodox Church (in Russian, *raskol* means schism) in 1666, in reaction to the liturgical reforms implemented by Patriarch Nikon. Nikon's religious reform implied the modification of Russian liturgical texts and practices in accordance with those that were followed by the Greek Church. The reform, enacted with a complete lack of diplomacy and of consideration for Russia's religious tradition, had triggered the staunch opposition of a Church faction, which has ever since been known as the Old Believers, led by Archpriest Avvakum Petrom. Making an association between the liturgical reform and the year (1666) in which it was put into practice, the Old Believers claimed that the Antichrist has taken control of the Russian Orthodox Church. As a consequence, they had broken away from the Orthodox Church, and later separated in various factions. Persecuted by the state, the Old Believers situated themselves, ever since, in opposition to Russia's political and religious establishment.

would get the taste of freedom, Russians will immediately want absolute freedom, accepting no half measures. "*Car il n'y a point d'homme*", Maistre argues, foreshadowing the portraits of Dostoyevsky's nihilist heroes, "*qui veuille aussi passionnément que le Russe*"[494]. If in the unpublished sketch of the final section of *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* Maistre warned that "*la flame brûle dans toute l'Europe*" while the Russians are "*combustibles*"[495], in *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, Maistre warned the Tsar that at the same moment when the liberation of the peasants would occur, "*on verrait s'allumer un incendie géneral qui consumerait la Russie*"[496].

Through his views concerning the Russian revolutionary potential that stems from a national character inclined towards the extremes, as well as through his sense of alarm in the face of the terrible dangers to which Russia was exposed, Joseph de Maistre anticipates the later reflections of Dostoyevsky. Like Dostoyevsky, Maistre feared a future Russian revolution led by a "*Pugatcheff d'université*"[497], greatly surpassing in violence and destruction the French Revolution. But once again, unlike Dostoyevsky and the Slavophiles, who had criticized the regime of censorship, the fear of revolution made Maistre insist on the fact that in Russia, freedom of thought needed to be kept under the tightest possible control. Thus, Maistre insisted in his memorial addressed to the Tsar that no Protestant scholar should be allowed into Russia, and that, until the union with Rome would be accomplished, science needed to be strictly censored and permitted only in technical applications that were absolutely necessary. As in other cases, Maistre insisted that a premature access to knowledge would be catastrophic. In general, Maistre advised the Tsar to keep the Russians' level of education as low as possible. He urged

[494] Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie,* p. 21.
[495] Joseph de Maistre, *Lettres et opuscules inédits*, Paris, A. Vanton, 1851, t. II, p. 340-343, quoted in Pierre Glaudes, *Introduction* to *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 444.
[496] Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie,* p. 22.
[497] *Ibidem*, p. 27.

him to eliminate "*tout enseignement public des connaissances qui peuvent être livrées aux goûts et aux moyens de chaque particulier ; comme l'histoire, la géographie, la métaphysique, la morale, la politique, le commerce, etc.*" ; likewise, not to favour in any way "*la propagation des sciences vers les dernières classes du peuple*"[498]. The historian David W. Edwards argues that Maistre's influence on the leading circles of Russian society while he was a diplomat in Saint Petersburg had a decisive contribution in the reversal of the education reform enacted in the first period of the reign of Alexander I, with the consequence that the liberal agenda had been replaced by the ultraconservative policy of Nicholas II[499]. As such, Maistre seems to have had a major contribution in the establishment of the censorship regime that created so many problems for the Slavophiles, and against which the latter fought so staunchly. In general, in what concerns Russia, wherever Dostoyevsky and the Slavophiles insisted on the need of liberal reforms, Maistre insisted, on the contrary, on the need of reactionary policies.

3.3. - The Maistrian critique of Orthodox ecclesiology

In *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, Joseph de Maistre recommended that the Tsar encourage "*la bonne harmonie et le rapprochement des deux religions Grecque et Latine, qui dans le fond n'en sont qu'une*"[500]. Maistre argued that, unlike Protestantism, which was inevitably hostile to all sovereignties, both Catholicism and Orthodoxy were preaching only "*foi et soumission*"[501]. Moreover, it is also extremely relevant that in Maistre's final and most important work, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, although there are three partners of discussion, none of them is

[498] *Ibidem*, pp. 147-148.
[499] *Cf.* Richard Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre: An Intellectual Militant*, pp. 209-210; Lebrun refers to Edwards' article "Count Joseph de Maistre and Russian Educational Policy, 1803-1828." *Slavic Review*, 36 (1977): 54-75.
[500] Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, p. 149.
[501] *Ibidem*, p. 149.

Protestant while one of them (the Russian Senator) is Orthodox. If, for Joseph de Maistre, Protestantism is worse than Islam and Paganism[502], the Orthodox are complimented in *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* with the appellative "*frères séparés*"[503]. However, in *Du Pape*, Maistre's tone becomes much more sharp and polemical. From the beginning of the fourth section of the treatise, the section that is dedicated to the so called *Photian*[504] churches, Maistre adopts a very trenchant rhetoric. Thus, Maistre states that "*toute Église qui n'est pas catholique est protestante*". "*Toutes les sociétés séparées*", whether Western or Eastern, "*se réunissent dans la haine de l'unité qui les écrase*". And since "*un protestant*", according to Maistre, "*est un homme qui proteste*", it doesn't really matter if he protests "*contre un ou plusiers dogmes*", "*contre celui-ci, ou contre celui-là*". A Protestant "*peut être plus ou moins protestant, mais toujours il proteste*"[505]. And the essential is that he is protesting against the authority that makes dogma possible. Thus, inevitably, "*toute nation comme tout homme, qui voudra choisir les dogmes, les perdra tous*"[506]. This is what is going to happen with the Orthodox nations in the close future, unless they return under the authority of the Roman Pontiff.

Maistre articulates four main arguments against Orthodoxy: a) the separation from Rome has meant that the Orthodox world was condemned to be deprived of the benefits of Western civilization; b) just as in the case of the Protestants, the separation from Rome has deprived the Orthodox churches of unity; c) as a consequence, the Orthodox churches inevitably fall under the complete domination of the sovereign powers and d) given their material and intellectual poverty, the orthodox churches are unable to withstand the revolutionary wave of modernity.

[502] Joseph de Maistre, *Sur le protestantisme*, p. 329.
[503] Joseph de Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersburg*, p. 752.
[504] The term *Photian* comes from *Photius*, Patriarch of Constantiople (from 858 to 867 and from 877 to 886). Photius was the first Patriarch of Connstantinople to condemn the *filioque* added to the Creed (the double procession of the Holy Spirit)inaugurating the first schism between the Greek Church and the Latin Church, a schism that will become definitive after 1054.
[505] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 322.
[506] Joseph de Maistre, *Lettres à un gentilhomme russe sur l'inquisition espagnole*, p. 153.

In Book I of *Du Pape*, Maistre had argued that a conciliar organization of the Church is impossible given the fact that, in what concerns the question of government, the Church is a society like all other societies, and social unity is ultimately impossible without a personal, unitary, and absolute sovereignty. Hence, in principle, taking into account the conciliar ecclesiology of the Orthodox Church, the same type of ecclesiological arguments that Maistre uses against Protestantism (the ancestor of republicanism) should apply also to Orthodoxy. As we remember, for Maistre, Protestantism was discredited first of all due to its lack of unity, impossible to achieve, according to Maistre, without a single personal sovereign, and, more specifically, without the Pope. However, taking into account the fact that, despite its conciliar organization, the Orthodox Church has maintained its dogmatic and sacramental unity, the demonstration of Maistre's thesis in the case of the Orthodox Church becomes more complicated. In this sense, Maistre will argue that, despite their dogmatic and sacramental unity, the different local/national Orthodox Churches, organized in local/national synods (the Synod of the Greek Orthodox Church, the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church, etc.), do not truly make up a single universal Church, because these churches do not have a common permanent synod and, moreover, without the Pope, they are also unable to even summon an ecumenical synod, let alone reach a decision through it. Each local Orthodox Church has a permanent synod. And all the local Churches have been represented at the seven ecumenical synods. However, since there is not (and, according to Maistre, there cannot be) a permanent synod of the whole Church, Maistre argues that the Orthodox churches lack authentic unity, and that such unity is possible only if the Pope represents the permanent voice of the whole Church, possessing also the authority to summon all the bishops to an ecumenical council (an authority that is not possessed by any Orthodox Patriarch).Thus, beyond

the argument according to which sovereignty, whether temporal or spiritual, is personal or does not exist, Maistre insists that "*il est impossible d'imaginer aucune association humaine sans un gouvernement ou centre d'unité de qui elle tient l'existence morale*". "*L'Église universelle ou catholique*", Maistre continues, "*ne revendique à cet égard aucun privilège particulier*"[507]. Therefore, Maistre insists that, beyond the fact that the Orthodox churches are incapable of indicating a single, personal sovereign (the equivalent of an Orthodox Pope with universal jurisdiction over the whole Church), with a mandate to speak for all the Churches, they are equally incapable of indicating a single assembly/synod capable of fulfilling that function. According to Maistre, before being able to oppose a republican ecclesiology to the monarchical ecclesiology of the Roman Church, the Orthodox are not even capable of proving that they are a republic, "*car il n'y a point de république qui n'ait un conseil commun, un sénat, des chefs quelconques qui représentent et gouvernent l'association*"[508]. Using the concept of statehood as a pattern for his ecclesiology, Maistre argues that "*Les États-Unis d'Amérique ne serait pas un État sans le congrès qui les unit. Faites disparaître cette assemblée avec son président, l'unité disparaîtra en même temps, et vous n'aurez plus que treize États indépendants, en dépit de la langue et des lois communes*"[509]. Consequently, although the Orthodox churches have in common the equivalent of a common language and a common legislation, namely their sacramental and dogmatic unity, Maistre argues that, without a single common authority entitled to represent them all (to represent their unity), the local Orthodox churches are "*que des pierres [mais pas] un édifice*"[510]. Any discussion as to whether "*l'Église universelle peut être une république ou un collège*" necessitates first that one indicates the universal church under the form of an assembly

[507] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 358.
[508] *Ibidem*, p. 341.
[509] *Ibidem*, p. 358.
[510] *Ibidem*, p. 341.

of a kind or another. Only afterwards one can see whether the assembly can reach decisions without a sovereign. And, according to Maistre, until they are able to show that one assembly, the Orthodox churches remain "*nulles dans le sens universel*".[511]

Maistre stresses the incapacity of the Orthodox Church to even summon an ecumenical council, let alone reach a decision through it. For Maistre, the argument of some Orthodox, according to which there is no longer need for an ecumenical council because everything that needed to be decided in matters of Christian faith has been decided, is completely absurd. The implication of such an absurd argument would be that "*on eut tort dans l'Église de s'assembler pour condamner* Macédonius*, parce qu'on s'était assemblé auparavant pour condamner Arius, et qu'on eut tort encore de s'assembler à Trente pour condamner Luther et Calvin,* parce que tout était décidé par les premiers conciles"[512]. Therefore, just as in the case of the critique of Protestantism, Maistre's critique of Orthodox ecclesiology rests on the belief that it would be absurd if the ruling of "*l'Église éternelle et universelle*" would be entrusted "*à un tribunal accidentel, dépendant du caprice des princes, et d'une réunion excessivement rare et difficile*", especially in the conditions of the modern world when, according to Maistre, the world has become concomitantly too big and too fragmented into multiple sovereignties, thus turning the idea of an ecumencial council into "*une chimère*"[513]. Maistre is otherwise convinced that, a hypothetical ecumenical council without the Pope (and, as a consequence, an Orthodox ecumenical council), would end up by destroying the unity of the Church, or better said, by revealing that the above mentioned unity has never been there, as no unity can exist without a

[511] *Ibidem*, note 1, p. 341.

[512] *Ibidem*, p. 344. More precisely, Maistre stresses the fact that the Church can always be challenged by new heresies, and that all dogmatic explanations may require, as a result of new heretical attacks, new explanations of the former explanations. This is the reason why he considers absurd the argument of some Orthodox, according to which all has been decided by the seven ecumenical councils.

[513] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, pp. 43, 46.

sovereign[514]. Finally, according to Maistre, the corollary of the Orthodox ecclesiology is the fact that all the Orthodox churches fall under the complete domination of the political authorities. Any separated church, Maistre argues, finds itself "*[serve] à l'égard de la puissance temporelle, en proportion précise de l'indépendance qu'elle acquérait envers son supérieur légitime*"[515], which, according to Maistre, is the Pope.

Given the aspects just mentioned, Eastern Orthodoxy appears for Joseph de Maistre as a form of proto-Protestantism, which is, so to say, insufficiently developed, or better said, which has not devolved as much on the path of disintegration. However, inevitably, the question that confronts Maistre is why these churches have not gone further than the Protestant churches, for this would be the logical outcome given the fact that they broke away earlier from Rome. As indicated, Maistre is confronted by the fact that, directly proportional with the much smaller number of dogmatic differences that separate the Orthodox from the Catholics, the degree of disunity in the Orthodox world can in no case be compared to the one that is manifested in Protestantism. More precisely, to the extent that disunity exists in the Orthodox world, it is only of administrative nature. Moreover, the affirmation of the principle concerning individual judgment in matters of faith, which is identified by Maistre as the cornerstone of Protestantism, is absent from the Orthodox Church. And finally, the Orthodox Church has not been affected by an ecclesial catastrophe in anyway comparable with the Reformation.

All these facts seem to run counter to Maistre's argumentation. Consequently, as it is always the case when he is confronted with the "authority of counter-evidence", Maistre resorts to the providential explanation that comes together with a prophecy and an eschatological expectation. As such, Maistre argues that if on the one hand the punishment suffered by the Greek Church for

[514] *Ibidem*, p. 39.
[515] Joseph de Maistre, *De l'Église gallicane dans son rapport avec le Souverain Pontife*, pp. 290-291.

its separation from Rome was the collapse of the Christian East under the Muslim yoke, on the other hand, the West has become more and more civilized precisely because of the civilizing effect of Roman Catholicism. According to Maistre, if the Popes would have had over the Eastern Empire "*la même autorité qu'ils avaient sur l'autre, non seulement ils auraient chassé les Sarrasins, mais les Turcs encore […].On parlerait français en Palestine. Les sciences, les arts, la civilisation, illustreraient ces fameuses contrées de l'Asie, jadis le jardin de l'univers, aujourd'hui dépeuplées, livrées à l'ignorance, au despotisme, à la peste, à tous les genres d'abrutissement*"[516]. In particular, it is important to stress the fact that for Maistre, science, whose morally and socially corrosive potential he has emphasized, represents nevertheless a blessing of civilization (and it can remain so if it is controlled by the Catholic Church) which belongs to Western Europe precisely because the Western civilization is the product of Catholicism. At the limit, Maistre is aware of the fact that while modern science, escaped from the control of Catholicism, represents a catastrophe, from an historical point of view, Catholicism represents nevertheless the ultimate source of this science, which belongs to the West. Henceforth, the logic of Maistre's traditionalism becomes twisted, as it appears that the persistence of tradition in the Orthodox Church is owed precisely to the fact that, given its separation from Rome, the Orthodox world has been spared the corrosive effect of a science that the West possesses as a consequence of its religious heritage, or more precisely, of a science that has become corrosive due to the Protestant rebellion against the Catholic clerical authority. And if one establishes an inner connection between scientific progress and modernity, this being, otherwise, the classical explanation of modernity (the modern world is the result of the progress achieved within the field of the natural sciences, beginning with the 17th century), then it would appear that the

[516] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 313.

Orthodox civilization has avoided the modern crisis, precisely for the fact that it has remained isolated from the West[517].

Currently escaped from the control of the Catholic Church and thus turned into humanity's greatest enemy, the monster, as we have seen, can be brought back into the cage only by the Catholic Church, the only institution "*qui peut supporter l'épreuve de la science*"[518], and that alone offers "*le spectacle de la science croyante et soumise*"[519]. In this sense, Maistre argues that the "*science*" of the Protestants, "*qui n'est maintenant qu'un épouvantable corrosif, perdra sa puissance délétère en s'alliant à notre soumission, qui ne refusera point à son tour de s'éclairer par leur science*"[520]. Yet, according to Maistre, the development of modern science, with all of its revolutionary consequences, fulfills a providential work. Not only Protestantism is destroyed with its own weapons, but Protestant science is also destined to wipe out the competing Orthodox churches and thus, to prepare the way for their desperate return under the protective authority of Rome. In fact, Maistre explains the traditionalism of the Orthodox churches as a matter that pertains simply to a difference of historical rhythm, "*car il a plu à Dieu, pour des raisons qui méritent d'être approfondies, de concentrer, jusqu'à nouvel ordre, toute la science humaine dans nos régions occidentales*"[521]. Consequently, the Orthodox have barely moved approximately in one millennium down the road that the Protestants have exhausted in no more than three hundred years, for the fact that the absence of science has spared them a regime of historical acceleration. But it is now this new regime that is heading with full speed towards the Orthodox East. According to Maistre,

[517] In general, Orthodox authors argue that the development in the West of secular modernity represents the historical outcome of the original Catholic heresy, and the ultimate historical proof of the distorted/heretical foundations of the Western civilization. It is from this perspective that Dostoyevsky and the Slavophiles interpret the genealogy of modernity.

[518] Joseph de Maistre,*Du Pape*, p. 327.

[519] Jospeh de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, p. 84.

[520] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 375.

[521] *Ibidem*, p. 326.

toutes ces Églises séparées du Saint-Siège, au commencement du XIIe siècle, peuvent être comparées à des cadavres gelés dont le froid a conservé les formes. Ce froid est l'ignorance qui devait durer pour elles plus que pour nous [...] Mais dès que le vent de la science qui est chaud viendra à souffler sur ces Églises, il arrivera ce qui doit arriver suivant les lois de la nature: les formes antiques se dissoudront, et il ne restera que la poussière[522].

Tested through fire by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, the Catholic religion has been strengthened, and its capacity to withstand the scientific and revolutionary wave has made the truth of its doctrine shine forth even more brilliantly. "*Soumettez un de ces peuples séparés*", Maistre prophesizes, "*à une révolution semblable à celle qui a désolé la France durant vingt-cinq ans: supposez qu'un pouvoir tyrannique s'acharne sur l'Eglise, égorge, dépouille, disperse les prêtres; qu'il tolère surtout et favorise tous les cultes, excepté le culte national; celui-ci disparaîtra comme une fumée*"[523] (a prophecy that has not been confirmed by history). Thus, writing at the beginning of the 19th century, Maistre warns the Orthodox that boast of "*leur prétendue immobilité*" to stop boasting, for they will soon see "*ce que c'est que le mouvement accéléré*"[524]. But Maistre's most astonishing statement on this particular topic (contradicted otherwise by his own recommendations with regard to the public access to science in Russia) is that every supporter of ecumenical unity "*doit [...]désirer que l'antique édifice achève de crouler incessament chez ces peuples séparés, sous les coups de la science protestante, afin que la place demeure vide pour la vérité*."[525]

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To summarize, although Maistre refers to the Orthodox as "separated brothers", he nevertheless insists that, ultimately, the latter are also Protestants. For the protest against the

[522] *Ibidem*.
[523] *Ibidem*, p. 329.
[524] *Ibidem*, p. 327.
[525] *Ibidem*, pp. 327-328.

dogma of papal infallibility will sooner or later lead to the protest against all dogmas. Maistre argues that, divided as it is between local/national churches, the Orthodox Church, unlike the Catholic Church, is deprived of authentic unity and universality. Totally controlled by the state, as a result of their disobedience towards the Pope, the Orthodox churches must sooner or later share the fate of Protestantism, which has ended in pure rationalism. According to Maistre, the fact that this had not happened yet, was owed to a historical gap that separated Eastern Christianity from Western Christianity. The historical backwardness of Eastern Christianity was owed precisely to its separation from the Roman See. However, while due to this fact the Orthodox have not yet experienced the modern crisis, they will experience it as soon as the modern wave reaches their shores, and according to Maistre, unlike the Catholics, they will not be able to withstand this crisis. Finally, Maistre argues that the collapse of the Orthodox East, under the impact of this destructive upcoming historical event, should ultimately be valued positively, for this collapse will reveal the falsity of the Orthodox religion, thus paving the way for the return of the Orthodox under the authority of Rome. As such, Maistre's paradoxical conception of modernity, as both destructive and regenerative, is revealed once again in this case. If the destruction caused by the satanic modern Revolution actually works for the realization of a future divine unity, the accomplishment of this unity also passes through the destruction of the theologico-political order of Orthodox Christianity. The collapse of the theologico-political order of the Orthodox East, as a result of modernity's advance, is ultimately a part of the general providential plan. Although, as we have seen, it is precisely in view of the prevention of such an event that Maistre was making a series of specific recommendations to the Tsar, in *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*. Once again, we are confronted with the constitutive paradox of Maistrian thought: the counter-revolutionary opponent of the modern Revolution,

who seeks to contain the spreading of the latter, and eventually to re-establish the former theologico-political authority that has been destroyed, is first and foremost a prophet who reveals the divine regenerative mission of the modern Revolution, a mission that is accomplished through the violent destruction of the old world.

3.4. - Greece, Byzantium and modernity

Maistre's critique of Orthodoxy from the fourth book of *Du Pape*, which has been presented in the previous section, is followed by an analysis of the origins of the Greek schism, which will be presented in this section. In the previous section, it has been explained why, for Maistre, Protestantism and Orthodoxy are ultimately one and the same thing. According to Maistre, as precursor of what he calls *philosophisme*, Protestantism represented a rationalist – and hence individualist– deviation from the Catholic system based on the principle of authority. Practically speaking, Protestantism's ulterior evolution, and its transformation into philosophical rationalism, has revealed its true nature. Maistre, it should be remembered, does not only affirm that there is an intrinsic affinity between Protestantism and the modern philosophical spirit. He also regards history as a whole as a struggle between two opposing principles: the religious principle of unity, whose highest expression is found in Catholicism, and the philosophical spirit of division, which has entered the stage of human history during Classical Greek Antiquity. Ultimately, it is the same Greek spirit of rationalism and social division that manifests itself in the Enlightenment and in its religious precursor, the Reformation, in such a way that one could establish a genealogy that begins with Hellenism, continues with Protestantism, then with *philosophisme*, and finally ends in nihilism. Interestingly enough, after reducing Orthodoxy and

Protestantism to a common principle, which is opposition to papal infallibility, Maistre also manages to introduce Orthodoxy within the above mentioned scheme of history. Thus, whereas Protestantism represents the seed of modern philosophy, Orthodoxy appears as the residue of Greek philosophy. The Greek philosophical culture, with its spirit of division, has been perpetuated throughout the Byzantine period, and this is what ultimately explains, according to Maistre, the opposition of the Greek Church to the Catholic principle of unity.

At first glance, the responsibility for the schism between the Greek East and the Latin West falls on "*ce Photius de funeste et odieuse mémoire*"[526], who, argues Maistre, was the first to protest against the Pope's authority, "*comme l'ont fait depuis les églises du XVIe siècle*"[527]. Thus, for Maistre, Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople, appears to be the first Protestant. Here, however, an interesting paradox appears. If Maistre's central thesis is that the essence of modernity is Protestantism, then this implies that despite the obscurantism that according to Maistre characterizes the Orthodox churches, there must be some sort of affinity between modernity and Orthodoxy. For Maistre, "*la haine de Rome*", that is the hate against the universal authority that leads to universal unity, is "*le lien unique, mais universel de toutes les Églises séparées*"[528]. But as Maistre argues, in one of the most interesting passages from *Du Pape*, before being modern, the hatred of authority and the spirit of division presupposed by the latter are typically Greek characteristics. As stressed by Robert Triomphe, Maistre traces back the origins of modernity to a Greek original sin, to the "*sanctuaire le plus profond de l'âme hellénique, qui est toute pourriture*"[529]. For, from the very beginning, Greece has been the land of sophism and anarchy. "*La Grèce*", Maistre argues, "*était la patrie du syllogisme et de la déraison*", so that

[526] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 310.
[527] *Ibidem*, p. 333.
[528] *Ibidem*, p. 324 .
[529] Robert Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre: Étude sur la vie et la doctrine d'un matérialiste mystique*, pp. 387-395.

Greek philosophy "*n'était au fond qu'une dispute éternelle*"[530]. Thus, just like the Protestant spirit, the Greek spirit is being ultimately reduced to the status of "*une haine commune contre l'affirmation*"[531]. And just as in the case of modernity, Greece is characterized by the correspondence between "*la philosophie qui se divisa en* sectes" and the sovereignty that has been divided "*en petites républiques indépendantes et ennemies*"[532]. Moreover, Maistre is aware that, just like modernity, Greece itself is incomprehensible. There is a Greek miracle, although, in Maistre's view, an unfortunate one. For what distinguishes Greece "*de toutes les nations du monde, c'est l'inaptitude à toute grande association politique ou morale*". "*Les Grecs*", Maistre continues, "*n'eurent jamais l'honneur d'être* un peuple*. L'histoire ne nous montre chez eux que des bourgades souveraines qui s'égorgent et que rien ne put jamais amalgamer. Ils brillèrent sous cette forme, parce qu'elle leur était naturelle, et que jamais les nations ne se rendent célèbres que sous la forme de gouvernement qui leur est propre*"[533].

Maistre believed that the experience of Greek antiquity has remained a definitory mark of the Greek national character, to such an extent that, writing at the beginning of the 19th century, while the Greeks were still under Ottoman rule, Maistre was convinced that "*jamais il ne sera possible d'établir une souveraineté grecque*". "*Il y a dans le caractère grec*", Maistre argues, "*quelque chose d'inexplicable qui s'oppose à toute grande association, à toute organisation indépendante, et c'est le première chose qu'un étranger voit s'il a des yeux*"[534]. Still alive at modernity's dawn in the Balkans, this Greek spirit has therefore passed through the Byzantine period and has inevitably affected (or, better said, as far as Maistre is concerned, infected) the religious culture of the Christian East. Combined with "*un orgueil furieux, antique, national,*

[530] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 348.
[531] Joseph de Maistre, *Lettres à un gentilhomme russe sur l'inquisition espagnole*, p. 128.
[532] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p.355.
[533] *Ibidem*.
[534] *Ibidem*, pp. 361-362.

immense et toujours humilié"[535], the Greek spirit of division bears the responsibility for the schism that consisted essentially in a Greek protest against authority and unity. The Greeks, Maistre argues,

> *furent hérétiques, c'est-à-dire divisionnaires dans la religion, comme ils l'avaient été dans la politique et dans la philosophie. Il serait superflu de rappeler à quel point ils fatiguèrent l'Église dans les premiers siècles. Possédés du démon de l'orgueil et de celui de la dispute [...], ils mêlent à tous nos dogmes je ne sais quelle métaphysique téméraire qui étouffe la simplicité évangélique [...]. Armés d'une dialectique insensée, ils veulent diviser l'indivisible, pénétrer l'impénétrable [...]. Au lieu de croire on dispute, au lieu de prier on argumente; les grandes routes se couvrent d'évêques qui courent au concile [...]. La Grèce entière est une espèce de Péloponnèse théologique où des atomes se battent pour des atomes. L'histoire ecclésiastique devient, grâce à ses inconcevables sophistes, un livre dangereux*[536].

The inevitable consequence of what we may call, using the Maistrian terminology, "*philosophisme dans la théologie*" is a chronical institutional instability that makes of the Byzantine monarchy "*la plus misérable dynastie*" ever recorded in the universal history. If one of the greatest benefits of Catholicism is that of securing the stability of the monarchical institution – which is automatically reflected in the increase of the average length of reigns – Byzantium reveals on the contrary "*pendant mille ans le spectacle hideux d'une monarchie chrétienne avilie jusqu'à des règnes de onze ans!*"[537]"*Ou faibles ou furieux, ou l'un et l'autre à*

[535] *Ibidem*, p. 345. Maistre argues that it is this sort of national pride that explains why the Greek Church has rejected all the perfectly rational arguments in favour of papal infallibility, reiterated by Maistre in *Du Pape*: "*Dans toutes les discussions qui intéressent l'orgueil national, s'il se trouve poussé à bout par les plus invincibles raisonnements, il dévorera les plus épouvantables absurdités, plutôt que de reculer*" (Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 344). As already indicated, Joseph de Maistre from *Du Pape* seems to contradict Joseph de Maistre from *De la souveraineté du peuple*. There, in reaction to the rationalism of the Enlightenment, Maistre had exalted "*[l]a foi et le patriotisme [...], [c]es deux enfants du Ciel [dont les] erreurs mêmes sont sublimes [...]. [N]'allez pas leur parler d'examen, de choix, de discussion: ils diront que vous blasphémez; ils ne savent que deux mots:* soumission *et* croyance" (Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 148). However, in *Du Pape*, Maistre has to confront the same national prejudices that he has praised in his previous book.

[536] *Ibidem*, pp. 355-356.

[537] One may argue that there is a direct connection between the principles of Orthodox theology that render impossible the institutionalization of an infallibility mechanism in the Church, and the political instability of the Byzantine Empire observed by Maistre. But this is not only for the fact that religious instability, as Maistre argues, inevitably leads to political instability. Beyond this aspect, what is very interesting is the fact that the theological mechanisms that render impossible the constitution of an infallibility mechanism in the Church, operate as well in the political organization of the Byzantine Empire. Orthodox theologians, as well as other authors, argue that it is

la fois", the Byzantine sovereigns "*tournèrent surtout leur démence du côté de la théologie, dont leur despotisme s'empara pour la bouleverser*"[538]. The whole history of the Byzantine Empire, like the history of Greece, is a perpetual Greek civil war. In the end, the result of all these theologico-political aberrations has been that the Empire of the Greeks "*périt comme il avait vécu, en disputant*". Metaphysical obsessions, national pride and the spirit of division have prevailed over the concern for the fate of Christendom: "*Mahomet brisait les portes de la capitale pendant que les sophistes mitrés argumentaient SUR LA GLOIRE DU MONT THABOR*"[539].

The dispute concerning the created or uncreated nature of the light revealed to the three apostles on Mount Tabor has been at the center of the debates surrounding Gregory Palamas'

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precisely the relation between theological truth and charisma, which may be granted by God to every Christian, that impedes the constitution of an infallibility mechanism or, otherwise said, of an impersonal juridical order. As argued by Gilbert Dagron in his study of Byzantine Caesaropapism, there is in fact no Byzantine dynasty. The history of Byzantium presents itself as "a series of dynasties which tried to establish themselves but were quickly cut short, lasting sometimes for three or four generations, but rarely longer than a century". The reason for this situation was that in Byzantium, dynastic legitimacy has always been accompanied, and indeed undermined, by charismatic legitimacy. Although in general, but not always, the Emperor was transmitting his throne to his son, the quality of Emperor needed to be confirmed by the imperial virtues of the newly enthroned. From this point of view, kingship in Byzantium was always directly connected to the divinity that was establishing it directly in the person of each emperor by conferring the imperial charisma. The presence or absence of such a charisma made legitimate or not the usurpation of the throne, usurpation that was very frequent in Byzantium. In this sense, just as for Maistre, for the Byzantines, the origin of sovereignty was always a legitimate usurpation. As argued by Dagron, the direct intervention of God in the life of the sovereign was converting "brute force", to which politics was inherently related, into "legitimate power". Finally, Dagron also indicates the fact that in Byzantium, dynastic legitimacy was not only limited by God's direct intervention in the constitution of monarchic power, which otherwise conferred the Emperor an enormous respect, but also by the republican heritage of Rome, for the people acted as an arbiter that was interpreting whether the Emperor was or was not a worthy Emperor and, consequently, whether the acts of usurpation were legitimate or not. Even later, in the eleventh century, when the Byzantine monarchy finally begins to be associated with a blood line, the transmission of the throne from father to son is often accompanied by the formula: "It is not I who have chosen you, it is God and it is the people, the senate and the army who have elected you". Given these circumstances, foreign travelers to Constantinople were always astonished by the contrast between the imperial splendor and the instability of the Emperor's power, which very easily collapsed whenever social problems or natural disasters occurred (Gilbert Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, translated from French by Jean Birrell, pp. 13-48). Moreover, given his theory of the direct divine participation in the institution of political power, Maistre's theory concerning the divine origin of sovereignty is much closer to Byzantine political theology than to Roman Catholic natural law. But what radically differentiates Maistre from Byzantine political theology is the fact that while the latter was affirming the divine origin of the power of the sovereign, taken as an individual, Maistre was affirming that God was participating directly in the establishment of dynasties (Joseph de Maistre, *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques et des autres institutions humaines,* p. 366).

[538] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p.356.

[539] *Ibidem*.

distinction between the divine essence and the divine energies. For Maistre, "*armés d'une dialectique insensée*", Greek theologians "*veulent diviser l'indivisible*" (God's essence from his operations, we may argue), "*pénétrer l'impénétrable*" (deify man and creation, we may further argue)[540]. What for the Greeks is paradox, for Joseph de Maistre is madness. From metaphysics, the madness is transferred to ecclesiology. According to Maistre, "*l'esprit de division et d'opposition que les circonstances ont naturalisé en Grèce depuis tant de siècles*", directly related to the dialectical insanity of Greek thought, has lead to the fact that the Greeks "*ont fini par perdre jusqu'à l'idée même de l'unité. Ils la voient où elle n'est pas; ils ne la voient pas où*

[540] *Ibidem*, p. 355. Gregory Palamas (1296–1359) was an Athonite monk and later Archbishop of Thesaloniki from 1354 to 1359. He has been involved in a theological dispute with various representatives of Western scholasticism, his most important adversary being a Calabrian monk called Barlaam. More specifically, in his writings, Palamas has defended, against the attacks of Barlaam, the Athonite monks, also known as *hesychasts*, who were claiming that during prayer they were experiencing the uncreated light of God, the same light that has been seen by the Apostles Peter, John, and James on Mount Tabor. From a theological point of view, the issue of the debate was whether grace was created, or whether it was the uncreated energy of God, the latter position being affirmed by Palamas on the basis of the *hesychast* mystical experience. Palamas believed that the doctrine of deification, a key concept of Greek patristic thought already affirmed in the 4th century by St. Athanasisus the Great, depended on grace being uncreated. Thus, God's simultaneous transcendence and immanence in Christ was underlined by Gregory Palamas through his distinction without division between God's essence and his uncreated energies (operations) that penetrate and transfigure creation. If Western scholastics had reproached Palamas that his distinction between essence and energies is compromising the unity and simplicity of the divine essence, as stressed by Lossky, in his attempt to give a theological expression to the paradox of "the accessibility of the inaccessible nature", St. Gregory Palamas does not start from the concept of the simple essence but from the paradox of the Trinity. "For St. Gregory Palamas", "as for all eastern theology, which is fundamentally apophatic – it was impossible to base the divine simplicity upon the concept of simple essence. The pre-eminent simplicity of the Trinity is the basis of his theological thought: a simplicity unimpaired by the distinction between the nature and the persons and that between the persons themselves. Like every doctrinal statement about God, this simplicity can only be expressed in terms of an antinomy: it does not exclude distinction, but can admit neither separation nor division of the divine being" (Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, pp. 69, 78). Thus, if Maistre characterizes Byzantine theology as philosophical theology, it should be mentioned that it was the Greeks that have accused the Latins of bringing philosophy within theology and of rationalizing the mysteries of the Christian faith. What for Maistre is "*dialectique insensée*" Greek theologians have regarded as the modality for protecting the mystery. Indeed, if the basis for Gregory Palamas' distinction between essence and energies is the incomprehensible nature of the Trinity, Trinitarian theology has been the origin of the break between East and West. Palamas' theology triumphed at the 1351 Synod of Constantinople and later he was canonized by the Orthodox Church. Practically speaking, the endorsement of Palamas' theology, attacked by Catholic theologians ever since, has represented the final act of the theological separation of the Greek East from the Latin West. Moreover, this has taken place at a time when the dying Byzantine Empire, less and less able to withstand the Muslim advance in the Balkan Peninsula, was desperately seeking military aid from the Western powers. However, in exchange for military aid, the Western powers were demanding from the Greek Church an acceptance of the authority of the Pope, and the Latin theological doctrines (For more details on Palamas see Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, Paulist Press, New York, Ramsey, Toronto, 1982; *cf.* Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, Ch. 4, pp. 67-90; Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Book I, Ch. 6, pp. 128-158).

elle est; souvent même leur vue se trouble, et ils ne savent plus de quoi ils parlent". "*Toutes ces Églises séparées*", Maistre argues, "*se condamnent chaque jour en disant:* Je crois à l'Église une et universelle. *Car il faut absolument qu'à cette profession* de droit, *elles en substituent une autre* de fait *qui dit: Je crois AUX Églises UNE et UNIVERSELLE. C'est le solécisme le plus révoltant dont l'oreille humaine ait jamais été affligée*"[541].

Surprisingly, Greece and Orthodoxy as a whole, which has been contaminated by the Greek spirit, are marked by a condition that bears striking similarities with the coordinates of modern politics. The Orthodox ecclesiology itself appears to Maistre as a critique of politics. As such, the conflict between Rome and Constantinople was not a conflict between two sovereignties, but an attack against sovereignty. The sovereignty of the Pope was contested, but Photius "*n'osa ou ne put jamais s'élever jusqu'à l'usurpation*". In a phrase that once again reveals traces of decisionism, refering to the Greek bishops, Maistre underlines the fact that the latter "*nièrent bien que l'évêque de Rome fût le chef de l'Église; mais aucun d'eux ne fut assez hardi pour dire* je le suis"[542].

Finally, like the destiny of modernity, the destiny of Greece, and with it the destiny of the Greek Church, appears as being marked by the curse that is inevitably attached to philosophy, "*le plus grand fléau de l'univers*" in all ages[543]. The disunity and sophistic lack of clarity that characterize the Greek spirit show that, just like the modern one, the Greek spirit is the spirit of the Tower of Babel, essentially opposed to the spirit of Pentecost. Rationalism leads to unreason, lack of clarity and therefore the impossibility of the common language that unifies. Just as in the case of modernity, the contestation of authority attracts the punishment of disunity. And finally, it attracts the punishment of tyranny. The punishment for the rejection of the enlightened

[541] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, pp. 357, 360.
[542] *Ibidem*, pp. 360-361.
[543] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 132.

authority of the Pope is the insane authority of the Byzantine emperors, and, in the last instance, the barbarian authority of the sultans, which follows the deplorable end of the Byzantine Empire. Condemned to perish in its own language, the language of quarrel, the Greek world is finally condemned to the reign of despotism; for as Maistre argues, wherever order cannot be imposed through religion, it is, with necessity, imposed through slavery. This has been the fate of philosophical Greece, and this, Maistre prophesizes, will also be the fate of philosophical Europe. Maistre's conception of history is centered around an eternal conflict that opposes Christianity and philosophy, the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Man, Babel and Pentecost. From this point of view, Orthodoxy and Protestantism are two examples, ultimately reduced to a single common essence, of the philosophical contamination of faith. This is what ultimately explains their lack of unity and their common hatred of Rome. However, there is a common Greek source that feeds both the Byzantine experience, as well as modernity. Like the moderns, and in particular the French, the Greeks are a cursed nation, and can be released from the curse only through a repentant return to Rome. The source of the Byzantine curse, as well as that of the modern curse, ultimately goes back to Greek Antiquity, where in a sense, the Enlightenment was born. For, Maistre rhetorically asks, "*n'est-ce pas la Grèce qui eut jadis l'horrible honneur de nier Dieu la première, et de prêter une voix téméraire à l'athéisme qui n'avait point encore osé prendre la parole à la face des hommes?*"[544].

[544] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 364.

Chapter 4 – The theological and political thought of the Slavophiles

4.1. - Introduction

Before beginning this chapter, I must recall the fact that the main axis of my thesis is the comprehensive comparison between Maistre and Dostoyevsky. In this sense, this chapter, which relies very much on secondary literature due to the scarcity of translations from Slavophile authors into English and French, essentially represents an introduction to the study of Dostoyevsky, meant to provide a better understanding of the religious and political thought of the Russian novelist. I limit myself to the thought of the first generation of Slavophile authors, and in particular, to its four main representatives, Aleksei Khomiakov, Ivan Kireevski, Iuri Samarin and Konstantin Aksakov, not analyzing the writings of other authors who have claimed a Slavophile descent (of course, with the exception of Dostoyevsky). Although there are several important aspects that differentiate Dostoyevsky from the Slavophiles, in particular the approach to several theological and political topics by Dostoyevsky that are generally or completely ignored by the Slavophiles, and even though Dostoyevsky avoided fully defining himself as a Slavophile, an understanding of Slavophilism is nevertheless essential for a sound comprehension of Dostoyevsky's work. First and foremost, while it is not clear how exactly and to what extent Dostoyevsky came into contact with the ideas of the Slavophile authors, to whom he refers sometimes in his writings, a careful parallel reading of the former and the latter indicates, beyond any doubt, that the central theological concepts on the basis of which Dostoyevsky articulates his Orthodox critique of modernity and the West are extracted from the thought of the Slavophiles. These concepts, in particular the Slavophile ecclesiology and epistemology, are essential in order to understand Dostoyevsky's approach to a series of topics.

Moreover, the study of this theology is all the more important in the context of a comprehensive comparison between Maistre and Dostoyevsky. For while Dostoyevsky's literary creation and his press articles, through which the Russian author has expressed his theologico-political creed, are grounded in the theology of the Slavophiles, unlike the latter, and unlike Maistre, Dostoyevsky did not write any theological treatises or articles. Consequently, the comparative study of Maistrian and Slavophile theology offers us a direct perspective of the theological basis of the comprehensive comparison between Maistre and Dostoyevsky.

If in the three chapters dedicated to Maistre I analyzed his theological and political thought, in this chapter I will analyze the theological and political thought of the Slavophiles, stressing the similarities and differences between the former and the latter. Section 4.2 begins with a brief presentation of Slavophilism, situating this current of thought in the nineteenth-century Russian historical and intellectual context. Section 4.3 is dedicated to the analysis of the Slavophile ecclesiology and epistemology, two interdependent dimensions of Slavophile thought. The understanding of the key concepts that define Slavophile ecclesiology and epistemology, namely *sobornost* (organic togetherness) and *tselnost* (integral knowledge), is essential in order to further comprehend the Slavophile view concerning the origins of modernity, to which I refer in the second part of the section. In section 4.4, I analyze the Slavophiles' vision of the relation between Russia and the West, which is essentially related to the Slavophile view concerning the way in which Russia should relate to the modern paradigm. I look also at the Slavophile interpretation of the evolution of Western thought, concentrating on the way in which the Slavophiles seek reconciliation between faith and reason, and emphasizing the concrete political consequences of this project. Section 4.5 then concentrates on the political thought of the Slavophiles. I therefore present the Slavophiles' opposition to the bureaucratic state, to

aristocratism, to individualism, and to secularism as well as their *sui generis* monarchism and theory of the social contract. I then focus, in section 4.6, on the relation between Maistrian and Slavophile ecclesiologies and two opposite political models: a theocratic political model, defended by Maistre, and a democratic political model, defended by the Slavophiles. Returning to Rousseau's conception of democracy, which has been analyzed in section 1.5, I argue that whereas Maistre's theologico-political thought consists in a reversal of Rousseau's political philosophy, the Slavophile political theology appears, on the contrary, as a (Orthodox) Christianization of Rousseau's political philosophy. With the purpose of answering the question that concerns the nature and origins of the Slavophile doctrine, I try, in section 4.7, to clarify the extent to which Slavophilism represents a Russian expression of the general Romantic current from the first half of the 19th century (as it is claimed by several interpreters of the Slavophiles), and the extent to which it represents a legitimate expression of the Orthodox tradition (as it is claimed by other interpreters of the Slavophiles and by the Slavophiles themselves). Within this context, I briefly compare the Maistrian and the Romantic critiques of modernity. Finally, in the concluding section (4.8) I summarize the similarities and differences between the thought of Maistre and the thought of the Slavophiles.

4.2. - Slavophilism and Westernism

According to Stéphane Vibert, compared with other European nations, "*la Russie présente l'avantage exceptionnel d'avoir fait de son rapport à la modernité comme idéologie occidentale le problème essentiel, majeur, incontournable de son questionnement identitaire*"[545]. In the

[545] Stéphane Vibert, "*Pravda*: Vérité et justice. Essai sur le devenir théologico-politique de la Russie" in *Société*, no. 24-25, hiver 2005, p. 194.

aftermath of Russia's encounter with the modern West, whose concrete manifestation was the age of reforms of Peter the Great, the interrogation concerning the relation between modern Europe and the Russian national identity will give birth to an ideological cleavage that will divide the Russian intelligentsia of the first half of the nineteenth century into two opposite camps: the Westernizers and the Slavophiles. In essence, the two camps were divided by two different projects of society that reflected two different views concerning the relation between Russia and the West. While the Westernizers argued that Russia's import of the exterior civilization of the modern West should be accompanied by a cultural revolution, which would replace the traditional Russian principles with superior modern ones such as liberal individualism and scientific rationalism, the Slavophiles claimed that Russia's traditional institutions, and in particular its Orthodox faith, sustain a culture that is superior to the culture of the modern West. Moreover, for the Slavophiles, Russian Orthodoxy was capable of subordinating to itself the exterior achievements of the modern West, conferring on the latter a higher meaning, which by themselves they did not possess. Thus, far from representing an appeal to a narrow nationalist closing of the Russian society upon itself, Slavophilism claimed instead that Russian Orthodoxy had the capacity and the mission to become the new religious principle of a new and higher universal civilization, which would replace what the Slavophiles considered to be the bankrupt civilization of the secular West.

Thus, from the very beginning, it should be underlined that the opposition between Westernism and Slavophilism does not represent an opposition between modernization and integral conservatism, but the opposition between an uncritical and a critical modernization, the critique being articulated from a traditionalist position that is open towards modernity. Neither can the above mentioned opposition be translated as an opposition between nationalism and

universalism. On the contrary, we have the opposition between two forms of universalism. If for the Westernizers, the universal culture of the modern West, based on the universality of human rights and of the rational faculty of judgment, had to be embraced by renouncing the Russian national specificities, for the Slavophiles, a new universal culture had to be based on the Russian national specificities. The term Slavophilism itself represents a caricatural label attached to the Slavophiles by their ideological adversaries. However, all the Slavophiles have specifically emphasized the fact that Russia's superiority in relation to the West did not derive from any inborn national characteristics of the Russians, but from the fact that the Russian people has preserved the Christian faith in all its (Orthodox) purity[546]. As such, Isabelle Grimberg rightly emphasizes the fact that, when speaking of Aleksei Khomiakov, Ivan Kireevsky, Iuri Samarin, Konstantin Aksakov and the other less significant Slavophiles from the first half of the 19th century, "*il serait […] plus logique de parler d'orthodoxophiles que de slavophiles*"[547]. Consequently, when comparing Slavophilism with the Catholic Counter-Revolution, we are comparing two ideologies that claim to ground their critique of modernity in the theology of the one and only true Church, which for the Slavophiles is the Orthodox Church, while for Maistre is the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, as in the case of Maistre, the understanding of the Slavophile critique of modernity and of the Slavophiles' theologico-political project must begin with an analysis of their theology.

Nikolay Berdyaev has argued that Joseph de Maistre and Aleksei Khomiakov have been the greatest theologians of the 19th century. For Berdyaev, they are representative of the spirit of

[546] Ivan Kireevsky argues that "it is not any inborn merits of the Slavic race that allow us to place such high hopes in its future prosperity. No! Racial characteristics, like the soil on which an intellectual seed is sown, can only retard or accelerate its early development […]. The actual nature of the fruit, however, depends on the nature of the seed" (Ivan Kireevsky, "On the Nature of European Culture and on its Relationship to Russian Culture", in *On Spiritual Unity: A Slavophile Reader*, translated and edited by Boris Jakim and Robert Bird, Lindisfarne Books, Hudson, New York, 1998, p. 216).

[547] Isabelle Grimberg, "La recherche d'une identité qui se dérobe" in *Eurasie : espace mythique ou réalité en construction?*, sous la direction de Wanda Dressler, Bruylant, Bruxelles, 2008, p. 64.

Catholicism and, respectively, of Orthodoxy, and it is through them that the Christian West and the Christian East have reached the full consciousness of their originality[548]. Like Maistre, Khomiakov and the Slavophiles think of modernity in theologico-political terms; and as in the case of Maistre, the starting point of their theologico-political thought is a certain ecclesiological conception, which is associated with a certain critique of rationalism articulated in the name of faith. Both Joseph de Maistre and the Slavophiles reacted against modern individualism and modern rationalism, which they regarded as two complementary phenomena whose development was essentially destructive. Against rationalism and individualism, Maistre and the Slavophiles proposed a return to Christian faith and Christian unity as manifested by the Church. However, their conception of faith and their ecclesiology were radically different. And, as indicated, both Maistre and the Slavophiles claimed that their theologies were nothing else than the teachings of the Catholic Church and of the Orthodox Church.

4.3. - Ecclesiology and epistemology

According to Father Albert Gratieux, Maistre's *Du Pape* is "*le livre le plus radicalement opposé à la théorie slavophile de l'unité de l'Eglise […]. Autant […] de Maistre attache d'importance à l'unité visible et à l'institution qui en est le signe, autant Khomiakov met l'accent sur l'unité intérieure, fruit de la foi vivante par l'amour*"[549]. Thus, the ecclesiological thought of Maistre and the ecclesiological thought of Khomiakov are centered on two different fundamental

[548] Nicolas Berdiaev, *Khomiakov*, translated by Valentine et Jean-Claude Marcadé, L'Age d'Homme, Lausanne, 1998, p. 15 (Although I have opted for certain ways of writing the name of the various authors which remain constant throughout the thesis, whenever I quote an author, in the footnote, I keep the name used by the editor. Likewise, whenever the name of the author appears in a quotation in a different version than the one I use [for example "Nicolas Berdiaev" instead of "Nikolay Berdyaev"] I leave the quotation unmodified. The same rule applies also for the characters from Dostoyevsky's novels).

[549] Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, Les Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 1938, vol. 2, pp. 115, 138.

concepts. In the case of Maistre, as we have seen, this concept is authority, which according to him, constitutes the essence of Catholicism. The opposite of authority for Maistre was the modern project of autonomy, Protestant in its essence, which had two fundamental interdependent coordinates: individualism and rationalism. While authority represents for Maistre the essence of Catholicism, for Aleksei Khomiakov, the essence of Orthodoxy is represented by *sobornost,* a term that is best translated as organic togetherness, or as freedom and unity reconciled through love. Both Maistre and Khomiakov regarded the modern conception of freedom as an expression of Protestant individualism, which they identified with a purely negative contestation of authority. Being grounded in a conception of freedom without content, for both authors, Protestantism and its descendent, liberalism, were incapable of manifesting themselves in any way other than as dissolvents of ecclesial and social unity. However, while in the case of Maistre freedom needed to bow down to authority/be subdued by it, so that unity would be possible, in the case of Khomiakov, such bowing down/enforcement was unacceptable.

Berdyaev argued that while the counter-revolutionaries possessed the genius of authority, the Slavophiles possessed the genius of freedom[550]. But, as underlined by the same author, "*les modernistes opposent trop souvent la liberté à l'Eglise et ils veulent par le libre effort de la personne redresser les défauts de l'Eglise*". Khomiakov, on the other hand, was identifying the Church with freedom, but a freedom that was accomplished "*dans la catholicité (*sobornost*) et non dans l'individualisme*"[551]. As indicated by John Romanides, "within Orthodoxy, as expounded by Khomiakov […], the individual" does not have "to give up his freedom in return for salvation. On the contrary, the individual is called upon to be free, to accept the fact of his

[550] Nicolas Berdiaev, *Khomiakov*, p. 87.
[551] *Ibidem*, p. 63.

freedom from the principles of necessity, by realizing his membership within the organic unity of the Church through the principle of selfless love"[552]. For the Slavophiles, it was only through the freedom of love, made manifest in the free obedience of the individual will to the will of all, that one became free from the bondage of sin, that is, free from the automatism of the selfish nature of the self-centered individual. But precisely for the fact that only love could liberate the individual from the laws of material necessity, love was foreign to authority, as the latter was understood by Maistre. More precisely, for Khomiakov and for the Slavophiles, the only acceptable authority was the authority of love. If according to Maistre's understanding of catholicity, the latter relied on the priority given to unity over freedom, a priority that culminated in the principle of papal infallibility, for Khomiakov, freedom and unity were reconciled in the catholicity of the Church, which presupposed the free submission, triggered by love, of each believer to the totality of the Church. Thus, freedom was reconciled with unity through unanimity, which was the expression of a common love that moved all the members of the ecclesial body. Khomiakov reproached Catholic theologians for having distorted the understanding of the term Catholic itself. While Catholicism has arrived at an understanding of catholicity as geographic universality – universality whose absence constituted according to Maistre the fundamental defect of Orthodoxy –, Khomiakov stressed the fact that in the initial understanding of the term, catholicity did not mean geographic universality but unanimity: *kath' olon*, that is, according to all[553].

While Maistre's methodological analogy between sovereignty and infallibility presupposes a juridical and institutional conception of the Church, for Samarin, as well as for the other

[552] John S. Romanides, "Orthodox Ecclesiology according to Alexis Khomiakov (1804-1860)", in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 2, no 1, Easter, 1956, p. 63.

[553] Aleksei Khomiakov, "Letter to the Editor of l'Union Chrétienne on the Occasion of a Discourse by Father Gagarin, Jesuit", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 139.

Slavophiles, "the Church is not a doctrine, system, or institution". "The Church", Samarin continues, "is a living organism, an organism of truth and love, or more precisely truth and love as an organism"[554]. According to Khomiakov, the Church is not an institution because "the body and blood are not a symbol"[555]. The body and blood are the very life of the Church and, consequently, of all of its members. Thus, the unity of the Church is not an institutional exterior unity but an inner unity that derives from the unity of the Triune God.[556]For Khomiakov, "the visible Church exists [as a Church and not as an 'institution'] only in so far as it is *subordinated* to the *invisible* Church [i. e. the Spirit of God] agreeing, as it were, to act as its manifestation"[557]. For this reason, in radical opposition to Maistre's theology, Khomiakov affirms that not only "the Church is" not "an authority", but neither is this the case with God Himself. For "an authority is something external" while God and the Church "are the truth: They are the life of the Christian – the inner life […], to the extent that Christians themselves live the universal life of love and unity, which is the life of the Church"[558].

Thus, the unity of the Church is a living and inner unity that does not require, and moreover, cannot tolerate, an exterior principle of unity, such as the principle of papal supremacy and infallibility. The Church, Khomiakov argues, "does not recognize any power over her except her own"[559]. When a universal bishop has authority over the Church, as in Roman Catholicism, *sobornost* is replaced with a forced aggregation of separated individuals, reunited under an authority that is both exterior and juridical. As a consequence, unity is no longer experienced as a living fact, being instead enforced by a transcendent authority that becomes the logically

[554] Yuri Samarin, quoted in Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. 2, p. 53.
[555] Aleksei Khomiakov, "The Church is One", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 39.
[556] *Ibidem*, p. 31.
[557] *Sochineniya*, Moscow 1990, II, 225, quoted inVladimir V. Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, translated by George L. Kline, Routledge&Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1953, vol. 1, p. 188 (Zenkovsky's translation).
[558] Aleksei Khomiakov, "Some Remarks by an Orthodox Christian Concerning the Western Communions, on the Occasion of a Brochure by Mr. Laurentie", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 58.
[559] Aleksei Khomiakov, "The Church is One", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 44.

necessary premise for the prevention of anarchy. Thus, as indicated by Romanides, who summarizes the ecclesiology of Khomiakov,

> non-utilitarian freedom and love [are] replaced by rationalism and a juridical concern for external things such as organization. This separation of the moral principle from unity automatically gave rise to the suppression of liberty for the sake of preserving unity. The Church of the West was thus doomed to follow the ways of all other worldly organizations and institutions[560].

In response to this Roman Catholic redefinition of the Church,

> a reaction naturally set in, and those who reasserted their liberty gave rise to the Protestant revolution. Both Protestantism and Romanism, however, represent a basic failure to unite and harmonize liberty and unity because these have been separated from the moral principle of non-utilitarian love, and subjected to the […] principles of material necessity and rational analysis[561].

As a consequence, Romanides underlines the fact that "Khomiakov does not see in Romanism and Protestantism two contrary extremes, but rather two sides of the same coin"[562]. According to Khomiakov, both Protestantism and Catholicism "see in the Church only individuals, who do not become less isolated for being scattered or agglomerated"[563]. In Catholicism there is unity without freedom. And this is false unity. In Protestantism there is freedom without unity. And this is false freedom. Both freedom and unity, the Slavophiles concluded, existed only in Orthodoxy; for true freedom cannot exist without unity, just as true unity cannot exist without freedom. Khomiakov distinguishes between unity, which is internal, organic and ecclesial, and union, which is external, formal and political. He therefore opposes the principle of "brotherhood" to the principle of "association"[564]. For Khomiakov, "the power of

[560] John S. Romanides, "Orthodox Ecclesiology according to Alexis Khomiakov (1804-1860)", p. 68.
[561] *Ibidem*.
[562] *Ibidem*.
[563] Aleksei Khomiakov, "Some Remarks by an Orthodox Christian Concerning the Western Communions, on the Occasion of a Letter Published by the Archbishop of Paris", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 93.
[564] *Ibidem*, p. 68.

unity lies in the fact that only the Life creating Spirit can truly unify"[565]. Only the Spirit of love can reconcile freedom and unity, for the same love is manifested by both. Thus, the Slavophiles have insisted that

> *aux partisans de l'autorité comme à ceux de la liberté il manquait, pour résoudre le problème, de faire intervenir un moyen terme, l'amour. L'amour est la justification de l'autorité comme il est le contenu positif et la garantie de la liberté [...].C'était le dernier mot de la pensée slavophile. L'Occidental croyait à l'ordre, à la logique, à l'organisation, à la discipline, le Russe croyait à l'amour*[566].

For the Slavophiles, it is only in the unity of love, which is realized by the free submission of each member to the totality of the Church, that the overcoming of rationalist epistemology and, consequently, the knowledge of the divine truth becomes possible. According to Father Gratieux, "*la clef de voûte de toute théologie et aussi de toute philosophie de Khomiakov*" is represented by the belief that "*le réel échappe à la raison raisonnante*", for "*la vie n'est bien connue que par le vivant*"[567]. Opposing Kantian transcendentalism, the Slavophiles regarded knowledge "as a part and function of our 'existential' penetration of reality". Thus, the Slavophiles considered that

> we 'unite ourselves' cognitively with reality not by thought alone but with our whole being. The chief condition for the preservation of cognitive intimacy with being is then the connection of man's cognitive processes to his whole spiritual sphere – i.e. wholeness of spirit. When this wholeness of spirit is weakened or lost, when the cognitive function becomes 'autonomous', there is a generation of 'logical thought' or 'rationality' which is totally isolated from reality[568].

In the words of Romanides, Khomiakov regarded "the contemporary philosophical development of his time" as "proof of the bankruptcy of the individualistic method of logical analysis and rationalism", stressing instead that "truth cannot be contemplated by the individual

[565] Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. 2, p. 44.
[566] Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 2, p. 237.
[567] *Ibidem*, p. 135.
[568] Vladimir Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, vol. 1, p. 219.

because truth is not logical definition but life". And "life is not individualistic but organic"[569]. Fullness of knowledge requires fullness of being, and this in turn requires the full integration of the individual in the ecclesial organism. Thus, for the Slavophiles, just as Catholicism and Protestantism are two sides of the same coin, likewise, *tselnost* (integral knowledge) and *sobornost* (organic togetherness) are two interdependent aspects of integral being.

The best account of the Slavophile epistemology is rendered by Kireevsky in an article entitled "On the Possibility and Necessity of New Principles in Philosophy". For Kireevsky, the scholastic attempt to transform philosophy into a handmaid of theology inevitably leads to the rationalization of theology and to its isolation from the broader moral and ecclesial experience. The Orthodox Church, Kireevsky argues, does not contest the conclusions of reason, which are legitimate in their own order. The Church must respect the autonomy of reason. For in case it derives dogmatic conclusions from rational arguments, which inevitably happens when philosophy is transformed into a handmaid of theology, theology legitimizes reason's authority to judge by itself dogmatic issues and, thus, legitimizes rationalism within the sphere of theology itself. According to Kireevsky, in Catholicism, the deductions of "man's reason" are presented as "the sacred teaching of the Church", and "the authority of the eternal and steadfast truths of Revelation" is "[projected] […] in the realm of systematic knowledge subject to development, change, errors, and the individual conscience of each person". Instead, the Orthodox Church "guards its teaching from incorrect reinterpretations of natural reason, on the one hand, and on the other guards reason against the incorrect intervention of Church authority"[570].

[569] John S. Romanides, "Orthodox Ecclesiology According to Alexis Khomiakov (1804-1860)", p. 61.

[570] Ivan Kireyevsky, "On the Necessity and Possibility of New Principles in Philosophy", in *Russian Philosophy*, Edited by James M. Edie, James P. Scanlan and Mary-Barbara Zeldin, Quadrangle Books, Chicago, 1965, vol. 1, pp. 196-198.

While it is normal for philosophy to arrive at its own conclusions, which are independent of faith, a problem appears only in the moment when philosophy considers the above mentioned conclusions to be final and absolute knowledge, in as much as it refuses to acknowledge the possibility of a "superior truth", the truth of revelation, whose access requires a superior form of understanding[571]. Thus, Kireevsky argues that, while the Church should "humble the rational conceit" of the rationalist thinker, it should, however, not impose any "constraint on the natural laws of his reason"[572]. For left to itself, authentic reason can only arrive at the consciousness of its own insufficiency. And in this way, Kireevsky argues, philosophy becomes prepared to meet faith through "the anticipation of other, supreme, and more truthful deductions from another, supreme and more truthful way of thinking"[573]. According to Kireevsky, "in order to bring faith and reason into accord, […] the Orthodox thinking person" does not "construct rational concepts in accordance with the tenets of faith, selecting the appropriate, excluding the offensive, and thus ridding reason of everything which contradicts faith"[574]. In this hypothesis "the results would [be] the same as in the West. Concepts irreconcilable with faith deriving from the same source […] as those which are compatible with it would have an equal right to recognition. [T]he same painful dichotomy would occur in the very basis of self-consciousness and would sooner or later […] deflect thought outside faith"[575]. Instead

> Orthodox thinking […] seeks not to arrange separate concepts according to the demands of faith, but rather to elevate reason itself above its usual level […], to the level of sympathetic agreement with faith […]. [Thus], man should strive to gather into one indivisible whole all his separate forces, which in the ordinary condition of man are in a state of incompleteness and contradiction; […] he should not consider his abstract logical capacity as the only organ for the comprehension of truth; […] he should not consider the

[571] *Ibidem*, p. 188.
[572] *Ibidem*, p. 199.
[573] *Ibidem*, p. 207.
[574] *Ibidem*, p. 198
[575] *Ibidem*.

> voice of enraptured feeling uncoordinated with other forces of the spirit as the faultless guide to truth; […] he should not consider the promptings of an isolated aesthetic sense, independent of other concepts, as the true guide to the comprehension of […] the universe; […] he should not consider even the dominant love of his heart, separate from the other demands of the spirit, as [an] infallible guide […]; but […] he should constantly seek in the depth of his soul that inner root of understanding where all the separated forces merge into one living and whole vision of the mind[576].

Distinguishing between separated reason and integral reason, the Slavophile authors do not contest the conclusions of separated reason, but they contest the definition of truth that is presupposed by the rationalist thinker. The Slavophiles insist on the fact that "the abstract logical faculty", separated from the other faculties of the soul, is insufficient for the knowledge of truth; for "the wholeness of truth needs the wholeness of reason"[577]. In its turn, faith also is not merely a feeling, neither a fideistic decision triggered by the incapacity of philosophy to reach a final conclusion. Faith, Khomyakov argues, "is not only thought or felt" but "thought and felt at the same time"; it is "not knowledge alone, but knowledge and life at the same time"[578]. Consequently, the "Orthodox believer […] who is capable of an inner consciousness of God and prayer at all levels of development" possesses "wholeness of reason" and thus has access to the "wholeness of truth […] Standing on this highest level of thought the Orthodox believer can easily and harmlessly comprehend all systems of thought deriving from the lower levels of reason; he can see their limitation and their relative truthfulness. But for the lower form of thought the higher form is incomprehensible and appears nonsensical"[579].

Ultimately, for Kireevsky, the Church does not confront reason with rational arguments, but confronts separated reason with the integral person, just as it is confronting the partiality of the sect, always rationalist and reductionist in its approach to faith, with the fullness of truth. "Not

[576] *Ibidem*, pp. 198-199.
[577] *Ibidem*, p. 200.
[578] Aleksei Khomiakov, "Some Remarks by an Orthodox Christian Concerning the Western Communions, on the Occasion of a Brochure by Mr. Laurentie", in *On Spiritual Unity*, pp. 60-61.
[579] Ivan Kireyevsky, "On the Necessity and Possibility of New Principles in Philosophy", p. 200.

abstract reason alone", Kireevsky argues, "but the sum total of man's intellectual and spiritual forces stamps with one common imprint the credibility of the thought which confronts reason – just as on Mount Athos each monastery bears only one part of the seal which, when all its parts are put together at the meeting of the monastic representatives, constitutes the one legal seal of Athos"[580]. Thus, *sobornost* (organic togetherness) represents the icon of *tselnost* (integral knowledge*)* and vice versa. Taken separately, each individual is both an ignorant and a sinner. Therefore, Khomiakov argues that "intelligence, like perfect holiness, belongs only to the unity of all the members of the Church"[581]. Wisdom is granted to the person "only partially without completely destroying […] personal falsity. In contrast wisdom is given to the Church in the fullness of truth and without admixture of falsity".[582]

If "intelligence, like perfect holiness, belongs only to the unity of all the members of the Church", then, as argued by Khomiakov, the Church "does not recognize a teaching Church other than herself in her totality". If communion is the precondition of knowledge, then those "who set themselves up as judges of the Church" essentially deny the principles of Orthodox epistemology, for they claim "perfect reason and perfect holiness for themselves"[583]. In Khomiakov's ecclesiology, there is no distinction between a teaching Church and a Church that is being taught. The absence of this distinction means that the definition of dogmatic truth cannot belong to all the reunited bishops any more than it can belong to a single bishop. The episcopate stops being the organ of truth once it is conceived as a separate category that governs the rest of the Church. Khomiakov argues that the authority of the bishops has been delegated to the latter

[580] *Ibidem*, p. 201.

[581] Aleksei Khomiakov, "Some Remarks by an Orthodox Christian Concerning the Western Communions, on the Occasion of a Brochure by Mr. Laurentie", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 59.

[582] Aleksei Khomiakov, "The Church is One", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 35.

[583] Aleksei Khomiakov,"Some Remarks by an Orthodox Christian Concerning the Western Communions, on the Occasion of a Brochure by Mr. Laurentie", in *On Spiritual Unity*, pp. 59, 62.

by the whole Church. The bishops have been granted authority to enforce canonical discipline, and here the flock does not reserve any rights for herself. However, in what concerns the definition of truth, Khomiakov argues that the assembled bishops only declare what the whole Church believes. The totality of believers reserves for itself the right to verify whether the teaching of the college of bishops is truly expressing the inner truth of the Church or not[584]. Invoking a common declaration of the reunited Greek speaking Patriarchs from 1848, which referred to the role of the people in preserving the purity of the Orthodox faith, Khomiakov concludes that "the unvarying constancy and the unerring truth of Christian dogma does not depend upon any Hierarchical Order: it is guarded by the totality, by the whole people of the Church, which is the Body of Christ"[585].

Thus, in the Church, the bishop is at the same time teaching and being taught by every Christian who fulfills in his life the commandments of Christ. The lack of intellectual preparation does not count, as Khomiakov compares the relation between an academic theologian and one "who is theologian because he knows how to pray" (Evagrius Ponticus[586]), with the relation between a blind physics professor who knows all the laws that concern the propagation of light, and a simple man that actually sees the light[587]. According to Khomiakov, to see in theology "a heavenly gift tied to certain functions" would imply a heretical "establishment of a sacrament of rationalism"[588]. The gift of truth, Khomiakov argues, is not inherent in a hierarchical function,

[584] Aleksei Khomiakov, "Some Remarks by an Orthodox Christian Concerning the Western Communions, on the Occasion of a Letter Published by the Archbishop of Paris", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 98.

[585] Aleksei Khomiakov, "Fifth Letter to William Palmer", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 157.

[586] Evagrius Ponticus (345-399) was one of the most important ascetical teachers of the fourth century and has exercised an important influence on the development of Orthodox monastic spirituality. Due to the fact that he took over from Origen some of his theological theses, he would be anathematized, together with the latter, by the Fifth Ecumenical Council. Nevertheless, he has remained an important reference in Orthodox spirituality.

[587] Aleksei Khomiakov, "On the 'Fragments' discovered among I. V. Kireevsky's Papers", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 309.

[588] Aleksei Khomiakov, "Some Remarks by an Orthodox Christian Concerning the Western Communions, on the Occasion of a Brochure by Mr. Laurentie", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 62.

for that would mean to argue that somebody is perfect in love just because he occupies a hierarchical position. This is the reason why Khomiakov argues that the Pope who is compelled to be infallible independently not only of his holiness, but even independently of his intelligence, reflects in his activity "the degradation of human beings when forced to be the organ of an infallible faith against their own will"[589]. Thus, in one of his harshest attacks against Catholicism, Khomiakov compares the papal proclamation of dogma with the uttering of somebody who, not belonging to himself, appears as demon possessed[590].

For Khomiakov, the fact that "infallibility in dogma – that is, knowledge of the truth – is based on the holiness of the mutual love of Christians in Jesus Christ" results in the fact that "rationalism becomes impossible since the light of understanding is made to depend on a moral law"[591]. Based on these ontological premises, Khomiakov explains the schism between the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church as the result of "a moral fratricide". For Khomiakov, the unilateral modification of the Creed by the Catholic West, without the previous consultation of the Eastern Church, automatically resulted in the breaking of the bond of love and,

[589] Aleksei Khomiakov, "Some Remarks by an Orthodox Christian Concerning the Western Communions, on the Occasion of a Letter Published by the Archbishop of Paris", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 74.

[590] *Ibidem*, p. 73. It is interesting in this sense to mention the observations of Fabrice Bouthillon, who connects the issue of the relation between the institutional authority of the Church and the charismatic authority of the holy man to the main dogmatic difference that has separated the Catholic West from the Orthodox East, the *filioque*. As indicated by Bouthillon, "*tous les chrétiens s'accordent à dire*", that the Church "*est le corps qu'anime l'Esprit de Dieu, mais en Occident […], il est entendu que cette effusion de l'Esprit s'opère par le canal de la hiérarchie ecclésiastique, telle qu'elle a été instituée par le Christ. Pour le dire en termes techniques, dans le catholicisme la théologie du Saint-Esprit, ou pneumatologie, a été subordonnée à celle du Fils, ou christologie. L'Esprit ne procède pas uniquement du Père, qui le communiquerait directement à qui Lui semble bon, mais du Père* et du Fils, *le fameux* Filioque *dont les Grecs n'ont jamais toléré l'adjonction au* Credo *par les Latins, et dont l'enjeu était d'assurer dans l'Eglise, contre toute contestation venant de la base, le pouvoir de la hiérarchie épiscopale remontant aux apôtres choisis par Jésus. La définition de l'infaillibilité du pape, au sommet de la pyramide hiérarchique, n'a été en 1870 que la conséquence logique de cette évolution millénaire*". On the other hand, "*les Eglises orientales ont au contraire défendu du bec et des ongles la liberté de l'Esprit; elles ont maintenu qu'il peut jaillir où il veut, et elles sont donc, par tradition, aussi naturellement conciliaires que l'Eglise d'Occident est primatiale. L'autorité hiérarchique du patriarche ne l'emporte pas nécessairement chez elles sur l'autorité spirituelle du saint homme […]. De là, l'acceptation par l'Orient chrétien du libre jaillissement des charismes, que l'Occident refoulait au contraire dans la mystique, dans l'hérésie, voire dans la sorcellerie*" (Fabrice Bouthillon, *Brève histoire philosophique de l'Union soviétique*, Collection Commentaire Plon, Paris, 2003, pp. 43-45).

[591] Aleksei Khomiakov, "Some Remarks by an Orthodox Christian Concerning the Western Communions, on the Occasion of a Letter Published by the Archbishop of Paris", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 72.

consequently, of the inner unity of the Church. Proclaiming his right to make theological judgments for the whole Church, the Pope automatically extracted himself from *sobornost*. Thus, theological error was only the inevitable result of the exit from the ecclesial order defined by *sobornost*, of the separation from the life of the ecclesial organism. Starting from that point, theology was separated from its moral and ecclesiological presuppositions, leading to the concomitant rationalization of theology and juridization of the Church. In this sense, for Khomiakov, the Catholic Church itself has been at the origin of the modern conception of sovereignty and of modern rationalism. It is in the loss of organic togetherness suffered by the West, which goes back to an original sin of the papacy, that the Slavophiles and later Dostoyevsky have identified the source of modern individualism and rationalism. If according to Pranchère, Maistre's reactionary Catholicism seems to be identified dialectically with Protestantism to the extent that it represents only its negation, it seems that for Khomiakov, this dialectic of Maistrian thought would be perfectly understandable in light of the fact that Catholicism itself represents the source of Protestantism. More exactly, for Khomiakov, "the two sections of the Western schism" were "nothing more than two forms of Protestantism"[592]. In this sense, Khomiakov spoke about German Protestantism and Roman Protestantism. Khomiakov argued that "when the logical principle of knowledge expressed in the exposition of the creed was separated from the moral principle of love expressed by the unanimity of the Church", together with the institution of a sacrament of rationalism, "a protestant anarchy was established in practice."[593] If Maistre has argued that the Protestant contestation of the authority of the Pope has opened Pandora's Box, Khomiakov sustains that it was actually opened by the Pope himself.

[592] *Ibidem*, p. 113.
[593] *Ibidem*, p. 68.

For, inevitably, the Pope's "heresy against the living unity of the Church"[594], has legitimized the right of every bishop, every priest, and ultimately, of every believer, to make individual judgments in matters of faith, following the same principle of non-ecclesial and therefore rationalist theological knowledge. The eruption of the Reformation, the Slavophiles believed, was therefore only a matter of time. By breaking away from the bond of love, the Pope had emptied authority of its only possible content, which is love itself. From this point onwards, exiting the order of love, Catholicism was constrained to edify a new order based on utility. More exactly, the maintenance of papal infallibility was necessary in order to prevent the full development of the disastrous historical consequences triggered by the proclamation of papal infallibility: the breaking apart of the Catholic Church and, together with it, of the Western civilization. Once the bond of love had been broken, papal dictatorship becomes the only alternative to Protestant anarchy, as Maistre himself has argued. The truth of dogma then becomes secondary in relation to the imperative of papal infallibility. In this sense, we should remember the fact that, demonstrating logically the need for papal infallibility and giving priority to the principle of hierarchy over the content of dogma, Maistre also argues that the question of religious truth may be decided on the basis of utility alone, and this way of arguing ultimately brings his Catholicism in the vicinity of Dostoyevsky's "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor". As indicated by Khomiakov, replacing love with utilitarian arguments, Roman Catholicism was constrained to appeal to, and thus to legitimize, the same naked rationality that has become the basis of the Catholic system, but that would prove in the end to be the grave digger of the religious life of the West[595].

[594] *Ibidem*, p. 86.
[595] Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 2, p. 133.

If Khomiakov had argued that the schism represented first of all an individualistic separation from *sobornost*, separation from which *filioque* inevitably resulted, Kireevsky argued that, developed within the sphere of Latin Trinitarian theology, rationalism has then eroded the inner unity of the Church in the West. Confronted with the Arian separation of the Father and the Son in view of their distinction, the Latins, according to Kireevsky, have reacted to Arian rationalism, not by protecting the mystery of the Trinity, but by strengthening the unity between Father and Son at the cost of their distinction. "Not being satisfied with the rejection of the heresy", Kireevsky, argued, "they created a new theological dogma in direct opposition to the Arians, under the influence of this same external-logical thought", unaware of the fact that the opposite of a heresy is another heresy. Thus, the unity of the divine essence gains priority over the multiplicity of the divine persons, a rationalization of the Trinitarian mystery whose ecclesiological translation is a subsequent rationalization of the ecclesiological mystery, that creates an unnatural and destructive tension between Church unity and individual freedom[596].

[596] In what concerns the *filioque* (the double procession of the Holy Spirit, from the Father and from the Son), the Greeks have argued that the Latin modification of the Creed was rationalizing the mystery of the Holy Trinity by prioritizing the unity of the one essence over the distinction of the three persons. As stressed by Philip Sherrard, "if it is true that, according to their essential nature, Father and Son are one, yet the Son is not the Father, and there is a real distinction of hypostatic powers which is affirmed precisely by the fact that the 'procession' of the Holy Spirit is from the Father, but not from the Son. In other words, while the Latins, in conformity with the tendency to emphasize in an exclusive sense the essential nature of God, are thereby compelled to consider the Son as determined absolutely by this nature – which comes very close to saying that the Son is the Father – the Greeks not only affirm the identity of Essence of Father and Son, but they also affirm that God is not only Essence, there being also this real distinction of hypostases, and that to regard him as such is not only to misconceive the nature of the Trinity, but also, and as a necessary consequence, to misconceive […] the relationship of the Divinity with man and the world". For, as already indicated, it is on the Trinitarian paradox that Gregory Palamas bases his distinction between the divine essence and the uncreated energies, distinction which, in the view of Orthodox theologians, permits the overcoming of the strict dichotomy that opposes dualism (God remains strictly transcendent and inaccessible for the world) to pantheism (there is no difference between God and the world) (see footnote 69 from chapter 3, section 3.4.). As stressed by Sherrard, "seen from this point of view, the double, and contradictory, affirmation of the Greeks in the Creed, where at one point it is said that the Son is of one Essence with the Father, and at another point that the Spirit proceeds from the Father, with the implication that it does not also proceed from the Son, is a guard against any too rational idea of limitation or insufficiency in the Divine, any restriction, falsely imposed by the human intelligence, on Its absolute and infinite plenitude" (Philip Sherrard, *The Greek East and the Latin West: A Study in the Christian Tradition*, Oxford University Press, New York, Toronto, 1959, pp. 71-72). According to the same author, "the *Filioque* question and that of the primacy of the Roman See may be regarded as two aspects of the same issue" (*Ibidem*, p. 83). Orthodox theologians stress the fact that the Church is an "image of

Thus, for Kireevsky, *filioque* has meant "the placing of syllogisms above the living consciousness of all Christendom". As a consequence, reason within faith appears in Catholicism, which leads to the Reformation of faith, and (from here on the Maistrian scheme of history and the Slavophile scheme of history coincide) finally to reason without faith. Thus, for the Slavophiles, the scholastics were the ancestors of Hegel[597]. Regarding Hegel's philosophical system as the greatest creation of the human mind and as the greatest monument of rationalism, Khomiakov nevertheless prophesized its collapse, and the subsequent development on the ruins of Hegelianism, and based on its core principles, of pure materialism as the final expression of Western thought[598].

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the Trinity" and "it is in the light of the dogma of the Holy Trinity that the most wonderful attribute of the Church – that of catholicity – is disclosed in its true and properly Christian sense, which cannot be translated by the abstract term of universality. For the highly concrete sense of the word 'catholicity' comprehends not only unity but also multiplicity. It points to a harmony between the two or, rather, to a certain identity of unity with multiplicity which makes the Church catholic in its wholeness as well as in each of its parts" (Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, translated from French by the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1976, p. 176). This vision of catholicity is supported by the fact that, in Orthodox ecclesiology, the unity of the Church exists not in virtue of the subordination of the multiplicity of local Churches to a single ecclesial centre of government, but in virtue of the fact that the same Christ is present, through the Eucharist, in each local Church. Therefore, as argued by another Orthodox theologian, Dumitru Stăniloae, the unity of the Orthodox Church "is an ontological unity, or rather supra-ontological" for "the foundation of the Orthodox Church is Christ himself, who dwells with His sacrificed and resurrected body in the depth of the Church". Relating Orthodox ecclesiology with St. Gregory Palamas' definition of grace as uncreated divine energy, Stăniloae argues that the "inner unity" of the Church "was weakened […] in Catholicism […] as a result of the fact that through the [Roman Catholic] sacraments only a created grace is received, and not grace as uncreated energy in which Christ himself is found" "[T]his weakening of the union with Christ", Stăniloae continues, "has lead to the Pope becoming Christ's vicar or his locum tenens. Obedience to the Pope has thus become the means for maintaining a Church unity which", as the Slavophiles also argued, "is rather juridical and institutional" (Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă [The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology]*, Editura Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, Bucureşti, vol. 2, p. 269 – my translation from Romanian). Returning to Sherrard, and to the relation between Trinitarian theology and ecclesiology, the latter argues that when at the level of Trinitarian theology „the idea of the eminent and absolute simplicity of the divine nature" gains absolute priority, „then not only will the idea of a distinction of Persons in the Trinity be reduced in significance, but also, and as a consequence, the sense of each sacramental centre participating through the ever-present and all-pervasive energies of the Spirit in the life of the Logos, the Principle of Unity, will be correspondingly weakened. Essence [...] implies entire simplicity, indivisibility, non-manifestation, absolute transcendence of all relationship and all created beings. Hence, if the Divinity is envisaged mainly from this point of view [...] it becomes difficult to understand how at the same time It can be fully present, and indivisibly divided, in the sacramental life of the many local churches" (Philip Sherrard, *The Greek East and the Latin West*, pp. 83-84).

[597] Ivan Kireyevsky, "On the Possibility and Necessity of New Principles in Philosophy", pp. 174-175, 189.

[598] Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le Mouvement Slavophile*, vol. 2, pp. 219-220; Nicolas Berdiaev, *Khomiakov*, pp. 85-86; Isabelle Grimberg, "La recherche d'une identité qui se dérobe", p. 59.

As indicated by Zenkovsky, "Khomiakov's struggle with the spirit of secularism became a struggle with the spiritual world within which this movement had developed"[599]. Moreover, as argued by the same author, "the Slavophiles insisted all the more insistently that the inevitability of secularism in the West was connected not with the essence of Christianity but with its Western perversions"[600]. Thus, if Maistre had attacked secularism in the name of Catholicism, the Slavophiles attacked Catholicism as the source of secularism. "Denying the moral basis of religious knowledge", Catholicism and Protestantism, in the opinion of Khomiakov, were eminently rationalistic. As a consequence, Khomiakov stressed the fact that they "had no right to complain about the rationalism that was attacking them"[601]. Being their theological product, modern rationalism was eroding the two Western confessions not from without, but from within. For Maistre, whenever such a process occurred, the erosion was lethal and required only time for its completion: the entropy could be stopped only by the opposite principle, which could not come from the contaminated institution but from without. That is the reason why he argued that ultimately there were only two choices: Catholicism and nihilism. Structurally speaking, the Slavophiles had the same manner of thinking. This is why they argued that, left to itself, Western Christianity, and Western civilization together with it, would inevitably collapse, and that salvation could come only from the Orthodox Church[602].

According to Khomiakov, both the Catholics, who argue that there will be anarchy without a unique infallible authority, and the Protestants, who argue that unanimity will imply slavery, are

[599] Valdimir Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, vol. 1, p. 206.
[600] *Ibidem*, p. 236.
[601] Aleksei Khomiakov, "Some Remarks by an Orthodox Christian Concerning the Western Communions, on the Occasion of a Letter Published by the Archbishop of Paris", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 113.
[602] Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 1, p. 90 ; vol. 2, pp. 81, 133.

applying earthly judgments to heavenly things.[603]They are lowering the Church to earthly standards. Thus, if the cornerstone of Maistre's ecclesiology is his contention that the Church is governed like any other society, the cornerstone of Khomiakov's ecclesiology is his belief that the unity of the Church does not rely on any "human institution" but on "the grace of God"[604] only. If for Maistre the Church is "the society of Christians", for Khomiakov, the Church is the "Spirit of God". Or, in Gratieux's terms, for Khomiakov, the opposition between Orthodoxy and Catholicism is represented as an opposition between "*corps mystique*" and "*société ecclésiastique*"[605]. Ultimately, for the Slavophiles, the opposition between Orthodoxy and Catholicism appears as an opposition between the order of the Church and the order of the State. Referring to the differences between the Greek and the Latin conception of the Church, Khomiakov argued that, while in the Greek East "*la vie intérieure et extérieure de l'Église […] était faite de l'unité vivante de tous les individus ayant la même foi*",

> *pour le Romain, créateur du plus puissant de tous les empires et de la science du droit poussée jusqu'à la suprême perfection de l'enchaînement logique, la foi était une loi, et l'Église un fait terrestre, social et politique, soumis à la volonté supérieure du monde invisible et du Christ son chef, mais qui réclamait en même temps une unité conventionnelle et des symboles visibles de cette unité gouvernementale. Le symbole de cette unité et l'expression permanente de son autorité légale devaient se trouver dans l'Évêque de Rome, en tant que pasteur de la capitale du monde*[606].

Thus, Khomiakov argues that "*l'intégrité de l'esprit libre fut brisée par le rationalisme caché sous la forme juridique*", and the Church became "*une chose extérieure pour ses sujets et même pour ses fonctionnaires, comme tout gouvernement*"[607]. If for Khomiakov, the unity of the Orthodox Church relies solely on grace, and not on any governmental mechanism, for

[603] Aleksei Khomiakov, "Some Remarks by an Orthodox Christian Concerning the Western Communions, on the Occasion of a Letter Published by the Archbishop of Paris", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 75.
[604] Aleksei Khomiakov, "Some more Remarks by an Orthodox Christian concerning the Western Communions, on the Occasion of Several Latin and Protestant Publications", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 134.
[605] Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 2, p. 103.
[606] *Ibidem*, pp.79-80.
[607] *Ibidem*.

Konstantin Aksakov, the state is a necessary evil, given the fact that much of human society has not been absorbed into the Church. But the state becomes a diabolical institution whenever it exercises control over the Church[608]. Slavophile authors could have only regarded the transformation of the Western Church into a state as a fall from grace and as a truly diabolical process. Thus, we can say that the theses of Khomiakov and Aksakov are anticipating the famous contention of Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor, which summarizes the essence of Dostoyevsky's critique of Catholicism: "listen: we are not with you, but with *him*, there is our secret! We have long been not with you, but with *him*, eight centuries now. It is now just eight centuries since we took from him that which you in indignation rejected, that final gift he offered you, when he showed you all the kingdoms of the world: we took from him Rome and the sword of Caesar"[609].

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As we have seen, the comparison between Maistre's ecclesiology and the ecclesiology of Khomiakov takes the form of an opposition between two ecclesiological models: a "mystical body" whose unity is based on the invisible grace of God, and an "ecclesiastical society", whose unity is based on a visible principle of government, more precisely, on the principle of papal supremacy and infallibility. In this context, it is important to stress the fact that, like the Slavophiles, contemporary Orthodox theologians argue that the Roman Catholic pontifical idea presupposes an ecclesiology built according to the model of statehood, as expressed by the Ancient Roman Empire. In opposition to this model, Orthodox ecclesiology insists on the fact that the Church is not a society of Christians, whose unity, to paraphrase Maistre, would be

[608] Konstantin Aksakov, quoted in Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, pp. 245, 252 (reference not given).
[609] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 355.

maintained, as in the case of all other societies, through the unity of government. Instead, according to Orthodox ecclesiology, since the Church is the Body of Christ, its unity is manifested sacramentally through the Eucharist: all believers from an Eucharistic assembly/local Church become one, by uniting themselves with the same Eucharistic Christ, and all the local Churches are united into one Church, not by obedience to a single universal bishop, but due to the fact that the same Christ is present in each Eucharistic assembly[610]. As we shall see, from a strictly Orthodox point of view, the Slavophiles do not emphasize sufficiently the Christological dimension of ecclesiology, or more precisely, the fact that the ecclesial "organism of truth and love", which they describe as the Body of Christ made manifest in the Eucharist. But independently of this problematic aspect, like Orthodox ecclesiology in general, Slavophile ecclesiology is based on a "mystical" conception of Church unity that is opposed to the Roman Catholic "juridical", or "institutional" conception of Church unity, whose most radical expression can be encountered in Maistre's *Du Pape*.

Inevitably, the opposition between "mystical body" and "ecclesiastical society" raises the issue of the relation between ecclesiastical organization and political organization, an issue which plays a central role in the overall economy of Maistre's theologico-political thought. From this point of view, it is interesting to analyze Maistre's analogy between sovereignty and infallibility, as well as the Slavophiles' analysis of the relation between the Roman Empire and the Catholic Church, and their implicit critique of Maistre's ecclesiology, in the light of Ernst Kantorowicz's renowned study: *The King's Two Bodies*. In his study, Kantorowicz has argued that the modern European state as well as modern European institutions in general have their

[610] *Cf*. Nicolas Afanasieff, "The Church which Presides in Love", translated by Katharine Farrer, in John Meyendorff, Nicolas Afanasieff, Alexander Schmemann, Nicolas Koulomzine, *The Primacy of Peter in the Orthodox Church*, The Faith Press, Bedfordshire, 1963, pp. 61-78 (I have given more details about this issue in footnote 52 from this chapter).

origin in a secularization of Roman Catholic ecclesiology. "The doctrine of theology and canon law", Kantorowicz writes, which "[teaches] that the Church, and Christian society in general, was 'a *corpus mysticum* the head of which is Christ', has been transferred by the jurists from the theological sphere to that of the state the head of which is the king"[611]. However, the precondition of this secularization has been a previous juridization of ecclesiology itself in the Catholic West. As indicated by Philip Sherrard, who comments on Kantorowicz's study, at the beginning of this process of secularization, the Pauline understanding of the Church as *corpus Christi* is replaced by the notion of *corpus mysticum*, although initially, like the former, the latter still "served to indicate the unity of the Church in the sacrament"[612]. However, with time, Catholic theologians would distance themselves from this ecclesiological conception and would arrive at a separation between the Eucharist and the Church. If up until then the Eucharist and the Church were one and the same Body of Christ, Catholic theologians will later distinguish "the individual *corpus verum*, or *naturale*, or *Christi*, of the host on the altar", from "the collective *corpus mysticum*, the Church, including the whole clerical bureaucracy". Later on, in the thought of Thomas Aquinas, "the 'true body' repeatedly indicates not at all the Eucharistic Christ [...], but Christ as an individual being, physical and in the flesh, whose individual 'body natural' is sociologically the model of the supra-individual and collective mystical body of the Church"[613]. The Church stops being the Body of Christ, the Eucharistic Body through which heaven and earth are united in the Liturgy, and becomes instead "the corporation of Christ", "a *corpus mysticum* with the Pope as its head", for which Christ "serves as an individual prototype". In the end, conceived independently of the Eucharist, the Church becomes an autonomous juridical body or, in other

[611] Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*: *A Study in Medieval Political Theology*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1957 pp. 15-16.
[612] Philip Sherrard, *The Greek East and the Latin West*, p. 88.
[613] *Ibidem*, pp. 88-89.

words, "a body politic of which the Pope is the head".[614] Thus, as Kantorowicz argues, "that originally liturgical notion, which formerly served to exalt the Church united in the sacrament, began to be used in the hierarchical Church as a means to exalt the position of the emperor-like pope". From now on, the head to which the limbs refer is the Pope, omnipresent in his Church just as the King is in his kingdom. Consequently, from now on, "the *corpus mysticum* was supposed to be present" not where the consecrated host was, but where the Pope was[615]. As Kantorowicz concludes, the once liturgical concept of the *corpus mysticum* has been "politicized and, in many respects, secularized by the Church itself", and only deprived of its "transcendental meaning" could the *corpus mysticum* be thought of as the model of the modern secular state[616]. Thus, Maistre's ecclesiology, and in particular his analogy between sovereignty and infallibility, must ultimately be understood from the perspective of the above mentioned historical evolution of the Catholic West, during which the initial sacramental notion of the Church has been finally converted into a juridical notion.

It should also be underlined that the Slavophile argument according to which Roman Catholic ecclesiology reproduces in itself the model of statehood, as expressed by the Roman Empire, anticipates the future analyses of Ernst Kantorowicz. In this sense, Kantorowicz underlines the fact that, when studying the transfer of theological content from the Catholic Church to the modern state, one should take into account the fact that the Church itself has initially taken over this content from the Roman Empire. Commenting on Kantorowicz's study, Jean-Claude Monod argues that "*l'originalité théologique est prise en défaut*", given the fact that "*les notions théologiques qui ont été transférées vers le domaine politique ont été elles-mêmes largement façonnées à partir d'une conceptualité politique première, à savoir la pensée*

[614] *Ibidem*, pp. 89-90.
[615] Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, pp. 205-207.
[616] *Ibidem*, p. 207.

impériale"[617]. Moreover, stressing the fact that the fundamental attribute of the modern sovereign, as Maistre himself affirms, is the power to judge without being judged, Monod indicates that for Kantorowicz, the above mentioned attribute, which has been transferred from the infallible Pope to the absolute sovereign, had belonged initially to the holy man, but had later been monopolized by the Pope[618]. To emphasize the initial authority of the spiritual man, Monod refers to Saint Paul's affirmation: "He who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one" (1 Corinthians 2, 15). The Slavophile critique of Roman Catholic ecclesiology based on the notion of *sobornost* (organic togetherness) appears then to be paralleled by a subsequent critique, based on the notion of *tselnost* (integral reason), whose target is the separation of theology from the integral life of the Spirit, and the implicit monopolization of theology by the governing authority of the Church. In this sense, the above mentioned affirmation of Saint Paul is echoed by Kireevsky's affirmation according to which the "Orthodox believer […] who is capable of an inner consciousness of God and prayer at all levels of development […] can easily and harmlessly comprehend all systems of thought deriving from the lower levels of reason […]. But for the lower form of thought the higher form is incomprehensible and appears nonsensical"[619]. In this sense, as we shall see, not only does the Slavophile critique of Roman Catholic ecclesiology (and in particular the emphasis put on the continuity between the Roman Empire and the Roman Catholic Church) anticipate Dostoyevsky's attack against Roman Catholicism from *The Brothers Karamazov*, the novel in which Ivan Karamazov recites his famous Poem concerning the Grand Inquisitor. But

[617] Jean-Claude Monod, *La querelle de la sécularisation*: *De Hegel à Blumenberg*, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, Paris, 2002.p. 135.

[618] *Ibidem*, p. 125.

[619] Ivan Kireyevsky, "On the Necessity and Possibility of New Principles in Philosophy", p. 200.

furthermore, the novel is constructed around the opposition between Zosima, the spiritual man, and the Grand Inquisitor who represents the supreme pontifical authority.

4.4. - Russia, the West and Modernity

If the wholeness of human being was the anthropological premise of the Slavophiles, the division of the soul between rationality and life/faith represented for the same group of authors the anthropological premise that, being common to both Western confessions, essentially defined the Western culture. For the Slavophiles, this anthropological division, which, as indicated, was nothing more than a lapse from the ecclesial miracle into a regime of accommodation with the fallen condition, was reflected in all aspects of Western existence. And likewise, the Slavophiles argued that wholeness of being manifested itself in all aspects of Russian life; more precisely it was everywhere present in Old Russia and it was still present in the life of the nineteenth-century Russian peasantry, which, according to the Slavophiles, had remained immune to the modernizing reforms of Peter the Great. Thus, the theological opposition between Orthodoxy and Western Christianity becomes, as indicated by Stéphane Vibert, the basis for "*deux modèles paradigmatiques: Russie/Europe, fondement de toute une série d'oppositions binaires: spirituel/matériel, liberté/nécessité, foi/raison*"[620]. As indicated by Isabelle Grimberg, the Slavophiles possessed "*une vision dialectique de l'histoire occidentale, pervertie dans son essence*"[621]. For the Slavophiles, modernity's vicious circle, composed of anarchy and tyranny, which so frightened the Catholic Counter-Revolutionaries, was rooted in the theological premises of the Western civilization. It represented essentially the radicalization and full

[620] Stéphane Vibert, "*Pravda* : Vérité et justice", p. 195.
[621] Isabelle Grimberg, "La recherche d'une identité qui se dérobe", p. 59.

development of the opposition between Catholicism (unity without freedom) and Protestantism (freedom without unity)[622]. Essentially, Catholicism and Protestantism were dividing the truth through their one-sidedness. This division, which represented the historical principle of Western history, crossed the very being of Western man and found expression in all the aspects of his daily existence. Thus, Kireevsky argued that, unlike in Medieval Russia, in the Western Middle Ages one found dichotomies at all levels: "a dichotomy of thought, a dichotomy of learning, a dichotomy of the state, a dichotomy of estates, a dichotomy of society, a dichotomy of familial rights and duties, a dichotomy of morals and emotions, a dichotomy of the sum total and of all separate acts of the human being, both social and individual". By contrast, Russia was defined instead by "a predominant striving for wholeness of being, both external and inner, social and individual, intellectual and workaday, artificial and moral"[623]. In the West, faith was in conflict with reason, the individual was in conflict with society, the social classes were in conflict and so on. In Russia it was the exact opposite. Thus, "dichotomy and wholeness, rationalistic understanding and reason, are the ultimate expressions of Western European and Ancient Russian culture, respectively"[624]. If the Western division had its origins in the rationalism and juridism inherited from Rome, which had penetrated the Catholic spirit, the Germanic conquest of the Western world was added to this Roman heritage, further dividing between opposite classes a West already divided by the Roman spirit[625]. Russia, instead, was defined as the land of pure faith and of social harmony.

[622] Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 2, p. 47.

[623] Ivan Kireevsky, "On the Nature of European culture and on its Relationship to Russian Culture", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 229.

[624] *Ibidem*.

[625] Isabelle Grimberg, "La recherche d'une identité qui se dérobe", p. 52 ; Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 2, p. 82.

Here it should be underlined that the Slavophiles were not refering to the social reality of Russia as such, but to what was for them the essence of Russia. Given their ideal of wholeness, which excluded any division between the sacred and the secular, the Slavophiles have overlapped the life of the Church on the life of the people to such an extent that the two have become almost indistinguishable. In what concerns the Church, Khomiakov had argued that "the visible Church is not the visible society of Christians but the Spirit of God and the grace of the sacraments living in the society. For this reason", Khomiakov argued, "the visible Church is visible only to the believer, since for the non-believer a sacrament is only a ritual and the Church only a society"[626]. Consequently, given the overlap between Church and people, the Slavophile doctrine implicitly presupposed that there was a visible Russia and an invisible Russia, the invisible Russia being visible only to the believer (the one who partook of its inner life). The Slavophiles were very firm in their critiques of the misgivings of the Russian past and present. Referring to one of Khomiakov's articles, in which the latter was basically demolishing the myth of old Russia, Berdyaev has argued that "*même dans la littératture occidentale on n'a pas parlé des aspects sombres de manière aussi excessive et catégorique*". And yet, as underlined by the same author, although just like Dostoyevsky, Khomiakov was seeing

> *clairement les tares de la paysannerie russe, son obscurantisme, ses excès, sa barbarie [...] malgré tout*" [for him], "*l'image idéale du pèlerin russe sorti du peuple restera éternellement caractéristique de l'essence idéale de notre peuple, de même que restera caractéristique de l'essence idéale de l'Eglise russe l'image idéale du starets russe qui se dresse au-dessus des tares de la hiérarchie russe*[627].

As indicated by Walicki, for Kireevsky, the unilateral "development of abstract reason" represented "the greatest threat to inner wholeness", as "rationalism breaks up the psyche into a number of separate and unconnected faculties, each of which lays claim to autonomy". Along the

[626] Aleksei Khomiakov, "The Church is One", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 39
[627] Nicolas Berdiaev, *Khomiakov*, pp. 125, 144, 147-150.

lines of the Platonic analogy between the soul and the city, this leads to "inner conflict, corresponding to the conflict between different kinds of sectional, party interests in societies founded on rationalistic principles". Moreover, "inner divisions remain even when reason succeeds in dominating the other faculties". In fact, revealing a true movement of disintegration in which different opposing principles are reunited by their common disintegrating one-sidedness, "the autocratic rule of reason" actually "intensifies the disintegration of the psyche, just as rationally conceived social bonds (Roman legislation and the Catholic principle of external authority) […] intensify social atomization"[628]. For the Slavophiles, the inner logic of this historical process was inevitably leading to that nihilist individualism in which Joseph de Maistre also foresaw the possible apocalyptic end of the Western civilization, and that will receive a particularly powerful expression in Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground*. According to Khomiakov, the conflict between Catholic unity and Protestant freedom, "*deux tendances également incomplètes*", could have only ended with "*une négation générale*"[629].

Defining the opposition between Russia and the West as the opposition between an "inner" or "integral" social bond and an "external" or "logico-technical" social bond[630], Kireevsky was convinced of the fact that the progressive loss of inner wholeness and the subsequent growth of individualism that occurred in the West corresponded to an ever increasing formalization/technicization of the social bond in a world, which, given the antireligious spirit of modern rationalism, was necessarily becoming more and more materialistic and utilitarian. "Only one serious thing", Kireevsky argued, was "left to" Western "man: industry", which "unites and divides people [...], determines one's fatherland […], delineates classes; it lies at the

[628] Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, pp. 150-151; Alert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 2, p. 82.
[629] Aleksei Khomiakov, *Œuvres complètes de Khomiakov*, I, 83, quoted in Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakiv et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 2, p. 82.
[630] Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 152.

base of state structures; it moves nations; it declares war, makes peace, changes mores, gives direction to science, and determines the character of culture […]. It is the real deity in which people sincerely believe and to which they submit"[631]. Kireevsky argued that "it is hard to see what European culture may come to" without an "inner change", "a change in" the "basic convictions". As it appeared to him at the moment when he was writing, Western civilization was heading towards "the unlimited domination of industry", in a "world without faith and poetry" where everything will be reduced strictly to "the physical being"[632]. As we remember, Maistre issued a very similar warning concerning the final destination of the secularization process: "*s'il ne se faisait pas une révolution morale en Europe, si l'esprit religieux n'est pas renforcé dans cette partie du monde, le lien social est dissous. On ne peut rien deviner, et il faut s'attendre à tout*"[633]. In another place, intersecting Kireevsky's prophecies concerning the end of philosophy and poetry, and the beginning of the unlimited domination of industy, Maistre wrote that "*les maux qui nous attendent sont incalculables: nous serons abrutis par la science, et c'est le dernier degré de l'abrutissement*"[634].

We can also argue that despite the radically different solutions of the two authors, Kireevsky's theses concerning the social effects of separated reason intersect Marx's analyses of alienation in the capitalist society. The capitalist economy, Marx argued, divides the life of the individual between different spheres of existence – the sphere of morality, the sphere of political economy, etc. – submitted to different and contradictory norms. Defining Slavophilism as a romantic anti-capitalist retrospective utopia[635], Walicki argued that Slavophilism represented "an

[631] Ivan Kireevsky, "On the Necessity and Possibility of New Principles in Philosophy", pp. 195-196.
[632] *Ibidem*.
[633] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 211.
[634] Joseph de Maistre, *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques et des autres institutions humaines*, p. 387
[635] Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, pp. 167-168.

attempt to defend immediate, emotional social bonds, which were threatened with destruction in an age of capitalist rationalization of production, individual motivation of behavior and social organization"[636]. Moreover, anticipating the ideological specificities of Russian Marxism, in Slavophile thought, the opposition between Russia and the West becomes the basis for a messianic political discourse that allocates to Russia, the land of wholeness and social harmony, the mission to redeem the West from its own contradictions, capitalist modernity being nothing else than the ultimate and most radical expression of these inner contradictions of the Western mind[637].

Remarkably paralleling Maistre's historical prophecies, and in particular his view concerning the future fate of Orthodoxy, the Slavophiles believed that the erosion of Western Christianity by modern philosophy was providentially preparing the way for a justification of the Orthodox faith and, as a consequence, for a new, universal, Orthodox civilization, which would replace the rationalist civilization of the modern West. As we remember, prophesying the future collapse of Orthodoxy under the impact of Western science, Maistre argued that this future collapse would be beneficial from the perspective of universal Christian unity, for it would speed up the return of the Eastern Churches under the authority of Rome. Maistre's expectations were based on his belief that only Catholicism was capable of withstanding the attacks of rationalism. Contrariwise, firmly convinced that Catholicism was eroded from within, by the rationalism that represented the very foundation of the Catholic system, the Slavophiles argued that, just as rationalism was foreign to Orthodoxy, likewise, Orthodoxy was immune to the corrosive effects of rationalism. Kireevsky stated that "orthodox believers could not arrive at unbelief through the natural development of reason, as thinking people of other confessions have done". For the most part,

[636] *Ibidem*, p. 205.

[637] Alain Besançon, *The Rise of the Gulag: Intellectual Origins of Leninism*, translated by Sarah Matthews, Continuum, New York, 1981, pp. 75-76.

Kireevsky argued, Orthodox believers "lose faith not because of intellectual difficulties, but because of the temptations of life, and they import rationalistic considerations only in an attempt to justify to themselves the apostasy of their own hearts".[638]

The Slavophiles believed that the historical evolution of modern rationalism itself was leading to abstract reason becoming aware of its own "limited one-sidedness"[639]. Thus, for Kireevsky, modern philosophy was becoming more and more aware of the inner contradictions of the rationalist approach. This awareness, the Slavophiles argued, was justifying integral reason, as reason itself was becoming aware of the fact that it needs something superior that pertains to other capacities of the spirit[640]. Reflecting on the evolution of German idealism, and in particular on Hegel's philosophy, which he regarded as the final and the most developed expression of Western rationalism, Kireevsky believed that "Western philosophy" found "itself in a situation where it" could not "continue any further along its abstract-rational path", for it had "become conscious of the one-sidedness of abstract rationality" and could not "strike out along a new path, since all its strength" had "consisted in developing precisely this abstract rationality"[641]. Abstract reason arrived at the end of its journey, the Western mind was realizing that it was in need of religious belief, and yet, it could not go back to its old religious belief since the latter was itself the source of the West's rationalism. In this sense, Kireevsky regarded Schelling's critique of Hegel, and Schelling's final philosophy of revelation as "the most

[638] Ivan Kireevsky, "On the Necessity and Possibility of New Principles in Philosophy", p. 201. Denying the validity of the conclusions of autonomous reason in the name of integral being, Kireevsky argued that the correct use of reason rested on moral and ecclesial premises. Otherwise said, right judgment depended on the holiness of one's life, acquired through the integration in the "organism of truth and love" that was the Church. Once this bond of love was broken through sin, reason lost its integrality. Separated reason became a tool in the service of the sinful passions. The one-sided conclusions of separated reason were used as means for justifying the sinful orientation of one's soul.

[639] Ivan Kireevsky, "On the Nature of European Culture and on its Relation to Russian Culture", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 192.

[640] *Ibidem*, p. 193.

[641] *Ibidem*, p. 211.

convenient point of departure on" Russia's journey "from borrowed systems to an independent philosophy that will correspond to the basic principles of ancient Russian civilization and be capable of subordinating the divided civilization of the West to the integral consciousness of believing reason"[642]. Thus, Kireevsky believed that the evolution of Western philosophy was preparing the ground for a return to the thought of the Church Fathers. Or, more precisely, the evolution of Western philosophy was calling for a new Christian philosophy that would respond to the philosophical problems of German idealism in the spirit of the Church Fathers. As indicated by Walicki, for the Slavophiles,

> *the essence of this new 'Russian Orthodox' philosophy was to be the rejection of autonomy in favor of 'wholeness' in all spheres of human life, both individual and social: the autonomy of reason was to be rejected in the name of spiritual wholeness, the autonomy of the individual in the name of the wholeness of both individual and society, and the autonomy of the separate spheres of human activity in the name of cultural wholeness. [And] it was the role of Orthodox faith to guarantee and safeguard this wholeness*[643].

If the opposition to philosophical rationalism had determined Maistre to preach censorship and the limitation of access to education, especially for Russia – although, despite his earlier affirmations from *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, in *Du Pape* he had expressed his hopes that Orthodoxy would be wiped out as soon as possible by modern philosophy and science –, consequent with their understanding of faith as freedom, the Slavophiles defended the freedom of philosophy and science. Their attitude was justified first of all by the fact that they regarded faith without freedom and reflection as a degrading religious perversion. In full contrast with Maistre's memorial addressed to Tsar Alexander I, addressing themselves to the newly liberated Serbian nation, the Slavophiles were urging the Serbs to make sure that in their new state, universal access to education is being provided, not only because giving access to knowledge to

[642] Ivan Kireevsky, "On the Necessity and Possibilityof New Principles in Philosophy", p. 213.
[643] Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 160.

each person was the right thing to do from a moral point of view[644], but because through education "*s'élargit et s'affermit la raison, grand don de Dieu*"[645]. The Slavophiles defended the freedom of philosophy because they were firmly convinced that the free development of philosophy was leading to the justification of faith, and that reason can be raised "above its usual level", to the status of "believing reason"[646]. The exterior, historical expression, of this inner development of the mind, was the development of a new culture that was both religious and rational. The Slavophiles believed that all that was necessary in order for this to happen was the free encounter between Orthodoxy and the West. As argued by George Florovsky, "the Slavophiles' demand for freedom was born from the firmness of their faith"[647]. Political chaos and rebellion, the Slavophiles argued, could not result from the relaxation/abandonment of the regime of censorship that reigned in Russia at the time of Nicholas I. On the contrary, censorship itself was responsible for destroying the vitality of the Russian tradition, as it was reducing to silence its living expressions. For the Slavophiles, it was precisely this narrow conservatism (the official conservatism of Nicholas that gave the Slavophiles a lot of trouble[648], and to whose development, as indicated, Maistre seems to have had a significant contribution) that was destroying the living force of conservation, thus paving the way for revolution[649]. Thus, one aspect of Slavophile thought that was perfectly in tune with the most noble aspirations of modern

[644] We have here an example where the Slavophiles fully support the egalitarian ideals of modernity.

[645] Aleksei Khomiakov et *alii*, "Aux Serbes – Epître de Moscou", postface to Nicolas Berdiaev, *Khomiakov*, p.193. This letter from 1860, addressed to the Serbian nation which had become an autonomous principality in 1817, had been signed by eleven Slavophiles: Alexis Khomiakov, Michel Pogodine, Alexandre Kocheliov, Ivan Béliaïev, Nicolas Elaguine, Iouri Samarine, Pierre Bezsonov, Constantin Aksakov, Pierre Barteniev, Fiodor Echijov, and Ivan Aksakov (I have used the names from the postface from Berdyaev's book). The purpose of the letter was to provide political and spiritual guidance to the newly liberated Serbian nation, which was in the process of constructing its own national state after more than four centuries of Ottoman domination. The letter practically outlines the project of an Orthodox society.

[646] Ivan Kireevsky, "On the Necessity and Possibility of New Principles in Philosophy", p. 198.

[647] Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. 2, p. 106.

[648] The writings of the Slavophiles had often been censured by the Russian authorities which were very suspicious as far as this intellectual group was concerned, but also quite puzzled by its *sui generis* defense of Russia's traditional institutions which intersected modern liberal values.

[649] Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 1, pp. 132-134; vol. 2, p. 186.

liberalism, and that made a perfect contrast with Maistre's political agenda, was the opposition to censorship and the defense of intellectual freedom. Whereas Maistre's suggestions that truth must be concealed from the masses make one think of the atheist Catholicism of the Grand Inquisitor, Aksakov straightforwardly declares that "not to believe in the power of truth to triumph means not to believe in truth itself", and "this is a form of godlessness, for God is truth". For Akaskov, "when operating freely […], truth […] is always strong enough to defend itself"[650]. Kireevsky regarded a regime of intellectual quarantine as neither realistic nor recommendable. Its only result, he thought, would have been that of conferring to modern ideas the attraction attached to "a forbidden fruit"[651]. On the contrary, only through the free development of philosophy would Russia have been capable of liberating itself progressively from the charm of rationalism. For Kireevsky, as for the other Slavophiles, "all the questions of western culture" had to be "acknowledged and resolved, not avoided"[652].

If Maistre's thought is defined by its opposition to the Enlightenment, we can say that Kireevsky wished to realize a synthesis between the Orthodox tradition and "the highest and most valuable fruits of contemporary enlightenment". His ultimate goal, which defines the spirit of the Slavophile philosophy as a whole, was nothing less than an "Orthodox Enlightenment"[653]. For the Slavophiles, the Orthodox Christian principle was the only principle that could confer to the secularized West the unity and finality that it had lost. The subordination of the scientific and democratic achievements of the modern Western civilization to a higher Orthodox principle would not mean the denial of the former by the latter, but instead the concomitant recognition of both the former's inner value and of their insufficiency. Unlike the case of Maistre, where such a

[650] Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. 2, p. 106.
[651] Ivan Kireevsky, "Fragments", in *On Spiritual Unity*, pp. 279-280.
[652] Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. 2, p. 26.
[653] Ivan Kireevsky, in Vladimir V. Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, vol. 2, p. 211 (reference not given).

scenario was out of discussion, the Slavophiles were seeking the reconciliation between Christianity and modernity, and through this reconciliation, they were seeking to practically save modernity from itself – to neutralize its nihilist potential that was related to its secular dimension, itself an unfortunate historical accident provoked by the spiritual degeneration of Western Christianity, and by its inner crisis. In fact, just like Dostoyevsky, as we shall see, the Slavophiles believed that Russia's historical existence was justified by this theologico-political project that it had to accomplish, thus liberating "mankind from the one-sided and false development that its history had taken under the influence of the West"[654]. This reconciliation, the Slavophiles argued, had to begin in Russia itself with the reconciliation between the Westernized elite and the God-bearing people[655]. In this sense, the Slavophiles believed that by reconciling the Western contradictions in their own country, by basically assuming the Cross of the Western contradictions and bearing it towards the resurrection of a new Christian culture, the Russian people had to fulfill a missionary mission, essentially turning Russia into the land of the future civilization and thus, into a Lighthouse that will guide the West and all the nations of the world out of darkness and towards the light of Orthodoxy[656]. Thus, the Slavophile reconciliation of reason and faith and the subsequent Slavophile reconciliation of freedom and unity were ultimately supposed to gain a historical expression through the reconciliation between Christianity and modernity, between past and future, between Russia and the West, in the form of a new, universal civilization. This final synthesis constituted for them the *telos* of human history.

The Slavophile doctrine had emerged as a reaction of the traditional structures of the Russian society to the identity crisis triggered by the brutal secularization of Peter the Great. Thus, the

[654] *Ibidem*, p. 203.
[655] Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 2, pp. 45-46.
[656] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol. 1, p. 63.

Slavophile theologico-political project rested on the belief that, despite Peter's modernization, "the essence of Russia's civilization […] still" existed "among the people and what is most important in the Holy Orthodox Church. Hence", Kireevsky argued,

> it is on this foundation and on no other that we must erect the sturdy edifice of Russian culture, which heretofore has been constructed out of mixed and, for the most part, foreign materials, and which therefore must be rebuilt with our own pure materials […].The construction of this building can be carried out only when […] the class whose appointed role in society is to develop the social self-consciousness […], finally becomes fully convinced of the one-sidedness of European culture[and,] growing more keenly aware of the need for new intellectual principles […], it turns to the pure fountainhead of the ancient Orthodox faith of its nation […].Then, having thrown off the yoke of the rationalistic systems of European philosophy, the educated Russian will find in the depths of the […] living, integral philosophy of the Holy Fathers of the Church complete answers to the very questions of the mind and heart that most perturb a soul deceived by the latest results of Western self-consciousness. [And thus,] in the former life of one's country will be discovered the possibility of understanding how a different culture may be developed[657].

In accordance with the basic principles of their epistemology, the Slavophiles wanted to reconcile the Western science of the Russian elite, which by itself would have become "*froide et stérile*", with the living Orthodox faith of the people, which, left to itself, would have remained blind[658]. The product of this synthesis would have been a living science that would have brought the West itself back to life.

The Slavophiles had vituperated Peter's brutal modernization through which the Russian elite and Russian institutions were converted to an exterior and formal civilization (the typical case of an artificial modernization) that rested on theological errors. Thus, the Russian elite and Peter's bureaucratic state, particularly loathed by the Slavophiles, had become alienated from the people and subject to the contradictions of the West. Divided between a Westernized elite and an Orthodox popular culture, Russian civilization was suffering, as it had lost the unity of old

[657] Ivan Kireevsky, "On the Nature of European Culture and on its Relation to Russian Culture", in *On Spiritual Unity*, pp. 231-232.
[658] Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 2, p. 10.

Russia. This division was sealed by the worsening of the servitude of the Russian peasantry during the eighteenth century[659]. In striking opposition to Maistre, who was warning against such a foolishness, the Slavophiles have made great efforts to promote the liberation of the peasants[660]. Nevertheless, Russia's entry on the stage of world history, just at the moment when the West was entering into crisis, represented for the Slavophiles more than just a coincidence; in fact, it represented a providential event[661]. Thus, the apostasy of Peter the Great, and all the suffering that the people and the Church had endured because of it, appeared nevertheless as the opportunity for the deliverance of the West from its own contradictions, but also as the

[659] Although already in the 11th century certain Russian peasants were serfs, the number of serfs grew and the conditions of the regime of serfdom worsened throughout the next centuries. By the middle of the 17th century the vast majority of the Russian peasants had become serfs. During the eighteenth century, under the influence of Western European Enlightenment, the successors of Peter the Great have enacted a series of liberal reforms whose purpose was the emancipation of the nobility, culminating with the *Charter of the Gentry* issued by Catherine the Great in 1785, a document that codified the rights and privileges of the Russian aristocracy. If before these reforms, ownership of land by the Russian aristocracy depended on military or civil service rendered to the Tsar, in 1731, through an *ukase* (decree of the Russian Tsar having the force of law) of Tsarina Ann, the property rights of the nobility will become inalienable and independent of the military or civil service, which in its turn will be abolished in 1762 through an *ukase* of Tsar Peter III. The *Charter of the Gentry* confirmed these reforms as well as others, which included the right of the nobles to be judged only by a Court formed of their equals. However, it seems that the cost of the emancipation of the nobility was the worsening of the regime of servitude of the peasantry, "*classe dont la relative liberté dans la Russie moscovite n'était pas due à des droits spécifiques mais plutôt à la dépendance des nobles par rapport au pouvoir tsariste*" (Stéphane Vibert: "*Pravda*: vérité et justice", p. 261). If previously the peasants had the right to complain to the Tsar for the treatment to which they were submitted to, beginning with the reign of Catherine the Great (1762-1796), the peasants lost this right. Moreover, the eighteenth century policies meant to strengthen the nobility also included the periodical offering of crown serfs as gifts to the representatives of the nobility (during her reign, Catherine the Great, enlightened monarch admired by Voltaire and Diderot, had offered to the nobility more than a million serfs), something that in most cases implied the worsening of the regime of servitude. Throughout the eighteenth century, while the strength of the aristocracy had been growing, the state of the peasants constantly worsened. In 1747 the nobles acquired the right to sell their peasants without land. In 1760 they acquired the right to arbitrarily exile their peasants to Siberia, and, five years later, the right to sentence them to hard labor, a punishment that until then applied only to criminals.

[660] To be more precise, although all the Slavophiles were in favor of the liberation of the peasants, there were differences among them with regard to the way in which this should be accomplished. Thus, as indicated by Walicki, while Konstantin Aksakov, "the most fanatical and least practical of the Slavophiles", wanted to proceed immediately with a radical reform, Ivan Kireevsky proved to be the most cautious and "thought that all changes should be put off until the upper classes had become converted to Slavophile ideals". Khomiakov and the other Slavophiles were somewhere in the middle between these two positions (Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, pp. 229-230). Let us remember the fact that, in principle, Maistre also agreed with the liberation of the peasants (after all, both Maistre and Chaadayev were praising Catholicism for the fact that, unlike Orthodoxy, it had made possible such a fundamental reform in the Middle Ages), but that, paralleling Kireevsky, he argued that this measure had to be postponed until Russia, through the agency of its upper class, came firmly under the control of the Holy See.

[661] Ivan Kireevsky, "On the Necessity and Possibility of New Philosophical Principles", pp. 190-191.

opportunity for the deliverance of Orthodoxy itself from the provincialism, formalism, and the social backwardness to which it had been condemned after the schism. The Slavophiles admitted these historical misgivings, but, nevertheless, saw in them a sign of Orthodoxy's spiritual superiority, which, unlike the Christian West, did not redirect its spiritual energies from the contemplation of the other world to the change of this world. Given the fact that secularization was the motor of Western development, the Slavophiles argued that all the technical and scientific achievements of the West, which were not bad in themselves, have nevertheless been achieved at the price of a spiritual catastrophe[662]. However, Kireevsky stressed the fact that the separation between the Christian West and the Christian East has represented a loss for both of them. The West has lost the purity of faith, but Eastern Christianity, although it preserved the purity of faith, was unable to shape the exterior institutions of the Orthodox nations. As we remember, this constituted the main reason for Chaadayev's repudiation of the Eastern Church, and one of the reasons for Maistre's similar position, which had inspired the former. According to Kireevsky, such a civilizing transformation required the common effort of both East and West[663].

Thus, Kireevsky's "Orthodox Enlightenment" would have meant both a return to the pre-schism unity of the Christian Church, and a final fulfillment of the theologico-political destiny of Christianity, which consisted in the harmonious reconciliation between the spirituality of the East and the civilization of the West. The Slavophile philosophy of history replicates the structure of the Hegelian philosophy of history, with its succession of thesis, antithesis, and the final reconciliation in the form of a superior synthesis. According to Stéphane Vibert,

> *l'Universel pour les Slavophiles n'est plus donné une fois pour toutes, identifié à la Vérité éternelle. Au contraire, il s'incarne dans une temporalité différente et s'inscrit*

[662] Isabelle Grimberg, "La recherche d'une identité qui se dérobe", p. 62.
[663] Ivan Kireevsky, "On the Necessity and Possibility of New Philosophical Principles", p. 190.

*dans une perspective historiciste, à savoir une dialectique résolvant l'opposition entre un premier temps de la Vérité vécue seulement 'hors du monde' (par les moines, mystiques et contemplatifs) et un deuxième temps antithétique mettant l'accent sur le développement des aspects extérieurs de la connaissance au détriment du savoir intérieur. Le troisième temps, finalité du processus universel, consacrera la réconciliation du principe donnant le sens global – préservé au sein de la Russie comme nation orthodoxe et du peuple comme Eglise vivante (*sobornost*) – et des formes sociales qui en constituent la teneur et la substance, i.e. la science rationnelle et la puissance étatique*[664].

Ultimately, for the Slavophiles, the Russian culture of the future was called to accomplish "*ce que la culture byzantine n'a pas réussi. Ainsi, au lieu de se limiter à un développement intérieur, il faut que le christianisme investisse toute la réalité extérieure […]. C'est tout le développement du monde contemporain qui doit être assumé et transfiguré*"[665]. Moreover, Rouleau argues that in Kireevsky's philosophy of history one can identify the influence of the theological thought of Joachim of Fiore, whose theological vision of history, as seen, exerted a crucial influence also on Maistre's philosophy of history. This influence was received by the Slavophiles via the German romantics, but it is also derived directly from certain themes of Russian religious thought such as "*la mystique du 'peuple élu', les doctrines de la 'Troisième Rome', ou même le 'Panslavisme' qui avait pris la relève de ces théories dans une mentalité sécularisée*".[666]

4.5. - The Slavophile political thought

As shown in the previous section, just like Maistre, the Slavophiles manage to providentially reintegrate into a Christian eschatological perspective what may be justly called their own Revolution: Peter's Reform, a Revolution which, unlike Maistre's Revolution, was a top to

[664] Stéphane Vibert, "*Pravda* : Vérité et justice", p. 215.
[665] François Rouleau, *Ivan Kiréievski et la Naissance du Slavophilisme*, Culture et Vérité, Namur, 1990, p. 207.
[666] *Ibidem*, pp. 242-243.

bottom Revolution in which the imported absolutist state was the revolutionary agent while the people were the representatives of the old order. No wonder then that, unlike the aristocratic and clerical conservatism of Maistre and Bonald, Slavophile conservatism would be essentially populist, both from a religious and a political point of view. If Maistre was recommending to Tsar Alexander I strengthening the nobility and not liberating the peasants –although Maistre insisted that the Tsar should take care that the peasants be treated properly and that they be not subject to abuses–[667], the most radical of the Slavophiles in what concerned the peasant issue, Konstanin Aksakov, "gives the impression" in his writings "that the peasants could exist quite well without the nobility"[668]. This anticipates "Tolstoy's view of the 'upper classes' as an unnecessary and artificial growth on the body of the people"[669]. The Slavophiles did not reject hierarchy in itself, but insisted that it should be based on merit, and that it should bring with it not more rights, but more obligations. In the *Epistle to the Serbs*, the reunited Slavophiles gave their Serbian Orthodox brothers the following advice: "*Que le juge juge, l'administrateur administre et le prince soit prince, comme il est nécessaire à la société; mais en dehors de sa fonction, que chaque Serbe, maintenant et toujours, soit égal à ses frères*". Moreover, "*qu'il y ait sur la terre serbe un tel luxe sacré que l'homme travailleur n'y connaisse pas le besoin et les privations. Ensuite que la richesse et l'éclat parent les demeures de Dieu*"[670].

Commenting on Tocqueville's *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*, Iuri Samarin made some crucial observations, which indicate the popular, anti-elitist, and anti-bureaucratic nature of Slavophile conservatism, and which indicate the specific position that the latter occupies in the context of nineteenth-century European conservatism. Samarin stressed the fact that

[667] Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, p. 32.
[668] Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 281.
[669] *Ibidem*.
[670] Aleksei Khomiakov et *alii*, "Aux Serbes – Epître de Moscou", pp. 176, 188.

> *comme chez nous, de même en France, en Angleterre, en Allemagne, il n'y a au premier plan qu'une seule question: le plein pouvoir absolu du raisonnement dans l'organisation de l'âme humaine, de la société civile, de l'État, est-il légitime ? Le raisonnement est-il en droit de briser et d'estropier les convictions religieuses, les traditions familiales et civiques, en un mot, de corriger à sa manière la vie ? La tyrannie du raisonnement dans le domaine de la philosophie, de la vie et de la science, correspond, sur le terrain de la pratique, dans la vie sociale, à la tyrannie du pouvoir central.* La manie de tout administrer, de tout réglementer, de substituer partout une règle déduite d'un principe abstrait à la tradition et à la libre inspiration. *Le pouvoir est, avec la société, dans le même rapport que le raisonnement avec l'âme humaine*[671].

Samarin argued that "*le despotisme du raisonnement*" determined "*un légitime sentiment d'ennui et de dégoût*" of authors such as Tocqueville and Montalambert. Up to this point we can notice the similarities with Maistre's critique of the revolutionary ambition to reorganize society according to abstract rational principles, a conservative critique that opposes to the shallowness of the modern legislating rationality the complex social order that has resulted from centuries of historical evolution. Nevertheless, Samarin stresses the fact that,

> *en défendant la liberté de la vie et la tradition […], Tocqueville, Montalembert, Riehl et les autres […], s'adressent de préférence à l'aristocratie, parce que, dans les données historiques de l'Europe occidentale, l'aristocratie, mieux que les autres partis, réalise le torysme vital […]. Nous, au contraire, nous nous adressons au simple peuple, mais pour le même motif qui les fait sympathiser avec l'aristocratie, c'est-à-dire parce que chez nous, le peuple garde en lui-même le don de l'immolation de soi, la liberté de l'inspiration morale et le respect de la tradition. En Russie l'unique asile du torysme, c'est l'izba noire du paysan. Dans nos administrations, dans nos salles universitaires, souffle un desséchant whigisme*[672].

As already indicated, for the Slavophiles, just as *sobornost* was a faithful reflection of inner wholeness, likewise, Catholic ecclesiology was a reflection of the dictatorship of reason at the level of the *psyché*. Samarin's analogy between the dictatorship of reasoning and the tyranny of the modern centralized and bureaucratic state indicates the fact that, for the Slavophiles, the institutional prototype of the modern centralized and bureaucratic state was the Roman Catholic

[671] Yury Samarin, *Œuvres complètes de Samarin*, I, 394, quoted in Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 2, p. 3.

[672] Yury Samarin, *Œuvres complètes de Samarin*, I, 195-196, quoted in Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 2, p. 3.

Church[673]. Florovsky noted that if we identify an analogy of structure between the theocratic traditionalism of Maistre and the utopian socialism of Saint-Simon (bureaucratic, hierarchic, and centralized), in its turn, the traditionalism of the Slavophiles – in which one can observe "an evident aftertaste of a certain distinctive anarchism, a hostility towards deliberate interference in the course of organic processes" – "unexpectedly joins ranks with socialist radicalism", or, more exactly, with the anarchist expressions of the left[674]. The same connection is underlined by Berdyaev, for whom the Slavophiles essentially represent (although Berdyaev does not use the term) a group of "Tory anarchists"[675]. For the Slavophiles, self-organized through the spontaneity of love, the Russian peasant commune was a living cultural incarnation of the principles of Orthodox ecclesiology. In the words of Aksakov, "the council of the commune (*mir*)" was "in effect a little *sobor*, the supreme authority which no one", except God, "can judge"[676]. On the contrary, the state, with its bureaucratic rationality and hierarchy, was an object of exorcism. One may argue that for the Slavophiles, the synthesis between state absolutism and social individualism, which characterized political modernity, and the subsequent replacement of

[673] In this sense, it is interesting to refer to Weber's observations concerning the legal bureaucratic order. According to Weber, this order characterizes the modern state and all modern institutions, such as the army and the "capitalistic enterprise". But this type of organization, Weber argues, is also "well illustrated by the administrative role of the priesthood (Kaplanokratie) in the modern [Catholic] church, which has expropriated almost all of the old church benefices, which were in former days to a large extent subject to private appropriation. It is also illustrated by the notion of a [Papal] universal episcopate, which is thought of as formally constituting a universal legal competence in religious matters. Similarly, the doctrine of Papal infallibility is thought of as in fact involving a universal competence, but only one which functions 'ex cathedra', in the sphere of the office, thus implying the typical distinction between the sphere of office and that of the private affairs of the incumbent". According to Weber, "experience tends universally to show that the purely bureaucratic type of administrative organization – that is, the monocratic variety of bureaucracy – is, from a purely technical point of view, capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency and is in this sense formally the most rational known means of exercising authority over human beings […]. The whole pattern of everyday life is cut to fit this framework. If bureaucratic administration is, other things being equal, always the most rational type from a technical point of view, the needs of mass administration make it today completely indispensable. The choice is only that between bureaucracy and dilettantism in the field of administration"(Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology*, translated by Ephraim Fischoff, Bedminster Press, New York, 1968, vol. 1, pp. 221-223). Needless to say, Maistre's argument in favor of Papal infallibility follows to a great extent the same argumentative pattern.

[674] Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. 2, p. 17.

[675] Nicolas Berdiaev, *Khomiakov*, p. 52.

[676] Konstantin Aksakov, *Zamechaniya na novoe administrativnoe ustroĭstvo krest'yan v Rossii* (Leipzig 1861), p.107, quoted in Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, pp. 260-261.

the spontaneous social order with a capitalist/contractualist order supervised, and more recently, organized by the state, was more or less reflective of a truly demonic synthesis between the Catholic principle of formal authority, based on utilitarian arguments, and the anti-ecclesial/anti-social Protestant freedom. In *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, Tocqueville argued that in modern democratic regimes, each individual, "*retiré à l'écart, est comme étranger à la destine de tous les autres*"[677]. "*Au-dessus de ceux-là s'élève un pouvoir immense et tutélaire*", Tocqueville continues, "*qui se charge seul d'assurer leur jouissance et de veiller sur leur sort*"[678]. If for the Slavophiles the life of the Russian peasantry was based on the experience of organic togetherness and integral reason, united in associations with the purpose of defending their individual interests, the Americans described by Tocqueville, "*dans la plupart des operations de l'esprit, […] n'en appelle[nt] qu'à l'effort individuel de [leur] raison*"[679]. Thus, while for Konstantin Aksakov the organic togetherness of the Russian peasant commune was nurtured by a living spiritual tradition, in the United States, "a country without natural ties of kinship […], shared recollections or traditions […]", or "a common faith", one could not encounter "a living people" but "a state machine constructed of human beings"[680]. For the Slavophiles there was no doubt that the constitutional artificialism of the United States of America represented the "purest expression of European principles"[681].

But one should not make the mistake of believing that the Slavophile opposition to the state brought with it an opposition to the monarchy. On the contrary: the Slavophiles were fervent defenders of Russian autocracy. But for them, as underlined by Berdyaev "*l'autocratie est liée à*

[677] Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, tome II, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, Paris, 1990, p.265.
[678] *Ibidem*.
[679] *Ibidem*, p.14.
[680] Kostantin Aksakov, i. 57, quoted in Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 245.
[681] Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 168.

l'esprit anarchique, antiétatique du peuple". Slavophile absolutism, Berdyaev argues, "*était un anarchisme à sa manière*". Conceiving the relation between the Tsar and the Russian people as a paternalist, familial relation, the Slavophiles "*avaient une aversion sans borne pour la bureaucratie qui séparait le peuple de son élu, le tsar*". The same idiosyncratic feelings were stirred by the interposition of the aristocracy between the Tsar and the Russian people. But the Slavophile "Tory anarchism" and anarcho-monarchism were not at all appreciated by the regime of Nicholas I. "*Tout cela*", Berdyaev underlines, "*était incompréhensible pour des gens tels que le comte Zakrevski et ses pareils. Le conservatisme était compréhensible en tant que fonctionnarisme et servilité, et était incompréhensible en tant que libre expression de l'âme nationale*"[682]. Nicholas I himself did not enjoy at all the idea of a monarchy circumscribed by a living tradition. Independently of the official slogan of his regime, *Orthodoxy, Nationality, Autocracy*, Nicholas I wanted to remain a European monarch and a heir of Peter the Great[683].

The Slavophiles argued that until the Reform of Peter the Great, which led to the transformation of the Church into a state department, unlike in the West, in Russia, the Church and the political power have not been in conflict but have been harmoniously united preservation of their distinct natures, notwithstanding what they consider some historical accidents such as Ivan the Terrible's rule. The separation between the religious and the political sphere was regarded as unacceptable, for, since the same Christian people lived in the two orders, their separation would have been an attack against wholeness of being and against the organic conception of existence[684]. However, for the Slavophiles, this did not involve the Church's subordination to the Tsar. The fact that Russia was called holy, Kireevsky was arguing, was

[682] Nicolas Berdiaev, *Khomiakov*, pp. 52, 72, 126-127, 133, 136.
[683] Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 147.
[684] Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 2, p. 196; Nicolas Berdiaev, *Khomiakov*, p. 138.

owed to its monasteries and its relics and not to the correspondence between political and ecclesiastical structures as in the case of the Holy Roman Empire[685]. Anticipating, and possibly inspiring, Dostoyevsky's theologico-political theses expressed in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Kireevsky argued that, having a superior nature when compared to the state, the Church could neither be subordinated to the former, nor put on equal footing. Instead,

> "*le devoir de l'État est de se mettre d'accord avec l'Église, pour se donner, comme objet principal de son existence, la tâche de se pénétrer de plus en plus de l'esprit de l'Église, et, non seulement de ne pas regarder l'Église comme un moyen de se faciliter sa propre existence, mais encore de ne voir dans sa propre existence qu'un moyen de réaliser plus pleinement et plus facilement l'Église de Dieu sur la terre*"[686].

However, Kireevsky emphasized the fact that this would in no way imply that the Church would exercise a coercive authority over the state. For, "*forcer les gens à croire est contraire à l'esprit du christianisme, et produit l'effet contraire à celui que l'on se propose, au grand détriment de l'État comme de l'Église*"[687].

The Slavophile defense of Russian autocracy is accompanied by a specific theory concerning the origins of the latter. Dimitri Khomiakov, the son of Aleksei Khomiakov, argued that even though Western nations cannot stand political autocracy, they easily accept religious autocracy. According to the same author, the exact opposite phenomenon occurs in Russia. In Russia, people easily accept political autocracy but they will not condone religious autocracy[688]. In other words, according to the Slavophile vision, if the West has a political and therefore material understanding of freedom, Russia instead understands freedom in spiritual terms. According to Khomiakov and Aksakov, this Russian understanding of freedom explained the absolute power of the Russian monarch. The unlimited power of the Tsar did not result from the divine nature of

[685] Ivan Kireevsky, "On the Nature of European Culture and on its Relation to Russian Culture", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 217.
[686] Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 1, pp. 195-196.
[687] *Ibidem*.
[688] *Ibidem*, vol. 2, p. 185.

his office, but was owed instead to the fact that the Russian people were not interested in political freedom. Thus, the Slavophiles argued that the sovereignty of the Tsar originated in a social contract, but in the kind of social contract that could be made only by the Russian people, the most Christian people on earth. According to this theory, Russians had transferred power to the Tsar completely and definitively, without demanding any guarantees in exchange and without trying to draw any limits to the exercise of sovereignty. For the purpose of the Slavophile transfer of sovereignty was not the defense of any natural rights, as in the modern understanding of political contractualism, but the liberation from the burden of politics, whose mundane nature was considered to be incompatible with authentic Christian existence[689]. In the Slavophile view, only a people liberated from all political preoccupations, was able to live a truly Christian life[690] and, therefore, to experience authentic freedom. Thus, for Aksakov, "political liberty cannot be called freedom". Instead, "only where the people have nothing to do with government, only where there is an absolute and unrestricted monarchy which safeguards the people's freedom in the moral sphere, only then can you speak of true freedom on earth"[691]. And while Western man "grovels before the idol of rebellion as formerly he groveled before the idol of authority", the Russian "regards the rebel as only another incarnation of the slave"[692]. Only Russians, who are immune both to the constitutional and the revolutionary spirit, two forms of materialistic enslavement, are truly free. And in order to preserve this freedom, they refuse to rebel even in case they are oppressed by somebody like Ivan the Terrible. Accepting this fact as God's will, and committed to the law of love, they only pray that God will change the heart of

[689] Nicolas Berdiaev, *Khomiakov*, p. 129.
[690] Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 1, p. 162.
[691] Konstantin Aksakov, quoted in Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p.250 (reference not given).
[692] Konstantin Aksakov, "On the Same Subject published in 1860" (the title refers to an earlier essay entitled "Fundamental Principles of Russian History"), 7-17, quoted in Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 243.

the Tsar[693]. But this fact, Khomiakov argued, did not imply that the Tsar possessed any authority whatsoever in spiritual matters. The Tsar did not receive from the people any powers in matters that concerned "*questions de conscience, dans celles du diocèse ecclésiastique, de l'enseignement dogmatique, de l'administration ecclésastique*". According to Khomiakov, the people do not consider the Tsar

> *comme un prophète inspiré par une force invisible, à la façon dont les Latins se représentent l'évêque de Rome. Nous pensons qu'étant libre, le Souverain peut, comme tout homme, tomber dans l'erreur et si, à Dieu ne plaise, un malheur semblable arrivait malgré les prières constantes des fils de l'Eglise, l'Empereur ne perdrait alors aucun de ses droits à l'obéissance de ses sujets dans les affaires séculières ; mais l'Eglise ne subirait aucun préjudice dans sa grandeur et dans sa plénitude, car jamais son vrai et unique Chef ne la trahira. Dans le cas supposé, il y aurait un chrétien de moins dans le sein de l'Eglise, c'est tout*[694].

In fact, as emphasized by Vibert, given its particular theologico-political premises, the Slavophile defense of Tsarist autocracy implied a desacralization of the imperial office. While the spiritual plenitude experienced by the Russian people grants to the latter the status of a self-sufficient community that does not require a mediator for its salvation, the political power that is abandoned as a result of its impure nature inevitably becomes the subject of a radical devaluation. For this reason, as argued by Vibert, the imperial office is deprived "*de toute connotation mystique, de toute vocation à une quelconque médiation sacrale héritée du modèle byzantin*". Thus, "*le mouvement slavophile, constamment jugé par ses principaux commentateurs comme conservateur, réactionnaire, patriarcal se révèle – comme l'atteste son jugement des relations entre pouvoir et société – être un puissant signe d'imprégnation des idées-valeurs liées à la modernité*"[695]. We are dealing of course with a hybrid expression of political modernity. While the contractual origin of the sovereign power deprives the latter of its sacred character,

[693] Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 2, p. 97.
[694] Khomiakov, *Œuvres*, t. 2, pp. 36-38, quoted in Nicolas Berdiaev, *Khomiakov*, pp. 71-72.
[695] Stéphane Vibert, "*Pravda*: Vérité et justice", pp. 206-208, 218.

this does not lead to the political affirmation of individual rights, neither to the constitution of a secular and artificial social order formed of contracting individuals. Instead, the transfer of sovereignty and the desacralization of the imperial office are based on the presupposition that the existence of the Russian peasant is completely integrated in the ecclesial organism, a fact that denies the validity of the anthropological presuppositions of Western modernity[696].

Thus, if Maistre's theologico-political architecture presupposes a sovereignty of divine origin hierarchically subordinated – in the ideal scenario – to the ecclesial authority that, by limiting the former, only strengthens its legitimacy, Khomiakov puts forward a conception of sovereignty that is both unlimited and deprived of sacred legitimacy. One may even talk of a Leviathan that is instituted not for the purpose of ending "the state of nature", but for the purpose of preserving the state of grace. In a certain sense, then, given the fact that Khomiakov locates the origin of sovereignty in the people, his theory of sovereignty seems to be more Catholic than Maistre's defense of absolute sovereignty (as Catholic theologians insist that political power is transferred from the people to the sovereign, something that in Maistre's political thought remains only a

[696] According to Vibert, the Slavophile doctrine presents "*la particularité de récuser tant la 'légitimation sacrale du profane' – un 'droit divin' tenu directement d'en haut – que la disqualification du principe même de médiation, aboutissant à la séparation définitive des deux sphères temporelle et spirituelle en Occident. Ce constat de discontinuité sans séparation entre les deux domaines permet aux Slavophiles de réfuter l'orientation absolutiste de l'Empire pétersbourgeois sans verser dans la quête occidentaliste d'une véritable sécularisation, et d'espérer une 'culture orthodoxe' convertissant l'ensemble des formes sociales temporelles. De là, il est possible d'affirmer que les Slavophiles prennent acte d'une effectivité de la dualité ontologique, mais la récusent par l'invalidité des principes rationnels qui la fondent, tant dans l'existence d'un objet 'monde' organisé selon des lois régulières que dans celle d'un sujet 'individu' autonome découvrant ces lois par la puissance de sa seule raison. Au contraire, selon eux, la Vérité chrétienne s'incarne dans le monde terrestre sous les traits de la Providence et de l'Eglise vivante, et l'homme ne s'y intègre que par sa foi ouvrant à la grâce divine et subordonnant la 'raison raisonnante'. Il s'agit donc de restaurer un régime de l'Unité ontologique, mais qui se justifie désormais par son avènement futur, en tant que 'culture ultime', après le passage rendu nécessaire par 'l'Occident', moment présent de la séparation et de la dualité ontologique*". For Vibert, Slavophilism's relation with modernity remains essentially ambiguous. Using Louis Dumont's methodological tools, in particular his distinction between traditional holistic societies and modern individualistic societies, Vibert concludes that the Slavophile ideology presents the case of what may be termed a hybrid modernity, apparently unaware of its own nature, or, in Dumont's terms, a " *'pseudo-holisme'* "; "*l'idéologie moderne […] [se greffe] sur une hiérarchie de valeurs réceptive, à dominante holiste, hantée par le fantôme de l'Unité devant sa propre désagrégation*". Referring to Dumont's theories, Vibert argues that the Slavophile ideology is a typical example of how, at the contact with the modern culture, a traditional culture builds "*des répresentations qui la justifient par rapport à la culture dominante […] Ces représentations sont si l'on veut une 'synthèse', plus ou moins profonde, une sorte d'alliage sui generis des deux sortes de représentations*" (*Ibidem*, pp. 201-203, 222).

possibility[697]). The latter, by stressing the direct role played by God in the institution of the monarchical office, has more in common with Byzantine and Russian Medieval political theology, from which, as stressed by Vibert, Slavophile political theology is subtly emancipated. Khomiakov's theory of popular sovereignty would be fully Catholic if Khomiakov would defend the conception of a natural law from which specific political obligations and limits to the political power derive. Instead, the purpose of the Slavophile social contract is to completely extract the people/church from the legal order so that it can live exclusively according to the law of love[698]. In what concerns Maistre, despite his defense of monarchical absolutism, it is precisely the papacy's limiting role in relation to the political power – meant to prevent the abuses of the latter, a role that is therefore essentially political – that determines Fisichella to affirm that, although Maistre's political thought may not formally correspond to the Catholic doctrine of natural law, the substance of Maistrian thought remains fundamentally bound to the Catholic understanding of this law. Papal infallibility represented the necessary (although not sufficient) precondition of Maistre's theocratic project, meant to prevent among others the abuses of monarchical absolutism. For Maistre, there could be no theocracy, and therefore no prevention of the abuses of the monarchy, unless the Church itself was a perfect monarchical regime, in which the infallible sovereign was identified beyond any doubt and beyond any contestation of its authority coming from the lower levels of the Church. The political sovereign, Maistre argued, could have been limited only by another sovereign whose authority was of a different nature. The political sovereign could not have been limited by a Church assembly. On

[697] For more details see section 1.3.

[698]Thus, as stressed by George Florovsky, the Slavophile phenomenon confronts us with the paradox of a philosophy of history, or more precisely of a "philosophy of universal Christian destiny", that tends towards a complete spiritual transfiguration of the whole terrestrial order, but whose "entire pathos lies precisely in its escape or even retreat from history", retreat whose concrete expression is the abandonment of the political by the people/church (Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. 2, p. 19).

the contrary, Maistre argued that, unable to maintain its unity in any other way, a Church Council that had previously rejected the absolute authority of the Pope, would have necessarily ended under the absolute domination of the political sovereign. Hence, the freedom of the Church in relation to the state, as well as the existence of political freedom in general (understood, in Maistre's terms as enlightened authority, the characteristic that distinguished in his opinion the Western monarchy from Asian despotism) required then the absolute supremacy of the Pope in the Church. But, as already indicated, Dimitri Khomiakov had argued that while the Russian people easily accepted political despotism, papal infallibility represented for them an unacceptable form of spiritual despotism. Put in the service of political freedom, and justified through this argument, the spiritual power of the pope appeared as even more condemnable from the Slavophile perspective.

Opposing revolution as the greatest evil and despising constitutional reforms, the Slavophiles believed that the authentic transformation of the Russian society into a just society, free from oppression and censorship, could have occurred only as a result of the collective exercise of freedom in love, and not through the imposition of political rights by force. The people had to reconvert the elite and the Tsar through their living moral example, whose highest expression was the meekness and resignation with which they endured the oppression of the nobles, regarding the latter not as class enemies but as strayed brothers. Thus, unlike the Westernizers, who argued that the liberation from oppression required a previous Westernizing cultural revolution,[699] the Slavophiles could see the end of serfdom only as a fulfillment of Russia's

[699] The Slavophiles had condemned the tyranny of Ivan the Terrible. Reading Khomiakov's condemnation, Chaadayev, the father of Russian Westernism, wrote to Khomiakov, ironically arguing that he appreciates his judgment, but that he further hopes that the Slavophiles would pursue their critical attitude to the end and condemn also the social environment that made possible the existence of a monster like Ivan the Terrible. The Slavophiles had defended Russia's superiority as opposed to the West by arguing that unlike in the West, in Russia, serfdom has not been imposed through conquest, but has been accepted with resignation by the Christian people and the clergy, as a

Orthodox culture; only by living according to the ideals of Orthodoxy, which were cherished by the people despite their sins, true freedom was accessible. This was achievable only through the inner change of the Russian society, and not through the change of exterior institutions. For Khomiakov, socialism and communism were absurd ideological expressions of the exterior and materialistic civilization of the West. They were based on the ignorance of the fact that a society cannot be better than the sum of its virtues, and that the change of exterior forms is useless as long as people themselves do not change for the better[700]. Convinced of the fact that there are no institutional solutions to society's problems, the Slavophiles regarded morality as the only legitimate and realistic form of politics. As stressed by Khomiakov, the purpose of his "politics" was to rebuild "*l'éducation de la société, [de] l'arracher complètement à la question politique et [de] l'amener à s'occuper d'elle-même, à comprendre combien elle est vide, égoïste et faible […], car le gouvernement ne fait que diriger l'emploi des forces, il ne les crée pas*"[701]. *Notre pays*, Khomiakov argued,

> *ne peut jamais se passionner pour ce qu'on appelle la pratique des institutions civiles. Il croit aux grands principes, il croit à l'homme et à sa conscience, il ne croit pas et ne croira jamais à la sagesse des calculs humains et des dispositions humaines […].Le mesquin, le conditionnel, le contingent, l'a laissé et le laissera toujours indifférente*[702].

Therefore, "*aucune tâche basse*", such as enrichment, political strength or cultural development, "*ne se fera admettre par la conscience de tout le peuple et n'attirera la sympathie de tout le peuple ; or, sans cela le succès et impossible. Il n'y a rien à faire : il faut pour la*

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sin of the nobility from which the latter needed to be healed by God's grace of repentance. Turning the Slavophile argument upside down, Chaadayev argued that, on the contrary, such a situation proved how much more deplorable was Russia's situation when compared to the West (Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, pp. 111-112). Otherwise said, for Chaadayev, voluntary servitude was the worst kind of servitude and, consequently, Slavophilism was just an ideological drug that was concealing and perpetuating Russia's misery.

[700] Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 1, pp. 128-129.

[701] *Ibidem*.

[702] Aleksei Khomiakov, *Œuvres complètes de Khomiakov*, III, 337, quoted in Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 2, p. 200.

Russie être la plus morale, c'est-à-dire la plus chrétienne des sociétés humaines, ou rien"[703]. Hence, from a practical point of view, the Slavophiles believed that the improvement of Russia's social and political institutions could only represent an indirect change resulting from the interior Christian transformation of each Russian individual. The extent of the exterior change could only be directly proportional to the extent of the interior change. The realization of this "Christian Utopia" – "*la plus chrétienne des sociétés humaines*"– could not elude the freedom of each individual person. For this reason, contrary to what one may believe, the Slavophile philosophy of history and, in particular, the national messianism of the Slavophiles, never degenerates into any form of historical or biological determinism[704]. In the end, there is no guarantee that Russia would fulfill its historical mission, for this mission passes through the personal freedom of each Russian. For the Slavophiles, the Russians only received from God the Christian faith in all its purity without deserving it in any way. But, since the Slavophiles insisted on the fact that freedom was the fundamental presupposition of Christianity, nothing could have guaranteed that Russia would have not buried or wasted its precious talents[705].

Finally, as far as the relation between exterior political solutions and the power of personal example is concerned, Maistre and Khomiakov express similar ideas. Thus, like Khomiakov, in one of his letters, Maistre confessed that everyday he was becoming "more convinced of the

[703] *Ibidem*.

[704] Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 1, p. 130; Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 149.

[705] This Slavophile conception reflects the Orthodox understanding of the relation between freedom and grace as synergic. Orthodoxy rejects both the Pelagian view, according to which man does not need grace for the pursuit of a moral life leading to salvation, as well as the opposite view, for which the action of grace is irresistible, independent of man's free choice and depending only on the will of God who bestows grace on whoever He wishes. Instead, Orthodox theology affirms that salvation (and ultimately deification) can be achieved only through cooperation between human freedom and divine grace. The more man cooperates with God's grace, the more grace he receives, and the more grace he receives, the more he is capable to cooperate with it, in a progressive evolution that ultimately leads to deification (just as God became man, so can man become God by virtue of the unity of the divine and human nature in Christ, grace being, as already indicated, the uncreated energy of God that penetrates creation). Salvation and moral action leading to it are accessible to every believer, since God does not refuse his grace to any of his creatures. Yet, although grace is necessary for salvation, nevertheless, it is not sufficient.

great verity that there is no other politics than morals"[706]. For Maistre, "all governments are necessarily good when their subjects are good, in as much as in this supposition, even disordered authority would always lack instruments; while given the contrary supposition, even the wisest authority would be useless to the world"[707]. Changing ourselves, then, is the best way to change governments, "for we cannot remove a vice from our hearts without depriving misled governments of a means of doing evil. Even the most depraved government", Maistre argues, "could never commit a crime without employing a vice"[708]. On the other hand,

> *au premier signal des révolutions, la vertu se cache, et l'on ne voit plus agir que le crime. Qu'est-ce donc que cette liberté dont les fondateurs, les fauteurs et les apôtres sont des scélérats? Ah! Vous avez un moyen sûr d'opérer de grandes et salutaires révolutions. Au lieu d'écouter les prédicateurs de la révolte, travaillez sur vous-mêmes: car c'est vous qui faites les gouvernements, et ils ne peuvent être mauvais si vous êtes bons*[709].

4.6. - The Christian democratic Utopia versus theocratic Machiavellianism

The Slavophiles have been accused of having produced an ideological drug in support of oppression by depicting an idyllic picture of the relation between Tsar and people, by being almost psychotically attached to the utopian vision of a Russian land without class conflict and by basically abandoning all political and republican virtues in the name of a complete withdrawal into an unhistorical, and therefore perverted, ecclesial life[710]. Criticizing some of Khomiakov's views, Nicholas Koshëlev, defined by Walicki as a heterodox Slavophile, has underlined the fact

[706] Joseph de Maistre, Letter to the Chevalier de Rossi, December 19, 1810 in *Oeuvres complètes*, Lyon, Vitte et Perrusel, 1884-1893, vol. 11, p. 528. , quoted in Richard Lebrun, *Throne and Altar*, p. 64.

[707] Joseph de Maistre, "Discours pour le retour du roi de Sardaigne dans ses Etats de terre ferme" in *Oeuvres complètes*, Lyon, Vitte et Perrusel, 1884-1886, vol. 8, p. 466 (passage translated by Richard Lebrun), quoted in Richard Lebrun, *Throne and Altar*, p. 64.

[708] *Ibidem*.

[709] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du Peuple*, p. 261

[710] According to Alain Besançon, the Slavophiles have "construct[ed] a fictional reality, a fictional history, a fictional religion and fictional politics in every field" (Alain Besançon, *Intellectual Origins of Leninism*, p. 65). In this sense, situating Slavophilism in the genealogy of Leninism, Besançon argues that Slavophilism is essentially related "to the fundamental falsehood of Bolshevism in power" (*Ibidem*, p. 77).

that "it was strange" that the Slavophiles "claim[ed] a monopoly on brotherliness for the only nation in contemporary Europe that imposed on its brothers the slavery of serfdom"[711]. However Aksakov's idyllic view of Old Russia functions as a discursive device that articulates a condemnation of the real social relations of the Russian nineteenth-century society[712]. If for Aksakov the anti-political spiritual freedom of the people and the refusal of rebellion were two sides of the same coin, this presupposed absolute freedom of opinion for the people. More exactly, for Aksakov, one could not be a Christian without freedom of conscience and freedom of opinion. Although for the Slavophiles such freedom found its accomplishment only through the voluntary submission of the weak and insufficient individual to the unanimous consciousness of the Church[713], nevertheless submission had to be voluntary. One could not be forced into submission by the group. In the worst case scenario one could only be ostracized. Thus, following the pattern of the Slavophile understanding of the Church, Aksakov was arguing that the peasant commune, although an organic community that did not originate in a social contract between individuals, did not represent either an instinctive gathering eluding individual reflection[714]. If one may say so, for Aksakov, the Russian peasant commune appeared as traditional and modern at the same time. Like the Church, the Russian peasant commune was seen as organic unity accomplished *through* freedom, and not *at the expense of* freedom.

Given all these aspects, the Slavophile claims for freedom of conscience and freedom of speech come close to the justification of political insurrection. Thus, if in his memorial addressed to Tsar Alexander I, Maistre was urging the latter to maintain the strictest level of censorship in

[711] Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 480.
[712] *Ibidem*, p. 254. The government circles reacted vehemently to some of Aksakov's articles that praised the people while rebuking the aristocracy, considering the latter articles as an invitation to popular uprising (*Ibidem*, pp. 271-272).
[713] Aleksei Khomiakov et *alii*, "Aux Serbes – Epître de Moscou", p. 175.
[714] Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, pp. 257-258, 260.

order to neutralize the revolutionary threat, some forty years later, in a memorial addressed to Tsar Alexander II, assuring the Tsar that the Russian people does not rebel for it regards political rebellion as spiritual slavery, Aksakov was emphasizing the crucial importance that freedom of thought and speech had for the spiritual life of the people. Criticizing state censorship and the control of the Church by the state, completely contrary to what Maistre was recommending to Tsar Alexander I, Aksakov tried to convince Alexander II that the only thing that was necessary to prevent the evil of Revolution (a perspective that horrified Aksakov just as much as Maistre) was the elimination of censorship. Underlining the fact that it was the spirit of the people that kept Russia from falling into political turmoil, after the Russian upper classes had been infected by the poisonous culture of the West, Aksakov warned however that if spiritual oppression continues, and the people is deprived of the necessary premise of its spiritual life, namely freedom, then the popular insurrection will come one day and that day will be terrible[715].

According to Vibert, "*en dernier recours, les Slavophiles ont à défendre à la fois une intégration communautaire par unanimité et coutume ininterrogée, seule source de véritable liberté, et à la fois une série des droits individuels (d'expression, de conscience) qui peuvent à tout moment mettre en danger l'harmonie du collectif*"[716]. From this point of view, the Slavophile theologico-political project may ultimately appear as utopian. In its attempt to overcome what may be an unsurpassable opposition, between the ideal of individual freedom, and the ideal of an organic society, Slavophilism may then be characterized by its lack of realism. As we remember, Maistre insisted that there was no middle way between papal infallibility and religious anarchy. Otherwise said, for Maistre, there was no middle way between the integration of the individual into the religious society –grounded on the infallibility of the

[715] *Ibidem*, pp. 249-254.
[716] Stéphane Vibert, "*Pravda* : Vérité et justice", p. 271.

religious authority – and individual rights. At the moment when the voice of authority spoke, the individual conscience had to bow down in obedience or otherwise the religious society ceased to exist. The contestation of the principle of infallibility in the spiritual sphere, was inevitably bringing with it political instability and ultimately Revolution. That is the reason why Maistre argued that the absolute control of the Church by the state – control against which Aksakov and the other Slavophiles were vituperating –, was perfectly legitimate and absolutely necessary wherever Catholic unity was absent. Thus, freedom of conscience in religious matters, which was regarded by Aksakov as the fundamental condition for being a Christian, represented instead for Maistre the fundamental principle of Protestantism, the irreducible enemy of sovereignty and the begetter of Revolution. In his reflections on Greek Orthodoxy from *Du Pape*, Maistre had stressed the fact that Orthodox ecclesiology was contaminated by the Greek spirit of division, the same philosophical spirit that had contaminated the West beginning with the Reformation. Moreover, in the same volume, Maistre had argued that no Russian would be able to write against the Roman Catholic Church without reigniting this essentially anarchical spirit, or, in other words, without betraying the fact that the substance of his discourse was ultimately Protestant[717]. As indicated by Walicki, in the opinion of a Catholic theologian who has analyzed Khomiakov's ecclesiology "from an orthodox Catholic point of view", Khomiakov's ecclesiology represents an extreme version of the ecclesiological democratism and liberalism that can be encountered in contemporary Catholic modernism. Thus, as stressed by Father Pawlovski, Khomiakov "dimiss[es] the authority of instruction bestowed on the hierarchy by the will of our Lord […], [and] believes that the guarantee of infallibility […] is to be sought directly, without any intermediary, in mutual love or the altruistic fellowship of the faithful; and

[717] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 337.

acknowledges the Holy Spirit alone as the only intermediary and source of the infallibility of the church"[718].

This kind of criticism can already be encountered in a written attack directed against Khomiakov's ecclesiology, whose author was the Russian Orthodox priest and theologian Pavel Florensky. According to him, in his opposition against the Catholic conception of authority, Khomiakov has also "[torn] the wheat of Orthodoxy out of the soil". "By getting rid of the apparent chaff of authority in the Church, which supposedly does not exist in Orthodoxy", Khomiakov jettisons "the principle of fear, the principle of power and the obligatory nature of the canonical order". Moreover, Florensky emphasizes the fact that this ecclesiological Revolution occurs in a modern age "which in general has such a great tendency to negate norms and even to struggle against all norms". Ultimately, this reflects the fact that, for Khomiakov, truth is not received by the believer from above, as the revelation of the transcendent God, but rather represents the autonomous creation of human consensus. Khomiakov therefore "leaves the impression that the decrees of the whole Church are true because they are the decrees of the whole Church", and that the "decrees of Western councils" are not condemnable for their "falsity", but for the fact "that they represent violations of unity". From this point of view, one has the impression of a dialectical reversal of Maistre, who also left the impression that the decisions of the Pope are not to be cherished because of their truth, but because through their authority the unity of the Church is being preserved. Florensky concluded that "Khomiakov's theories" reflect the "same spirit of immanentism that constitutes the essence of Protestantism, although in an immeasurably improved form – chiefly through the introduction of the idea of sobornost". It is likely that Maistre would have argued much the same thing with regard to

[718] A. Pawlowski, *Idea Kósciola w ujeciu rosyjkiej teologii i historiozofii (The Idea of the Church in Russian Theology and Philosophy of History)*, part 2, Warsaw, 1935, pp. 238-239, quoted in Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, pp. 196-197.

Khomiakov's theology, and, most certainly, he would have agreed with Florensky's conclusion concerning the political effects of such a theology: namely, the fact that, from a political point of view, far from being "a faithful servant of autocracy", Khomiakov was in fact "the creator of the most popular and therefore the most dangerous form of egalitarianism"[719]

However, with the purpose of clarifying the meaning of the liberalism and democracy of which Khomiakov is accused by his opponents, Walicki underlines the fact that

> for Khomiakov the concept of 'the church as a whole' by no means meant the total sum of formal adherents of Orthodoxy; *sobornost* was not a synonym for 'parliamentarism', nor should the always infallible standpoint of the 'entire church' be interpreted as the sum of the private opinions of its individual members. In order to understand Khomiakov's ecclesiology properly, we must realize that what he had in mind when he spoke of the freedom of the church was not the personal 'Protestant' freedom of individual believers, but the freedom of the church as a supra-individual organic whole[720].

It is not hard to notice here the intersection between Rousseau's republican ideal and the Slavophile model of the ecclesial community. In his critique of Rousseau, Maistre had argued that the unity of the sovereign will, whose necessity was affirmed by both authors, excluded the possibility of democracy. Instead, for Maistre, this unity required the transcendence of monarchical authority, which in turn rested on an equally transcendent religious authority. Admitting the absolute necessity of religious authority in the formation of a people, Rousseau was forced to admit that, in the last instance, democracy required "a nation of gods". More precisely, Rousseau's republican utopia presupposed two things. It called for the miraculous reconciliation of the multiplicity of individual freedoms in a single collective will, excluding both individualist fragmentation and the distinction between subject and government, and at the

[719] Pavel Florensky, "Around Khomiakov", in *On Spiritual Unity*, pp. 321-325. Father Gagarin, a Russian Jesuit and contemporary of the Slavophiles, argued that the nationalist ideology of the Slavophiles was nothing else than "the Oriental version of the 19th century revolutionary idea". According to Gagarin, this Russian version was much more effective than what the Western revolutionaries had been able to create. Once the monarchy will be gone, Gagarin argued, the nationalism of the Slavophiles was set to give birth to "very radical, very republican and very communist political doctrines" (Gagarin, *Op. cit.*, 72, quoted in Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 2, pp. 147-148).

[720] Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 197.

same time, required a religious authority that would be both transcendent and immanent; that is, an authority that would be identified with the freedom of the individual over which this authority was exercised.

For Khomiakov, the Russian people was not only the most Christian people in the world, but also the most democratic people in the world[721]. Khomiakov's conviction practically reflects the fact that the Slavophiles regarded the sacramental reality of the Church as the environment in which Rousseau's democratic ideals could be transfigured and fulfilled. For Maistre, Rousseau's political philosophy was refuted by an unsurpassable horizontal division, which separated individuals from each other, and by an unsurpassable vertical division, which separated the governing authority and its transcendent basis from those who were governed. However, for the Slavophiles, in the Church, freedom and unity are reconciled through love. Likewise, the authority of love is not an exterior authority, and in this sense, it completely identifies itself with the freedom of the individual. "A nation of gods" exists, and therefore, democracy becomes possible, because, as Khomiakov stressed, the Church, and God Himself are not authorities, for authorities are something external[722]. Instead, through the Holy Spirit, the life of the people/church becomes the very life of God. Thus, if in the case of Maistre, the Church is the model of the absolute monarchy and, consequently, the legitimating source of all reactionary politics, for Khomiakov, on the contrary, the Church is the model of the democratic community. In the case of Maistre, the accomplishment of the monarchic ideal depends on the authority exercised by the Church over the monarchy. In the case of the Slavophiles, the democratic ideal can be accomplished only as manifestation in all the aspects of human existence, including

[721] Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 1, p. 99.

[722] Aleksei Khomiakov, "Some Remarks by an Orthodox Christian Concerning the Western Communions, on the Occasion of a Brochure by Mr. Laurentie", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 58.

politics, of the life of the Church. In its most profound understanding, democracy appears as a superhuman condition, made possible only through grace.

It is important to stress the fact that the Slavophile ideal of unanimity was not only opposed to the principle of monarchical infallibility, but also to the principle of majority rule. In both cases, a decision mechanism that assured the formal unity and functionality of society indicated the fact that inner unity was absent in that society. Thus, just like infallibility, which mattered less in itself than as a governing mechanism, majority rule meant that, instead of the organic togetherness that resulted from the free agreement of all, one had an aggregation of separated individuals, who were bound together exteriorly by a juridical contract and by social necessity. Refusing to subordinate truth to the imperative of social unity, which, Maistre argued, rested on the principle of infallibility, implicitly, the Slavophiles also refused the idea of voting on truth[723]. From this point of view, liberal and representative democracy, as well as the Maistrian authoritarianism, opposed to the former, appeared as two sides of the same coin. Ultimately, in both cases, one was confronted with the same reality of decisionism, of politics devoid of substantial content, the political or religious order resting on a decision that could not claim to be more than the arbitrary choice of *some* or of *someone*. Using Max Weber's terms, Walicki argues that the Slavophiles opposed " 'substantially rational justice' " ("judgment according to conscience and backed by ethical and religious norms") to "formally rational justice" ("a rational juridical system based on a strict and universally valid legal code")[724]. Walicki underlines the fact that, for an author like Aksakov, the "freedom of speech" for which he had so strongly militated, meant rather "freedom of argument" than acceptance of pluralism as such. For, Aksakov argued, it was *unacceptable* to "[accept] disagreement as a principle". At the limit,

[723] Aleksei Khomiakov et *alii*, "Aux Serbes- Epître de Moscou", p. 191; Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 261.

[724] Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p.266.

Aksakov argued that civil strife was preferable to the "acceptance of disagreement as a principle"[725]. For Maistre, it was *impossible*, from his point of view too, to accept disagreement as a principle. For this would have meant accepting the war of all against all, and thus, the disappearance of society. Maistre's political philosophy is a response to this hypothetical situation, and as indicated, this response risks evolving towards a decisionist resolution and from there to the argument of the Grand Inquisitor that it is acceptable to maintain society through the authority of a lie, instead of letting society break apart for the sake of honesty.

Reflecting on the theologico-political coordinates of the modern West, Khomiakov was underlining the fact that the need "*d'une autorité gouvernementale dans les choses spirituelles*", which was everywhere felt in the modern West, was a proof of the fact that "*le monde spirituel*" was no longer perceived in the West as "*celui de la grâce et de l'amour qui garde tout, mais comme un monde de droit extérieur, soumis aux mêmes lois et aux mêmes calculs que tous les autres faits terrestres*"[726]. For Khomiakov, the proclamation of papal infallibility was a typical case of decisionist behavior, followed by the inevitable subsequent Machiavellian erasure of traces. Thus, after it has effectively legalized Protestantism through the proclamation of his infallibility, the Pope was hiding "the anarchy of the principle under the governmental despotism of the fact"[727]. Moreover, for Khomiakov, this utilitarian/decisionistic logic is transferred from ecclesiology to faith itself: just as the Pope was ultimately compelled to act as infallible, in order to maintain the unity of the Church, the act of faith in itself, in Catholicism and in the whole West, which was marked by the Roman paradigm, was regarded by Khomiakov as a utilitarian response in the face of the threat of disbelief. Anticipating practically the "Legend of the Grand

[725] Konstantin Aksakov, i. 292-3, quoted in Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 262.

[726] Aleksei Khomiakov, *Œuvres complètes de Khomiakov*, VII, 440, quoted in Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 2, p. 85.

[727] Aleksei Khomiakov, "Some Remarks by an Orthodox Christian Concerning the Western Communions, on the Occasion of a Letter Published by the Archbishop of Paris", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 72.

Inquisitor", Khomiakov argued that the religion of the West – or more precisely what was worse in it, and therefore more affected by the mark of the initial Roman sin – was ultimately reduced to Machiavellianism.[728]In modernity, Khomiakov observed, under the attacks of modern rationalism, this Machiavellianism became more and more transparent, as it became more and more obvious that the God of Western Christianity was dead. Khomiakov attached the label of blasphemy to the apologies for faith that were based on the argument that faith becomes necessary when confronted with incurable uncertainty[729], apologies to which, as we have seen, Maistre was not foreign. Khomiakov believed that behind modern utilitarian apologies for faith stood "the threatening future of triumphant disbelief" and of its cataclysmic consequences in the near future[730]. Ultimately, for Khomiakov, the religion of the West is nothing else than the voluntarist denial of philosophical skepticism, which poses a mortal threat to the social order.

The analyses of Khomiakov touch on the aporias of Maistre's religious thought – in particular on his attempt to overturn the Enlightenment understood as nihilism of reason –, aporias that have been underlined in the first part of this dissertation. The Catholic mind, Khomiakov argues, is caught "in a constant struggle between the desire for analysis and the fear that this power will only raze the edifice they are taking such pains to defend against it"[731]. If, as argued by Pranchère, Maistre's overturning of the Enlightenment represents a dialectical moment of the Enlightenment which reproduces the fundamental premises of the latter, for the Slavophiles, the Enlightenment represents a necessary moment in the historical evolution of the Catholic heresy. Thus, for Khomiakov, Maistre's Catholicism, and in particular its decisionistic and Machiavellian tendencies, do not represent a deviation from the principles of Catholic

[728] *Ibidem*, p. 101.
[729] *Ibidem*, p. 103.
[730] *Ibidem*,p. 102.
[731] *Ibidem*, p. 77.

ecclesiology. On the contrary, for Khomiakov, Maistre's *Du Pape* represented "the purest distillation of the Catholic spirit"[732]. Moreover, like Pranchère, in one of his few direct remarks concerning Maistre, Khomiakov has underlined the natural affinity between Maistre's Catholicism and the Enlightenment, arguing that Maistre belonged "*à l'école littéraire de l'Encyclopédie par toute la tournure de sa pensée*". Sketching practically a portrait of the Grand Inquisitor that will be later developed by Dostoyevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Khomiakov defines Maistre as "*[un] esprit anti-chrétien au plus haut degré*", and as "*[un] éloquent archisophiste […] qui vous assure gravement que, sans les papes, Dieu n'aurait pas pu conserver l'unité de la foi, et que par conséquent, les papes sont une nécessité dans les rapports de l'homme à Dieu*". Maistre, Khomiakov concludes, had "*trop d'intelligence pour ne pas comprendre sa propre fausseté*".[733] Thus, for Khomiakov, cynicism and dissimulation are the fundamental traits of Maistre's Catholicism.

According to Khomiakov, modern disbelief in the West was perfectly justified, for it was confronted with a religion "without depth, without real faith, and without organic principle", a religion reduced to the status of religiosity[734]. Moreover, if Maistre could see only perversity in modern disbelief, for Khomiakov, it presupposed a certain nobility of spirit. This nobility was owed to the fact that modern disbelief had the courage to confront what Khomiakov regarded as the perverted religiosity of the West. Given the fact that for Khomiakov, Catholicism was the cause of Protestantism, and, in its turn, Protestantism was the cause of modern disbelief, then it followed that Catholicism was worse than Protestantism and, overall, that Western Christianity

[732] Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 529.

[733] Aleksei Khomiakov, *L'Église latine et le Protestantisme*, 69, quoted in Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 2, pp. 137-138, note 5.

[734] Aleksei Khomiakov, "Some Remarks by an Orthodox Christian Concerning the Western Communions, on the Occasion of a Letter Published by the Archbishop of Paris", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 101.

was worse than modern disbelief[735]. For Khomiakov, Catholicism and Protestantism were "[bearing] death within their bosoms, and" thus, "unbelief [had] only to remove the corpses and sweep out the arena". Khomiakov believed that the future belonged to Orthodoxy. In his opinion, in the future "there will no longer be pure and honest souls who *cannot believe*", although there will still be, as in all ages, "perverse" souls who "*do not want to believe*"[736].

According to Khomiakov, the two Western confessions could have only hastened "in their own fall by the methods they" used "to resist unbelief"[737]. For what was needed in order to resist the assault of rationalism was not a dialectical overturning of the latter, which resulted in its confirmation, neither a cynical philosophy of mystification, but "life"[738]. Only life, not an authority founded on the contradictions of rationalism, could resist the corrosive effects of modern rationalism and modern individualism. The return to life required for him the return to the source of life, the Church; it required the rediscovery of Orthodoxy, understood not as an abstract theory but as the authentic ecclesial experience. This alone was the way for saving the West from its contradictions and, moreover, for saving everything in the West that ultimately bore the seal of Christianity: "all the good and the beautiful, all the great and glorious things"[739]. "*À quoi bon, en effet*", Kireevsky wrote, "*rejeter et mépriser ce qui était et ce qui est bon dans la vie de l'Occident? Cela n'est-il pas*", Kireevsky continued, "*l'expression de notre principe, si notre principe est le vrai*"[740]? For Khomiakov, as well as for Dostoyevsky, Europe represented

[735] On the traces of Khomiakov, Dostoyevsky will argue that Roman Catholicism is worse than atheism.

[736] Aleksei Khomiakov, "Some Remarks by an Orthodox Christian Concerning the Western Communions, on the Occasion of a Letter Published by the Archbishop of Paris", in *On Spiritual Unity*, pp. 113-114.

[737] *Ibidem*, p. 113.

[738] *Ibidem*, p. 103.

[739] *Ibidem*, p. 115.

[740] Cf. *Oeuvres complètes de I. Kireïevski* (rédaction de M. Guerchenzon), éd. Pout, t. I, p. 112, quoted in Nicolas Berdyaev, *Khomiakov*, p. 25.

"*le pays des saintes merveilles*"[741]. Left to itself, to its own historical evolution that resulted from its theological premises, "the land of holy miracles", Kireevsky argued, was losing its poetry because it was losing its faith, and it was heading towards "the unlimited domination of industry"[742]. Despite the harshness of their attacks against Western Christianity, the Slavophiles and Dostoyevsky nurtured a deep love for the West, which they wanted to raise back to life[743]. Nowhere is this profound love better expressed than in Ivan's dialogue with Alyosha from *The Brothers Karamazov.* Announcing his intention to take a trip to Europe Ivan says to his brother:

> I know it's a cemetery I shall be going to, but it's the dearest, dearest of cemeteries, that's all. Dear corpses lie there, each stone laid over them speaks of such ardently lived past life, such passionate faith in one's achievements, the truth one has gained, one's struggle and one's learning, that I know in advance I shall fall to the ground and kiss those stones and weep over them, [for there] are certain human achievements in which one may perhaps have ceased to have any faith, but which for old time's sake one treasures in one's heart.[744]

Ivan confesses to Alyosha the irrationality of his love for life in general, and for Europe in particular, for Ivan's love clashes with his intellectual awareness of the fact that life and history are absurd and unredeemable. The West, the Slavophiles argued, was collapsing because it was incapable of reconciling reason and life, or, more precisely, because its cultural paradigm was based on a false and destructive antagonism between the two. Confronting the nihilism of reason with the epistemology of the Slavophiles, which overcomes the nihilistic contradictions of Ivan's Euclidean mind through a superior mystical intuition, Alyosha tells Ivan that only by loving life before logic can one understand life's meaning. According to Alyosha, through his love for life, Ivan has completed the first half of his task, and the completion of this task, Alyosha argues,

[741] Aleksei Khomiakov, Kh. IV, p. 28, quoted in Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, vol. 1, p. 18.

[742] Ivan Kireevsky, "On the Necessity and Possibility of New Principles in Philosophy", p. 195.

[743] According to Florovsky, in their relation to the West, the Slavophiles possessed "an awareness of Christian consanguinity and responsibility, a sense of and longing for fraternal compassion and a consciousness and presentiment of the Orthodox mission in Europe". For him, this represents "the great truth and moral power of early Slavophilism" (Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. 2, p. 302).

[744] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p.301.

would be "to raise up your dead, which may never perhaps have died"[745]. For Dostoyevsky, as well as for the Slavophiles, this was the messianic task that Russia was called to accomplish: to raise up the West from its spiritual death and to show to the whole world the path to the integral civilization that reconciles reason and life, unity and freedom.

4.7. - Between Orthodoxy and Romanticism

According to Walicki, the Slavophile conception of the social bond, with its distinction between organic and formal/legal order, is actually encountered in the thought of Ferdinand Tönnies, more exactly in Tönnies' distinction between two types of social bond: *Gemeinschaft* that characterizes traditional societies, and *Gesellchaft*, the type of social bond that characterizes modern societies. The first type is organic and implies a "community of moral values", while the second is mechanical and implies a "community of interests"[746]. Thus, in the second case, underneath the surface of social convention society remains in a state of generalized conflict. *Gemeinschaft* excludes the idea of absolute property and its corollary, "the depersonalization of interhuman relations", while *Gesellchaft* is characterized not by an organic law but rather by regulation[747], that is, by conventional laws framed according to the model of commercial contracts[748]. Furthermore, while *Gemeinschaft* excludes the conflict between individual and community, *Gesellchaft* reveals arbitrary anarchical will and arbitrary despotism as two sides of the same coin[749]. For Tönnies, while *Gemeinschaft* was the traditional order that was defining the

[745] *Ibidem*, pp. 301-302.
[746] Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p.170.
[747] In this sense, we should also remember Maistre's distinction between Law, which was of divine origin, and Regulation, which resulted from the agreement of contracting individuals.
[748] Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, pp.171-172.
[749] *Ibidem*, p.173.

way of life of the "people" (understood as organic community), *Gesellchaft* was the order specific to capitalism and to "society" (understood as aggregation of individuals)[750]. Both Kireevsky and Tönnies identified Roman law as the source of the destruction of *Gemeinschaft* and of its replacement with *Gesellchaft,* that is, as the source of modernization. Finally, Walicki underlines that while the German conservative thought of the first half of the 19th century essentially represents a defense of *Gemeinschaft* against *Gesellchaft*, the Slavophile thought may be regarded as "a more consistent defense of *Gemeinschaft*"[751].

This brings us to the question of the relationship between Slavophilism and German Romanticism. Frederick Beiser has defined Romanticism as a reaction to the alienation of modernity and has identified three major forms of alienation, or division, that modernity has brought, and that the romantics attempted to overcome, re-establishing thus a pre-modern and ultimately primordial unity of human existence. As indicated by Beiser, the first form of alienation was "the division within the self" which "took two forms: "the conflict between reason and sensibility" and the division that resulted from "the one-sidedness of specialization", inherent to the capitalist "division of labour", whose consequence was that "the self developed only one of its powers at the expense of all the others"[752]. In this sense, the romantic critique of the Enlightenment was not directed against the discursive reason of the latter. Instead, "following [the Platonic] tradition, the early romantics" (such as Schlegel, Baader, and Schelling, passionately read by the Slavophiles) "saw reason as not only a discursive faculty", *Verstand*,

[750] *Ibidem*, p.172.

[751] *Ibidem*, p.175. According to Walicki, compared to German romantic conservatism, Slavophilism represents a more consistent defense of *Gemeinschaft*, because unlike German romantic conservatism, which had a pronounced aristocratic and hierarchical component, Slavophilism defended the conception of a "popular monarchy" while attacking "aristocratic licence". Therefore, according to Weber's terms, the Slavophiles would situate themselves in the category of patrimonialism, a category that for Weber was closer to the ideal type of traditional authority than feudalism, which involved class domination (Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 176).

[752] Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 2003, p.31.

"but also as an intuitive one", *Vernunft*[753]. For the romantics, the two faculties were not opposed but complementary, and "it was through the intellectual intuition of aesthetic experience […] that reason could perceive the infinite in the finite, the absolute in its appearance, or the macrocosm in the microcosm"[754]. Otherwise said, the complementarity between discursive reason and intuitive reason made possible the passage from the strictly critical rationality of the Enlightenment, to what can rightly be described as a mystical union between the knowing subject and the object of knowledge. Immanuel Kant, Beiser argues, had rejected the Platonic intuition and the possibility of a mystical union between the knowing and the known. Thus, from this point of view, the difference between the Enlightenment and Romanticism is "the difference between those who insist on a completely discursive concept of reason and those who also permit a mystical dimension to reason"[755].

As indicated by Beiser, "the second form of alienation" which the romantics struggled to overcome, directly connected with the former, was "the division between the self and others". "This form of division", Beiser argues, "arose from the decline of the traditional community […] and the rise of the competitive marketplace, where each individual sought his self-interest at the expense of others […], the epitome of such social alienation" being the "social contract theory, according to which the individual entered a group only if it suited his self-interest"[756]. Finally, "the third form of alienation was the division between the self and nature. This too arose from two sources: first, the growth of modern technology, which made nature into an object of mere use, having no magic, mystery, or beauty; and second, mechanical physics, which made nature

[753] *Ibidem*, p.60.
[754] *Ibidem*, p.61.
[755] *Ibidem*,p.61.
[756] *Ibidem*, p.31.

into a vast machine and the mind either a small machine within nature or a ghost standing outside it"[757].

"In the face of all these ills of modernity", Beiser argues, "the romantics posed their ideals of wholeness or unity". Consequently, to "each form of alienation or division", the romantics have opposed "a corresponding holistic ideal"[758]. Thus, "the division within the self would be overcome in the ideal of *the beautiful soul*: a person who acts according to the principles of morality *from* rather than *contrary to* inclination" – that is, whose morality is not based on institutional mechanisms of coercion but on love –, "and who unites his thinking and feeling, reason and sensibility, conscious and subconscious in one aesthetic whole". Likewise, "the division between self and other would be overcome in the ideal of *community, free sociability* or *the organic state*", where "each person would develop his individuality only through love and free interchange with others. Finally, the division between self and nature would be overcome only in the ideal of *life* or *the organic concept of nature* […], the self" realizing "that it is inseparable from nature as well as nature inseparable from it"[759].

Beiser also stresses the fact that it would be utterly simplistic to reduce Romanticism to a form of anti-modernism. "The romantic ideal was also an attempt to preserve modernity", or, more precisely, a "*via media*" that attempted to reconcile modernity with tradition and "to reform society and the state according to liberal ideals but also in a manner consistent with their historical development"[760].

> In three fundamental respects, the romantics were on the side of modernity […]. First, despite their criticism of the Enlightenment, the romantics placed the greatest importance on the critical powers of reason, especially the right of the individual to criticize all beliefs. Second, for all their misgivings about the consequences of civil society, the

[757] *Ibidem*, pp. 31-32.
[758] *Ibidem*, p.32.
[759] *Ibidem*, p.32.
[760] *Ibidem*.

> romantics also valued its freedoms, especially the right of the individual to think for himself, and to develop all his powers to the fullest. Third, according to the romantic philosophy of history, the unity and harmony of the past […] had been lost forever by the advent of civil society and Enlightenment. Since there could be no going back, the problem was how to achieve the earlier harmony and unity on a higher level in the future[761].

The similarities between the thought of the German romantics and the thought of the Russian Slavophiles are more than obvious. Like the romantics, the Slavophiles sought to reconcile rationality and life, as well as the individual and the community. Last but not least, the aim of the Slavophiles was to reconcile the Orthodox tradition with modernity. Thus, the Slavophiles expected that the synthesis between modern science and Orthodox spirituality would give birth in the future to a new universal civilization. This civilization would represent the accomplishment of the highest potential of both modernity and Orthodoxy. Moreover, the German romantic conservatives themselves regarded Russia with sympathy. Among them, Baader in particular was convinced that in Europe, only the Orthodox Church had remained unaffected by the rationalist spirit and that consequently, Russia was called to rescue a West, which, lacking organic unity, was divided between Catholic dictatorship and Protestant individualism[762]. Although the German romantics had a religious sensitivity and were engaged in religious quests, that led sometimes to conversions, overall, their thought is not theocentric, neither was their social organicism necessarily related to the ecclesial body. In the case of the Slavophiles, nature mysticism is replaced by Christian mysticism[763], and, when referring to the

[761] *Ibidem*.

[762] Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, pp. 162-165.

[763] In what concerns the third type of unity which the romantics sought to re-establish, the unity between the self and nature, Berdyaev has argued that "*la cosmologie religieuse est presque totalement absente de la philosophie religieuse de Khomiakov*". The cosmic dimension of the Orthodox Liturgy and spirituality is one of the particularities of Orthodoxy that most often fascinates Western observers, in particular those who possess a romantic sensitivity. However, according to Berdyaev, the understanding of the sacraments as "*l'archétype de la transfiguration de la création*" is absent from Khomiakov's theology. Thus, one cannot encounter in Khomiakov's religious thought the image of "*la terre mère à qui est unie au Logos*". For this motive, Berdyaev considered that "*le slavophilisme était inférieur et non supérieur à Schelling qui a tellement mis l'accent sur les problèmes de la*

ideal of organic community, the Slavophiles refer to the Church (although, as we shall see, under the influence of Romanticism, their ecclesiology remains problematic). Thus, for the Slavophiles, the experience of God in the Orthodox Church and the patristic theology of the Greek Fathers were regarded as the definitive answers to the spiritual quest of German Romanticism.

Nineteenth-century counter-revolutionary thought is composed of three main ideological families: the Catholic Counter-Revolution of the French theocrats, the Anglo-Saxon liberal-conservative Counter-Revolution, originating in the thought of Edmund Burke, and the Romantic Counter-Revolution whose epicenter was located in Germany[764]. In what concerns the mystical view of history, and, in particular, the expectation of a religious Revolution, which will put an end to the modern crisis and will inaugurate a new religious age, Maistre can be regarded as a precursor of European Romanticism. To the extent that Slavophilism is integrated in the broader European Romantic current, Maistre and the Slavophiles appear to be united by a similar prophetic discourse and by similar messianic and eschatological expectations. On the other hand, when comparing the Maistrian and the Romantic opposition to the rationalism of the Enlightenment, Pranchère emphasizes the fact that the representatives of the romantic Counter-Revolution criticized the rationalism of the Enlightenment "*au nom de l'authenticité et de l'immédiateté*", while "*ce n'est pas au nom de l'authenticté, mais au nom de l'obéissance que Maistre a récusé le 'projet d'autonomie' des Lumières*". The romantics, like the Slavophiles,

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Naturphilosophie *et de la cosmologie*" (Nicolas Berdiaev, *Khomiakov*, pp. 78, 95). If one accepts Berdyaev's interpretation of the Slavophiles, as far as the cosmic dimension of their religious thought is concerned, one should also underline the fact that this interpretation does not apply to Dostoyevsky's work. More precisely, as shall be seen, this cosmic dimension of Orthodox Christianity plays a crucial role in Dostoyevsky's literary creation and in his religious thought.

[764] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, pp. 24-27.

seek an absolute, intuitive knowledge, "*qui, unifiant poésie et philosophie, saisirait l'unité de la nature et de la liberté*". By contrast,

> *cet idéal est précisément ce que tout la pensée maistrienne combat : alors que la pensée romantique souhaite transgresser les limites de l'entendement fini, la théologie politique de Maistre veut que nous nous résignons à notre ignorance ; elle ne vise pas à déborder la raison dans un savoir d'un autre genre, mais à démontrer rationnellement les limites de la raison ; elle vise à faire taire les disputes rationnelles pour laisser place à la seule voix de l'autorité*[765].

For the Slavophiles, this was exactly the governing mechanism that characterized the Catholic system. While for the Slavophiles integral knowledge and organic togetherness were two aspects of a single modality of being, the epistemological differences that separate Maistre from the German romantics, and, implicitly, from the Slavophiles, find their correspondence in two different ideals of the social bond that separate Maistre's Counter-Revolution from the romantic Counter-Revolution. As stressed by Pranchère, "*l'organicisme du romantisme politique, qui projette sur le passé féodal un idéal communautaire [est] absent de la pensée maistrienne*". Maistre proposes instead "*l'autoritarisme de la théologie politique, centré sur l'unité de l'autorité politique, pontificale et divine*"[766]. Thus, in Maistre's case, there is no harmonious reconciliation between individual freedom and social unity. Furthermore, unlike in the case of the Romantic authors, for Maistre, there can be no question of harmoniously

[765] *Ibidem*, p. 100. However, it could be argued that Pranchère's interpretation minimizes the importance of Maistre's Masonic writings, where one encounters, among others, the idea of a mystical esoteric knowledge based on intuition. As we have seen, this component of Maistre's thought is situated in tension with the institutional Catholicism defended by Maistre, a tension revealed, as we have seen, especially by the last dialogue from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*. In this dialogue, while the Russian Senator displays the illuminist doctrine, the Count insists that the wisest path to be followed in spiritual matters is that of humble resignation in the face of one's ignorance, followed by the humble acceptance of the doctrines taught by the teaching authority. From this point of view, while theosophical doctrines play an important role in the formation of Maistre's thought, Maistre's theologico-political project does not presuppose the cultivation of the latter, but the promotion of the spirit of obedience. Moreover, one should also underline the fact that, unlike the intuitive knowledge sought by the young Maistre in the Masonic lodges, which appears to be opposed to the ecclesial order, the integral knowledge of the Slavophiles, on the contrary, has ecclesial preconditions, in the context in which Maistre and the Slavophiles have totally different understandings of the Church. If the intuitive and esoteric knowledge of which Maistre speaks in his Masonic writings is the fruit of a private initiation, the integral knowledge of the Slavophiles is the fruit of one's integration into the ecclesial organism.

[766] *Ibidem*, p. 102.

reconciling the old order with the virtues of modernity. While from an institutional point of view modern freedom needs to be crushed under the yoke of authority, as a historical phenomenon, modern times await the purification that can come only through divine punishment. For Maistre, there is nothing good or, to use Hans Blumenberg's terms, legitimate about modernity. The only thing that modernity brought is a massive infection that requires radical surgical means.

Taking into account all the aspects mentioned above, the following question is naturally raised: when comparing the thought of Maistre and the thought of the Slavophiles, are we comparing a Catholic Counter-Revolution[767] with a Romantic Counter-Revolution, or are we comparing a Catholic Counter-Revolution with an Orthodox Counter-Revolution? Just as in the case of the relation between Maistre and Catholicism, there is no academic consensus as far as the following question is concerned: to what extent is Slavophilism an authentic expression of the Orthodox tradition, and to what extent is it the product of the influence of German Romanticism? Tracing back the epistemology of Ivan Kireevsky to the writings of Eastern Church Fathers such as Isaac the Syrian and Maximus the Confessor, Henry Lanz arrives at the end of his article dedicated to the philosophy of Kireevsky to the following conclusion: "Slavophilism is not a patriotic perversion of German idealism, not even a reaction against modern European rationalism. It is simply and solely a modern continuation of a religious tradition which has been dominating Russian life since the time of Saint Vladimir, and which was temporarily driven into the underworld by the violent reforms of Peter the Great and his successors"[768]. At the other end of the spectrum, Alain Besançon argues that Slavophilism is simply a mimetic reproduction of the themes of German Romanticism, and that, due to a lack of intellectual honesty, the Slavophiles concealed their true sources of inspiration by not quoting

[767] We take here the term Catholic Counter-Revolution nominally, for as we have seen, Maistre's conformity with Roman Catholic orthodoxy is more than debatable.

[768] Henry Lanz, "The Philosophy of Ivan Kireyevsky", in *Slavonic Review*, no. 4, 1925/1926, pp. 602-604.

them. Accordingly, Besançon considers Slavophilism as one of the ideological gnoses of modernity, illegitimately and parasitically attached to the body of the Orthodox tradition with which it does not have anything to do[769]. While Besançon's position is rather extreme, more nuanced positions have been expressed by Berdyaev, Walicki, and more recently Vibert, authors who consider that there is a proximity between Romanticism and Slavophilism. According to Walicki, Slavophilism, and in particular Kireevsky's thought, "was not something entirely new, but only an interesting variant of European conservative romanticism"[770]. However, studying the Slavophiles from a Marxist perspective, Walicki argues that the similarities between Slavophilism and Romanticism "can be explained […] not only by the immediate influence of the latter" on the former, but also – and most of all – by "an objective similarity in historical circumstances and in the social relations prevailing in Russia and Germany" in the first half of the 19th century[771]. In Berdyaev's opinion, while Slavophilism is indeed one moment of the general European romantic movement, nevertheless, Slavophilism is also distinguished by its Russian Orthodox specificity. This aspect, Berdyaev argues, is otherwise perfectly understandable. For, reacting against the abstract universalism of the Enlightenment, Romanticism turns towards the concrete historical reality and towards the organic character of specific national cultures, from which it draws inspiration, and which it seeks to protect against the dangers of an abstract universalism. In this sense, while there are common pan-European traits of Romanticism, it is proper to the latter to always manifest distinctive characteristics from country to country. Since nations are different, it follows that any authentic Romanticism will be different from the other Romanticisms[772]. For Vibert, the Slavophiles' rejection of the abstract

[769] Alain Besançon, *Intellectual Origins of Leninism*, pp. 62-68.
[770] Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 160.
[771] *Ibidem*, p. 166.
[772] Nicolas Berdiaev, *Khomiakov*, p. 13.

reason and of the abstract universalism of the Enlightenment, their subsequent attempts to overcome the division between the knowing subject and the object of knowledge, as well as their attempt to reconcile nationalism and universalism, integrates "*la Weltanschauung slavophile*" in "*ce vaste mouvement de réaction à l'Aufklarüng*" that is Romanticism, and that contests "*l'idéologie moderne tout en intégrant une partie de ses acquis idéologiques*". According to Vibert, "*comme l'ensemble du mouvement romantique allemand*", Slavophilism is marked by the attempt to restore "*l'Un onto-théologique*". But according to Vibert, Slavophilism does not represent a mere importation of German romantic thought, but an ideological construct, not lacking a Russian and Orthodox originality, that "*mêle dans sa volonté de restauration de l'Unité ontologique des éléments à dominance moderne […] avec un soubassement 'traditionnel' et holiste*"[773].

I should also mention the opinions of two Orthodox theologians who have studied the Slavophiles from an Orthodox theological perspective. In *Ways of Russian Theology*, Father Florovsky has also argued that in principle, Slavophilism represents a romantic reaction against modern individualism. According to Florovsky, like other European intellectuals of the first half of the nineteenth century, the Slavophiles returned to the Church as to the "sole 'organic' force amidst the 'critical' dissolution and disintegration of all binding ties". As such, Florovsky has argued that "all the aporia and discontinuity of the usual romantic worldview, together with a one-sided or exclusively 'organic' point of view are typically repeated and apparent" in Slavophilism[774]. For Florovsky, the main problem of the Slavophile theology, and in particular of the Slavophiles' ecclesiology, is represented by the fact that the latter "did not fully discern or admit the incommensurate natures of Church and society", a fact that explains their tendency to

[773] Stéphane Vibert, "*Pravda*: Vérité et justice", pp. 222-225.
[774] Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. 2, p. 17.

overlap Church and *obshchina* to the point of complete identity. But Florovsky underlines the fact that although "only in the Church can the otherwise mutually irresistible tension of human wills be fully resolved […], the 'organic' or social motif does not exhaust the reality of the Church and it must not be taken as primary or basic"[775].

Along the same lines, the ecclesiology of Khomiakov had also been criticized by Father John Romanides. Romanides further develops Florovsky's observations concerning the Slavophile tendency to overbid the organic dimension of the Church. According to Romanides, the problem with Khomiakov's ecclesiology consists in the fact that the latter is deprived of its soteriological foundation. In this sense, Romanides indicates that, unlike Khomiakov's ecclesiology, exclusively focused on the concept of organic togetherness, "the ecclesiology of the Fathers is inseparable from soteriology and Christology", "the pivotal point of" patristic ecclesiology being "the necessity of liberation from the powers of death and the devil through communion with the Source of Life in the human nature of Christ"[776]. For Romanides, this handicap of Khomiakov's ecclesiology is a direct consequence of the fact that "whereas the Fathers of the Church would firmly base their theology concerning the Church on a doctrine of the fall enlightened by a definite doctrine of atonement, Khomiakov seems to try to explain the fall in terms of a" rather bizarre "philosophy of history" articulated on the basis of the opposition between the Koushit principle of necessity and the Iranian principle of freedom[777]. Romanides regards Khomiakov's

[775] *Ibidem*.

[776] John S. Romanides, "Orthodox Ecclesiology according to Alexis Khomiakov," p. 70.

[777] *Ibidem*, p. 58. All historical evolution, according to Khomiakov, is explained by the tension between these two principles, which are characteristic of two types of civilization. The Koushit principle, characterizing Greco-Roman antiquity, Western Christianity and the modern West, was essentially defined by rationality and, correspondingly, by the material necessity that represented the conclusion of rationalistic philosophy. As a consequence, a materialistic order, which found its best expression in the formal juridical order, characterized the Koushit societies. The Iranian principle was characteristic of Israel and of the Church of the first millennium, and was now represented on the scene of world history by Russia. In contrast to the Koushit principle, faith and freedom from material necessity were the defining characteristics of the Iranian principle, an aspect that found expression in the life of the Iranian societies. According to Khomiakov's speculation, at the beginning of history, these two principles were embodied in

philosophy of history as a substitute for the doctrine of original sin. More precisely, Khomiakov's philosophy of history does not explain the origin of evil and therefore provides no soteriological justification or fundament of the Church.

According to Romanides, the Slavophiles only "grasped" the positive "patristic idea of the Church as an organic unity of people in complete freedom from utilitarian concern". However, "they completely overlooked the negative aspects of ecclesiology as expressed in the sacrament of baptism […]. They had no theology of struggle against the forces of the devil, death, and corruption"[778]. Otherwise said, the Slavophiles ignored the fact that the precondition for one's participation in the ecclesial organism is the previous restoration of the sinful human nature, and its liberation from the demonic powers through baptism in Christ. And it is only through a sacramental integration in the Body of Christ, whose consequence is the transformation of human nature through grace, that different persons can be reconciled harmoniously through selfless love. Due to this reason, the Slavophiles "imagined that the application of the principles

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their pure form, in two primordial civilizations, one located in Iran, and the other located in Ethiopia. The two principles were inscribed in the racial and cultural characteristics of these two populations. But the two principles were manifested in a pure racial and cultural expression only at the beginning of history. All civilizations that have come after are the product of syntheses realized between the Iranian and the Koushit principles, and between the two primordial races. Civilizations differ from one another depending on the proportion in which the two principles are present in their constitution (Albert Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvment slavophile*, vol. 2, pp. 66-80). Alain Besançon has characterized Khomiakov's philosophy of history as a form of "gnostic historiosophy" (Alain Besançon, *Intellectual Origins of Leninism*, pp. 73-75), and Romanides agrees basically with Besançon's thesis. According to Romanides, "Khomiakov seems to try to explain the fall in terms of a philosophy of history and of racial and cultural development similar in method to those of his time (especially to that of Schelling), which, however, does not attempt to trace the source of evil to any one element". As a consequence, "he is driven to a type of dualistic spiritualism by making out material creation to be something by nature inferior, bad, and the cause of the evil of organization [...]; in contradiction to the doctrine of creation, which he accepts, Khomiakov opposes the spiritual and material" (John S. Romanides, "Orthodox Ecclesiology according to Alexis Khomiakov", pp. 58, 70). However, as underlined by Walicki, Khomiakov's philosophy of history deviated a lot from the "internal structure" of the Slavophile doctrine. In Khomiakov's historiosophy, "the Orthodox religion" is "deprived of all its exclusiveness" and is reduced "to being only one of a number of Iranian religions". Instead, Walicki argues that Kireevski's view of history, which practically reproduces the traditional Biblical view of history, should be regarded as the view of history that best defines the Slavophile school as a whole, and that is fundamentally compatible with the essential Slavophile theological positions (Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, pp. 222-226). Reflective of some of the ambiguities of his ecclesiological thought, as stressed by Romanides, Khomaikov's philosophy of history ultimately remains a private speculation that does not present a significant interest for our study.

[778] John S. Romanides, "Orthodox Ecclesiology according to Alexis Khomiakov", p. 73.

of selfless love could be extended and maintained in the character of people living in society at large, and as such tried to create a Russo-Christian social philosophy". Thus, overlooking "the patristic dogma of the Church as a real union with each other in the flesh of Christ", the Slavophiles adapted themselves "to a contemporary German philosophy of social life as organism and imagined that the Russian peasants were the Orthodox par excellence because of something inherent in the national character"[779]. According to Florovsky, these theological handicaps of Slavophilism were not left without negative spiritual consequences. Under the influence of Slavophilism, a "return to the Church too frequently became confused with 'going to the people' ". But, as stressed by Florovsky, "the sole means of genuine entry into the Church is a strict ascetic trial, not some return […] to primitive wholeness and simplicity". "The Slavophiles", Florovsky concludes, "were particularly at fault" for this "dangerous prejudice" which had later on affected in Russia all sorts of "thoughtless enthusiasts, repentant intellectuals, ordinary people and snobs"[780]. However, paralleling the complex relation of Maistre with Catholic Orthodoxy, the conclusion that results from the analyses of the two Orthodox theologians quoted above is that neither the Orthodoxy nor the heterodoxy of the Slavophiles should be exaggerated. Romanides stresses the fact that Khomiakov "grasped firmly the central moral principle necessary for comprehending the organic reality of the Church – faith which is completely free of utilitarian concern and positively expressed in selfless love" and, this way, he has "served as an important stepping stone for the liberation of modern Russian theology from the usual […] eudaimonistic and hedonistic" Western theological methodology. Khomiakov's "greatness as a theologian", Romanides concludes, "is based not on his strict adherence to patristic theology, but rather on the fact that he paved the way for a return to the Fathers of the

[779] *Ibidem*. A similar critique of Slavophile ecclesiology has also been put forward by the Catholic priest and theologian François Rouleau (François Rouleau, *Ivan Kiréievski et la Naissance du Slavophilisme*, pp. 245-246).

[780] Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. 2, pp. 291-292.

Church"[781]. Florovsky has argued that the incapacity of the Slavophiles to fully comprehend "the incommensurate natures of Church and society", did not affect their theology itself as much as it affected their understanding of history and society. But according to him, "no matter how socially ambiguous the Slavophiles could be in their philosophical views", their ecclesiology and epistemology remain "completely true to fundamental and ancient patristic tradition"[782].

Grounding his ecclesiology in universally valid social laws, from which the imperative of infallibility is deduced, Maistre has the tendency to reduce the order of the Church to the order of nature, transforming thus the Church into a society like any other society. And if all the problematic aspects of Maistre's ecclesiology stem from his sociological methodology, or, more precisely, from his sociologization of ecclesiology, a similar sociologization, albeit of a different nature, seems to lead to theological problems in the case of the Slavophilesas well. But here the boundaries between Church and society seem to be crossed in the opposite sense. More specifically, if Maistre tends to reduce the Church to the level of a society that is governed like all other societies, stressing the specifically Orthodox unity between the life of the Church and the life of the people, the Slavophiles tend instead to lose sight of the differences between the Eucharistic unity of the Body of Christ and the organic order of the Russian peasant commune. Thus, if Maistre tends to reduce the Church to the natural order, the Slavophiles tend to extend the life of the Church beyond its strict Eucharistic boundaries, or, to make abstraction of the Eucharistic dimension of the Church when referring to the latter, slipping in a more or less subtle manner from Christian Orthodoxy to Russian populism and ultimately to Russian nationalism. This aspect of Slavophile Christianity, with all the ambiguities that it presupposes, will be inherited to a large extent by Dostoyevsky.

[781] John S. Romanides, "Orthodox Ecclesiology according to Alexis Khomiakov", pp. 69, 73.
[782] Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. 2, pp. 27, 46, 52.

4.8. - Joseph de Maistre and the Slavophiles – A summary of similarities and differences

While both Maistre and the Slavophiles are opposed to Protestant individualism, there are fundamental differences between Maistre's ecclesiology and the ecclesiology of the Slavophiles. If Maistre opposes the principle of papal infallibility to the disintegrating tendencies of Protestant individualism, the Slavophiles regard Protestant individualism and Papal infallibility as two sides of the same coin, and argue that Protestantism is only the consistent development of the anti-ecclesial individualism that the principle of papal infallibility presupposes. Hence, if in the case of Maistre the unity of the Church is maintained through the principle of authority, which finds its highest expression in the Catholic system, in the case of the Slavophiles, the unity of the Church is maintained through *sobornost* (organic togetherness), which presupposes the harmonious reconciliation, through love, of individual freedom and collective unity. While Maistre's conception of the Church is juridical, the Slavophile conception of the Church is organic, the difference between the two ecclesiologies reflecting to a large extent the difference – presented in the part dedicated to Kantorowicz from section 4.3– between the understanding of the Church as the Eucharistic Body of Christ and the understanding of the Church as a corporate body whose head is the Pope. However, as we have seen, it seems that the organic character of Slavophile ecclesiology lacks precisely a clear Christological, and therefore Eucharistic, foundation.

Based on the concept of *sobornost*, the Slavophile ecclesiology is inherently connected to a specific theory of knowledge that has ecclesiological presuppositions; in the sense that the access to knowledge is reserved only to the ecclesial organism, of which the individual believer is only a member. More exactly, the Slavophiles distinguish between separated reason, which can only

reach a partial knowledge of truth, and integral reason, which alone can grasp the fullness of truth. Integral knowledge/reason represents a mystical perception of truth whose precondition is the harmonious integration of the various capacities of the soul –intellectual, ethical, esthetical, etc. The sources of the Slavophile epistemology can be traced both to the theology of the Greek Fathers, as well as to the thought of German Romantic thinkers such as Schelling and Schlegel. Overall, while the genealogy and nature of Slavophile thought remains a subject of debate, it is clear that, despite the fact that Maistre is not foreign to the idea of intuitive knowledge, the latter does not reject the rationalism of the Enlightenment on the basis of a Romantic epistemology, and that, furthermore, he does not defend the romantic conception of the social order. Instead, Maistre favors an institutional order that preserves social unity through the mechanism of infallible authority, which alone can put an end to the otherwise unending war of individual opinions. Most likely, Maistre can only perceive a mystical type of knowledge as a subversive force that challenges the clerical mediation and thus threatens to undermine the institutional order of the Church.

In understanding the religious thought of Maistre and of the Slavophiles, one should take into account the fact that Maistre and the Slavophiles are reacting against modern individualism and rationalism. For Maistre, as well as for the Slavophiles, modern individualism dissolves the social bond and thus threatens society with the specter of disintegration, while reason separated from religion inevitably leads to the annihilation of man's spiritual dimension, and through this, to his dehumanization. Modernity is therefore perceived as a crisis, which can lead – at least in principle, if not in fact – to catastrophic consequences. Moreover, both Maistre and the Slavophiles argue that the modern crisis has theological origins. If Maistre locates the origin of this crisis in the Protestant Reformation, the Slavophiles argue that the origin of the modern

crisis should be located in the theological innovations of the papacy that have led to the schism between the Orthodox East and the Catholic West. Maistre's genealogy of modernity and the Slavophiles' genealogy of modernity resemble each other from a structural point of view. More specifically, both Maistre and the Slavophiles are tracing back the origin of modernity to a theological original sin, opposed to the essence of Catholicism and respectively Orthodoxy, which triggers a historical process of decay that can only be stopped by the reaffirmation of the Catholic, respectively Orthodox principle, that has been denied in the first place. Like Maistre, the Slavophiles also believe that the modern crisis will be surpassed by a new religious age, and both Maistre and the Slavophiles put forward a providential explanation of the revolutionary changes of modernity that they are otherwise criticizing. Thus, if Maistre sees in the French Revolution a providential event that announces a third and final revelation of the Holy Spirit, and prepares the ground for a millenarian transformation of the whole world, for the Slavophiles, the break from the Russian past, provoked by Peter's modernization of the Russian society, represents nevertheless the necessary premise for a future universal civilization, which will subordinate the highest scientific and political developments of modernity to the spiritual principles of Orthodox Christianity. While Maistre believes that only the Catholic Church can withstand the political and intellectual changes brought about by modernity, the Slavophiles believe that only the Orthodox Church is able to resist these changes. Maistre prophesizes the collapse of Orthodoxy in the face of these transformations and regards this expected collapse as a proof of the falsity of the Orthodox religion. Khomiakov makes a similar prophecy with regard to Catholicism, and derives from this fact the same conclusion as Maistre.

For Maistre the defining principle of Catholicism is papal infallibility. For the Slavophiles the defining principles of Orthodoxy are organic togetherness and integral knowledge. The

Maistrian and the Slavophile principles are both opposed to Protestant individualism, but they also exclude each other. Maistre regards Orthodoxy as just another expression of the Protestant principle, and this is also the way in which the Slavophiles regard Catholicism. While for Maistre Protestantism means first and foremost disobedience, for the Slavophiles, Protestantism means first and foremost isolation. Thus, if for Maistre, the Orthodox Church is just another sect that rebels against the authority of the Pope, for the Slavophiles, the juridical organization of the Roman Catholic Church presupposes the same type of individualism whose manifestation in the case of Protestantism becomes explicit. Finally, if in his analysis of Orthodoxy, Maistre argues that the latter is to a great extent a product of the anarchical spirit of Greek Antiquity, in their analysis of Catholicism, the Slavophiles regard the latter as the continuation of the Roman imperial idea.

The theological differences that separate Maistre and the Slavophiles are reflected in different, and even directly opposed political principles and ideas. Thus, the belief in the possibility of a harmonious reconciliation between faith and reason supports the Slavophiles' defense of the freedom of thought and of the universal access to education. Although, unlike the Slavophiles, Maistre stresses the distinction between faith and reason, and seems to reject the possibility of integral knowledge, he nevertheless officially expresses his belief that reason justifies faith. Yet, unlike the Slavophiles, Maistre is very anxious with regard to the disenchanting power of modern science and modern philosophy, and he fears that these may ruin the religious convictions on which the moral and political order of societies depends. For this reason, unlike the Slavophiles, Maistre argues that censorship is necessary, that the access to science should be controlled by the clergy and that for the sake of political stability the masses should be kept in a state of illiteracy. Regarding freedom as a fundamental presupposition of the

Christian life, the Slavophiles have also militated for the liberation of the Russian peasantry. Contrariwise, Maistre has warned the Tsar that this would be a thoughtless social measure that would have disastrous consequences. Overall, while from many points of view the Slavophiles have positively influenced the modernization of the Russian society, in what concerns Russia, Maistre had promoted an ultra-reactionary political agenda.

Based on different religious, and, more specifically, ecclesiological premises, Slavophile conservatism radically differs from the conservatism of Maistre. In principle, both Maistre and the Slavophiles are defending the Catholic, respectively Orthodox tradition, in the face of the challenges posed by modern secularism. Moreover, both Maistre and the Slavophiles have criticized the revolutionary mentality and all abstract ideological recipes, underlining that a society cannot be better or worse than the sum of its private virtues, and, likewise, stressing the fact that the only legitimate and efficient way for improving government is the cultivation of personal virtues and the power of personal example. However, while Maistre's conservatism has a hierarchical structure, and the social categories on which it is based are the clergy and the aristocracy[783], Slavophilism represents instead a form of popular, quasi-anarchical, conservatism, which is essentially anti-aristocratic and opposed to the clericalism that characterizes Roman Catholicism. More precisely, the Slavophiles refuse to separate the Russian clergy from the Russian people, and to simply subordinate the latter to the governing authority of the former. While the clergy has its own specific role in the Church, it does not represent the Church apart from the Orthodox people, and is authorized to speak in the name of the Church only if it gives expression to the collective consciousness of the Orthodox people.

[783] Maistre argues however that, like the monarchy, the aristocracy has to pass through a process of regeneration, and that this regeneration can occur only through the subordination of the aristocracy to the authority of the Roman Catholic clergy. From this point of view it is correct to say that ultimately, Maistre invests all his hopes in a single institution: the Roman Catholic Church.

Like Maistre, the Slavophiles were fervent monarchists, and have argued that the power of the monarch must be unlimited. But unlike in the case of Maistre, in the case of the Slavophile authors, this absolute authority of the monarch does not derive from a divine right. Instead it derives from the absolute devaluation of the political by the Russian Christian people, which in order to completely dedicate itself to the Christian ideals, renounces completely the sinful burden of the political, which is taken over by the Tsar. If Maistre tries to prevent the tyrannical deviations of monarchic authority by subordinating the latter to the authority of the Pope, the Slavophiles argue that the Russian people is willing to endure the most terrible kind of political despotism in order to preserve its spiritual freedom, but that it is completely unwilling to accept the spiritual despotism of the Pope, despite its civilizing influence. If Maistre argued that, wherever Catholic unity is absent, the control of the Church by the state becomes both necessary and legitimate, the Slavophiles protested against the interferences of the state in the life of the Church.

If Maistre's theory of sovereignty is conceived as a Catholic refutation of Rousseau's ideal of popular sovereignty, in as much as it concomitantly affirms the principles of freedom and unity, the ecclesiological and social thought of the Slavophiles may be regarded as an Orthodox fulfillment of the same ideal. In general, while Maistre is proposing a Catholic Counter-Enlightenment, the Slavophiles are proposing instead an "Orthodox Enlightenment". The political theology of Maistre starts from the presupposition that there is an irreducible antagonism between Catholicism and modernity, the latter being Protestant in its essence. Therefore, for Maistre, the overcoming of the modern crisis presupposes the triumph of the Catholic principle of authority over the Protestant principle of individual freedom. For the Slavophiles, Orthodoxy is situated beyond this conflict, and, consequently, it has the mission to

reconcile the contradictions of Western civilization. Thus, just as Catholic unity and Protestant freedom are reconciled in the Orthodox Church, the Slavophiles argue that, far from opposing modernity, Orthodoxy has to recognize both its value and its legitimacy, and that it has to integrate within its own religious tradition the political and the scientific progress of the modern West, conferring on it a higher spiritual meaning. In conclusion, while Maistre opposes Christianity to modernity, the Slavophiles want to reconcile Christianity with modernity.

Finally, if, constructed according to the model of political sovereignty, Maistre's ecclesiology tends to evolve in the direction of a decisionism that requires in turn a mystification mechanism, as we have seen, Khomiakov sees in Maistre's contradictions only a transparent manifestation of the intimate nature of Catholicism itself. For Khomiakov, while the proclamation of papal infallibility inevitably presupposes the right of every Christian to claim, sooner or later, the same status for himself, such a situation inevitably compels the Catholic hierarchy to conceal "the anarchy of the principle under the governmental despotism of the fact"[784]. Thus, if several aspects of Maistre's Catholic thought bring Maistrian Catholicism in the vicinity of Dostoyevsky's "Legend of The Grand Inquisitor", the religious thought of the Slavophiles anticipates and probably even influences the genesis of Dostoyevsky's "Legend".

[784] Aleksei Khomiakov, "Some Remarks by an Orthodox Christian Concerning the Western Communions, on the Occasion of a Letter Published by the Archbishop of Paris", in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 72.

Chapter 5 – The West and modernity in the thought of Dostoyevsky

5.1. - Introduction

Since my thesis represents a comprehensive comparison between Maistre and Dostoyevsky, and since in the chapters on Maistre, I analyzed his understanding and critique of modernity, I will engage in a similar analysis in the next two chapters dedicated to Dostoyevsky. If the topic of chapter 6 will be Dostoyevsky's response to what he sees as the modern crisis, in this chapter I will begin my study of Dostoyevsky by analyzing his interpretation of modernity. But first of all, in section 5.2., I raise the question that concerns the interpretation of Dostoyevsky. In this sense, I will refer to different hermeneutical approaches to the Dostoyevskyan work and I will clarify the way in which I am interpreting Dostoyevsky.

In section 5.3., I analyze Dostoyevsky's view of the theological origins of modernity, and in particular, his understanding of Catholicism and Protestantism, and of the relation between the two. In the following section (5.4.), I present Dostoyevsky's analysis of the secular ideal of modernity. In section 5.5., I concentrate on Dostoyevsky's analysis of the bourgeois social order, which destroys, through its contractualism and utilitarianism, the social bond grounded on a common religious principle. Bourgeois social order makes, then, the last tenet of the French Revolution, brotherhood, impossible. I continue with section 5.6., explaining that, for Dostoyevsky, in the absence of genuine brotherhood in Christ, socialism claims that man, as a rational animal, prefers compulsory brotherhood to bourgeois disorder, brotherhood appearing thus to be dependent on selfish rationality. Section 5.7. presents Dostoyevsky's prophetic analysis, according to which the destructive tendencies of capitalism were leading to a socialist revolution. In section 5.8. I argue that Dostoyevsky and Maistre agree that the root of modern

evil is individualism, but while Maistre sees the crisis of modernity as being a crisis of authority, Dostoyevsky sees it as a crisis of brotherhood. The following section (5.9.) presents Dostoyevsky's view of the final Western solution to the modern crisis: the division of humanity between a ruling elite, which claims to take over the burden of human freedom, and a mass of perfectly equal slaves. The last section (5.10.) represents an analysis of Dostoyevsky's view concerning the revolutionary phenomenon, and, within this context, I compare Dostoyevsky's interpretation of this phenomenon with Maistre's interpretation.

5.2. - Hermeneutical perspectives

Given the fact that, unlike Maistre, Dostoyevsky is first and foremost a novelist, from a hermeneutical point of view, the comparison between Maistre and Dostoyevsky presents itself in asymmetric terms. Hermeneutical problems which, in Maistre's case, are raised only by *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, mark the great majority of Dostoyevsky's works that I will use in my comparative study. But even if one were to simply compare *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* with one of Dostoyevsky's novels, the asymmetry still persists. For independently of the nuances that pertain to the different participants in the dialogue, and even of the tension, reflected dialogically, that exists between the different dimensions of Maistre's religious thought, Maistre's *Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* remains a dialogue between people that agree with regard to the same fundamental principles[785]. By contrast, Dostoyevsky's literary world presents itself as a battlefield where fundamentally opposed worldviews are engaged in a fierce conflict. Thus, when analyzing the theological, philosophical, and political position of Dostoyevsky, there

[785] See in this sense the observations made in subsection 2.8.2.

appears the question of how to identify Dostoevsky's voice in his novels. Up to date, the most important study of Dostoevsky's literary style remains Mikhail Bakhtin's book, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, first published in Russian in 1929. In his classical study, Bakhtin argued that Dostoyevsky is the inventor of the "polyphonic novel"[786], the novel with a multiplicity of voices that are all set on equal footing. According to Bakhtin, the concept of polyphony has its roots in Dostoyevsky's conception of man and of the world. Dostoyevsky expressed the importance he ascribed to human freedom through his writing style. In this sense, in the same manner as the Christian God fully respects the freedom of his creation, as the creator of his characters, Dostoyevsky has respected the latter's total freedom, without imposing his viewpoint to them. Dostoyevsky does not understand his characters as objects through which he should express his own word, but as subjects with "their own directly significant word".[787] According to Bakhtin, Dostoyevsky believed that man – and implicitly the world – is never in a finalized state, that is, one can never fully know oneself; moreover, one can never reach the truth about oneself and about the world in isolation. The truth about oneself and the world is revealed in dialog with others because, in order to know oneself, one has to rely not only on his own inner perspective about oneself, but also on the external perspective, which only others can offer. Bakhtin notes that "the hero's […] seclusion in his own world always lie[s] at the root of the tragical catastrophe in Dostoevsky's works".[788]

Dostoyevsky's polyphonic literary style discloses, thus, the importance of two fundamental concepts: freedom and truth. Mere freedom, in the absence of truth or of the quest for the truth, is nonsensical. But a ready-made truth asserted by an alleged superior authority, in the absence of

[786] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, translated by R.W. Rotsel, Ardis, Ann Arbor, 1973, p.4.
[787] *Ibidem*.
[788] *Ibidem*, p.7.

freedom, is impersonal, "belongs to no one"[789], and tries to express a finalized vision about the others, which is inevitably false. Because, for Dostoyevsky, the Truth is a Person (it is Christ, the eternal Logos who exists in relation to the two other persons of the Trinity and who relates to men personally) the truth about oneself and about the world can be sought only in dialog with other persons, a dialog that most often consists of painful contradictions and polemics. As such, in Dostoyevsky's novels, the truth can never be identified in one single mouth, but, on the contrary, in the multiplicity of voices. Bakhtin strengthens this idea by citing L.P. Grossman, who maintains that Dostoyevsky's literary work consists of a unique combination of "the Book of Job, the Revelation of Saint John, the New Testament texts, Saint Simeon the New Theologian" and "the newspaper page, the anecdote, the parody, the street scene, the grotesque and even the pamphlet"[790], all on equal footing.

According to Bakhtin, "Dostoevsky does not work at making objectivized images of people, but seeks, for his hero, words which are maximally pregnant with meaning and seemingly independent of the author, words which express […] the hero's […] ideological position in the world".[791] Here lies the fundamental distinction between Dostoyevsky's polyphonic style and the monologic or aphoristic novels. One example of a monologic novel, *par excellence*, is Tolstoy's novelistic genre, where, Bakhtin notes, "Tolstoy's monological point of view and his word penetrate everywhere".[792] In this kind of novel, the author, with the full consciousness of the superior point of view of the creator, sees, understands, and knows truths about his heroes to which the latter do not have access. The heroes thus become the mouthpiece of the author who asserts his truth, while other ideas, "incorrect or indifferent" from the author's viewpoint, "are

[789] *Ibidem*, p.64.
[790] *Ibidem*, p.11.
[791] *Ibidem*, p.33.
[792] *Ibidem*, p.47.

not asserted, but are either polemically negated or lose their direct significance".[793] The aphoristic style was developed in the "literature of classicism and of Enlightenment", and Bakhtin characterizes it as a way of thinking "in separate and self-sufficient thoughts […] purposely independent of their context". The only representative – or "epigone", as Bakhtin calls him – of this style in Dostoyevsky's novels is Stepan Trofimovich who "spouts his 'verities' because he lacks a 'dominant idea' which would determine the core of his personality".[794] Consequently, on his death bed, Stepan Trofimovich confesses that he has "been a liar all [his] life": "Even when I spoke the truth, I never spoke for the truth's sake, only for my own".[795] Contrariwise, Dostoyevsky does not *assert*, but *represents* ideas, opinions, including his own. All ideas become, thus, "pure voices"[796] and the words of specific heroes belong only to them because, for Dostoyevsky, there are no impersonal ideas. Bakhtin emphasizes that "the hero's word about the world merges with his confessional word about himself" because "the truth about the world, according to Dostoevsky, is inseparable from the truth of the personality".[797] As such, Bakhtin says, the authorial voice is simply another voice in the novel, "the authorial word about the hero" being "a word about somebody who is present, somebody who can hear the author and can answer him".[798]

Despite the polyphony of voices, Dostoyevsky's literary world, according to Bakhtin, converges on one image, that is, Christ and his Church. The different perspectives represented by the multiplicity of characters, with which Dostoyevsky partially agrees and partially disagrees, all point towards the wholeness of truth as expressed by the eternal Logos, and to the Church as

[793] *Ibidem*, p.64.
[794] *Ibidem*, p.79.
[795] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Possessed*, VI, 678, quoted in Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.79.
[796] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.43.
[797] *Ibidem*, p.64.
[798] *Ibidem*, p.53.

an interpersonal dialogical communion whose cornerstone is the living Word. But in the novels, the Christian idea remains just another idea, affirmed by Dostoyevsky's Christ-like characters, whose voices coexist with other voices on equal footing. However, Bakhtin argues, the fact that Dostoyevsky also wrote articles in the journals of his time and in the *Diary of a Writer* is very helpful in identifying his own voice in the novels as well as opinions with which he was in partial agreement or with which he totally disagreed. In the articles, Dostoyevsky expressed clear-cut, monological ideas. By comparing the novels and the articles, we can see, according to Bakhtin, that "the prototypes of Raskolnikov's ideas, for example, are the ideas of Max Stirner and the ideas of Napoleon III […]; one of the prototypes for Petr Verkhovensky's ideas is [Nechayev's] *Catechism of a Revolutionary*". According to Bakhtin, these are "ideas with which Dostoevsky the thinker was totally at variance". We can recognize also, Bakhtin continues, "the prototypes of Versilov's ideas" in "the ideas of Chaadaev and Herzen", "ideas with which Dostoevsky the thinker was in partial agreement".[799] Finally, we can identify Dostoyevsky's own ideas "as idea-prototypes for certain idea-images in his novels, the images of the ideas of Sonya, Myshkin, Alyosha Karamazov, Zosima".[800] These are Christ-like characters and the fact that Dostoyevsky the thinker embraces such an image is evident, according to Bakhtin, not only from his articles, but also from his letters. He writes, for instance, to a friend: "One must constantly ask oneself: are my convictions just? There is only one test for them – Christ …"[801]. Thus, through his Christ-like characters, Dostoyevsky the author enters into dialogue with his other characters, which are likewise also dialoguing between themselves independently of the author.

Dostoyevsky's commitment to polyphony presupposed the assumption of two risks that will be

[799] *Ibidem*, pp.74, 75.
[800] *Ibidem*, p.75.
[801] *Biography, Letters and Notes from F.M. Dostoevsky's Notebook*, Saint Petersburg, 1883, 371-372, 374, in Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.80.

analyzed in the remaining part of this section. First of all, Dostoyevsky's engagement, throughout his novels, of these beliefs in an open confrontation with other worldviews, exposes Dostoyevsky to the risk of being misinterpreted. More precisely, as argued by A. Boyce Gibson, by "letting the devil speak for himself"[802], Dostoyevsky has managed to scandalize many of his readers, who have thus reached the conclusion that the devil's voice was actually Dostoyevsky's own voice. Thus, taking into account the fact that "Dostoevsky presents the case for atheism so persuasively, and so variously, […] many readers, among them such eminent literary figures as Albert Camus, D.H. Lawrence and V. Rozanov, have been forced to conclude that this is what, in his heart, he really believed"[803]. If, in the opinion of Henri de Lubac, Dostoyevsky's work essentially represents a Christian response to Nietzsche's nihilism[804], Léon Chestov has argued that, in reality, Dostoyevsky has affirmed with "*honte et terreur*" what Nietzsche has affirmed openly. "*Les gens*", Chestov argues, "*furent si naïfs et si confiants qu'ils pardonnèrent à Dostoïewsky la terrible philosophie d'Ivan pour le pitoyable bavardage d'Aliocha*". But according to Chestov, both the German philosopher and the Russian novelist "*abandonnèrent l'humanitarisme pour la cruauté et inscrivirent sur leur étendard ces mots étranges 'Wille zur Macht'*"[805]. Thomas Masaryk has argued that Dostoyevsky's true voice is the voice of the Grand Inquisitor. Thus, if Fyodor Pavlovich says at a certain point that Zosima is a "Russian […] Jesuit" who "[puts] on holiness" before the people while telling "all the clever people who come to see him" that he doesn't believe in God[806], identifying Zosima and the Grand Inquisitor, Masaryk argues that Dostoyevsky's Russian Jesuitism actually surpasses in perfidiousness

[802] Alexander Boyce Gibson, *The Religion of Dostoevsky*, SCM Press LTD, London, 1973, p. 30.

[803] Malcolm Jones, *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of Religious Experience*, Anthem Press, London, 2005, p. 26.

[804] George Pattison and Diane Oenning Thompson, "Reading Dostoevsky Religiously", in George Pattison and Diane Oenning Thompson (ed.), *Dostoevsky and the Christian Tradition*,Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 16-17.

[805] Léon Chestov, *La Philosophie de la Tragédie: Dostoïewsky et Nietzsche*, in *Œuvres*, Tome III, traduction de B. De Schloezer, Éditions de la Pléiade, Paris, 1926, pp. 115, 239, 246.

[806] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 180.

Roman Catholic Jesuitism. As indicated by Théodore Paléologue, "*le jésuitisme est, selon Masaryk, la fatalité d'un catholicisme ayant perdu crédibilité au contact de la modernité : sa mauvaise foi fondamentale consiste donc dans l'effort de regagner la foi perdue. C'est un athéisme inavoué*"[807]. The observation is of particular interest, since, as it can be clearly seen, Masaryk interprets Dostoyevsky in the same way as Maistre is interpreted by many of his commentators. Consequently, from the perspective of a hermeneutic of suspicion, like Maistre, Dostoyevsky would then appear as another avatar of the Grand Inquisitor: one who, unlike Maistre, has the inspiration not to make scandalous confessions; or, more precisely, one who, expressing his intimate convictions through some of his loathsome characters, is able to better conceal those convictions from the naïve reader. Thus, Dostoyevsky's polyphony may be ultimately considered as "a technique […] of writing between the lines", motivated by the need to conceal the author's true opinions. As argued by Leo Strauss, "some great writers" who, for specific reasons, choose to write both exoterically (for the great public) and esoterically (for a small number of initiated disciples), may "[state] certain important truths quite openly by using as mouthpiece some disreputable character"[808] – Fyodor Pavlovich in this case.

The second risk that is implicit in the concept of polyphony, although related to the problem of interpretation, operates nevertheless at a deeper level. We may call this risk, which has marked Dostoyevsky's destiny as an artist and as a religious consciousness, an existential risk. In this sense, it is important to mention at this point Malcolm Jones' interpretation of Dostoyevsky. Jones practically radicalizes Bakhtin's interpretation of Dostoyevsky, arguing that, as far as Dostoyevsky's novels are concerned, the multiplicity of voices prevents us from ascribing any particular voice to Dostoyevsky the author. In this sense, Jones says that it is impossible to

[807]Théodore Paléologue, *Sous l'œil du Grand Inquisiteur*, pp. 181-183.
[808]Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1988, pp. 24, 36

pronounce ourselves with regard to the final destination of Dostoyevsky's personal journey of faith, and, moreover, that no such final destination, as far as Dostoyevsky the author is concerned, can be identified in his novels. The personal voice of Dostoyevsky, in the novels, practically dissolves into a multiplicity of Dostoyevskyan voices expressed through a multiplicity of Dostoyevskyan characters. Paraphrasing Dmitry Karamazov, for whom man's heart is the battlefield on which God and the devil are fighting, Jones argues that the battle that occurs on the battlefield that is "Dostoyevsky's text" remains essentially "undecided"[809]. According to Jones, "only such a reading does full justice to the text and remains faithful to all the varieties of religious and atheist experience to be found there"[810]. For him, the world of Dostoyevsky's novels is the "[post-modern]…world in which there is no ultimate truth and in which we have to constitute our own systems of meaning". And, it is in this sense that one should understand Ivan Karamazov's argument: in the absence of God, or, in Derrida's terms, of "the transcendental signifier", " 'everything is permitted' "[811]. Jones emphasizes the fact that Dostoyevsky was not "a deconstructionist *avant la lettre*", for he does not celebrate the deconstruction that is at work in his texts. Nevertheless, he was "compulsively drawn" towards deconstruction, in his admirable determination to confront, until the end, "what he called the 'accursed questions' "[812]. Rather than celebrating deconstruction, Dostoyevsky suffers from a "deconstructive anxiety". He "displays a dread that reality, whatever that might be, forever eludes our grasp and that the world of our experience is devoid of all meaning apart from that with which we may choose to endow it"[813]. Thus, Jones rejects both the atheist and the Christian interpretations of Dostoyevsky. If Albert Camus has argued that "Dostoevsky's heart was with

[809] Malcolm Jones, *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of Religious Experience*, pp. x, 96.
[810] *Ibidem*, p. 65.
[811] *Ibidem*, pp. 83, 106.
[812] *Ibidem*, p. 73.
[813] *Ibidem*, p. xii.

Ivan rather than with Alesha", Jones argues that, instead, "Dostoyevsky's heart was clearly torn between the two extremes"[814]. Moreover, Jones insists that no dogmatic Orthodox view could be ascribed to Dostoyevsky, but that instead, what remains after the clash between traditional Christianity and atheism is only a "minimal religion". This minimal religion is, first of all, highly subjective: the "honest believer", and more precisely Dostoyevsky, selects from the body of tradition "only those beliefs that" he "knows, understands and treasures from his or her own personal experience"[815]. Second, while constantly subverted by the opposing voice of atheism, the minimal religion is never annihilated. The tradition is dead, but the religious feeling, fed by Orthodox motives, lives on, in a post-modern world.

Jones' work raises two issues: first, the issue that concerns the Orthodoxy of Dostoyevsky's religious faith, and second, the issue that concerns the reality of Dostoyevsky's religious faith – whether Dostoyevsky truly believed in God or not, independently of how much his faith corresponded to the official teaching of the Orthodox Church. As far as the first issue is concerned, it is not in my intention to engage in an extensive criticism of Jones' work. As it will be seen, while admitting that there are several controversial and even highly controversial spots that concern Dostoyevsky's Orthodoxy, my approach towards this subject significantly differs from that of Jones. At first glance, one may reproach Jones for the fact that he forces the interpretation of Dostoyevsky[816], and that the tradition, in relation to which the new "minimal

[814] *Ibidem*, p. 50.
[815] *Ibidem*, p. xi.
[816] For example, Jones argues that there are not sufficient dogmatic and liturgical expressions of Orthodoxy in Dostoyevsky's novels (Malcolm Jones, *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of Religious Experience*, pp. 22-23). But a novel is not a dogmatic treatise, and, moreover, the Orthodox tradition is not characterized by an abstract approach to theology, but by the idea of living theology. Furthermore, these criteria of interpretation, especially if a thelogical interpretation is applied to a novel (which is already a problematic issue), are extremely vague. Jones also argues that Dostoyevsky supports the idea of "the establishment by personal will-power of heaven on earth" (*Ibidem*, p. 60), although, as it will be demonstrated later in the thesis, this is absolutely not the case. Likewise, he argues that the image of Christ from *The Idiot* leads to a conception of the world that is clearly not Orthodox (*Ibidem*, p. 50),

religion" of Dostoyevsky defines itself, is conceived by Jones in overly rigid and monolithic terms – as if to purposely stimulate the need for the separation from the body of tradition of a new and more breathable minimal religion[817]. But, the biggest problem with Jones' diagnostic of Dostoyevsky's religious thought is the fact that this diagnostic is not supported by specific references to Church Fathers or consecrated Orthodox theologians[818] (a problem which, unfortunately, is quite common in the Western scholarship dealing with Dostoyevsky). Moving now to the second issue, although Jones argues that it is not his intention to "deconstruct Dostoevsky"[819], I think that, inevitably, this is what he ends up doing. So, whether we uphold the more radical hermeneutical position that identifies Dostoyevsky's voice with that of his atheist heroes, or, whether we uphold the more moderate position that simply argues that there is no

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but, as it will be shown later in the thesis, this is not the image of Christ to which Dostoyevsky had adhered in the end, but rather a stage in the evolution of Dostoyevsky's journey of faith.

[817] Jones praises Dostoyevsky for the fact that, by ridiculing such monastic figures as Father Ferapont, he has showed "that even the most sacred institutions of the Church are not immune, indeed they seem to harbour, even provoke, some of the most negative aspects of spirituality" (*Ibidem*, p. 154). Setting aside the fact that I do not see how it can be deduced from *The Brothers Karamazov* that Orthodox monasticism itself is responsible for provoking Father Ferapont's fanaticism, I also do not see why Dostoyevsky's observation that the life of some monks is far from ideal (the monastic literature of the Orthodox Church is full of such observations) situates Dostoyevsky outside the Orthodox tradition. In other situations, the Orthodox tradition, on the contrary, is presented as being more flexible than generally known. Thus, Jones argues that the Epistle of James, part of the Orthodox scriptural canon, is "highly controversial (from an Orthodox point of view)" (*Ibidem*, p. 56). Consequently, according to Jones, the influence of this Epistle on Dostoyevsky's work appears as another argument for the questionable character of Dostoyevsky's Orthodoxy. Likewise, we also find out from Jones that "Eldership" is "an "[institution] of a highly controversial nature within" the Orthodox "tradition" (*Ibidem*, p. 60), an affirmation which will probably not find very much support on Mount Athos. As for the reproach that Dostoyevsky refers to the mystical experience of Alyosha in vague terms, not referring clearly to its "supernatural" elements, it can be argued that, by itself, the mystical experience presupposes a degree of intimacy, which Dostoyevsky the author acknowledges and respects. All the more so since, as stressed by Vladimir Lossky, in the Orthodox Church, "the way of mystical union is nearly always a secret between God and the soul concerned […]. What is published abroad is the fruit of this union: wisdom, understanding of the divine mysteries, expressing itself in theological or moral teaching or in advice for the edification of one's brethren. As to the inward and personal aspect of the mystical experience, it remains hidden from the eyes of all" (Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, pp. 20-21).

[818] One somewhat notable exception would be an article by Father Sergei Hackel, quoted several times by Jones. But, although it contains some interesting points, the article generally suffers from the same problems for Jones may be reproached: views which arguably or obviously do not belong to Dostoyevsky, but only to his characters, are attributed to the author; an artistic work is analyzed with the rigor (or rather the rigidity) with which one would analyze a theological treatise; in general, the hermeneutical framework is very rigid, shows very little generosity and a lot of suspicion which is not and cannot be confirmed (See Sergei Hackel, "The Religious Dimension: Vision or Evasion? – Zosima's Discourse in The Brothers Karamazov" in Malcolm Jones and Garth M. Terry (ed.), *New Essays on Dostoevsky*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 139-164).

[819] Malcolm Jones, *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of Religious Experience*, p. xii.

Dostoyevskyan voice in the novels, I think that, in both cases, we assume the risk of abusing Dostoyevsky's dialogical generosity. More precisely, by arbitrarily ascribing to Dostoyevsky another voice than the one that he has publicly assumed, or by denying him a voice at all, we risk ending up, from the hermeneutical standpoint, precisely in the arbitrary and authoritarian form of monologism that Dostoyevsky has struggled and managed to avoid. And this form of monological authoritarianism risks being all the more perverse when the interpreter does not assume openly a deconstructionist project, arguing instead that, it is not even necessary to deconstruct Dostoyevsky, because, left to itself, "the Dostoevskian text deconstructs itself before our very eyes"[820] anyway. If in response to Jones' affirmation I argue that, in Dostoyevsky's text, the Dostoyevskyan voice resists deconstruction or reconstructs itself before our eyes (because the Dostoyevskyan text remains an open dialogue, and Dostoyevsky practically invites the reader to join the dialogue) my affirmation may not be true (ultimately, the question concerns the nature of the subject, and more specifically of the author, and remains a metaphysical question), but it is not more arbitrary than the affirmation of Jones. However, I do think that it is fairer towards Dostoyevsky. And, whereas Jones argues that the interpretation that sees in Dostoyevsky's novels not only a "fragmented world", but also "the promise of rebirth and renewal through the Christian faith", is "[slavish]"[821], I prefer to take this risk rather than taking the opposite risk of a hermeneutical abuse of Dostoyevsky's polyphonic generosity. Besides, joking now a little bit, since my project is a comparison, I am anyway compelled to assume such a position, because deconstruction implies not only the death of dialogue, but also the death of comparative studies. If there is no Dostoyevsky, but only a multitude of competing voices, how would I be able to compare Dostoyevsky with Maistre? Finally, I underline the fact that my choice of assuming that

[820] *Ibidem*, p. xii.
[821] *Ibidem*, p. x.

Dostoyevsky sincerely believed in the religious position that he affirmed does not delegitimize the interpretations that do not start from this premise. Since it is impossible to know with exactitude what takes place in a man's soul, a judgment that applies to Dostoyevsky as well as to Maistre, theoretically, these interpretations may be correct. And, independently of whether they are correct or not, they testify, by their very existence, to the complexity of the Dostoyevskyan novel and of Dostoyevsky the author. However, while the absence of trust, or the absence of a voice, makes dialogue impossible, there is no limit to speculation or deconstruction.

In the end, in what concerns the interpretation of Dostoyevsky's novels, I generally favor the hermeneutical perspective of A. Boyce Gibson. Gibson has the merit of setting Bakhtin's polyphonic reading of Dostoyevsky in an evolutionary perspective or, more precisely, in the perspective of Dostoyevsky's personal evolution in matters of religious faith. Thus, Gibson argues that in the novels, Dostoyevsky tested the ideas that he upheld publicly in his articles, by confronting these ideas, on an equal footing, with opposite ideas. More generally, in the novels, Dostoyevsky verified the capacity of his Christ-like figures (Sonya, Myshkin, Tikhon, Alyosha, Zosima) to face the test of reality. According to Gibson, engaged in this dialogue, Dostoyevsky himself has evolved, gradually adjusting his religious ideas in response to the challenges raised by the opposite partners of dialogue. In relation to the ideas expressed in the articles, "the novels present the 'negative moment' ", and Dostoyevsky always "proceeds to reconstruction on a higher level"[822]. The new ideas, produced in response to the negative feed-back of the novels, take flesh in new characters, created in response to the failure of previous ones. In this sense, Myshkin represents "a test case" that, being "[insufficiently] incarnate" (a concept that will be explained in greater detail later in the thesis), fails to resist the temptation of the world in which

[822] A. Boyce Gibson, *The Religion of Dostoevsky*, p. 38.

Dostoyevsky has set/thrown him. In response to Myshkin's failure, Dostoyevsky has created a new character, Alyosha, which this time is the representative of an incarnate Christianity[823]. Alyosha therefore represents the incarnation of an adjusted idea, better equipped to withstand the test of confrontation with opposite ideas.

As such, Gibson argues that, if we want to clearly distinguish Dostoyevsky's voice, this voice should not be necessarily sought in his luminous characters, but rather in the characters that appear at the end of his work, more specifically in *The Brothers Karamazov*, where "he is both more ruthlessly dialectical, and nearer to finality, than ever before"[824]. In this sense, Gibson criticizes the exegetes of Dostoyevsky's work who have erroneously "fastened on a stage in the journey and treated it as final"[825]. As far as the nature of Dostoyevsky's beliefs is concerned, according to Gibson, at the end of the journey we find a man concerning whom "we know what he wanted to believe, and with the more conscious part of his mind, did believe"[826]. The last novel reveals to us a man who "never ceased to entertain doubts", as "no Christian of education and intelligence can or should do otherwise"[827]. Yet, a man who, even as an artist, was "[completely devoted] to Christ" and "wholly Orthodox in sentiment and loyalty" (despite the various legitimate reservations with regard to the precision of his dogmatic views). "Much of the skepticism", Gibson argues, "expressed about the religion of the novels starts from the assumption that the Christian novelist will speak in his own person through a megaphone and give the devil no chance to speak at all". However, according to Gibson, those who base their interpretation of Dostoyevsky on this presupposition "know nothing of the knife-edge balancing

[823] *Ibidem*, pp. 38, 104, 122.
[824] *Ibidem*, p. 38.
[825] *Ibidem*, pp. 22-23.
[826] *Ibidem*, p. 4.
[827] *Ibidem*, pp. 22-23.

act which is Christian experience"[828]. In this sense, Dostoyevsky's last profession of faith, written in his notebook shortly after the publication of *The Brothers Karamazov*, speaks for itself. Referring to the arguments directed against Christianity, of his character Ivan Karamazov, Dostoyevsky states that nobody in the secular West has put forward "such a force of atheistic expression". Yet, the author, who has granted a voice of its own to the strongest atheistic expression, confesses, at the end of the hardest battle with himself, and with the spirit of denial, his faith in the following way: "it is not like a child that I believe in Christ and profess my faith in Him. My hosanna has come forth from the furnace of doubt"[829].

5.3. - Catholicism, Protestantism and the theological origins of modernity

In order to understand Dostoyevsky's philosophy of history, as well as his interpretation of the nature and origins of modernity, one should begin from Dostoyevsky's considerations concerning classical Antiquity and the impact that Christianity had on the latter. For Dostoyevsky, the emergence of Christianity represented a revolutionary historical phenomenon that shattered the political organization of the Roman Empire. According to the Russian novelist, when Christianity was born, the Roman Empire had been for long engaged in the edification of what he defined as "the ant-heap"[830]. The building of a universal "ant-heap", the Roman dream according to Dostoyevsky, effectively presupposed the forced unification of all humanity under the unique authority of the Roman Emperor. As argued by Bruce K. Ward, for Dostoyevsky, "this world-wide communion was compulsory because the boundaries of the communion were

[828] *Ibidem*, pp. 5-6.
[829] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, 27:86, quoted in Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet (1871-1881)*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2002, p. 713.
[830] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 336.

expanded by means of the sword. But more significantly, the communion was compulsory because it was rooted in the attempt (epitomized in the classical humanism of Cicero) to order human life exclusively on the basis of rational categories"[831]. As a unifying and rationalizing universal force, which was bringing the world from chaos to order, the Roman Emperor was considered to be a god, this being the "quintessential article of the imperial civil theology". And since Rome's ideal was the edification of a world order on the basis of human rationality and force alone, it naturally resulted that "the Eternal City ultimately aspired to be the vehicle of human self-deification"[832].

The Roman Empire appears then as a political expression of the mythological Tower of Babel, which, as we have seen, represents also a key concept in Maistre's thought. The Tower of Babel presupposes man's ambition of self-deification and the ambition to organize humanity as a whole exclusively by human means. And, just as in Maistre's philosophy of history, Babel will be confronted by Pentecost. Thus, while the Roman Empire was progressing in its effort to complete the building of the Tower of Babel, an alternative vision of universal unity had arose out of Judea, with the advent of Christianity. If the cornerstone of the Roman order was the man-god, the cornerstone of the new order was the God-man. Moreover, while Rome's ideal was to unify humanity through force, under an external authority, Christ's ideal was to create an inner unity of mankind, based on love and the implicit respect for human freedom that love presupposes. The ideal has only been partially accomplished, and, according to Dostoyevsky, this distance between ideal and reality has determined at a certain point the Roman Catholic Church, and more specifically the Pope, to abandon the ideal. The motivations behind this

[831] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo, 1986, p. 167.

[832] *Ibidem*, p. 167.

decision, as well as the subsequent transformation of the Roman Catholic Church, as a result of this decision, are described by Dostoyevsky in "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor".

As argued by Dostoyevsky's Inquisitor, while Christ compromised the theologico-political project of the Roman Emperor, he did not succeed in bringing mankind to unity. And, the Grand Inquisitor argues, Christ failed because of his idealism. In "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor", Christ's bankrupt idealism is reflected by his response to the three temptations of the Devil. Confronted with the first temptation, Christ refused to transform the stones into loaves of bread, for, in the name of spiritual freedom, he refused to "[purchase]...obedience [...] with loaves". By so doing, Christ rejected "the only absolute banner that was offered to [him] and that would have compelled everyone to bow down before [him] – the banner of earthly bread"; the same "banner" that socialism will eventually raise against Christ, "and before which [his] temple will come crushing down", when mankind will scientifically "proclaim [...] that there is no crime and consequently no sin either, but only the hungry"[833]. Likewise, instead of "[casting himself] down" from the "pinnacle of the temple", when the Devil tempted him to thus reveal his divinity, "[thirsting] for a faith" and a love "that was free", Christ refused "to enslave man with a miracle". But, The Grand Inquisitor argues, in so doing, Christ ignored, or seemed to ignore the fact that free faith is only for "gods", while the rest of humanity, "that weak, mutinying tribe", is unable "to reject the miracle and to make do, at such terrible moments of life, moments of the most terrible fundamental and tormenting spiritual questions, with only a free decision of the heart"[834]. Finally, Christ rejected the "sword of Caesar" that the Devil offered to him. Yet, the Inquisitor insists that, by not accepting "that third counsel of the mighty Spirit", Christ implicitly refused to offer to man everything that the latter "seeks in the world [...]: someone to bow down

[833] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 330-331.
[834] *Ibidem*, pp. 333-334.

before, someone to entrust one's conscience to, and a way of at last uniting everyone into an undisputed, general and consensual ant-heap, for the need of universal union is the third and final torment of human beings"[835]. Overall, "instead of taking mastery of people's freedom", Christ acted as he "did not love" men "at all", and therefore "increased" the burden of freedom "even further"[836]. Thus, he refused, in the opinion of The Grand Inquisitor, to acknowledge the fact that "the weak soul" does not have "the strength to accommodate such" a "terrible [gift]". And as a consequence, the result of Christ's sacrifice for man was not the inner and exterior peace that humanity needs, but only "restlessness, confusion and unhappiness"[837].

Tracing a radical antagonism between Christ and the Church, which overlaps on the conceptual opposition between freedom and unity, the Grand Inquisitor regards the Christianity of the Gospel in the same way as Maistre regards Protestantism: as a purely negative force which is limited to destruction. Disenchanting the imperial civil theology and exposing the Roman Emperor as a fake god, Christ has inevitably subverted the authority of the latter. Delegitimizing the Roman Imperial order, while at the same time proclaiming a kingdom that was "not of this world" (John 18, 36), Christ left man divided between an other-worldly freedom, accessible only to a minority of elect, and an earthly empire that could no longer govern on the basis "of the old, firm law"[838]. If Maistre had argued that both the heretic and the rebel are enemies of sovereignty, and that the existence of sovereignty therefore requires the unity between political and religious authority, Christ's refusal to unite the two types of authority in his person has inevitably left behind a theologico-political void. For this reason, the Grand Inquisitor regards Christ as an anarchist who "split up the flock and scattered it over unknown ways [...]. But the flock", the

[835] *Ibidem*, pp. 335-336.
[836] *Ibidem*, p. 332.
[837] *Ibidem*, pp. 334-335.
[838] *Ibidem*, p. 332.

Grand Inquisitor tells Christ, must "once more gather and once more submit"[839]. In this sense, if Christ's gift of freedom has actually represented a curse, due to which humanity has had "[to suffer] for a thousand years with [its] Tower"[840], The Grand Inquisitor assumes for himself the mission to "[correct]" Christ's work[841], and to "complete" the "Tower"[842], liberating at the same time humanity from the burden of freedom, which torments the individual conscience of the weak, and which at the same time is incompatible with his craving "for a" universal "*community* of bowing-down"[843].

Thus, in order to correct Christ's work, the Grand Inquisitor "took from" the Devil "that which" Christ "in [his] indignation had rejected: Rome and the sword of Caesar"[844]. Thus, according to Dostoyevsky, betraying the initial Christian ideals, Roman Catholicism "[proclaims]" to the world "a new Christ, not like the former one, but one who has been seduced by the third temptation of the devil"[845]. A Christ who unites in him both the secular and the ecclesial power, which are both delegated to the Pope. A Christ who therefore understands that those who "reign over human beings [...], and in whose hand are their loaves", should also "reign over their consciences"[846]. Thus, in the name of this new Christ, Roman Catholicism reactivates the old Roman ambition of building "a [...] universal Roman empire", but that will now be "headed not by the Roman emperor but by the Pope".[847] But while this new Empire is built in the name of Christ, the real Christ, not the new Christ invented by the Grand Inquisitor, remains in fact a stumbling block for the Roman ideal, which the Roman Catholic Church has reactivated.

[839] *Ibidem*, p. 337.
[840] *Ibidem*, p. 330.
[841] *Ibidem*, p. 339.
[842] *Ibidem*, p. 330.
[843] *Ibidem*, p. 331.
[844] *Ibidem*, p. 335.
[845] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol. 1, p. 225.
[846] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 336.
[847] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol. 2, p. 728.

For, by "[fostering] the development of the personal conscience"[848], Christ is responsible for compromising the conditions of authority. Yet, as stressed by both Maistre and by Dostoyevsky's fictional character, without authority, humanity will never build its Tower of Babel, but will eventually destroy itself in the attempt to do it. The feeble constitution of the human being, and, more precisely, the incapacity of the "feeble mutineer [...] to sustain [his] mutiny", fosters nevertheless the Inquisitor's confidence that the Roman dream will sooner or later be fulfilled. For, sooner or later, after "[overthrowing] the temples and [soaking] the earth in blood"[849], exhausted humanity, or what will be left of it, will finally give up. Thus, the Inquisitor prophesizes that after "the disobedient and ferocious ones [have destroyed] themselves", and "the disobedient and feeble [have destroyed] one another [...], those who are left, the feeble and unhappy ones, will come crawling to our feet, and will cry to us: 'Yes, you were right, you alone were masters of his secret, and we are returning to you, save us from ourselves'"[850]. And then, in the Inquisitor's "hands [...], everyone will be happy and will neither mutiny nor destroy one another anymore, as they do in" Christ's "freedom"[851].

For the Grand Inquisitor, the correction of Christ's work essentially consists in the transformation of the Gospel into a socialist type ideology and the subsequent transformation of the Church into a a universal socialist state, ruled by a "hundred thousand martyrs who have taken upon themselves the knowledge of good and evil"[852]. The Grand Inquisitor and his ruling elite will organize the rational distribution of bread to all mankind, at the cost of its enslavement, for according to the Grand Inquisitor, "freedom and earthly bread in sufficiency for all are

[848] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's critique of the West*, p. 167.
[849] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 334.
[850] *Ibidem*, p. 337.
[851] *Ibidem*, p. 336.
[852] *Ibidem*, p. 338.

unthinkable together"[853]. On the contrary, the attempt to organize society rationally and equitably only on the basis of science, and with full respect for human freedom, can only lead to "antrhopophagy"[854]. But most importantly, the Grand Inquisitor will liberate mankind from the burden of a free conscience, which requires the heroism of faith of which only a minority of Christians throughout the ages have proven themselves capable. Enslaving the consciousness of the masses, who would regard their rulers as "gods"[855], through manipulation and deceit, the Grand Inquisitor and his clerical army will finally deliver mankind "from the great anxiety and fearsome present torments of free and individual decision"[856], replacing thus the "free love", required by Christ, with "the servile ecstasies of the slave before the might that had inspired him with dread once and for all"[857]. The Grand Inquisitor will organize the life of his flock "like a childish game, with childish songs, in chorus, with innocent dances". The children will even be permitted to sin, as long as the sin is not hidden from the clerical authority that rules over their consciousnesses. They will be allowed or not "to live with their wives or paramours, to have or not to have children –all according to the degree of their obedience –" and in the end, after dying, "beyond the tomb they will find only death". But the Grand Inquisitor shall "preserve the secret and for the sake of their happiness will lure them with a heavenly and eternal reward". Thus, unhappy because he knows "the mystery", the Grand Inquisitor will nevertheless offer a degrading happiness to "thousands upon millions of happy babes", the only happiness of which "pathetic children", unable to sustain their mutiny, are capable and worthy[858]. For this reason, the Inquisitor insists on the fact that, by disdaining mankind, he has in fact loved it more than Christ

[853] *Ibidem*, p. 330.
[854] *Ibidem*, p. 336.
[855] *Ibidem*, p. 331.
[856] *Ibidem*, p. 338.
[857] *Ibidem*, p. 334.
[858] *Ibidem*, pp. 337-338.

who had bestowed upon it a dignity that it cannot bear. The Inquisitor argues that while Christ had come only for the elect, for the minority of "proud and mighty ones", he has instead "saved all". On the day of judgment, the Inquisitor continues, "I shall arise and draw your attention to the thousands upon millions of happy babes, who know not sin", and who "were glad that they had once been brought together into a flock, and that at last from their hearts had been removed such a terrible gift, which had brought them so much torment [...]. And we, who for the sake of their happiness have taken their sins upon us, we shall stand before you and say: 'Judge us if you can dare' "[859]. The Tower, the Grand Inquisitor insists, will be completed in Christ's name, while Christ himself will be banished from his own kingdom by the Grand Inquisitor. As a consequence, the Grand Inquisitor is "compelled to lie"[860]. Therefore, dismissed as either human, all too human naivety, or as divine mockery, the Christian ideal of unity in Christ through love is replaced with a completely different project: unity without Christ, albeit in the name of Christ, through violence and deceit. Unity based not upon free love, as in the Slavophile ecclesiological ideal, but upon "*miracle, mystery* and *authority*"[861].

For Dostoyevsky, the secular ambitions of the medieval papacy meant much more than a mere sin committed by the bishop of Rome. Instead, the secular ambitions of the papacy were the necessary consequence of the fact that the Pope had lost faith in the Gospel's capacity to change the world and, ultimately, in the divinity of Christ himself. That is the reason why the Grand Inquisitor tells Christ that he is a God who failed, both in the work of creation as well as in that of redemption, He does not have the right to judge either him or the world. According to Ward, for Dostoyevsky, the constitution of the papal state, the alliance of the Roman Catholic Church with Charlemagne, with the purpose of

[859] *Ibidem*, pp. 335, 338.
[860] *Ibidem*, p. 331.
[861] *Ibidem*, p. 335.

> extending its influence over the barbarian peoples of Europe, and the adoption of much of the civic and legal apparatus of the Roman state [...], represented merely the outward confirmation of an inner attitude. This attitude was not a denial of the God-man so much as a denial that the world is effectively overcome by him [...]. It is the *resurrected* God-man whom the Inquisitor will not accept. Not believing in the God-man who has overcome necessity, the Inquisitor accepts the offer of the universal state held out in the third temptation as the only order which renders human happiness possible. [...]The reliance upon compulsion in the service of the God-man is, for Dostoyevsky, a tacit admission of the ultimate impotence of goodness in the face of chance and necessity – an admission which constitutes the essence of Roman Catholicism[862].

This, of course, is a Machiavellian thesis. This intimate conviction of the Grand Inquisitor can only lead to a radical change in the way in which the Church acts upon the world. Moral exhortation and the cultivation of Christian virtues are replaced with institutional constraint, while the meaning of the word virtue itself is redefined in Machivaellian terms, as the ability to conquer chance by means of violence and deceit. Finally, for Dostoyevsky, the Inquisition itself is based on the principle according to which the purpose (social order and the happiness of the masses) justifies the means (the burning of heretics for example). Thus, like Khomiakov, Dostoyevsky believed that "theocratic Machiavellianism" (to paraphrase Cioran's reference to Maistre) represented the most coherent expression of Roman Catholicism. Dostoyevsky therefore argued that the Catholic Church had betrayed Christ "when it blessed the Jesuits and sanctioned the righteousness 'of every means for Christ's cause' "[863]. Otherwise, just as in the case of the Slavophiles, the two Catholic institutions that Dostoyevsky loathed the most were exactly the two Catholic institutions that Maistre appreciated the most: the papacy and the Jesuits.

As argued by Leo Strauss in his analysis of the differences between the political philosophy of the Ancients and the political philosophy of the Moderns, the redefinition by Machiavelli of

[862] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, p. 170.
[863] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol. 2, p. 911.

the classical understanding of virtue, which stops being an ideal of moral excellence and becomes "patriotism, or devotion to collective selfishness", indicates the fact that Machiavelli "consciously lowers the standards of social action – to lead to a higher probability of actualization of that scheme which is constructed in accordance with the lower standards". To this change of standards corresponds a change of the means for achieving those standards. Whereas in the classical tradition of natural right, the means for arriving at the best regime (an ideal whose accomplishment, as underlined by Strauss, was considered to be highly unlikely by the classical philosophers) was education, for Machiavelli, the means to arrive at the redefined best regime is force. Convinced that the moral capacities of human nature are limited, and that, as a consequence, its moral aspirations should be limited as well, Machiavelli stresses the fact that we do not need good people (to desire this means "wishful thinking") but efficient institutions. In the first case, the best regime is brought about through inner change of the individuals, and therefore depends on personal quality and improvement. In the second case, the best regime, according to the lowered standards, is imposed through exterior coercion, and thus, its accomplishment becomes simply a technical problem[864]. If we substituted the relation between the ancient and the modern understanding of virtue, as defined by Strauss, with the relation between Orthodox Christianity and Roman Catholicism, as understood by Dostoyevsky, then we would have a perfect analogy. The Grand Inquisitor deliberately lowers the standards of Christian virtue, thus making the standards fit the "happiness of feeble creatures"[865]. Likewise, Christianity stops being an ideal of holiness that is preached to the *people,* becoming instead a social formula that is imposed on the *mass*, with –one may argue – technocratic efficiency.

[864] Leo Strauss, "What Is Political Philosophy", pp. 42-44.
[865] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 337.

Thus, for Dostoyevsky, as for Khomiakov, what differentiates Catholicism from Orthodoxy is the fact that the former conforms itself to the logic of the fall, returning, as indicated by Ivan Esaulov, from the order of grace to the order of the law, a fact that implicitly brings with it the transformation of the Church from a mystical body into a society characterized by the division between the masses and the ruling elites. This return, Esaulov argues, constitutes in fact the supreme sin, the sin of apostasy[866]. The return from grace to law means a return from redeemed to unredeemed, fallen nature, and that is the reason why the Inquisitor tells Christ that he is not with Him, but with "the ruler of this world" (John 14: 30). Catholicism, Dostoyevsky argues, rests on the "dogma that 'Christianity cannot survive on earth without the earthly power of the Pope' " [867], which is just another expression of the Maistrian conviction that the Church can exist only as a society governed like all other societies. Thus, for Dostoyevsky, there is a direct connection between the principle of papal infallibility and the universal theocratic ideal, deduced by Maistre from his ecclesiological presuppositions. Dostoyevsky believed that the territorial power of the Pope, constituted in the early Middle Ages, represented a testimony of the Pope's final ambition to set himself at the helm of a future universal empire. For Dostoyevsky, this was confirmed by the fact that the Pope proclaimed himself to be infallible at the exact moment when he was defeated by the Italian republicans, and yet, also when modern Europe was sinking into national and social divisions. For Dostoyevsky, whose thought intersects with Maistre's reflections on the relation between infallibility and sovereignty, the proclamation of the Vatican I Council amounted to nothing less than a declaration of global sovereignty[868]. Moreover, the proclamation of papal infallibility seals and definitively confirms the transformation of "the

[866] Ivan Esaulov, "The Categories of Law and Grace in Dostoevsky's Poetics", in George Pattison and Diane Oenning Thompson (ed.), *Dostoevsky and the Christian Tradition*, p. 120.
[867] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol.1, p. 255.
[868] *Ibidem*, pp. 255-256.

Western Church itself [...] into a Roman state"[869]. In the opinion of Dostoyevsky, the explicit materialism manifested by the secular ambitions of the papacy was just another expression of the materialism implicit in the juridical substance of the Roman Catholic ecclesiology. One change automatically attracted the other and vice-versa. Thus, as argued by Ward, for Dostoyevsky, the unity of the Roman Catholic Church "was a fundamentally material or mechanical unity, having its source of Power in the visible presence of the Pope in Rome rather than in the invisible presence of the resurrected God in each local church"[870]. The institutional architecture of the Roman Church is the direct consequence of the fact, mentioned by Ivan Karamazov in the beginning of "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor", that in Catholicism, after his an ascension, Christ effectively departs from the world and from the Church, leaving "all [...] in the Pope's possession", until the final judgment[871]. As a consequence, the Church stops being the body of Christ, becoming instead the society of Christ, governed by the Pope in the name of the absent Christ.

[869] *Ibidem*, vol.2, p. 984.

[870] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, p. 170. Stressing the fact that the theologico-political project of the Grand Inquisitor is based on the refusal to accept the resurrected Christ, which essentially means that God is expelled from the world and locked up in his inaccessible transcendence, Ward argues that such ecclesiological and theologico-political transformations of Western Christianity are directly related to the rationalization of the Trinitarian mystery of which the Latins have been accused by the Greeks. According to Ward, who follows the studies of Orthodox authors such as Vladimir Lossky and Philip Sherrard, "this rationalizing of the Christian principle entailed the overcoming of the paradox of God's simultaneous transcendence and immanence in relation to the world, the paradox which is at the heart of Godmanhood. This paradox was overcome, however, only through the exclusion of one of its poles. Western Christianity has come increasingly to conceive God as transcendent only, and not at the same time immanent within the world". According to Ward, although there is no evidence that Dostoyevsky comprehended, in dogmatic terms, the theological dynamic triggered by the Roman Catholic evolution of Trinitarian theology, it is nevertheless clear that Dostoyevsky was convinced "that such a rationalization did take place in the West". Thus, Ward underlines that Dostoyevsky's position "reflects the Eastern side of the controversy" (*Ibidem*, pp. 169-170). The association between the politization/juridization of Roman Catholic ecclesiology and the rationalization of Roman Catholic theology is a constant in the Slavophile thought, directly related to the opposite interdependence between *tselnost* and *sobornost*.

[871] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 327.

It can therefore be argued that, for Dostoyevsky, the reactivation of the Roman imperial idea in the eighth century[872] essentially marks the beginning of what is known as the process of secularization. Thus, in the Dostoyevskyan philosophy of history, this landmark plays the same role as the one played by the Reformation in Maistre's thought. According to Dostoyevsky, since the Pope had betrayed the Christian ideals by assuming the attributes of the Roman Emperor, Europe had been divided between "the Eastern ideal of a purely spiritual communion of men, and the Western European, Roman Catholic papal ideal diametrically opposite to the Eastern one"[873]. Thus, as in the case of the Slavophiles, the ecclesiological differences that separate Orthodoxy and Catholicism are reflected in two opposite types of social bond, interior and exterior, and consequently in two different theologico-political projects. Thus, there are two different ways in which the Church acts upon society in order to transform it: one that gives priority to the spiritual dimension over the political dimension, and the other that prioritizes the political dimension in the face of the spiritual dimension. For Dostoyevsky, "we have in the Eastern ideal – first the spiritual communion of mankind in Christ, and thereafter, in consequence of the spiritual unity of all men in Christ and as an unchallenged deduction therefrom – a just state and social communion". "[I]n the Roman interpretation we have a reverse situation: first it is necessary to achieve firm state unity in the form of a universal empire, and only after that, perhaps, spiritual fellowship under the rule of the Pope as the potentate of this world"[874]. If the system of the Grand Inquisitor relies on the premise of a fundamental incompatibility between freedom and unity, as argued by Ward, for Dostoyevsky, "the appearance of Christianity signifies the possibility of an alternative universal order in which the

[872] It seems that, more specifically, Dostoyevsky refers to the constitution of the papal state under Pope Stephen II in the year 755.

[873] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol.2, p. 728.

[874] *Ibidem*, pp. 728-729.

personal conscience is reconciled with social unity, and particularity with universality"[875]. Challenging the Roman imperial order, which is legitimized and reactivated by the Grand Inquisitor, the new unity in Christ, made manifest in the Christian Church, is therefore defined by *sobornost*: freedom and unity reconciled through love. As indicated by Gibson, while "in the 'Legend' Christ is in tension with the socio-religious unity; under *sobornost* he is the center of it"[876].

In conclusion, for Dostoyevsky, Catholicism was a perversion of Christianity, and that is why he has attacked Catholicism in very harsh terms. One of the most violent attacks that appear in Dostoyevsky's literary work is represented by Myshkin's tirade from chapter seven of the last part of *The Idiot*. There, Prince Myshkin, who faithfully expresses and resumes Dostoyevsky's own views, declares that

> Roman Catholicism is even worse than out-and-out atheism [...]. Atheism just preaches negation, but Catholicism goes further than that: it preaches a distorted Christ, traduced and abused by itself, the opposite of Christ! It preaches the Antichrist [...]. Roman Catholicism believes that without universal temporal dominion, the Church cannot survive on earth [...]. In my opinion, Roman Catholicism is not even a faith, it's the continuation of the Western Roman Empire, and everything in it is subordinate to that idea, beginning with their faith. The pope seized the earth, an earthly throne, and took up the sword; since that time everything has gone the same way, except that to the sword they've added lies, intrigue, deceit, fanaticism, superstition and evil-doing. They have trifled with the most sacred, truthful, innocent, and ardent emotions of the people and bartered them all, all of them, for money and paltry temporal power. Is not this the teaching of Antichrist? Atheism was bound to come from them! Atheism did come from them, from Roman Catholicism itself! Atheism first came into being through them: could they believe in themselves? It gained strength from the abhorrence in which they were held, [and because of them,] in Europe, great masses of the common people are [...] losing their faith – at first from ignorance and falsehood, but now through hatred of the Church and Christianity![Atheism]is the spawn of their lies and spiritual impotence[877].

Like the Slavophiles, Dostoyevsky firmly believed that secularism was not inscribed in the inner logic of the historical development of Christianity, representing instead the outcome of its

[875] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, p. 167.
[876] A. Boyce Gibson, *The Religion of Dostoevsky*, p. 188.
[877] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Idiot*, translated by Alan Myers, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992, p. 574.

Western distortion. More precisely, Dostoyevsky argued that, at least to a large extent, the modern Western nations did not in fact reject Christ, whom they ceased to know for a long time, but the "monstrous image in which, at length, Christ had been revealed to them" by the Roman Catholic Church[878]. For Dostoyevsky, the Roman Catholic deformation of the Christian truth had triggered the justifiable and the well intended revolt of many Christians in the West. In principle, Luther's Reformation falls within this category. As in the case of Khomiakov, Dostoyevsky's opinion of Protestantism was far better than the one he held with regard to Catholicism, and it was expressed in a much more diplomatic language. However, if Maistre identified Protestantism as the source of secularization, confirming largely his own interpretation of Protestantism, Dostoyevsky regarded the latter as a historical phenomenon that in the end has only accelerated the decline of the West and aggravated its crisis. In this sense, Protestantism was not able to oppose to the papal authority any positive dogma, but only the freedom of individual inquiry in matters of faith, a principle that would finally give birth to secular rationalism. As a consequence of the above mentioned principle, Protestantism had not been able to oppose the rediscovered organic unity, of the ancient Church, to the Roman Catholic redefinition of unity. Instead, it has manifested itself only as a disintegrating force, giving birth to nationalism, sectarianism, and ultimately the atomizing individualism characteristic of modern liberalism[879]. Ultimately, Dostoyevsky concluded that Protestantism "is a protesting and merely denying faith, and just as soon as Catholicism disappears from the earth, Protestantism will unfailingly disappear, too, because there is going to be nothing to protest against, and it will turn into straight atheism, and that will be the end"[880]. Maistre affirmed exactly the same thing.

[878] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol.2, p. 911.
[879] *Ibidem*, pp. 727-731; Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, pp. 171-172.
[880] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol.2, p. 564.

In the end, one should also stress the fact that, although Dostoyevsky was convinced of the existence of a universal Jesuitical conspiracy directed against Russia, but not only[881], he was equally convinced of the fact "that faith and the image of Christ up to the present continue to dwell in the hearts of many Catholics in all their original truth and purity".[882] However, Dostoyevsky insisted on the fact that "the main well-spring has been made muddy and has been befouled forever"[883]. Thus, for Dostoyevsky, as for the Slavophiles, the regeneration of the Western civilization, which had been thrown into an irresolvable inner crisis since the Pope's apostasy, required the return of the West to the Orthodox faith. Like the Slavophiles, Dostoyevsky believed that, caught in the struggle between the tyrannical authority of Rome and the disintegrating individualism of Protestantism, the West had lost the experience of ecclesial unity, and with it, the concept of the Church itself. As indicated by Ward, "the dimming of the Church idea in the West was most clearly evident for Dostoyevsky in the fact that the two poles of the idea – freedom and unity – had become antithetical", as "they had been placed in mutual opposition through their embodiment in the two great divisions of Western Christendom"[884].

Dostoyevsky's vision of Catholicism, in particular as expressed by "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor", has been valued differently by various interpreters of his work. Some, like Jean Drouilly, have dismissed Myshkin's attacks against the Roman Church as "*misérables platitudes nationalistes ou réactionnaires*"[885]. Berdyaev argued that the spirit of the Antichrist, made manifest in "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" through "the denial of the mystery of Christian

[881] *Ibidem*, p. 823. We remember the fact that Maistre was also convinced of the existence of a universal conspiracy, reuniting Protestants, masons and Jews, directed against Roman Catholicism and the European monarchies, and organized by the devil himself. As well, in response to the above mentioned conspiracy, Maistre was advocating what was rightly defined by Pranchère as a Catholic "counter-conspiracy", in which the leading role would be played by the Jesuits.

[882] *Ibidem*, vol.1, p.256.

[883] *Ibidem*, p. 255

[884] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, p. 172.

[885] Jean Drouilly, *La pensée politique et religieuse de F.M. Dostoïevski*, Librairie des Cinq Continents, Paris, 1971, p. 333.

freedom"[886] and the turning of "crucified Truth into coercive truth", is not limited to the historical experience of Roman Catholicism, but has manifested itself in the political expressions of Orthodox Christianity as well[887]. A similar reproach has been formulated by Romano Guardini, a Roman Catholic theologian, who, like Berdyaev, has argued that Dostoyevsky has presented as a critique of Catholicism what was in fact a critique of "ecclésialisme": "*la transformation des relations vivantes de l'homme à Dieu en un système des garanties de salut, de formules et de pratiques*". Only through the "*aveugles et injustes déformations de l'auteur*", Guardini argues, could such a historical sin of Christianity be attributed exclusively to the Roman Catholic Church[888]. An Orthodox theologian like Florovsky argues that despite Dostoyevsky's exaggerations with regard to Catholicism, explainable to a certain extent given the context of the Vatican I Council, the Russian novelist has nevertheless "correctly understood the fundamental idea of the Western Catholic Solution of the social problem [...]. And he accurately pointed out its prototype in the pre-Christian ideal of the *Imperium Romanum*"[889]. Last but not least, taking into account the similarities between the theologico-political thought of Maistre and Carl Schmitt, or, more exactly, taking into account the fact that Schmitt further develops the elements of Maistre's Catholicism that present striking resemblances to the Catholicism of the Grand Inquisitor, it would be very interesting to see what Schmitt had to say about "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor". Schmitt takes note of the fact that "*[l]e Grand Inquisiteur de Dostoïevski avoue avoir consciemment cédé aux tentations de Satan, parce qu'il*

[886] As argued by Henri de Lubac, as the sovereign of this world, the Grand Inquisitor is the exact antithesis of God for, de Lubac rhetorically asks himself, "*qu'est-ce en effet que Dieu, sinon un créateur de libertés?*" (Henri de Lubac, *Le drame de l'humanisme athée*, Les Éditions du CERF, Paris, 1983, p. 341).

[887] Nicholas Berdyaev, *Dostoievsky*, translated by Donald Attwater, Sheed & Ward, London, 1934, pp. 197-198.

[888] Romano Guardini, *L'univers religieux de Dostoïevski*, translated by Henri Engelmann & Robert Givord, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1963, p. 114.

[889] Georges Florovsky, "Dostoevsky and Europe", translated by Thomas Butler, in *Theology and Literature*, vol. 11 of *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, edited by Richard S. Haugh, Büchervertriebsanstalt, Belmont MA, 1989, vol. 11, p. 74.

sait que l'homme est naturellement mauvais et vil, un lâche rebelle qui a besoin d'un maître, et parce que seul le pontife romain a le courage de prendre sur lui tout le péché qui est attaché à un tel pouvoir".[890]Starting from the premise that the democratic critique of monarchical sovereignty presupposes an antitheology that denies the doctrine of original sin, and by this, implicitly denies the necessity of government and religion[891], Schmitt argues that in "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor", Dostoyevsky

> *a projeté [...] avec une grande force son propre athéisme potentiel dans l'Église romaine. Son instinct au fond anarchiste – et cela veut toujours dire athée – percevait tout pouvoir comme quelque chose de mauvais et d'inhumain. Dans le cadre du temporel, la tentation du mal, qui se trouve dans tout pouvoir, est bien sûr éternelle, et seulement en Dieu est définitivement dépassée l'opposition entre pouvoir et bonté; mais vouloir échapper à cette opposition par le refus de tout pouvoir terrestre serait la pire inhumanité. Une obscure disposition, largement répandue, ressent comme mauvaise la froideur institutionnelle du catholicisme et considère la largeur informe de Dostoïevski comme du vrai christianisme. Cela est une platitude, comme tout ce qui reste au niveau des dispositions et des sentiments, et ne comprend même pas à quel point est non chrétienne la représentation selon laquelle le Christ pourrait encore venir parmi les hommes entre son existence terrestre et son retour glorieux lors du Jugement dernier, pour ainsi dire afin de faire des expériences*[892].

5.4. - Dostoyevsky and "the modern idea"

Like Maistre, Dostoyevsky uses the metaphor of the Tower of Babel, in order to describe the modern project of a secular society, and both authors are reunited by the conviction that, deprived of a religious foundation, the modern Tower of Babel will sooner or later collapse. In this sense, Maistre's arguments concerning the social ravages of philosophy, and, in particular, his contention that "*ce n'est point à la science qu'il appartient de conduire les hommes*", for "*la*

[890] Carl Schmitt, *Römischer Katholizismus und politische Form*, pp. 54-55, quoted in Théodore Paléologue, *Sous l'œil du Grand Inquisiteur*, pp. 51-52 (Théodore Paléologue's translation).

[891] See Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*, pp. 56-59, 63-66.

[892] Carl Schmitt, *Römischer Katholizismus und politische Form*, pp. 54-55, quoted in Théodore Paléologue, *Sous l'œil du Grand Inquisiteur*, pp. 51-52.

science réduite à elle-même divise au lieu d'unir"[893], are encountered in Shatov's political philosophy, which faithfully reproduces Maistre's position concerning the relation between reason and religion in relation to man's social existence. Like Maistre, Shatov, who reproduces here Dostoyevsky's own opinions, argues that "reason has never had the power of defining evil and good, or separating evil from good, even approximately. On the contrary, it has always mixed them up in a shameful and pitiful fashion, whereas science has found solutions by sheer force. In particular, this is the distinguishing feature of half-science". "Half-science" is described by Shatov in exactly the same terms as Maistre describes philosophy, namely, as "mankind's most dreadful scourge, worse than plague, famine and war", which "has been unknown until the present century". "Not a single people", Shatov argues, in a passage which seems extracted from Maistre's *De la Souveraineté du Peuple*, "has ever yet organized itself according to the principles of science and reason [...]. Reason and science in the life of peoples always, now and from the beginning of time, have fulfilled merely a secondary and auxiliary function". Instead, like Maistre, Shatov argues that all nations have been moved by the vital force of religion, in which one distinguishes "the spirit of life" and "the living water", "the drying up of which is threatened in the Apocalypse"[894].

For Dostoyevsky, the inner crisis of the Western civilization, caused by the breakup of Western Christianity, as well as the overall crisis of religious faith in the West, triggered by the development of rationalism, has determined Western humanity to seek outside religion a new form of social organization. More precisely, the crisis of Western Christianity has determined the Western civilization to seek to organize itself on the basis of secular principles that from now on, unlike in the case of the Catholic system, have been assumed and affirmed in a transparent

[893] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Sain- Pétersbourg*, pp. 701, 734.

[894] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, translated by Robert A. Maguire, Penguin Books, London, 2008, pp. 277-278.

manner. And yet, given the fact that for Dostoyevsky the Catholic project was nothing but secularism in a concealed form, the modern Western project of secular social organization appeared as nothing else than the natural continuation of the ancient Roman idea, albeit in a transparent form. In this sense, for Dostoyevsky, "the dreadful French Revolution", has represented "the last modification and metamorphosis of the same ancient Roman formula of universal unity"[895]. Dostoyevsky believed that the Reformation had occurred in Germany because the national identity of this country had been defined from the very beginning by its purely negative opposition to the Roman ideal of universal unity. From this point of view, beginning with the opposition of the Germanic tribes against Roman conquest, passing through Luther's Reformation, and ending with the German opposition to the imperialistic universalism of Revolutionary France, Germany "has been doing nothing but protesting [...], living all along by negation and protest against her enemy". And yet, it "has never uttered her own *new word*"[896] in response to the Roman paradigm. It was not by accident that the new ideal of universal unity, based on the principles of freedom, equality and brotherhood, emerged in France. Maistre argued that "*il y a dans le gouvernement naturel, et dans les idées nationales du peuple français, je ne sais quel élément théocratique et religieux qui se retrouve toujours*". "*Les Français*", Maistre continues, "*eurent l'honneur unique [...] d'avoir constitué (humainement) l'Église catholique dans le monde*", and as such, France was destined "*à se retrouver à la tête du système religieux en Europe*"[897]. For Dostoyevsky, this accounted for a theologico-political persistence of the Catholic, and more specifically Roman element, in the political constitution of modern France. France, Dostoyevsky declared, in tune with Maistre's intuitions,

[895] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol.2, p. 729.
[896] *Ibidem*, p. 564.
[897] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, pp. 24-26.

> is a country which, even if there shouldn't remain in it a single person believing in the Pope or even in God, will nevertheless continue to be a pre-eminently Catholic country, the representative, so to speak, of the entire Catholic organism, its banner [...].Through the ages, France has been [...] the fullest incarnation of the Catholic idea, – the head of this idea which [...] was inherited from the Romans [...].That France, which *in toto* has now lost *virtually all* of her religion (the Jesuits and the atheists there are one and the same); which several times has closed her churches and which on one occasion subjected God himself to ballot in the Assembly; France which has evolved from the ideas of 1789 her own peculiar French socialism, *i.e.*, the pacification and organization of human society without and beyond Christ, as Catholicism has sought but failed to organize society in the name of Christ; that same France with her revolutionists of the Convention, with her atheists, with her socialists and with her present day communards, – is, continues to be, in the highest degree, fully and altogether, a Catholic nation, completely contaminated with the spirit and letter of Catholicism, which by the mouths of her most arrant atheists is proclaiming: *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité – ou la mort, i.e.*, exactly as this would be proclaimed by the Pope himself were he compelled to formulate the Catholic liberté, égalité, fraternité in his style, in his spirit, in the genuine style and spirit of a medieval Pope[898].

As argued by the main character of Dostoyevsky's *A Raw Youth*, Versilov, the cornerstone of the new social order inaugurated by the French Revolution was the ideal of "virtue without Christ". This, Versilov argued, represented the essence of what he described as the "Geneva idea", or "the modern idea"[899]. According to Ward,

> when he speaks of the Geneva Idea, Dostoyevsky is referring to the entire stream of thought which found its original inspiration in Rousseau. Above all he is thinking of the slogan of the French Revolution – 'freedom, equality and brotherhood'– and of the theoretical elaboration which was subsequently given to it. Broadly speaking, this would include French liberalism, the French socialism which appeared almost at the same time, and the German philosophical commentary on these moments[900].

In its pure idealist expression, the modern idea presupposes that Christian morality is preserved as the foundation of the modern society, despite the rejection of all the supernatural elements of the Christian religion, and of the hierarchical structures of historical Christianity.

[898] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol. 2, pp. 563, 721.

[899] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *A Raw Youth*, translated by Constance Garnett, Dell Publishing Co. Inc., New York, 1961, p. 240.

[900] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, p. 45.

Referring to the idealist socialism of his youth[901], with which he became acquainted in the Petrashevsky circle, Dostoyevsky argued that this type of socialism "was conceived in a most rosy and paradisiacally moral light", and that some regarded it as "a mere corrective to and improvement of Christianity"[902]. From this point of view, the secular ideals of the modern world are nothing else than the effective realization of Christianity in the world. Thus, Versilov, who expresses the ideals of the first generation of Russian Westernists, dreams that Christianity will be transformed into an immanent religion of humanity, and that mankind's commitment to this new religion will ultimately result in the establishment of an earthly paradise, which would become a satisfactory substitute for man's religious longing for eternal life. In the earthly paradise, founded on the principle of virtue without Christ, all the love, dedicated before to the transcendent divine being, is redirected towards the earth and towards fellow creatures. Thus, "left" by "the great idea of old [...], the great source of strength that till then had nourished and fostered them [...], men", as it is envisioned in one of Versilov's utopian visions of the future of mankind,

> would begin to draw together more closely and more lovingly; they would clutch one another's hands, realizing that they were all that was left for one another! The great idea of immortality would have vanished, and they would have to fill its place; and all the wealth of love lavished of old upon Him, who was immortal, would be turned upon the whole of nature, on the world, on men, on every blade of grass. They would inevitably grow to love the earth and life as they gradually became aware of their transitory and finite nature [...].They would work for one another, and each would give up all that he had to all, and by that only would be happy [...]. 'To-morrow may be my last day', each one would think, looking at the setting sun; 'but no matter, I shall die, but all they will remain and after them their children', and that thought that they will remain, always as loving and as anxious over each other, would replace the thought of meeting beyond the tomb[903].

[901] I will refer more to this subject in the next pages.
[902] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, Vol. 1, p. 148.
[903] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *A Raw Youth*, pp. 510-511.

The essence of Versilov's timid and melancholic vision appears depicted in much bolder terms in the first chapter of *Demons*, in a poem written by Stepan Trofimovich Verkhovensky, a character who, just like Versilov, is meant to incarnate the idealist liberalism of the Slavophiles' adversaries, the Westernizers of the 1840s. Dismissing the rumors that he would be an atheist, Stepan Trofimovich declares instead that he believes in God, but "in God as a being that is conscious of himself only in me"[904]. Stepan Trofimovich's immanentism apparently gains a revolutionary political expression, and for him, the modern revolution appears exactly as it was understood by Maistre. The modern revolution represents first and foremost an insurrection directed against God; and mankind's earthly happiness depends on its successful liberation from the oppressive burden of traditional religion. Thus, Stepan Verkhovensky's *Poem* presents "an indescribably handsome youth"[905] who

> suddenly rides in on a black steed, followed by a huge number of all the peoples of the world. The youth represents death and all the peoples are longing for it. And finally, in the very last scene, the Tower of Babel suddenly appears, and some athletes are busy bringing it to completion, with a song of fresh hope, and when they reach the very top, the lord of – let's say it's Olympus – runs off in comical fashion, and mankind, which has grasped the situation, occupies his place, and immediately begins a new life with a new and deeper understanding of things[906].

In Dostoyevsky's work, the promethean ideal of a mankind completely emancipated from its earlier gods, and which invests all of its energies into the construction of the earthly paradise, receives its most titanic expression in Ivan Karamazov's poem entitled "The Geological Revolution". In his poem, Ivan argues that

> once mankind, each and individually, has repudiated God […], then of its own accord, and without the need of anthropophagy, the whole of the former morality, will collapse, and all will begin anew. People will unite together in order to take from life all that it is able to give, but only for the sake of happiness and joy in this world. Man will exalt

[904] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, p. 41.
[905] An ironic allusion to Nicolas Stavrogin, whom Pyotr Verkhovensky, the nihilist son of the liberal Stepan Verkhovensky, wants to set at the helm of a future Russian socialist Revolution.
[906] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, p. 11.

himself with a spirit of divine, titanic pride, and the man-god will appear. Vanquishing nature hour by hour, already without limits, by his will and science, man will thereby experience, hour by hour, a pleasure so elevated that it will replace all his former hopes of celestial pleasures. Every man will discover that he is wholly mortal, without the possibility of resurrection, and will accept death calmly and proudly, like a god. Out of pride he will grasp that there is no point in him complaining that life is a moment, and he will come to love his brother without any need of recompense. The love will only be sufficient for the moment of life, but the very consciousness of life's momentariness will intensify its fire just as much as it formerly ran to fat in hopes of an infinite love beyond the grave[907].

In response to the secular ideals of Versilov, Stepan Trofimovich, and Ivan Karamazov, Dostoyevsky will expose the distance between the modern ideals and their concrete historical transposition. This distance between ideal and reality, made manifest in the political history of the modern West, and in particular of post-revolutionary France, has a direct correspondence in the contrast between ideal and reality that is manifested in the personal lives of Versilov, Stepan Verkhovensky, and Ivan Karamazov. The issue is of particular importance, given the fact that, as it shall be seen, for Dostoyevsky, the failure to transpose into concrete reality the abstract ideals of the French Revolution comes down to the sum of personal failures of transforming, at a personal level, the ideal of brotherhood into a real one. Thus, Dostoyevsky insisted that, without the power of Christ, man is not able to convert the *ideal* love of humanity into *real* love for the human being living next to you, who may not correspond to your ideal of humanity, and, moreover, who, as a result of its freedom, may also refuse to respond with love, or at least with gratitude, to your love. Love of humanity may coexist then with disdain, or even hatred of real men. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, this conflict between the *ideal* of brotherhood and the *real* experience of vicinity is described by Elder Zosima who relates the confession that somebody once made to him. The respective person was admitting the fact that while he loves mankind, he however "[marvels] at [himself]" that "the more [he loves] mankind in general, the less [he

[907] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 829.

loves] human beings in particular, separately, that is, as individual persons". "In my dreams", Zosima's interlocutor continues,

> I would often arrive at fervent plans of devotion to mankind and might very possibly have gone to the Cross for human beings, had that been suddenly required of me, and yet I am unable to spend two days in the same room with someone else, and this I know from experience [...]. In the space of a day and a night I am capable of coming to hate even the best of human beings: one because he takes too long over dinner, another because he has a cold and is perpetually blowing his nose[908].

Versilov, Stepan Trofimovich and Ivan Karamazov all experience this failure to give flesh to the ideal of brotherly love. Torn apart between the attraction for the Russian soil, and the commitment to the progressist, universalist, and humanist ideals of modernity, Versilov acknowledges his incapacity "to love people as they are", and his personal experience leads him to the conclusion that it is impossible "to love one's neighbor and not despise him". "I believe", he argues, that "man has been created physically incapable of loving his neighbor. There has been some mistake in language here from the very first, and 'love for humanity' must be understood as love for that humanity which you have yourself created in your soul (in other words, you have created yourself and your love is for yourself) – and which, therefore, never will be in reality"[909]. Versilov's drama, according to Dostoyevsky, is typical for the Russian Westernizers of the 1840s. For as we learn from Shatov, like the other representatives of his generation committed to the "modern idea", Stepan Trofimovich, who we shall later analyze in greater detail, treated the Russian people "with sickening contempt, for the sole reason that" he "couldn't imagine 'the people' to be anything other than the French people, and only Parisians at that"[910]. Finally, whereas in "The Geological Revolution" Ivan speculated about the capacity of man to reach the point in his evolution where he will be able to "love his brother without any

[908] *Ibidem*, p. 79.
[909] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *A Raw Youth*, p. 242
[910] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, pp. 37-38, 42-43

need of recompense", in a confession which he makes to his brother, Alyosha, Ivan arrives at the exactly opposite conclusion, this time talking from personal experience. "I have never been able", Ivan tells Alyosha,

> to understand how it is possible to love one's neighbour. In my opinion, the people it is impossible to love are precisely those near to one, while one can really love only those who are far away. I once read somewhere concerning 'Ioann the Almsgiver' (a certain saint) that when a hungry and frozen itinerant came to him and asked him to warm him, he put him to bed in his own bed, go into it together with him, put his arms around him and began to breathe in his mouth, which was festering and foul with some terrible disease. I'm convinced that he did this in the grip of a hysterical lie, out of a love that was prescribed by duty, and because of the epithymia he had taken upon himself. In order to love a person it is necessary for him to be concealed from view; the moment he shows his face – love disappears[911].

We would not be able to fully grasp the nature and the significance of Dostoyevsky's critique of the modern ideal of "virtue without Christ", if we would not take into account Dostoyevsky's own personal experience, through which he became aware of the colossal gap that separates the modern ideal from the actual experience of socialization in the midst of the "subterranean" humanity. In his youth, Dostoyevsky shared the aspirations of the Russian liberal idealists of the 1840s, and, despite his future conversion to what I define as Christian Orthodox realism, he nevertheless preserved, until the end of his life, a deep sympathy for his youthful dreams and for their representatives. Nevertheless, for Dostoyevsky, the clash between the loftiness of "the Geneva idea" and the brutal reality of human cohabitation occurred during his imprisonment in Siberia. Before his Siberian exile, Dostoyevsky's political creed was shaped by the utopian socialism of George Sand[912]. He was also exposed in the Petrashevsky circle, the membership of

[911] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 309.

[912] George Sand had been influenced mostly by two thinkers of her time, Pierre Leroux and Félicité de Lamennais (from the second period). From both of them she retained the ideal of a spiritual unity of humankind in the form of a new religion continuing Christianity, a religion centered on spontaneity, brotherhood, and mutual sacrifice in freedom. She believed that the Christianity of her time, as she perceived it, cherished "*l'immobilisme*", that is, the idea that God created a world from which he withdrew. This understanding, she believed, justified the separation between the spiritual and temporal orders, as well as between transcendence and immanence.

which led to his arrest, to the writings of other utopian socialists such as Charles Fourier and Étienne Cabet, although the latter authors never gained a significant influence over him. If the French socialist tradition of the first half of the 19th century exhorted brotherhood in response to the individualism that had developed in the aftermath of the French Revolution, and, in the case of many authors, promoted the thesis that social harmonious cohabitation can be achieved through a mere rational reorganization of society, Dostoyevsky has been terrorized in prison, as he himself confesses in *The House of the Dead*, by the impossibility of being alone, and by the constant vicinity of human brutes[913]. As indicated by Drouilly, in the Siberian imprisonment, Dostoyevsky will encounter "*des natures primitives, des gens qui n'ont pas voulu ou n'ont pas pu s'intégrer à l'ordre social. Tous sont des cyniques*",[914] and above all, as indicated by Dostoyevsky in one of his letters to his brother Michael, they were greeting the educated classes

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Consequently, in her opinion, this world became a world where the transcendent realities of love and sacrifice faded in the face of the immanent bourgeois self-interest. She proposed as an alternative, on the footsteps of Leroux and Lamennais, a new religion inspired directly from the teachings of Christ, whom she considered "*un homme divin*" who deserved to be adored "*autant qu'il est permis d'adorer le meilleur et le plus grand des maîtres et des martyrs*" (George Sand, *La Comtesse de Rudolstadt*, Paris: Garnier, 1959, p.456, quoted in Jacques-Noël Pérès, "George Sand, entre socialisme évangélique et messianisme social", in *Autres Temps. Cahiers d'éthique sociale et politique*, vol.63, 1999, p.58). This new religion was to be grounded on brotherhood and unity in freedom, the ideal towards which humanity should always try to come closer, annihilating, thus, the separation between transcendence and immanence. The people, anchored in the new religion continuing Christianity, was meant to become, according to Sand, this transcendence-immanence or, as she said, "*le nouvel messie*", "*le peuple libérateur-libéré, sauveur-sauvé*" (Jacques-Noël Pérès, "George Sand, entre socialisme évangélique et messianisme social", p.56). The messianic role of the people, in her view, came from the fact that the latter, unlike the elites, resembled Jesus Christ through its capacity to bear sufferings, humiliations, and to sacrifice itself. Although he did not share Sand's understanding of the new religion and of Christ as just "*un homme divin*", Dostoyevsky appreciated Sand's socialism in which he saw the only true political project of modernity with authentic moral legitimacy. In this sense, he argued that Sand "based her socialism, her convictions, her hopes and her ideals upon the moral feeling of man, upon the spiritual thirst of mankind and its longing for perfection and purity, and not upon 'ant-necessity' " (Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol.1, p.349). Given Sand's dreams of a humanity always "*en marche*" towards its spiritual spontaneous unity in freedom, Dostoyevsky concluded – and held on to this conviction until the end of his life – that "George Sand was not a thinker but she was one of the most clairvoyant foreseers […] of a happy future awaiting mankind […]. The preservation of this faith to the end is usually the lot of all lofty souls, of all genuine friends of humanity. George Sand died a *déiste*, with a staunch belief in God and in her immortal life. […]. Of course, being a Frenchwoman, in accord with the conceptions of her compatriots, George Sand could not consciously adhere to the idea 'that in the whole universe there is no name other than His through which one may be saved' […] yet, despite this seeming and formal contradictions, George Sand […] was perhaps, without knowing it, one of the staunchest confessors of Christ" (*Ibidem*).

[913] A. Boyce Gibson, *Dostoyevsky's Religion*, p. 21. On the same page, Gibson argues that "the resistance of Raskolnikov to the socialities of prison life is undoubtedly autobiographical".

[914] Jean Drouilly, *La pensée politique et religieuse de F. M. Dostoievski*, p.127.

of society, among which Dostoyevsky himself, "*le coeur plein de haine et de joie mauvaise à la vue de notre malheur*"[915]."*Ces barbares*", Drouilly continues, apart from revealing to Dostoyevsky the extent of the division between the Russian people and the upper classes, "*lui révèlent*", first of all, "*l'homme tel qu'il est: un être qui subit les lois de la matière, bête semblable aux autres bêtes et quelque fois bien pire qu'elles*". "*Cette révélation*", Drouilly argues, "*comportait pour Dostoievski un très grand danger. Elle eût pu l'entraîner vers une négation totale de la bonté de l'homme, vers un pessimisme destructif et amer*".[916]More specifically, Dostoyevsky's Siberian experience may have led him to the kind of anthropological pessimism that leads to political conclusions such as those of the Grand Inquisitor. In this sense, one expected outcome of his prison experience could have been a complete break with the social idealism that Dostoyevsky had inherited from Rousseau and George Sand, or from Rousseau *via* George Sand. But this was not the case. Rather, after the prison experience, Dostoyevsky's social idealism/utopianism evolved towards a much more complex form, as it was now grounded on a much more complex anthropological consciousness, which, although aware of the blatant limitations of Rousseauist anthropology, nevertheless managed to preserve itself from taking a Hobbesian turn.

Thus, as indicated by Drouilly, Dostoyevsky "*va savoir trouver derrière beaucoup de ces forçats, de ces hommes dégradés, grossiers, brutaux, des hommes*",[917] men whose souls were at times capable of revealing "such feeling and heart, so clear an understanding of its own and others' suffering "[918]. But at the same time, "*des hommes qui ne sont pas faits pour le phalanstère, cette lamentable construction d'homme de cabinet*". In a word, men who are "*ni*

[915] F.M. Dostoïevski, *Pis'ma*, t. I, pp.135-136, lettre du 22 février 1854, in *Ibidem*, pp.128-129.
[916] Jean Drouilly, *La pensée politique et religieuse de F. M. Dostoievski*, p.127.
[917] *Ibidem*, p.127.
[918] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Memoirs from the House of the Dead*, translated byJessie Coulson, Oxford University Press, London, 1956, p.250.

ange[s] ni bête[s]", because they are both "*bête[s] et ange[s] à la fois*",[919] and as such, "*des hommes qui ont besoin de remèdes autrement plus complexes et plus subtils*"[920]. Dostoyevsky's encounter with the *real* people, in whom the divine image in man coexisted, side by side, with extreme manifestations of human wickedness and degradation, ultimately resulted in "*la vision d'un monde où les rapports entre les hommes n'étaient ni faussés par la civilisation, ni vidés de leur contenu tragique*"[921]. As stressed by Gibson, the Siberian experience made Dostoyevsky understand that social reform "is extremely difficult, not quite impossible, but above all piecemal and personal: so different from the over-all push-button reform planned by intellectuals from an ideological nowhere". Thus, "the first casualty in Siberia was 'Schillerism' " and "it was long before Dostoievsky could look Utopia in the face again". "But above all", Gibson concludes, the Siberian experience played a crucial role in the evolution of Dostoyevsky's Christian faith, not so much directly, as Dostoyevsky still was at that time at the beginning of his journey of faith, but, first of all, indirectly, given the fact that Siberia "wrecked the alternatives" to the Christian project of anthropological reform, "and supplied the experiences from which Christian conviction could grow"[922].

Dostoyevsky's Christian conviction, which he defended throughout his work, was that virtue, and in particular brotherhood, was impossible without the belief in God and immortality. Subsequently, like Maistre, Dostoyevsky believed that by depriving Christian morality of its traditional theological foundation, the representatives of the Enlightenment were inevitably paving the way for the Nietzschean reevaluation of all values. Otherwise said, for Dostoyevsky, as for Maistre, nihilism was the inevitable consequence of secularism. Apart from subverting the

[919] Jean Drouilly, *La pensée politique et religieuse de F. M. Dostoievski*, p.124.
[920] *Ibidem*, pp. 127-128.
[921] *Ibidem*, p. 211.
[922] A. Boyce Gibson, *The Religion of Dostoyevsky*, pp. 19-20.

moral foundations of society, modern secularism, according to both authors, would have also led to the annihilation of the vital energy of mankind. In *Redeeming the Enlightenment*, Ward argues that Dostoyevsky's dialogical work can be read as a three-level dialogue between Christian humanism, the secular humanism of the Enlightenment, and nihilism. This three-level dialogue takes a concrete shape in *The Brothers Karamazov*, where Dmitry Karamazov defends the first position, which is also Dostoyevsky's position, Rakitin, the seminarian, defends the second position, while Ivan Karamazov, which radically contradicts his own statements from "The Geological Revolution", argues in favor of the third one. Thus, Ivan argues that "in all the earth there is nothing whatever to compel human beings to love their fellows, and [...] a law of the type 'man shall love mankind' is wholly non-existent". Moreover, he argues that "if hitherto there has been any love upon the earth it has proceeded not from a natural law but solely from the fact that human beings have believed in their own immortality." And, "if one were to destroy mankind's faith in its own immortality there would instantly grow enfeebled within" mankind "not only love, but every vital force for the continuation of universal life". Without God and immortality, "nothing would be immoral, all things would be lawful, even anthropophagy", and through the voice of the Grand Inquisitor, Ivan later prophesizes that anthropophagy will actually come to pass before the exhausted humanity abandons the "cursed" Tower at the feet of the Pope. "For every private individual", Ivan concludes, "who believes neither in God nor in his own immortality, the moral law of nature must be transformed into the complete opposite of the old, religious law, and [...] selfish egoism even to the point of evil-doing must not only be lawful to man, but must even be acknowledged to be necessary, the most reasonable and indeed possibly the most decent way out of his situation"[923].

[923] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 94. In this passage, Dostoyevsky practically reaffirms Nietzsche's conviction: "When one gives up Christian belief one thereby deprives himself of the right to Christian

Rakitin, who defends the secular humanist position characterizes Ivan's "entire theory" as "a piece of vileness", and reaffirms the humanist creed of modernity, proclaiming that "mankind will find within it the strength to live for virtue, even if it doesn't believe in the immortality of the soul! It will find it in a love of liberty, equality and fraternity"[924]. Finally, in his doxological declaration before departing to Siberia, Dmitry Karamazov, who expresses here Dostoyevsky's own Christian position in the face of the alternative between atheist humanism and atheist nihilism, and who reflects Dostoyevsky's own illuminating experience from the Siberian imprisonment, subscribes to Ivan's conclusions, but refuses the atheist premises. "We shall be in fetters", Dmitry proclaims,

> and shall have no freedom, but then, in our great misery, we shall again rise up in the joy without which it is impossible for a man to live, or God to exist, for God gives joy, that is his privilege, a great one [...].O Lord, let man melt away in prayer! How is it possible that I shall be down there under the earth without God? Rakitin is wrong: if God is driven from the face of the earth, we shall meet him under the earth! It is impossible for a convict to be without God, even more impossible than for someone who is not a convict! And then we, the subterranean folk, will sing out of the bowels of the earth a tragic hymn to God, with whom is joy![925]

Far from being only a necessary moral premise, for Dostoyevsky, God is the source of life and the Spirit of love and joy[926]. As such, Dostoyevsky concluded that the secularization process

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morality. For the latter is absolutely *not* self-evident […]. Christianity is a system, a consistently thought out and *complete* view of things. If one breaks out of it a fundamental idea, the belief in God, one thereby breaks the whole thing to pieces […]. Christian morality is a command: its origin is transcendental […]; it possesses truth only if God is truth – it stands or falls with the belief in God" (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, in *The Twilight of Idols* and *The Anti-Christ*, translated by R.J. Hollingdale, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1968,pp. 69-70).

[924] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 110.

[925] *Ibidem*, pp. 756-757.

[926] In this sense, it must be underlined that, unlike Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky does not limit himself to the argument that, without the support of the divine command and of the (eternal) sanction presupposed by the latter, Christian morality becomes an absurdity. Instead, Dostoyevsky insists that the loss of belief in God, understood as an experiential belief and not merely as a metaphysical postulate, brings with it the vital loss of the capacity to love one's fellow human beings, with the love of Christ, and to joyfully experience life which for Dostoyevsky is universal communion in Christ. Thus, it is not only the metaphysical basis of morality which is lost, but also the vital desire of communion. I will return to this subject later in section 5.12. when I will deal more extensively with Ward's parallel reading of Dostoyevsky and Rousseau.

was turning the West into a beloved "cemetery"[927]. Beloved, because the ruins of Europe spoke of the passionate life that the Western world had once derived from its religious belief, and because, like the Slavophiles, Dostoyevsky regarded the West as the prodigal son that was expected to return home to Mother Russia. The great problem of the West, according to Dostoyevsky, was represented by the fact that, while the crisis of the West was caused by secularization, the West could not solve it by a return to its religious foundation, as Maistre hoped would happen, because it was precisely the religion of the West that had provoked the crisis. Thus, for Dostoyevsky, although the salvation of the West could only come from Christ, it also had to come from the Russian Christ. Moreover, as it will be shown in the next section of this chapter, according to Dostoyevsky, if the crisis of Western Christianity has given birth to the modern ideal, the contradictions of Western Christianity were reproduced in the contradictions of political modernity. However, it would have been impossible for the Western world to go on living without an ideal of social unity. If Western Christianity is rejected, because it is found to be inconsistent, then, Dostoyevsky argues, there are two possible paths to be followed. In the first case, the modern idea is abandoned altogether, and nothing is put into place. As stressed by Ward, in the event of this scenario, the West would be condemned to a "lingering dissolution", to a slow and certain process of decay, until it finally becomes Ivan's beloved cemetery.[928] In the second case, it seems that "the gulf between thought and practice in the Geneva idea can be finally overcome […] by an uncompromising alteration of the idea itself, so that it conforms with life as it actually is rather than as it ought to be"[929]. More precisely, if men cannot be united by love, then they must be united by other, less lofty means. The modern ideal then follows the same path as the one followed by Western Christianity, and the social and ethical standards are

[927] *Ibidem*, p. 300.
[928] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, p. 96.
[929] *Ibidem*, p. 59.

lowered so that they will fit man's fallen condition. At this point, Dostoyevsky identified two alternatives, which according to him represented the paths followed by the two ideologies that have emerged from the French Revolution. These two means, meant to unite people in the absence of authentic brotherly love, were individual interest and a new revolutionary tyranny, emerging from a revolution that would be triggered precisely by the reorganization of modern society on the basis of individual interest. The (conflicting) ideologies that followed the above mentioned patterns, in the aftermath of the French Revolution, were bourgeois liberalism and socialism. As argued by Dostoyevsky, both were failing in their attempt to accomplish the principles of freedom, equality, and brotherhood.

Thus, like Maistre, Dostoyevsky describes the failure of the French Revolution, and, like Maistre, he locates the origin of this failure in the secular ambitions of the Enlightenment. Moreover, for Dostoyevsky, as for Maistre, the collapse of the modern Tower of Babel, like the collapse of the ancient Tower of Babel, represents a historical event whose prophetical interpretation implies a justification of authentic Christianity, which in the first case is Orthodoxy, while in the second case is Catholicism. Finally, for both authors, the engagement of Western humanity in this Babylonian enterprise is, likewise, prophetically interpreted as an apocalyptic sign, as a sign that the world is now closer than ever to the final apocalyptic confrontation between the Spirit of Pentecost and the spirit of Babel.

5.5. - The bourgeoisie, the proletariat, and the failure of the ideals of the French Revolution

Unlike other Catholic Counter-Revolutionaries such as Bonald and Donoso Cortés, Maistre does not distinguish himself through a developed critique of economic liberalism, a phenomenon

to which he did not seem to pay very much attention. In his few reflections that touched on economic issues, Maistre tended rather to extract arguments in favor of his providentialist critique of political rationalism from the fact that the market functioned well when ruled by a providential, invisible hand, while it stopped functioning as soon as one wanted to reorganize it according to the patterns of abstract reason[930]. Yet, taking into account the fact that Maistre's central preoccupation was the dissolution of the social order under the impact of individualism, Bernard Sarrazin argues that "*il nous est permis de rêver et de supposer que J. de Maistre, écirvant dans les années 1830 et non en pleine Révolution française, aurait transposé sur le libéralisme économique sa critique de l'ordre social fondée sur le libéralisme politique*"[931]. Sarrazin's thesis seems to be confirmed by a remark from one of Maistre's letters, where he argues that "*l'esprit philosophique*", the basis of political liberalism according to him, and "*l'esprit de commerce*", are "*les deux gangrènes modernes*"[932]. This vision of the commercial spirit, expressed through Maistre's marginal observation, appears in a much more developed form in the work of the other representative of the French theocratic school, Louis de Bonald. Bonald blamed the destruction of the French monarchy on the corrosive commercial spirit that had eroded the traditional order of the *Ancien Régime*. With the French Revolution, Bonald believed, this commercial spirit has been completely liberated from the social norms and institutions that were, until then, still limiting its pernicious effects. Now it was threatening to

[930] Maistre did not refer directly to Adam Smith although he had in his library the French translation of *The Wealth of Nations*. According to Jean Denizet, whereas Maistre's "theory of spontaneous order […] is expressed in almost the same terms as the theory of Friedrich Hayek", who insists "on the incapacity of man to create by his reason a social order", Maistre's theory has, however, "very different bases". Unlike Hayek, who has an evolutionist perspective, Maistre insists on the idea that human nature is constant and that "*sociability* […] is one of its essential elements". Moreover, in Maistre's case, the economic order is not self-sustainable. For Maistre, "if […] society in its majority does not practice a social morality (in Maistre's case a Christian morality), it collapses" (Jean Denizet, "Joseph de Maistre Economist", in *Joseph de Maistre's Life, Thought and Influence*, pp. 85-86; 95-96).

[931] Bernard Sarazin, "Le Comte et le Sénateur ou la double religion de Joseph de Maistre", p. 25.

[932] Joseph de Maistre, *Lettre à Madame la Baronne de Pont*, in *Lettres choisies de J. de Maistre*, Lyon, Imprimeur de l'Archevêché et des Facultés Catholiques, Éditeur Emmanuel Vitte, 1901, p. 104.

destroy society through what has been later described by Karl Polanyi as the complete subordination of all social institutions to the autonomous finality of the self-regulated market. Thus, Bonald argued that, unlike in monarchies, where laws are the manifestation of a structural social rationality that transcends and integrates the individual, in republics, "*les lois ne sont que les volontés particulières de l'homme dépravé*". And as such, man is placed "*à l'égard de son semblable, dans l'état sauvage*". For Bonald, one of the consequences of the French Revolution was that the social order has been replaced with the commercial order, described as "*le spectacle hideux d'une bande de sauvages qui se glissent dans l'obscurité, pour aller enlever la chasse de leur ennemi, ou incendier son habitation*"[933]. Moreover, anticipating Marx, Bonald presents the image of a dehumanizing emerging industrial system, which transforms men into production machines, thus calling for the apparition of consumption machines capable to absorb the ever growing industrial production. Likewise, Bonald is horrified by the new socio-economic reality of "*manufactures*" qui "*entassent dans les villes une population immense d'ouvriers, dépourvus des vertus qui inspirent le goût et la culture des propriétés champêtres, livrés à tous les vices qu'enfante la corruption des cités*", "*livrés à la faim et au désespoir*", and, finally, to revolution[934].

The above passage resonates well with Dostoyevsky's impressive depiction of the London proletariat from *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*. The epiphany of the global capitalist system at the world exhibition from London appears to Dostoyevsky as something Babylonian, "as some prophecy out of the Apocalypse being fulfilled before your very eyes", as a mighty proud Baal that it is hard to refrain from idolizing, but that "reigns supreme" over a subterranean humanity in whose brutal and degrading behavior Dostoyevsky identifies "a repudiation of our

[933] Louis Ambroise de Bonald, *Théorie du pouvoir politique et religieux*, p. 230.
[934] Louis Ambroise de Bonald, *Théorie de l'éducation*, tome 2, pp. 564-565, quoted in Gerard Gengembre, *La Contre-Révolution ou l'histoire désespérante*, pp. 271-272, 275.

social formula, an obstinate and unconscious repudiation; an instinctive repudiation at any cost, in order to achieve salvation, a disgusted repudiation of the rest of us. Those millions of people" who "drink gloomily and heavily", that mass of prostitutes and child prostitutes,

> abandoned and driven away from the feast of humanity, push and crush each other in the underground darkness into which they have been cast by their elder brethren, they grope around seeking a door at which to knock and look for an exit lest they be smothered to death in that dark cellar. This is the last desperate attempt to huddle together and form one's own heap, one's own mass and to repudiate everything, the very image of man if need be, only to be oneself, only not to be with us[935].

This psychological drive towards convulsive, self-destructive, irrational manifestation of the will, which shall be analyzed in detail in Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground*, before being a reaction to social oppression within the capitalist system, is first and foremost a violent refusal of the rational principles of utilitarianism on which the liberal political economy is based. The target of the self-destructive fury, manifested by the underground humanity, is the reification of inter-human relations, namely, the replacement of the organic social bond with an exterior social bond grounded in the principles of utilitarian rationalism. The undisguised coarseness, wickedness, and brutality that is made manifest in Dostoyevsky's prison mates and in Dostoyevsky's proletarians, as well as in his man from the underground, is an existential cry triggered by the disappearance of authentic interpersonal relations, and their replacement with impersonal systemic recipes for social progress and the subsequent social discipline that is required by the latter. Thus, at the beginning of *Crime and Punishment*, in a discussion with Rodion Raskolnykov, the drunkard father of Sonya, Marmeladov, reproduces what a certain "follower of the latest ideas" had told him, namely "that in this age the sentiment of compassion is actually prohibited by science, and that is how they order things in England, where they have

[935] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, transated by Kyril Fitz Lyon, Quartet Books, Lodon, Melbourne, New York, 1985, pp. 45-50.

political economy"[936]. Marmeladov has learnt about these new ideas from the enthusiastic Fourierist, Andrey Lebezyatnikov, who shares them with Peter Luzhin, the fiancée of Raskolnikov's sister and an epitome of the bourgeois mentality. Later in the novel, Luzhin further elaborates the theory sketched by Marmeladov at the beginning of the novel, but – and this for Dostoyevsky represents a typical trait of the bourgeois – he is incapable of drawing the logical conclusions that naturally follow from his assumed premises. This will be done by the nihilist Raskolnikov, as what differentiates the nihilist from the bourgeois in Dostoyevsky's work, is precisely the capacity and willingness of the former to draw the conclusions from the premises that he shares with the latter.

In a discussion that takes place in Raskolnikov's room between four interlocutors, not long after Raskolnikov had murdered the pawnbroker woman and her sister, the recently arrived Luzhin expresses his contentment that Russia had been exposed to "new beneficial ideas" while "many harmful prejudices have been rooted out and held up to ridicule". The Russian society had "irrevocably severed" itself "from the past", committing itself instead to "progress…in the name of science and economic truth". This, Luzhin argues, is a great and wonderful achievement. "In earlier times", Luzhin confidently continues his argument, "it was said to me 'Love your neighbor' ". But "what was the result of it", Luzhin asks his audience? "The result", he continues, "was that I divided my cloak with my neighbor and we were both left half-naked […]. Science, however, says: love yourself first of all, for everything in the world is based on personal interest. If you love yourself alone", thus substituting the laws of science to God's commandments, then "you will conduct your affairs properly, and your cloak will remain whole. Economic truth adds that the more private enterprises are established and the more, so to say,

[936] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, translated by Jessie Coulson, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, pp. 11-12.

whole cloaks there are in a society, the firmer will be its foundations and the more will be undertaken for the common good". Thus, Luzhin concludes, "by the very act of devoting my gains solely and exclusively to myself, I am at the same time benefiting the whole community, and ensuring that my neighbor receives something better than half a torn cloak, and that not by private, isolated bounty, but as a consequence of the general economic advancement"[937].

Shortly after Luzhin's lecture on the social benefits of rational egoism, and to Raskolnikov's painful psychological anxiety, the topic of discussion is changed, and Raskolnikov's three visitors, without knowing who the criminal is, start discussing the recent murder that had just been committed in Saint Petersburg. In the context of the new discussion, Luzhin who had just recently expressed his enthusiasm with regard to the progressive views of the new generation, expresses his perplexity with regard to the objective observation that in recent years, that is, in parallel with the extension of the new intellectual and economic progress that stirs Luzhin's admiration, crime rates have been increasing not only "among the lower classes", but "in higher social circles" as well. Luzhin enumerates a series of recent crimes involving members of the highest strata of society and concludes, based on the fact that "peasants do not pawn articles of value", that the pawnbroker woman's murderer was also "a person of some social standing". And, with disconcerting sincerity, Luzhin decries the incomprehensible "depravity" and "lack of principles" that manifests itself more and more each day, even "among the civilized elements of our society". At this point, Raskolnikov, who had just committed a double murder, precisely due to his belief in the principle of social utility, and who up until then had been boiling with anguish and anger, breaks in furiously and tells Luzhin, now scandalized by the "exaggerations" of Raskolnikov's dialectic, that the pawnbroker woman's murder has been committed "in

[937] *Ibidem*, pp. 142-143.

accordance" with Luzhin's "own theory", which "carried to its logical conclusion" implies that one "can cut people's throats"[938]. Thus, whereas Luzhin is enthusiastic with regard to the progress presupposed by the new organization of society according to scientific principles, Raskolnikov's conclusion reveals the fact that, just like Maistre, for Dostoyevsky, the scientific organization of society has disastrous consequences. And, above all, like Maistre, Dostoyevsky emphasizes that these consequences are inevitable whenever "*la science du bien et du mal*"[939] is entrusted to the scientists.

In the ensuing brawl caused by Raskolnikov's brutal intervention, the latter rebukes Luzhin for his disgusting, and yet, not in the least cynical, attitude towards his fiancée who is Raskolnikov's sister. As very brutally, but very pertinently summarized by Raskolnikov himself during the brawl, Luzhin had openly declared to Raskolnikov's sister, Dunya, and to her mother, that "it is better to take a wife out of poverty, so that you can dominate over her afterwards […] and reproach her with the benefits you have heaped on her"[940]. In his analysis of the marital arrangements between Dunya and Luzhin, Dostoyevsky exposes the conversion of matrimonial relations in the bourgeois society into relations of exploitation with a contractual basis. Grounding the concept of morality in individual freedom, and excluding feeling, and in particular love, as a basis for moral action, Kant had defined marriage as a contract signed between a man and a woman, in view of the reciprocal use of their sexual organs[941]. Applied in a bourgeois society marked by class division, Kant's liberal principles effectively transform marriage into a form of prostitution, given the fact that the differences of income, which ultimately imply differences of power, effectively compel one of the signatory parts to sell itself

[938] *Ibidem*, pp. 144-145.
[939] Joseph de Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, pp. 701-702.
[940] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 146.
[941] Emmanuel Kant, *Métaphysique des moeurs*, translated by Alain Renaut, Flammarion, Paris, 1994, vol. 2, pp. 77-78.

in order to survive. Thus, one day before assassinating the pawnbroker woman, which represents the perfect incarnation of the bourgeois commercial spirit, the angrily disgusted Raskolnikov comes to the conclusion that in essence, Dunya, who has to marry Luzhin in order to raise herself and her family out of poverty, is in no better position than Sonya, Marmeladov's daughter, who has to prostitute herself in order to assure the survival of her alcoholic father and of Katerina Ivanovna, her step mother, and of the latter's children from her first marriage[942].

Two points should be underlined here. First of all, Raskolnikov understands that the type of social relations in which Sonya and Dunya are forced to participate, namely relations of exploitation with a contractual basis, are the type of relations that characterize bourgeois society as a whole, and that are inherent to the economic order praised by Luzhin. Moreover, it is proper to the bourgeois society to conceal the reality of oppression under the ideological mask of abstract freedom and formal equality before the law. Thus, reflecting on the bourgeois order that had been established in France after the collapse of the *Ancien Régime*, Dostoyevsky dismissed in a short series of logical deductions the pretension of the French bourgeoisie that its political and social order was actually based on the principles of 1789, namely freedom, equality and brotherhood. "What is *liberté*", Dostoyevsky asks, in the beginning of his short demonstration? In the conditions of the bourgeois society, it is

> equal freedom for all to do anything one wants within the limits of the law. When can a man do anything he wants? When he has a million. Does freedom give everyone a million? No. What is a man without a million? A man without a million is not a man who does anything he wants, but a man with whom anything is done that anyone wants. And what follows? What follows is that besides freedom there is also equality, in fact equality before the law. There is only one thing to be said about this equality before the law – that the way in which it is now applied enables, indeed forces, every Frenchman to consider it as a personal insult[943].

[942] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, pp. 28-37, 41-42.

[943] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, pp. 59-60. Ironically pointing at the distance between the ideals of the French Revolution and the reality of bourgeois society, Smerdyakov, another nihilist assassin that carries modern principles to their ultimate consequences, tells his brother Ivan that "in the normal

In the second place, and as a direct consequence of the contradiction that exists between the formal/legal organization of bourgeois society and its real/substantial organization, Raskolnikov comes to the conclusion that bourgeois morality is form without substance. Bourgeois morality is reduced to the formal conformation of the individual will to an external legal order, but it is perfectly compatible with the selfish orientation of that will, or, even more so, it presupposes that form of rational selfishness. For bourgeois morality, of which Luzhin is the typical exponent, is a perfect deformation of Christian morality. According to Saint Paul, "the commandments, '*You shall not commit adultery*', '*You shall not murder*', '*You shall not steal*' ", etc., "are all summed up in this saying, namely, '*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*'. Love does no harm to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13: 9-10). However, the cornerstone of the bourgeois organization of the society is the principle, affirmed by Luzhin, "love yourself above anyone else". Thus, whenever the bourgeois says "*You shall not commit adultery*", "*You shall not murder*", "*You shall not steal*", etc., we are inevitably dealing with an instrumental morality, whose purpose is only that of insuring the dominating power of the bourgeois. The commandments no longer point to a love that fulfills the law beyond the law, thus granting substance and meaning to the law, but they become the instruments through which the bourgeois governs the world within his own interest (or, more generally, within the interest of his class), and constitute the basis of a disciplinary order through which the bourgeois tries to ensure the security of his property, threatened by theft or revolution, and the obedience of his slave wife, who is lured by carnal desire or by romantic love. In this sense, Raskolnikov's crime, which is based on the principle that humanity is divided between a majority that lives according

instances of life beating servants is indeed forbidden by the law nowadays, and the masters have all stopped beating us, sir, well, but in the distinctual instances of life, and not only in Russia, but [...] even" in "the very French Republic itself, they continue to beat us, just as they did in the time of Adam and Eve" (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 788).

to the principles of conventional morality, and a minority that situates itself beyond good and evil, having the right to bring social change and pursue its goals through murder, is nothing but the coherent expression of bourgeois morality. If the bourgeois legally plunders and oppresses, to the point of actual murder, and this only in order to satisfy his selfish interest, Raskolnikov reserves for himself the right to kill and rob an "actively harmful" old woman in order to "take her money" and dedicate it "to the service of humanity and the common good"[944]. In this sense, Raskolnikov's crime has a revolutionary character. Not only because its declared purpose is the establishment of a just social order. But also because, through his crime, Raskolnikov exposes in the light of the day the true nature of bourgeois morality, and thus, disenchanting it, he lays the foundation for the emancipation of those for whom this morality functions as an oppressive ideology. Yet, through his murder Raskolnikov also definitively confirms the *de facto* division within bourgeois society between masters and servants. If the basis of emancipation, which not all are capable of pursuing, can be established only through crime, and if only a minority of people are sufficiently strong and intelligent to act as revolutionary criminals, then Raskolnikov's philosophy must ultimately dismiss the ideals of liberty, equality, and brotherhood, perpetuating instead the division of humanity between those who command and those who obey, between a minority of emancipating revolutionaries who live beyond good and evil, and "the mass", whose natural state is obedience and blind conformity with the existing moral order.

If Dostoyevsky stresses the distance that separates legality from morality and, implicitly, the actual bourgeois order from the ideals of 1789, in his analysis of bourgeois ideology, Dostoyevsky emphasizes the fact that the bourgeois does not cynically, that is consciously,

[944] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, pp. 62-63.

instrument morality, but simply follows his selfish interest in an oblivion, or unawareness, of the above mentioned distance, and therefore, of his authentic condition. The bourgeois believes what is in his advantage, his reason being completely darkened and perverted by his base passions[945]. In this sense, as a moral consciousness, Marmeladov, the drunkard who bows down before the Orthodox Christian ideal, appears as the perfect opposite of Luzhin, the successful businessman who, with superficial enthusiasm, embraces the scientific theories of the modern West. Pushed by miserable social conditions towards alcoholism, Marmeladov nevertheless assumes full responsibility for his vice, which further contributes to the misery of his own family, especially to the moral misery of his daughter, whose money earned from prostitution Marmeladov spends on alcohol. He does not blame anybody else for the fact that he is drinking. He is perfectly aware of his state of depravity and even accepts the beatings that he receives from his wife, when he comes home, as a well-deserved retribution for his sins. And, through his impressive representation of the Final Judgment, from the end of his discussion with Raskolnikov, the Christian artist that is Dostoyevsky manages to turn this drunkard who drinks himself to death into an icon of Christian humility[946]. Turning now to Luzhin, Dostoyevsky informs us that what distinguished the latter was the fact that he had an extremely good opinion of himself, and that, "more than anything in the world he loved and prized his money". Although he is exploiting Dunya's material vulnerability, who is otherwise an extremely beautiful and virtuous girl, Luzhin regards his decision to marry her as a "heroic" deed. Dostoyevsky informs us that when Luzhin

[945] As already indicated, in the Orthodox and Slavophile conception, the soundness of reason depends on the purity of the heart.

[946] Marmeladov says that God "shall judge all men, and forgive them, the good and the evil, the wise and the humble…And when He has done with all men, then shall he summon us also: 'Come forth', He will say 'ye also, ye drunkards, ye weaklings, ye infamous, come forth!'. And we shall come forth without shame and stand before Him. And He will say: 'Ye are swine! Ye are made in the image of the beast and bear his mark; yet come ye also unto Me!' And the wise and learned shall say: 'Lord, why dost Thou receive these?' And He shall say: I receive them, oh ye wise men, I receive them, oh ye learned ones, inasmuch as not one of these has deemed himself worthy…' " (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 21).

"bitterly [reminds] Dunya that he had resolved to take her in spite of evil rumors about her, he [speaks] with complete sincerity, and even [feels] the deepest indignation at her 'black ingratitude' ". And yet, Dostoyevsky also informs us that "when he offered his hand to Dunya he was already fully convinced of the baselessness of the stories, which had been publicly refuted" by a person whose testimony was beyond doubt, "and long since dropped by everybody in the little town" where Dunya used to live, as everybody was now "warmly [defending]" her. Nevertheless, although he could not deny that he knew this all along, he still regards his deed as a "heroic", "noble action", he has "the feeling of a benefactor", and is sincerely outraged by the fact that others do not recognize and appreciate his virtues[947]. Despite his practical intelligence, which at times reaches the peak of diabolical perversity – he sneaks a banknote of one hundred rubles into Sonya's pocket so that he can afterwards unjustly accuse her of theft and blackmail her into helping him get Dunya back –, Luzhin appears as the perfect combination of stupidity and egotism, two traits of character that nourish each other. He "sincerely" identifies virtue with *his* selfish interest, and is "sincerely" morally outraged by anybody who does not recognize his selfish interest as virtue. He has completely internalized the morality of the market, and thus, he becomes a perfect cog in the overall functioning of the capitalist mechanism. Thus, self-contentment and the ignorance of his own moral condition, implied by the former, appeared to Dostoyevsky as the defining psychological traits of the bourgeois, and it is precisely the same distinguishing traits that Dostoyevsky will single-out in the Parisian bourgeois which he encountered on his trip to Western Europe from the summer of 1862.

Annulling at the deepest level of his consciousness the tension between authentic morality and the "morality" of the market, the Parisian bourgeois, as described by Dostoyevsky, lacks the

[947] *Ibidem*, p. 294.

cynicism of the English upper classes, who do not conceal the oppressive nature of the capitalist system. Instead, in the consciousness of the Parisian bourgeois, the content represented by the new utilitarian morality is completely inserted into the ancient forms of morality, in as much as the French bourgeois does not manifest the slightest awareness of the actual moral revolution that has taken place. Thus, completely internalizing the new ethics of individual enrichment as the highest form of praiseworthy morality, the Parisian bourgeois "fleeces you not for the sake of profit, as in the old days but in the name of virtue, out of some sacred necessity". "In the old days", Dostoyevsky continues, "some value was attached to other things besides money, so that a man with no money but possessing other qualities could expect some kind of esteem". Not only "the esteem of other people", but also "*self*-esteem". Instead, nowadays "the Parisian has a very low opinion of himself if he feels his pockets are empty – and he holds this opinion consciously, and with great conviction". "[T]he meanest little Frenchmen who would sell you his own father for six pence" displays with full inner conviction "an extraordinarily noble appearance […] at the very moment of selling you his father"[948]. Unconsciously annulling the distance between the nobility of the Old Regime and the ethics of the market, the bourgeois implicitly annuls also the distance between the ideals of the French Revolution and their actual transposition. Just as he is able to display with complete ingenuity a noble countenance, while ripping off his client, he is likewise capable of talking about *liberté, egalité, fraternité,* in the conditions in which three quarters of humanity (the working class) "serve as raw material and a means of exploitation" for the rest of mankind (the bourgeoisie)[949]. Thus, for Dostoyevsky, the great problem of the French bourgeoisie was not the fact that it "[behaved] despicably", but that, raising despicable behavior to the status of a "virtue", it "[has] completely lost [its] sense of honour, and therefore [behaves]

[948] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, pp. 55-56.
[949] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol.2, p. 729.

despicably and [knows] not what [it does] to virtue"[950]. And thus, self-deceived and immersed in the feeling of self-satisfaction, the Parisian bourgeois is "well satisfied and convinced that everything is as it should be and may even beat you up if you express a doubt on that score"[951].

In the last instance, lowering all ideals to the level at which they are compatible with his own selfish interest, and thus eliminating all tension within the political consciousness aroused by the distance between the actual state of society and its ideal representation, the bourgeois comfortably installs himself in a society that he regards as the best possible regime, and therefore, as the end of history. In *The Diary of a Writer*, Dostoyevsky argued that the "portion of society which in 1789 won political leadership, *i.e.*, the bourgeoisie, triumphed and declared that there was no necessity of going any further", despite the fact that the greatest part of mankind, all "the humiliated and the defrauded […], had not received their share in the new formula of universal unity proclaimed by the French Revolution of 1789"[952]. Instead of a universal unity based on the principles of freedom, equality, and brotherhood, what emerged

[950] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, pp.70-71. According to Dostoyevsky, one of the central cultural characteristics that made Russians superior to Western Europeans, was the fact that, independently of how sinful they were, the former always remained fully aware of their true moral condition, and in this sense, the opposition between Luzhin and Marmeladov appears as an opposition between the Westernized Russian and the true Russian. The former progresses according to the newly discovered laws of political economy, the latter, although sunk in drunkenness, tragically meditates on the Gospel's teaching, aware of the fact that redemption through science and progress is only a pathetic caricature of the authentic eschatological redemption of Orthodox Christianity. "Take a Russian drunkard", Dostoyevsky wrote in *The Diary of a Writer*, "and compare him, let us say, with a German drunkard: the Russian is more abominable than the German; still, the German drunkard is unmistakably more stupid and ridiculous than the Russian". According to Dostoyevsky, while the former, although "drunk as a fiddler" is nevertheless "proud of himself", the latter, in the depth of his heart, is painfully aware of the fact that "he is nothing but a scoundrel". For ultimately, Dostoyevsky argued, despite their numerous and vile sins, Russians preserved within their souls an ideal of holiness. And they refused to lower the standards of moral action, preferring instead the painful awareness of the distance between the ideal of holiness and the reality of despicable behavior (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol. 1, pp. 36-37, 202-203). This nationalist anthropological thesis had already been formulated by Ivan Kireevsky, who argued that, unlike Russians, who always ask more of themselves in terms of virtue, and always regard sin as sin, "Western people, generally speaking, are nearly always satisfied with their moral state […]. If their overt acts should happen to come into variance with the generally accepted notions of morality, they will invent their own, original system of ethics, and thus once more pacify the conscience" (Ivan Kireevsky, *On the Nature of European Culture and on its Relationship to Russian Culture* in *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 227). Thus, for Dostoevsky and the Slavophiles, the bourgeois morality appears as a specifically Western development.

[951] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, p. 44

[952] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol.2, p. 729.

after 1789 was "the comedy of bourgeois unity" or, more precisely, a union of mankind based on the principle "*Chacun pour soi et Dieu pour tous*"[953]. Like Bonald[954], Dostoyevsky argued that what distinguished the new liberal society from all previous societies was the fact that economic gain, a reality present in all societies, had become "the sublime principle" that represented the very foundation of 19th century society. Concomitantly, Dostoyevsky observed, never "have the people been in a worse bondage than in the factories owned" by the new ruling class, the bourgeoisie[955]. The new order was based on materialist principles and on an understanding of freedom not as "self-mastery", but as "license", which brings with it a loss of true inner freedom through the enslavement to matter[956]. However, the satisfaction of material desires, to which the bourgeois was committed, was something that everybody wanted, including the great mass of working humanity. According to Dostoyevsky, in the last instance, committed to its selfish interest alone and thus without any moral justification, the French bourgeois had simply overthrown the old aristocracy from power on the basis of the following principle: "*Ôte-toi de là, que je m'y mette*". "But having placed itself in the stead of its former masters", Dostoyevsky continues, "and having seized their property, the bourgeoisie completely disregarded the people, the proletarian and having refused to recognize him as its brother, it converted him, in exchange for his daily bread, into a working force for its own welfare". It was therefore common sense to expect that, sooner or later, the proletarian would deal with the bourgeois in the exact same manner that the latter had dealt with the aristocrat. If the bourgeois refuses to fraternize, fulfilling thus generously the ideals of universal freedom and equality, then the proletarian will have to compel him to fraternize and share his property with him by means of "club and blood". If the

[953] *Ibidem*, p. 911.

[954] "*L'or est devenu la divinité extérieure et sensible des sociétés commerçantes et républicaines*" (Louis Ambroise de Bonald, *Théorie du pouvoir politique et religieux*, p. 229).

[955] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol.1, pp. 484-485, vol.2, p.650.

[956] *Ibidem*, vol.2, pp. 623-624.

bourgeoisie proves itself incapable "of becoming the brethren of the people", then it must be "[excluded] […] altogether […] from brotherhood" and exterminated "for the happiness of the human race"[957].

Socialism is therefore born out of the contradictions of the bourgeois society. Dostoyevsky was convinced that the bourgeoisie would not resist in the face of the socialist assault, for socialism was more coherent and thus, it had the advantage of an indisputable appearance of moral superiority when compared with bourgeois liberalism[958]. According to Dostoyevsky, it was precisely the absence of a moral ideal that would prove fatal for the bourgeois order. Replacing the lofty ideals of Christianity, with the "economic truth" invoked by Luzhin, the new liberal society was undermining its very foundations. Luzhin's realism, more specifically, his scientific organization of society in accordance with the natural selfishness of the self-centered individual, was therefore not at all realistic; and Dostoyevsky will emphasize throughout his work that in politics, idealism is more realistic than realism, for without an ideal that transcends the individual will, any social order inevitably collapses, whether through revolution, military invasion, or anarchic dissolution. Thus, according to Dostoyevsky, who reproduces some of Shatov's theses that have been presented earlier, "when in a nation the moral or religious idea wears itself out, there always comes the panicky, cowardly urge to unite for the sole purpose of 'saving the skins' ". This appears as the negative form of the union whose principle is the accumulation of wealth, but both types of union, which essentially correspond to the contractualist theories of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, are ultimately grounded in the same principle of individual selfishness[959]. According to Dostoyevsky, "the French bourgeoisie sticks together only for the purpose of 'saving its skin' from the fourth estate, which tries to break into its door. But 'the

[957] *Ibidem*, pp. 619-620.
[958] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, p. 94.
[959] See Leo Strauss, "What Is Political Philosophy", pp. 49-50.

saving of skins' is the most impotent and lowest of all ideas uniting mankind. This is the beginning of the end. People pretend to stick together, but at the same time they are on a sharp look-out for the first moment of danger, ready to disperse"[960] like rats.

Dostoyevsky believed that the existence of any social order required a moral ideal for which people would be willing to sacrifice themselves. "Neither man nor nation", Dostoyevsky wrote in *The Diary of a Writer*, "can exist without a sublime idea. And on earth there is but one sublime idea – namely, the idea of the immortality of man's soul – since all other 'sublime' ideas of life, which give life to man, are merely derived from this one idea"[961]. Rejecting thus "the modern idea" in its very foundation, like Maistre, Dostoyevsky argues that only on the basis of faith in God and in the immortality of the soul it is possible to edify an *inner* social bond – a social bond based on inner conviction –, which would replace the self-annihilating exterior bond of liberal contractualism. Only thus could the individual renounce himself for the sake of the common good, and only thus could society survive. This idea is powerfully expressed by one of the characters from *The Idiot*, Lebedev, who relates a story characterized by dark-humor and purposeful exaggeration, concerning a certain individual from the Middle Ages, who, throughout several periods of famine, has killed and eaten – Lebedev argues to the amusement of his audience – sixty monks and six infants. Nevertheless, "the criminal ends up by going and denouncing himself to the clergy and giving himself up to the government. One may ask", Lebedev continues

> what torments awaited him in those days, the wheel, the stake, the fire? Who was it then who prompted him to denounce himself? [...] There must have been something stronger than the stake, the fire, even the habit of twenty years! There must have been an idea more powerful than any disaster, famine, torture, plague, leprosy, and all that hell which mankind could not have borne without that one binding idea which directed men's minds and fertilized the springs of life! Show me anything resembling that power in our age of

[960] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol. 2, p. 1002.
[961] *Ibidem*, vol. 1, p. 540.

> depravity and railways […].Show me a force which binds today's humanity together with half the power it possessed in those centuries […]. And don't try to browbeat me with your prosperity, your riches, the rarity of famine and the speed of communications! The riches are greater but the force is less; there is no more a binding principle[962].

Theoretically, the only other alternative to a social bond based on religion would be the preservation of social unity through the sheer force of the sovereign, exercised on his subjects. Dostoyevsky did not believe in such a possibility, and, even in the case of Maistre, it is extremely doubtful that he would have firmly held to such an opinion. In the polemical confrontation of the Grand Inquisitor with Elder Zosima, which constitutes the central axis of *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoyevsky, to paraphrase Malraux, conveys the message that the society of the future would either be based on the authentic religion, or will be based on some form of religious manipulation. And if it will be neither, then neither will it exist at all. In fact, the Grand Inquisitor stresses the fact that it is precisely the overtly atheist character of socialism, and its simplistic transparent materialism, which condemns to failure its attempt to build the Tower of Babel. But these were characteristics which socialism shared with bourgeois liberalism (bourgeois religiosity, as bourgeois morality, appeared to Dostoyevsky as a mere joke[963]). These were the characteristics that according to Dostoyevsky made impossible the constitution of an inner social bond, based on self-giving fraternity and willingness to sacrifice oneself for one's brethren. As for Maistre, for Dostoyevsky, atheism and materialism lead with necessity to egoism, egoism, which in turn dissolves the social bond. As already indicated, for Dostoyevsky, the failure of the ideals of the French Revolution represented essentially a failure to fraternize, fraternity being for Dostoyevsky the key concept of the triad *liberté, egalité, fraternité*, on which

[962] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Idiot*, pp. 396-399.

[963] It is true that he only visited Europe and, unlike Tocqueville, he did not analyze the complex relation between religion and liberal democracy in the United States.

he will concentrate the most in his analysis of the French bourgeois society from *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*.

Thus, Dostoyevsky argues that if the bourgeois would have really taken seriously, within his own heart, the ideal of brotherhood, and would have willingly fraternized with the proletarian, then all the tensions and contradictions of the post-revolutionary French society would have been resolved in one instant. Fraternally, the bourgeois would have shared his material possessions with his proletarian brother, and there would have been no need for violence and Revolution anymore. Yet, the unwillingness of the bourgeois to fraternize was making a new socialist Revolution inevitable in France. Yet a fundamental question was raised at this point: what will happen after the bourgeoisie is gone? Were the French proletarians capable of fraternizing, in their current social and moral conditions? Or, in case not, could they find another means of achieving social unity? In other words, was socialism possible in France, and in the West, the homeland of the bourgeois? Dostoyevsky's answer to all of these questions was no! There was no possible way of achieving social unity without brotherhood, except perhaps within the system of the Grand Inquisitor, which, for Dostoyevsky, as stressed by Ward, represented "the final Western solution to the crisis of order"[964]. But to this we shall return a little bit later, in section 5.9. For the moment, taking into account the fact that one of the defining traits of the bourgeois was his incapacity to fraternize – fraternity being fundamentally incompatible with Luzhin's "economic truth" that determined the actions of the bourgeois – the crisis of order of the West appeared to Dostoyevsky as unsolvable. For according to him, the great drama of political modernity was represented by the fact that the bourgeois spirit had penetrated all the layers of the society, including the proletariat. Brotherhood and therefore social unity were impossible in

[964] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, p. 97.

France, and in the West, because, according to Dostoyevsky, the prediction of the Abbé Sieyès had come true in the fullest possible sense. In post-revolutionary France, as well as in the West, the bourgeois was now everything[965]. His destructive individualism, the deployment of which triggered Maistre's apocalyptic visions, had contaminated all things, including the proletariat.

According to Dostoyevsky, liberal freedom was leading to inequality and hence, to the enslavement of the poor. Imposed through force, socialist equality could have been imposed only at the cost of freedom. Moreover, once the bourgeoisie would have been out of the way, if equality did not result from spontaneous socialist concord, then it would have to be imposed and maintained through the force of government. Inevitably, this would mean the perpetuation of revolutionary violence until hierarchy would be reestablished, as the socialist society would finally be divided between a ruling minority that would rule over a mass of equals, enforcing unity and equality. Therefore, both freedom and equality would once again be sacrificed, and hierarchy, as Maistre prophesized, would be justified by the evolution of the Revolution. For Dostoyevsky, there was only one way out of the deadlock: brotherhood. But, in order to exist, brotherhood required the free renunciation of material and individual interest, as reflected in the communal economy of the Russian peasant commune, and in the free renunciation of political power in the name of inner freedom, which according to the Slavophiles were the characteristics of the Russian people. Instead, bourgeois political economy, as well as the revolutionary political practice of the liberals and of the socialists, were characterized by an active pursuit of self-interest, and by the determination to defend and impose one's rights by force[966]. In this sense, if the bourgeoisie had openly abandoned the ideal of fraternity when it had replaced the Christian

[965] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, p. 59.

[966] In its most sublime expression, the revolutionary political practice meant self-denial and the willingness to sacrifice oneself for the realization on earth of an ideal of social justice, but to this aspect, which Dostoyevsky does not overlook, we shall refer in the last section of the dissertation.

principle "love your neighbor" with the "scientific" principle "love yourself", the socialist is forced to observe that "the principle of brotherhood is absent in Western man, who recognizes, on the contrary, the individual and personal principle which always insists on isolation and on demanding rights, sword in hand". As a consequence, observing the absence of brotherhood, the socialist comes to the conclusion that brotherhood must be created[967]. But "brotherhood", Dostoyevsky insists, "cannot be created"! Since in essence brotherhood is nothing else than brotherly love, than no sort of artificial mechanism can create it if it does not "[create] itself", if it does not "[exist] in nature"[968]. Confronted with this situation, the socialist then tries to convince people to fraternize by exposing to everyone the advantages of brotherhood. Thus, he

> throws out the bait of personal advantage, explains, teaches and tells people how much advantage each person will obtain out of this brotherhood, how much each will gain; he determines the utility and cost of each individual, and works out in advance the balance of this world's blessings: how much each individual deserves them and how much each individual must voluntarily contribute to the community in exchange for them at the cost of his personality.[969]

But of course, by trying to convince people of the advantages of brotherhood, the socialist has to appeal to the same principle which undermines brotherhood in the first place, namely self-interest. As a result, instead of a community of brothers, what one gets instead is an ant-heap formed of rational selfish ants, who rationally trade-off their individual freedom to do what they want in exchange for the maximum of personal utility, defined in terms of "security [...], food and drink"[970].

[967] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, p. 63.
[968] *Ibidem*, p. 60.
[969] *Ibidem*, pp. 63-64.
[970] *Ibidem*, pp. 63-64.

5.6. - The man from the underground

Before analyzing the anti-rational and anti-social voluntarism of Dostoyevsky's man from the underground, as well as the relation between his worldview, and the problem of socialism, it would be interesting to analyze first of all the counter-revolutionary understanding of the relation between reason, will and society, and, in particular, Maistre's understanding of that relation. From this point of view, it can be argued that Dostoyevsky's analysis of the relation between reason, will and society, from *Notes from the Underground*, may be regarded as a continuation of the previous reflection of the counter-revolutionary authors concerning this problem. As indicated by Domenico Fisichella, the social philosophy and epistemology of both Maistre and Bonald, is grounded in a distinction between individual reason and universal reason. In this sense, far from opposing reason as such, the two authors attack individual reason in the name of universal reason. While the former is identified by Maistre with the philosophical spirit, or, more precisely, with "human reason reduced strictly to its individual capacities", the latter is identified by him with the universal wisdom of mankind, which is contained in the traditional norms and prejudices upon which the social order reposes. Overturning practically the claims of the Enlightenment, which has attacked tradition in the name of individual reason, Maistre and Bonald argue that tradition, or universal reason, represents the true reason, an idea that has also been expressed by Burke in his *Reflections on the French Revolution*. For Maistre and Bonald, individual reason conceals in fact the subjective passion. As stressed by Fisichella, for the above mentioned authors,

> individual will is nothing but passion, that is, the perverse, uncontained will, free from reason's control, free form the eternal and universal norms fixed by the common dogmas, incapable of submission and not tolerating any limitations. The […] philosophy of individual reason is more precisely the philosophy of the will. Otherwise said, the 'perverse will' has found its speculative expression and its ideological theoretization in the eighteenth century 'philosophie' which preaches 'individual reason': the opposition

between the latter and 'universal reason' is reduced to an opposition between will and reason[971].

In this sense, Maistre refers to the *philosophes* as "*têtes folles* dont le raisonnement a banni la raison"[972]. "*Le raisonnement*" is nothing else than a "*[sophisme]*", produced by a "*cœur*" that is "*naturellement rebelle*"[973]. Fisichella quotes Bonald, for whom the French revolutionaries and the ideologists behind the French Revolution have all been "insane people who have dared to replace the eternal truths of nature with their own, particular wills, or vicious people who, giving to society their own passions as laws, have legalized, if it can be said so, the passions of society"[974]. Centrifugal by nature, these passions naturally tend to tear apart the social body, destroying by man's irrational behavior the rational work of nature that is society itself. Opposed to the common norms contained within and sanctioned by tradition, inevitably, individual reason, or more precisely, the will freed from the bonds of universal reason, is both anti-social and anti-rational. Ultimately, emancipated from the social rationality of the traditional institutions, the individual will, not only enters into conflict with the rational interests of society, but, moreover, potentially at least, it enters into conflict even with the rational interests of the individual itself. From this point on, the story of Dostoyevsky's man from the underground can begin.

We interrupted the Dostoyevskyan analysis of the relation between freedom, equality and brotherhood, from *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions,* at the point where, in the absence of fraternity, socialism appears to depend on men's selfish rationality, on their willingness to associate in order to satisfy their selfish interests. Is man a rational animal? The answer provided by Dostoyevsky, through the voice of the man from the underground, would be that, precisely

[971] Domenico Fisichella, *Politica e mutamento sociale*, pp. 181-182, 184.
[972] J oseph de Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 544.
[973] *Ibidem*, pp. 459.
[974] Louis Ambroise de Bonald, *Théorie du pouvoir politique et religieux dans la société civile*, Blond et Barral, Paris, 1880, Vol. II, p. 316, quoted in Domenico Fisichella, *Politica e mutamento sociale*, p. 184 (my translation from Italian).

because he is selfish, that is, preoccupied above all with the cultivation of his self, man is not and must not be rational, for human existence is torn between man's will, which is subjective, and reason, which being objective, necessarily dictates to the will from outside. True freedom, therefore, may very well presuppose irrationality, the rejection of "two plus two make four", and self-assertion may ultimately be at odds with self-interest. Against the anthropological thesis of the rational individual, which represents the premise of scientific socialism, Dostoyevsky will argue in *Notes from the Underground* that man is in fact "foolish" or, not so much foolish, but rather "monstrously ungrateful"[975]. Criticizing the utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham, which will be later assumed by Chernyshevsky, the leader of the Russian socialists from the 1860s, as the premise for the latter's own scientific socialism[976], Dostoyevsky will argue in *Notes from the Underground* that "man, always and everywhere, whoever he might have been, has liked to act as he wanted, and not at all as reason and interest have enjoined him".[977] "Man", Nietzsche argued, in opposition to the same anthropological theses of the English political economy, "does *not* strive after happiness; only the Englishman does that!"[978] In tune with Nietzsche's conception of the will, the underground man declares that "man must" not "have" a "healthy […], virtuous"

[975] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from the Underground*, translated by Hugh Aplin, Hesperus Press Limited, London, 2006, p. 33.

[976] Bruce K. Ward resumes thus the doctrine of scientific socialism that is criticized by Dostoyevsky: "Scientific socialism teaches that human nature can be fully understood in terms of the necessary laws which science formulates. If regarded entirely as a product of necessity – natural and social – the human being is comprehensible as the sum of various calculable desires […]. On the basis of a scientific understanding of human nature – that is, an understanding of people as they actually are rather than as they ought to be – the realization of a complete social order (the image of which, for Chernyshevsky, was London's Crystal Palace) is attainable. It will become merely a question of arranging relations among individuals so that the satisfaction of the desires of each tends to cement social unity rather than to disrupt it. If necessary, human desires can be changed so that they accord with the requirements of social organization. To the extent that this change can be effected with voluntary co-operation, it is necessary to re-educate people to a knowledge of their true interests, so that they may act according to rational self-interest. To the extent that human desires can be altered by scientifically manipulating the social and physio-psychological factors that determine them, it is necessary to transform the social environment (first abolishing irrational social institutions such as the Church and the family) and, if possible, human beings themselves" (Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, pp. 52-53).

[977] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from the Underground*, p.29.

[978] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, p. 23.

or "sensibly advantageous desire." Instead, he "must have just independent desire alone, whatever that independence might cost and to whatever it might lead"[979]. Thus, against the idea that people are by definition rational, which represents the anthropological basis of all objective recipes of social welfare, the underground man will argue that "wishing something extremely foolish" only "in order to *have the right* to wish […] something extremely foolish, is […] perhaps the most advantageous thing there is on earth", for "it preserves what is most important and most dear to us, that is, our personality and our individuality"[980]. Only by the irrational exercise of his will does man prove that he is not an ant, and therefore, that he does not belong in the ant-heap that the French socialists, no less than the British economists, are preparing for him. Thus, *Notes from the Underground* represents an existential protest of the individual personality that is directed against the attempt to totally integrate the latter in a perfectly and exclusively rational social order, which dehumanizes man by denying in him that which is not rational and does not fit the social framework imposed from outside.

As indicated by Walicki, *Notes from the Underground* represents a "criticism of the rationalism of social bonds which is common to both Western capitalism and socialism"[981]. Therefore, it ultimately represents a denial of the Enlightenment's ideal of progress, which points towards the perspective, underlined by Maistre, that in the end, the development of science and its application to human affairs would lead to the "*abrutissement […] par la science*" which is

[979] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from the Underground*, pp. 29-30.
[980] *Ibidem*, p. 33.
[981] Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 545. Dostoyevsky's man from the underground is protesting not only against the objective rationality of socialist (pseudo)fraternity, but also against the objective rationality of Luzhin's economic truth, on which political economy is based. Ironically, the underground man notes that "when it's proved to you that, in essence, one little drop of your own fat should be dearer to you than are a hundred thousand of those like you, and that in the end this result will be the resolution of all so-called virtues and obligations and other ravings and prejudices, then just accept it that way, there's nothing that can be done, because two twos is mathematics. Try objecting" (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from the Underground*, p. 16).

"*le dernier degré de l'abrutissement*"[982]. The proponents of progress argue that in the future society, built according to the patterns of scientific truth, "re-educated" man "will himself cease to make mistakes voluntarily", not wanting to separate

> his will and his healthy interests. And that's not all: then, you say, science itself will teach man […] that he doesn't really even have either will or whim, and never did have either, and that he is himself no more than something like the keyboard of a fortepiano or an organ stop; and that, besides, there are on earth also the laws of nature, so that everything he does is done not at all according to his wishes, but independently, according to the laws of nature. Consequently, these laws of nature only have to be discovered, and man will no longer be answerable for his actions, and life will be extremely easy for him. All human actions will, it goes without saying, then be computed in accordance with those laws, mathematically, like tables of logarithms, up to 108,000, and entered in a calendar; or even better than that, some well-intentioned publications will appear, like today's encyclopedic lexicons, in which everything will be so accurately calculated and designated that there will no longer be any more actions or adventures on earth anymore[983].

Confronted with this dystopian perspective, which makes one think of the science-fiction creations of the 20th century, such as Huxley's novel *Brave New World*, or such as the movies *Matrix* or *Minority Report*, in full agreement with his strange character, Dostoyevsky can only hope that "amidst the universal future good sense […], some gentleman with an ignoble or, to put it better, with a retrograde and mocking physiognomy" will "knock all this good sense over in one go, kick it over into the dust, with the sole aim of sending all these logarithms to the devil", so that men can "[live] according to" their own "foolish will again!"[984]. And in case even

> all this too can be calculated according to a table […] so that the possibility alone of a preliminary calculation will stop everything and reason will come into its own – then for that instance man will deliberately make himself mad, so as not to have reason and to insist on having things his way!; [for] the whole human business […] [consists] only of man continually trying to prove to himself that he is a man and not a stop![985]

[982] Joseph de Maistre, *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques*, p.387.
[983] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from the Underground*, p. 28.
[984] *Ibidem*, p. 29.
[985] *Ibidem*, pp. 35-36.

Thus, according to Dostoyevsky, scientific socialism – as opposed to brotherly socialism – which appeals to man's rational interest only, is one-sided and therefore inhuman, forcing the plenitude of human existence to fit into the Procustian bed of rationally circumscribed existence and rationally planned social co-existence. In a passage in which one clearly recognizes the influence of Slavophile anthropology, the underground man argues that

> [r]eason […] is a good thing, that is indisputable, but reason is only reason and satisfies only man's reasoning capacity, while desire is a manifestation of the whole of life, that is, the whole of human life, with both reason and all its funny itches too. And although our life often turns out rather trashy in this manifestation, it's life nonetheless and not just the extraction of a square root. I mean, I for example, quite naturally want to live to satisfy my whole capacity for life, and not just to satisfy my reasoning capacity alone, some twentieth part, that is, of my whole capacity for life. [For] reason knows only what it has managed to find out […] but human nature acts as a whole entity, with all its parts[986].

In fact, before Dostoyevsky, Khomiakov had already seen in the philosophy of Max Stirner – the ideas that the underground man is set to represent –, the ultimate and legitimate outcome of the fundamental philosophical premises of the West. For Khomiakov, attacking reason's attempt to impose its dictates on the will from which it was divorced, Stirner's philosophy was "significant as the fullest and final protest against all arbitrary bonds imposed from outside". It was, Khomiakov argued, "the outcry of a soul that [...] expresses ceaselessly though unconsciously its longing to be able to subordinate itself to a principle it would wish to realize and believe in and that rejects with indignation and hatred the daily practices of the Western 'systematizers' who have no faith but demand faith, who create arbitrary bonds and expect others to accept them meekly"[987]. Thus, on the traces of the Slavophile thinkers, Dostoyevsky underlines that the unilateral development of the soul under the dictate of rational objectivity and the subsequent suppression of the vital element, inevitably triggers the violent but legitimate rebellion of that thing in man which is irrational, subjective, and which resists forced

[986] *Ibidem*, p. 32.
[987] Aleksey Khomiakov, i. 150-1, quoted in Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 546.

socialization, leading in the end to the disintegration of the soul. Moreover, the more this element is suppressed from outside by the socializing rationality, the more irrational and violent will be the protest of that part of humanity which, not being recognized, becomes subterranean. Thus, the inner disintegration of the soul and the subsequent inner crisis of the social order are actually aggravated by the attempts of rationalization[988]. In his opposition against rationalism and the ant-heap, the underground man does not represent a triumphant affirmation of the will, but the tragedy of a divided being. The underground man confesses that he envies the healthy man, the man integrated in society. And yet, he nevertheless proclaims that "the underground is in any event more advantageous". But then again, he declares, "I'm lying at this point too […], because I know for myself like two twos that it's not the underground that's better at all, but something different, completely different, for which I thirst, but which I won't be able to find for anything! Damn the underground!"[989] In fact, the underground man thirsts for the reconciliation between subjectivity and objectivity and for his harmonious integration within the human community, which can occur only through inner conviction, that is, only when, to use Gibson's terms, the "dedication of the self from within" replaces its "suppression from without"[990], and only when the exterior social bond becomes an inner bond, which is not only *objectively good*, but also *subjectively desired* with one's whole being. If *Notes from the Underground* resumes the Romantic and Slavophile thesis that abstract reason, which excludes the possibility of union between subject and object in the act of knowledge, inevitably leads to an antagonism between rationality and will, it is redemption through love that is attempted towards the end of the novel, when the man from the underground seeks salvation in the arms of a harlot who shares his

[988] This faithfully reproduces Walicki's observation concerning the nature of Kireevsky's criticism of rationalism and the exterior social bond that corresponds to it: rather than containing it, "the autocratic rule of reason […] intensifies the disintegration of the psyche" (*Ibidem*, pp. 150-151).

[989] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from the Underground*, p. 42.

[990] A. Boyce Gibson, *The Religion of Dostoevsky*, p. 201.

miserable condition, an episode that bears striking similarity with Raskolnikov's regeneration under the impact of Sonya's love. However, unlike Raskolnikov, the underground man does not manage to change his inner perception of human relations as relations of power, an internalization of the morality of political economy, due to which he can conceive love either as humiliating bowing down before the power of the other, or as tyrannical exercise of power over another[991]. And from this point of view, his failed relationship with Liza, who represents the mediator of his possible reintegration within the world of social relations, resumes practically his relation with society as a whole. Tragically, for the underground man, the self cannot be reconciled with society through love. Instead, either the self has to be suppressed by society, or, in the opposite case, as reflected by the example of Raskonlikov's murder, the self must set itself above society and dictate to it its own rules. For the moment, the underground man – whose exaltation of the will shall resurface again in characters such as Raskolnikov, Stavrogin, Svidrigaylov and Kirilov–, experiences the presence of others as self-suppressing torture, to which he can respond only by his self-torturing suppression of his innermost desire for communion with them[992]. From this point of view, in the Dostoyevskyan literary creation, the

[991] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from the Underground*, pp. 139-140.

[992] This idea, recurring throughout Dostoyevsky's work, receives its most precise definition in Zosima's discourse from *The Brothers Karamazov*: "hell […] is the suffering of no longer being able to love" (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 417). Zosima's teaching is most probably extracted from the ascetical teachings of St. Isaac the Syrian, a book whose presence in the house of Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov is indicated in the novel. According to this Christian Orthodox mystic, "those tormented in Hell will be hit with the whip of love. And what greater and more bitter torment is there than the torment of love! That is, those who feel that they have wronged love suffer there a torment greater than any torment, no matter how frightful. For the sadness imprinted in the heart by the sin against love is sharper than any torment […]. It is madness for one to think that in Hell, sinners are deprived of the love of God […]. But love works […] in two ways: it torments the sinners, just as it happens in this world to a friend who does not respond to the love of his friend; and it fills with joy those who have guarded the commandments" (*Cuvinte despre nevoinţă ale celui între sfinţi părintelui nostru Isaac Sirul* [*The ascetical teachings of our father among the saints Isaac the Syrian*] in *Filocalia*, Volume X, translated by Dumitru Stăniloae, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2008, LXXXIV, pp. 380-381 – my translation from Romanian). Relating Zosima's teaching with Sartre's famous contention, "hell is other people", the Orthodox theologian Christos Yannaras writes that Dostoyevsky's "definition means that other people simply provide the occasion for my own hell, while its cause is to be found in my own inability to relate, my own incarceration in the egocentric autonomy of my individuality. So hell becomes the more agonizing when the 'other' is not an individual at an existential distance which nullifies the

underground man represents the first major representation of the tragic condition of modern individualism, arrived at the peak of its historical evolution

5.7. - The collapse of the ant-heap and the necessary alliance between Catholicism and Socialism

The relevant conclusion that results from Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground* is that the existence of an inner division in human nature is the reason why French socialism, as well as the materialist socialism of Chernyshevsky, is ultimately condemned to failure. As pertinently resumed by Drouilly, the implicit political conclusion of *Notes from the Underground* is that "*le socialisme est un système puéril […] parce que ses penseurs les plus éminents croient que l'homme est une créature raisonnable qui ne demande qu'à obéir à son intérêt bien compris*", whereas in reality "*l'homme est un être essentiellement déraisonnable*"[993]. Like Catholic counter-revolutionary thinkers, such as Maistre and Cortés, Dostoyevsky confronts the progressist ambitions of the Enlightenment with the Christian doctrine concerning original sin[994], a religious

possibility of a relationship, but a Person whose loving self-transcendence and self-offering call me to existence and true life, while I cling to my individual autonomy. Hell[means that] man […] imprisons himself in an agonizing lack of life, and deliberately refuses communion with the loving goodness of God, the true life", rejecting implicitly also the love of his fellow human beings (Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, translated by Elizabeth Briere, Saint Vadimir's Seminay Press, Crestwood, New York, 1984, p. 33). This existential drama is confirmed by the bitter reflections from the last pages of *Notes from the Underground*, which resonate with the lapidary declaration from the beginning of the novel: "I'm a sick man". Thus, after his brutal rejection of Liza's love, the underground man admits bitterly that he has "missed out on [his] life through moral decay in the corner, through a lack of society, through becoming unused to living and through vain malice in the underground", rejecting love in which "all resurrection, all salvation from whatever sort of ruin and all regeneration consists". For, he continues, reflecting what for Dostoyevsky constitutes the drama of the modern condition, "we've all become unused to life […], each of us more or less […], even to such a degree unused to it that we sometimes feel a sort of loathing for genuine 'living life', and for that reason simply can't stand it when we're reminded of it" (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from the Underground*, pp. 5, 144).

[993] Jean Drouilly, *La pensée politique et religieuse de F.M. Dostoïevski*, p. 228.

[994] Contrary to what Carl Schmitt is arguing concerning Dostoyevsky. Schmitt uses a reductionist hermeneutical grid that leads him to the superficial conclusion that Dostoyevsky is an anarchist rooted in an optimistic anthropology. However, as rightly stressed by Théodore Paléologue, "*sans doute, Dostoïevski refuse le pessimisme anthropologique du Grand Inquisiteur. Mais cela ne signifie nullement, contrairement à ce que suppose le commentaire schmittien, l'acceptation de la thèse de la bonté naturelle de l'homme. La conception dostoïevskienne*

doctrine that has been described by a thinker who meditated on the tragedy of the Enlightenment, Max Horkheimer, as "the greatest intuition of all times"[995]. Thus, Dostoyevsky resumes in *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* the challenge with which the subterranean humanity confronts the socialist who is trying to organize the scientific order of the future society. According to Dostoyevsky, although man would be required "just […] a tiny grain of his personal freedom" in exchange for "security […], food and drink", he will still find even that

> tiny grain too irksome. He thinks that he is being put in gaol, poor fool, and that he would be better off by himself, because then he would have full freedom. And when he is free he is knocked about and refused work, he starves to death and has no real freedom. But all the same, the strange fellow still prefers his own freedom. Naturally enough, the socialist is simply forced to give him up and tell him that he is a fool, that he is not ready yet, not ripe enough to understand what is good for him; that a dumb little ant, a miserable ant is more intelligent than he is because everything is so lovely in an ant-hill, so well-ordered, no one goes hungry and all are happy, everyone knows what he has to do.[996]

Finally, overwhelmed by despair, "the socialist proclaims at last: liberté, égalité, fraternité *ou la mort*"[997]. If human nature as a whole – that is both the wicked heart and the "stupid" or perverse reason – resists socialism, then socialism inevitably takes the path of violence in an attempt to impose its rationality on a rebellious human nature. "Were we brothers", Zosima argues in *The Brothers Karamazov*, "there would be brotherhood, but until there is brotherhood never will there be an equal sharing"[998]. And if there is no brotherhood, inevitably there will be

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de l'homme n'est rien moins qu' 'optimiste' dans le sens d'un humanisme rationaliste et progressiste". In fact, as argued by the same author, "*il y a, si l'on veut, un parallélisme entre le rôle de l'homme du souterrain dans la 'philosophie' de Dostoïevski et celui du partisan dans l' 'enseignement' de Schmitt […]. La simple existence d'un homme tel que l'homme du souterrain, sans doute mesquin et à bien des égards méprisable, inflige un démenti à l'image de l'homme rationnel et 'bon' qui se trouve à la base de la pensée utopique*" (Théodore Paléologue, *Sous L'Œil du Grand Inquisiteur*, pp. 54, 97).

[995] Max Horkheimer, *Théorie critique*, essays presented by L. Ferry and A. Renaut, trans. by the group of translators of the College of Philosophy, Payot, Paris, 1978, p. 359, quoted in Jean-Yves Pranchère, "The Persistence of Maistrian Thought", p. 321.

[996] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, pp. 64-65.

[997] *Ibidem*, pp. 64-65.

[998] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 409.

violence. Then the scenario of the French Revolution repeats itself all over again, and, in the absence of brotherhood which no civic institution can create, "brethren will start chopping off the heads of their brethren in order to achieve brotherhood through 'the civic institution' "[999]. Dostoyevsky predicted that a future socialist revolution, of whose imminence he was convinced, will replicate the same pattern. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Zosima argues that the socialists,

> think to establish themselves in truth and justice, but, having rejected Christ, they end by bathing the world in blood, for blood seeketh blood, and they that take the sword shall perish with it too. And were it not for the covenant of Christ, they should destroy one another even unto the last two men upon the earth. And in their pride those last two would not be able to stay each other's hands, but the last would slay the one before the last, and then himself as well. And this would be accomplished, were it not for the covenant of Christ, that for the sake of the meek and the humble those days shall be shortened[1000].

Thus, as in the case of Maistre, Dostoyevsky's analysis of the inner logic of political modernity relates the modern political project to an inevitable unleashing of violence, whose uncontrollable self-reproduction further points toward its necessary eschatological resolution. For Dostoyevsky, as for Maistre, only God can save man from the catastrophic consequences of his own actions. In the meantime, however, Dostoyevsky was convinced that the unleashed acquisitiveness of capitalism was leading with necessity to a socialist revolution, in the aftermath of a war triggered by the principle of mad commercial competition that has become the cornerstone of modern secular Europe[1001]. Thus, in 1880, in one of his last articles from *The Diary of a Writer*, Dostoyevsky concludes his reflection on the fate of modern Europe with a truly apocalyptic prophecy. Europe is heading with full-speed towards "immense cataclysms […], perturbations which the human mind refuses to believe, perceiving them as something

[999] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol.2, p. 1002.
[1000] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 411-412.
[1001] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, pp. 93-94.

fantastic"[1002]. The Western "ant-hill which has been long in the process of construction without the Church and Christ […] is utterly undermined". Thus, "the fourth estate is coming, it knocks at the door, and breaks into it, and if it is not open to it, it will break the door". It "cares nothing for the former ideals; it rejects every existing law. It will make no compromises, no concessions" and "buttresses will not save the edifice". "All these parliamentarisms", Dostoyevsky prophesizes, "all civic theories professed at present, all accumulated riches, banks, sciences, Jews[1003] – all these will instantly perish without leaving a trace […].The final settlement […] may occur much sooner than the most vivid fantasy can conceive", for "abnormality is laid in" Europe's "very foundation and has been accumulating during centuries […].This abnormality and these 'insoluble' political questions […] unfailingly must lead to a colossal, final, partitioning political war in which everybody will be involved, and which will break out in the course of the current century, and, perhaps, even in the coming decade". And then, "the proletarians will rush upon Europe, and the entire old order will collapse forever"[1004]. Finally, given the incapacity of the socialists to erect the Tower of Babel, a generalized state of anarchy will follow, a state of anarchy whose overcoming would seem to be possible only through the implementation of the Grand Inquisitor's totalitarian system.

[1002] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol.2, p. 908.

[1003] Like Karl Marx in *On the Jewish Question*, Dostoyevsky has attacked "*Judaism* and the *Jewish idea*" which he associated with the spirit of capitalism. Unlike in the case of later anti-Semites, the association between Jews and socialism is rather marginal in the case of Dostoyevsky, as only one of the members of Verkhovensky's revolutionary sect, Lyamshin, is Jewish (moreover, he is the first who turns himself in to the authorities after Shatov's murder). However, despite his anti-Semitic attacks, Dostoyevsky wrote that he "[favors] full and complete equalization of rights" for the Jews, because "such is the Christian principle" (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol. 2, pp. 637-653). If Maistre's rhetoric concerning the Jews is clearly less virulent than Dostoyevsky's, nevertheless, unlike in the case of the latter, we do not encounter any sort of democratic generosity. In *Quatre Chapitres sur la Russie*, Maistre specifically instructs the Tsar not to allow the access of Jews to public offices. "*Tout porte à croire*", Maistre writes, "*que leur argent, leur haine et leurs talents sont au service des grands conjurés*" who are tryng to bring the Revolution to Russia (Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre Chapitres sur la Russie*, pp. 112, 121).

[1004] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol.2, pp. 1003-1004.

As indicated by Ward, Dostoyevsky's formula "the Pope-leader of communism" represents "a possible culmination of Western thought and practice"[1005]. Thus, already in 1877, in *The Diary of a Writer*, Dostoyevsky wrote that like Roman Catholicism, French socialism "is nothing else but a *compulsory* communion of mankind, – an idea which dates back to ancient Rome and which was fully conserved in Catholicism"[1006]. Taking into account this identity of essence, Dostoyevsky argued that in the end, after successive failures of secular socialism, the Pope will set himself at the helm of the international socialist movement. Rejected by the bourgeois governments, and "having lost its allies – the kings", Catholicism, Dostoyevsky argued, "will thrust itself into democracy". With an army of "psychologists, dialecticians and confessors of faith", it will "rush to the" oppressed "demos", arguing that the ideas preached to them by the socialist leaders, have been contained from the very beginning in the Gospel book, whose interpretation God has entrusted to the Pope. As it results from Maistre's theologico-political thought as well, this hermeneutical authority, or more precisely the Pope's infallibility, implicitly makes the latter "king over all kings and sovereign over all sovereigns". Thus, with "the book" in one hand, and with "the keys of Saint Peter" in his other hand, the Pope would be the only one able to confer to the socialist movement that religious ideal that is able to mobilize not only the minds but also the hearts. More precisely, Dostoyevsky referred to that indispensable mechanism of religious manipulation, developed throughout centuries of exercised skill in the Roman Church and described in "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor", without which, the socialist leaders have led the people "to nothing sensible – merely to executions and the worst calamities", as "each one of their undertakings collapsed of its own accord". The Pope, Dostoyevsky argued, will

[1005] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, p. 97.
[1006] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol.2, p. 563.

> once more […] pervert and sell Christ as[he] has sold Him so many times in the past, [by telling the working class the following things:] Thus far, we have talked to you a little differently […], because up to the present you were like little children, and it was too early for you to learn the truth; but now the time has come for your truth, too […]. In days past the main force of faith consisted of humility, but now humility must come to an end, and the Pope has the authority to abrogate it, since […] he has been instituted on earth for you by God in his stead[1007].

Hence, starting from the premise that "Christ Himself has ordained that all be brethren", the Pope would then stir the poor and destitute brothers to "arm [themselves] with sticks and enter [the] houses" of the "elder brothers" who refuse

> to accept [them] as brethren […] and compel them to become [their] brethren by force. Christ has long awaited for your elder brothers to repent, and now He grants you his own permission to proclaim: 'Fraternité ou la mort!' […] Should your brother refuse to share with you his property, half and half, take it all away from him, since Christ has long awaited for his repentance, but now the time for wrath and vengeance has come[1008].

On the eve of the future Revolution, the Pope would absolve the working class of all its "former and future sins", with the argument that all "have been caused merely by your poverty", and would exhort the workers to "rejoice and be exceedingly glad", in the newly established "earthly paradise"[1009], where the popes "shall be Caesars and […] shall give thought to the universal happiness of human beings"[1010].

5.8. - Western individualism and Russian Orthodox brotherhood

The root of the modern evil for Dostoyevsky, as for Maistre, was individualism. As already indicated, towards the end of his life, Maistre came to the conclusion that individualism

[1007] *Ibidem*, vol. 2, p. 911, vol. 1, pp.256-257.
[1008] *Ibidem*, p.257.
[1009] *Ibidem*. It would be interesting to make a connection between Dostoyevsky's speculations and the phenomenon of liberation theology, otherwise condemned by the Vatican. It would also be interesting to relate Dostoyevsky's speculations with the complex issue of the relation between infallibility and the historical development of dogma, an issue to which Joseph de Maistre pays a lot of attention.
[1010] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 335.

represents the essence of the modern Revolution as a whole, and, like Dostoyevsky, foresaw, in the absence of a religious regeneration, an apocalyptical future for the European continent: "*le protestantisme politique poussé jusqu'à l'individualisme le plus absolu*" and, as a consequence, the erosion of all forms of social aggregation: "*les nations en corps*" becoming "*folles*"[1011]. There is perhaps no better literary transposition of Maistre's apocalyptic vision than Raskolnikov's dream from prison, described by Dostoyevsky at the end of *Crime and Punishment,* a dream which reflects Raskolnikov's own drama of alienation through individualistic isolation. As in Maistre's apocalyptic scenario, "[laying] in […] fever and delirium", Raskolnikov dreams

> that the whole world was condemned to fall victim to a terrible, unknown pestilence which was moving on Europe out of the depths of Asia. All were destined to perish, except a chosen few, very few. There had appeared a new strain of trichinae, microscopic creatures parasitic in men's bodies. But these creatures were endowed with intelligence and will. People who were infected immediately became like men possessed and out of their minds. But never, never, had any men thought themselves so wise and so unshakable in the truth as those who were attacked. Never had they considered their judgments, their scientific deductions, or their moral convictions and creeds more infallible. Whole communities, whole cities and nations, were infected and went mad. All were full of anxiety, and none could understand any other; each thought he was the sole repository of truth and was tormented when he looked at the others, beat his breast, wrung his hands, and wept. They did not know how or whom to judge and could not agree what was evil and what was good. They did not know whom to condemn and whom to acquit. Men killed one another in senseless rage. They banded together against one another in great armies, but when the armies were already on the march they began to fight among themselves, the ranks disintegrated, the soldiers fell on their neighbours, they thrust and cut, they killed and ate one another. In the towns, the tocsin sounded all day long, and called out all the people, but who had summoned them and why nobody knew, and everybody was filled with alarm. The most ordinary callings were abandoned, because every man put forward his own ideas, his own improvements, and there was no agreement; the labourers forsook the land. In places men congregated in groups, agreed together on some action, swore not to disband – and immediately began to do something quite different from what they themselves had proposed, accused one another, fought and killed each other. Conflagrations were started, famine set in. All things and all men were perishing.[1012]

[1011] Joseph de Maistre quoted in Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 181.
[1012] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, Epilogue, pp. 523-524.

Yet, if Maistre and Dostoyevsky agreed with regard to the symptoms, they disagreed with regard to the cause and, implicitly, they also disagreed with regard to the cure. Thus, while for Maistre the crisis of the modern West was essentially a crisis of authority, for Dostoyevsky, the crisis of the West was essentially a crisis of brotherhood, which, Dostoyevsky argued, did not exist in the West and could not be created. In order for brotherhood to become possible in the West, a cultural (*ergo* religious) revolution was necessary, a revolution that would replace the Western understanding of what it means to be a personality. According to Dostoyevsky, in the West, the concept of personality was defined by "isolation […], intensified self-preservation[…], self-seeking […], self-determination" and the subsequent claim of the individual for his rights. But for Dostoyevsky, "a voluntary, absolutely conscious and completely unforced sacrifice of oneself for the sake of all", a giving away of one's personality "to all, in order that others too, may become personalities just as independent and happy" represents "a sign of the highest development of individual personality". Moreover, brotherhood can exist only if the individual, instead of rebelling and claiming his rights, "sacrifice[s] both his personality and the whole of himself to society and not only not claim[s] his rights, but on the contrary, hand[s] them over unconditionally to society". Since the principle of brotherhood is absolutely incompatible with the contractual principle of liberal society that has its origins in Roman Law, brotherhood is possible only through selfless love, which renounces itself completely expecting nothing in return. Only the unanimity of love can solve the paradox of brotherhood. The individual must declare: "I shall fade away and merge with the completely uniform mass, only let your brotherhood remain and flourish". In its turn, society must respond: "You are giving us too much […]. You too then must take everything for us. We shall always do all we can that you might

have as much personal freedom and as much independence as possible"[1013]. If in the liberal system the main preoccupation of each person is to secure his rights, Dostoyevsky's alternative social order becomes possible only if the main preoccupation of each person becomes the other person, and, this attitude should manifest itself independently of the fact that the other person may be first and foremost preoccupied with herself.

Dostoyevsky's social thought may rightly be characterized as utopian. However, Dostoyevsky will insist on the fact that, while the contradictions of the modern West mentioned above were inevitably leading to a generalized catastrophe, the only way to overcome these contradictions, and hence avoid the catastrophe, was the active accomplishment of this utopia. Ultimately, for Dostoyevsky, the choice with which the modern world was confronted was that between consistent Christianity and nothing. For Dostoyevsky, as for the Slavophiles, only the Orthodox Church had preserved the purity of the original Christian ideals. And, moreover, Russians had a privileged understanding of the true nature of the choices with which the modern world was confronted. And if Khomiakov had argued that Russia can be either the most Christian society in the world or nothing, Dostoyevsky agued that whereas French Socialism was ultimately impossible, the only possible socialism was Russian Christian socialism. This type of socialism was automatically realized where brotherhood was present. But in order for brotherhood to be possible, "man must instinctively and of his own accord" – that is, in a reconciliation of nature and will, resolution towards which all the inner torment of the man from the underground tends –, "be drawn towards" it. "The need for brotherly love", Dostoyevsky concludes, "must, in fact, have its being in the nature of man, he must be born with it or else have acquired the habit of it from time immemorial"[1014].

[1013] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, pp. 60-63.
[1014] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, p. 62.

Dostoyevsky's thesis is that the crisis of the West finds its resolution (only) in a specific religious/cultural, and more particularly ecclesial experience, which has been preserved "from time immemorial" by the Orthodox Church and, in particular by the Russian people. Moreover, it is a cultural experience that reflects human nature as created by God. This belief will form the basis for his religious populism and for his national messianism, which he shares with the Slavophiles. Drouilly has argued that one recognizes in *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*

> *transposées sur le plan politique, les idées que I. Kirevskij et Khomjakov développaient sur le plan religieux quand ils affirmaient que l'orthodoxie était supérieure au catholicisme parce qu'elle avait conservé l'idéal d'une Église, union spirituelle, union vivante entre tous les chrétiens, sans que cet idéal fût déformé par l'esprit juridique qui a gangrené le catholicisme et substitué à ces liens vivants la notion de rapports rationnels dérivés du droit romain*[1015].

Indeed, the antagonism between Catholic unity and Protestant freedom is reproduced as in a mirror in the antagonism between socialism and liberalism, as described in *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*. While through the suppression of freedom, socialism builds the order of the ant-heap, the centrifugal freedom of liberalism, whose ultimate expression is the self-destructive anarcho-individualism of the man from the underground, erodes the social bond and turns society into "the war of all against all". Both systems ultimately share a common rationalist and individualist foundation, and feed each other in a dialectic of destruction. In the absence of brotherhood, the attempt to enforce equality triggers the development of a more and more anarchical freedom, which in turn nourishes the development of more and more tyrannical egalitarianism. The only way to solve the tension is brotherhood, and, for Dostoyevsky, as for the Slavophiles, "only in the Church and in Christ do people truly become brothers"[1016]. As a consequence of this fact, Zosima declares that the socialists "possess more dreamlike fantasy

[1015] Jean Drouilly, *La pensée politique et religieuse de F.M. Dostoïevski*, p. 208.

[1016] Georges Florovsky, "The Evolution of the Dostoevskian Concept of Human Freedom", in *Theology and Literature*, vol. 11, in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, translated by Robert L. Nichols, p. 83.

than we do", but he is confident that "with Christ we shall resolve this great matter"[1017], which comes down ultimately to the unification of mankind in brotherhood, as a true manifestation of Pentecost and of the Church, and not under the form of the Tower of Babel which, due to its inner contradictions, will inevitably collapse. "[Rejecting] the spiritual world" with "triumph" and "hatred", and proclaiming science as the unique basis for world unity, Western humanity is trapped in a material world and inevitably arrives at an understanding of freedom as "satisfaction" and "multiplication" of needs. But this freedom represents in reality material enslavement of the individual. Thus, "among the rich", it leads to "s*olitariness* and spiritual suicide, and among the poor", to "envy and murder, for while they have been given rights, they have not yet been afforded the means with which to satisfy their needs", and therefore, while "among the poor envy and the frustration of needs are at present dulled by drunkenness […], soon, in place of alcohol it will be blood upon which they grow intoxicated". But such men, born from the 1789 Revolution, whether bourgeois or the revolutionary proletarians and their leaders, who have all been fashioned in the image of the bourgeois, are condemned to find "in place of freedom […] slavery, and in place of service to brotherly love and the unity of mankind […] *isolation*"[1018]. For, as Zosima argues, "each now strives to isolate his person as much as possible from the others, wishing to experience within himself life's completeness, yet from all his efforts there results not life's completeness but a complete suicide"[1019].

As clearly seen, Zosima's observation identifies the essence of the problem that confronts the man from the underground: self-destructive and self-annihilating freedom developed in response to an understanding of society as forced coexistence. In this sense, Florovsky argues that there is a natural evolution from *The House of the Dead* to *Notes from the Underground*, for the ultimate

[1017] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 411.
[1018] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 406-407.
[1019] *Ibidem*, p. 393.

model of the perfectly organized society (the ant-heap) is the prison, imprisonment leading to "convulsive intolerance" and "convulsive manifestations of personality"[1020]. Implicitly, the resolution of the problem of the man from the underground and the resolution of the modern crisis of social unity are one. In both cases, for Dostoyevsky, the answers are Christ and the Church. As underlined by Berdyaev, for Dostoyevsky, "without freedom there is no man", and "the way of freedom is the way of suffering and man must follow it to the end". "The denial of the freedom of evil", Berdyaev continues, "in favour of an exclusive freedom of good ends […] in a negation of freedom and its degeneration into a good necessity. But a good necessity is not good, because goodness resides in freedom from necessity". "[F]ree goodness involves the freedom of evil; but freedom of evil leads to the destruction of freedom itself and its degeneration into an evil necessity". It leads to "Dyonisian delirium", as reflected by Stavrogin, Svydrigailov and other descendents of the man from the underground, "dyonisian delirium which is disastrous to personality", as it "swallow[s] up the individual in the great impersonal stream of nature"[1021]. According to Berdyaev, Dostoyevsky "knew only one way out of this contradiction: Jesus Christ. In Christ, freedom is given grace, wedded to infinite love, and no longer need become its own opposite, while the utopia of social happiness and perfection", against which the man from the underground raises his protest, "requires" that freedom "be reduced and limited"[1022]. Dostoyevsky's supra-rational resolution of this conflict reflects the similar attitude

[1020] Georges Florovsky, "The Evolution of the Dostoevskian Concept of Human Freedom", p. 84. It is perhaps no coincidence that Jeremy Bentham, who is at the origins of Chernyshevsky's social philosophy, is also the inventor of the Panopticon, the model of the perfect prison and the epicenter of Michel Foucault's famous study *Surveiller et punir – Naissance de la prison*. The closing phrase of Foucault's study makes one think of the anarchical impulses of the underground humanity which resists the incarceration schemes of the social engineers: "*Dans cette humanité centrale et centralisée, effet et instrument de relations de pouvoir complexes, corps et forces assujettis par des dispositifs 'd'incarcération' multiples, objets pour des discours qui sont eux-mêmes des éléments de cette stratégie, il faut entendre le grondement de la bataille*" (Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir : Naissance de la prison*, Gallimard, Paris, 1975, p. 360).

[1021] Nicholas Berdyaev, *Dostoyevsky*, pp. 65-66, 70.

[1022] *Ibidem*, p. 144.

of Khomiakov, as described by the same Berdyaev. "*Le volontarisme de la philosophie européenne contemporaine*", he argues, "*est le résultat de la perte du Logos […]. Chez Khomiakov, il ne s'agit pas de cela*". Khomiakov overcomes the conflict between necessity/nature and freedom/will, because in his thought, he proceeds from "*l'esprit intégral dans lequel la volonté et la raison ne sont pas coupées l'une de l'autre. Pour lui, la raison est volitive, la volonté est raisonnable*"[1023]. Thus, unlike in the case of Maistre, where the evil of individualism is treated by submitting individual reason to institutional authority, in the case of Dostoyevsky, individualism is treated by the overcoming of the rationalist logic of either/or, through integral knowledge (*tselnost*).

As indicated by Drouilly, as with all irrationalist philosophies, the philosophy of the man from the underground starts from "*l'opposition du monde de la conscience et du monde extérieur*". The man from the underground has to choose between the objective and logical world of "two twos are four"[1024] and "*le monde de la volonté et de la conscience […], ce monde qui ne semble peut-être que désordre, chaos, furie, mais*", the underground man underlines, "*qui est mien*". Thrown against his will in a world of order and determination that crushes freedom, and thus, "*repoussé par un monde où il ne peut pas s'insérer, l'homme ne peut résoudre l'antagonisme du moi et du non-moi […]. Rejeté par le monde extérieur, le non-moi, l'homme se tourne vers lui-même, et là, seul avec ses questions et ses doutes, seul avec son âme et sa souffrance*", experiencing a drama that is recurrent in all of Dostoyevsky's nihilist heroes, "*il exerce son activité dans le sens le plus absurde, le plus révoltant, le plus odieux, ne serait-ce que pour se démontrer qu'à travers son libre arbitre, il est*". And thus, "*balancé entre l'absurdité de sa propre nature et l'inhumanité d'un monde qui l'ignore, il se sent évoluer dans un domaine où*

[1023] Nicolas Berdiaev, *Khomiakov*, p. 92.
[1024] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from the Underground*, p. 16.

il n'y a plus ni morale, ni bien, ni mal, un monde où il se perd. Alors l'angoisse le saisit". But from here onwards, for Dostoyevsky begins the path towards regeneration, for man cannot be satisfied

> *d'une existence vouée à l'absurde et au chaos […].L'aventure que nous conte l'homme du Souterrain est là pour nous démontrer le contraire. Car le remords qui l'étouffe, l'angoisse qui l'étreint, n'ont pas de place dans un mode absurde où rien ne vaudrait rien. Ils ne se justifient que par l'existence d'une réalité supérieure […].Si la philosophie de l'homme du Souterrain semble nous mener à une impasse dans son impatience de rejeter toute construction rationnelle qui embrasserait à la fois le monde des phénomènes et celui de l'Être, si elle repousse le rationalisme comme insuffisant à expliquer le monde dans sa totalité, c'est qu'en réalité l'homme du Souterrain ne sait pas répondre à l'appel qu'il entend […]. Car sa philosophie, dans son développement ultime, loin de se ranger à un irrationalisme qui ne mène qu'au chaos, doit déboucher nécessairement sur le transcendant. Et ce transcendant en lequel se concilieront le rationnel et l'irrationnel, s'appelle Dieu. Le sens profond qui se dégage de ce livre déchirant est donc un sens religieux comme est religieuse la conclusion qui le couronne*[1025].

In the original, uncensored version of *Notes from the Underground*, it seems that Christ was referred to as the response to the contradictions of the man from the underground. But the official censorship eliminated that section, triggering Dostoyevsky's fury, as expressed in a letter to his brother: "those brutes of censors, – where I made a mock of everything and sometimes blasphemed for form's sake, that is passed, but where I deduced from all this the necessity of faith and of Christ – that is suppressed"[1026].

The corollary of the overcoming of the tension between subjectivity and objectivity through integral knowledge (*tselnost*), is the overcoming of the tension between *I* and *US*, through organic togetherness (*sobornost*)[1027]. Returned from prison, Dostoyevsky's intellectual journey

[1025] Jean Drouilly, *La Pensée politique et religieuse de F.M. Dostoïevski*, pp. 230-245.

[1026] Letter 74 in J. Coulson, *Dostoevsky: a Self-portrait*, p. 124, in A. Boyce Gibson, *The Religion of Dostoevsky*, p. 86.

[1027] In fact, as already indicated, *tselnost* presupposes *sobornost*, a fact apparently misunderstood by Jean Drouilly who, without referring to the ecclesiological and epistemological differences between Catholicism and Orthodoxy, and with no patristic references, argues that any mystical experience, instead of presupposing an ecclesial integration, inevitably excludes the latter altogether. Jean Drouilly regards Dostoyevsky essentially as a Kierkergaardian hero of the personal experience of faith, seen by him as inevitably anti-ecclesial, while the Church

parachutes him into the middle of a battlefield, where the two combatants, Chernyhevsky's individualist utilitarianism, and Stirner's anarchical individualism, "meet and collide on the subject of freedom; the first denies it outright, the second affirms it crudely and defiantly". As an idealist socialist, which he still was, and as a Christian populist, which he was about to become, Dostoyevsky, A.B. Gibson argues, could sympathize with neither of the two paradigms. Moreover, "what antagonized him was the individualist assumption" – in as much as in both cases brotherhood was denied or ignored – "which was common to them, and which he always believed to be anti-Christian". Integrating his thought in the Slavophile religious tradition, Dostoyevsky was therefore becoming "convinced that Protestantism was sliding into atheism by way of fragmentation, and Catholicism by way of socialism"[1028]. Like the Slavophiles, Dostoyevsky clearly sympathized more with the Protestants, for he believed that the rebellion of the latter was a consequence of the flawed paradigm against which they defined themselves through protest. This attitude is mirrored in the obvious partial sympathy that Dostoyevsky feels for his underground (anti)hero. In a passage that makes one think of Dmitry's prophetic discourse before his departure for prison, and also of Dostoyevsky's description of the British lumpenproletariat, we find that "the surly rumbling from the underground" is surely "better" than "the flat finality of the Crystal Palace", for "Christ might emerge from the blasphemous

is seen as inevitably institutional in nature. For this reason, Drouilly regards Dostoyevsky's religious populism and his religious nationalism as a mere aberration, of which Kierkegaard had the merit of knowing how to preserve himself, fundamentally incompatible with the inner substance of his "mystical" thought (Jean Drouilly, *La pensée politique et religieuse de F.M. Dostoïevski*, pp. 422-426, 441-446, 450-451, 459-461). However, Slavophile thinkers will reproach Drouilly for an interpretation of Dostoyevsky that is locked in the framework of the either/or logic of Western Christianity, which makes the main object of the Slavophile critique of the West, and whose overcoming is accomplished through the interdependent experiences of *tselnost* and *sobornost.* Somewhat more subtle, Eduard Thurneysen, a Protestant theologian, shares nevertheless with Drouilly the same hermeneutical perspective. According to Thurneysen, like Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky "bore in himself the deepest mistrust toward a Christendom that had become church, and he loved in his Russian church just that which is not church in it – the reminders, still preserved pure, as he believed, of the early history of Christendom" (Eduard Thurneysen, *Dostoevsky: A Theological Study*, London, translated by Keith R. Crim, The Epworth Press, 1964, p. 10). As it can be seen, whether they appreciate it or not, Drouilly and Thurneysen have a common definition of the Church. This definition is contested by Orthodox authors, and in particular, by the Slavophiles.

[1028] A. Boyce Gibson, *The Religion of Dostoyevsky*, pp. 25-27

catacombs", but "there is no place for him among perfected robots"[1029]. However, we can say that Dostoevsky's argumentative strategy has two stages. First of all, the subversion of utilitarian determinism, through the revelation of the self-destructive impulse of the individual which clings to his self-determination at any cost. In the second place, after having subverted utilitarianism, Dostoyevsky confronts the man from the underground and brings him to the point where he confesses his need of God's grace, acting upon his will. The reference to Christ, which has been eliminated by the official censorship, is particularly relevant. For it is only in Christ and through Christ that the man from the underground can make the leap from *I* to *US*, that is, from individualism to *sobornost*[1030]. Thus, as in the case of Maistre, the horizontal contradictions of political modernity find their resolution only through metapolitics and the subsequent religious leap from the horizontal logic of conflict (including violent political conflict), to the vertical logic of reconciliation.

5.9. - Nihilism, the man-god and "the final Western solution to the crisis of order"

For Dostoyevsky, the problem of "man's terrible freedom"[1031] and the problem of social organization were ultimately one and the same problem. They both received the same response: Christ and the Church. But where would Europe and humanity as a whole head to if Christ and the Church were rejected? According to Drouilly, Dostoyevsky's *Demons*, the novel that pays most attention to the problem of nihilism in its political expression, goes way beyond "*la mise en accusation du libéralisme ou du socialisme*", as it represents first and foremost "*l'exposé prophétique du drame de l'homme moderne*". The fundamental question raised by the novel is

[1029] *Ibidem*, p. 29.
[1030] *Ibidem*, p. 31.
[1031] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, p. 686.

the following: "*les sociétés occidentales, au terme du développement de la pensée moderne, peuvent-elles se passer du message chrétien? Quelles sont les voies qui s'ouvrent au monde s'il abandonne les principes religieux sur lesquels il a jusque-là vécu?*"[1032] Thus, for Dostoyevsky,the problem of socialism appears as being infinitely more dramatic than first thought. "For socialism", Dostoyevsky argues, "is not only a problem of labour, or the so-called 'fourth estate', but is in the first instance the problem of atheism, of the contemporary embodiment of atheism, the problem of the Tower of Babel"[1033]. As already indicated, for Dostoyevsky, as for Maistre, the modern anomy ultimately threatens the existence of society; even more so, taking into account the evolution of man's scientific knowledge and of his technical capacities, the modern anomy, as stressed by the Inquisitor's reference to the relation between science and "anthropophagy", may even threaten the existence of the human species. Thus, if at first glance socialism appeared as the fulfillment of the ideals of the French Revolution that have been betrayed by the bourgeoisie, at a closer look, far from representing the fulfillment of these ideals, socialism becomes in fact the social solution meant to neutralize the destructive effects of the French Revolution. In particular, appearing essentially to be a defense of society, socialism is called to annihilate the dissolving individualism that has been unleashed in the aftermath of the collapse of the *Ancien Régime*. Seen from this negative angle, and as demonstrated by "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor", socialism, despite being the social incarnation of atheism, appears in the last instance as a reactionary ideology that seeks to end the

[1032] Jean Drouilly, *La pensée politique et religieuse de F.M. Dostoïevski*, pp. 367, 386. Probably the most powerful expression of this dramatic problem is offered by Nietzsche's madman in *The Gay Science*: "*Dieu est mort! Dieu reste mort! Et c'est nous qui l'avons tué! [...] Mais comment avons-nous fait cela? Comment avons-nous pu vider la mer? Qui nous a donné l'éponge pour effacer l'horizon? Qu'avons-nous fait lorsque nous avons détaché cette terre de la chaîne de son soleil? Où la conduisent maintenant ses mouvements? Où la conduisent nos mouvements? Loin de tous les soleils? Ne tombons-nous pas sans cesse? En avant, en arrière, de côté, de tous les côtés? Y a-t-il encore un en-haut et un en-bas? N'errons-nous pas comme à travers un néant infini? Le vide ne nous poursuit-il pas de son haleine? Ne fait-il pas plus froid? Ne voyez-vous pas sans cesse venir la nuit, plus de nuit?*" (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Le gai savoir*, translated by Henri Albert, Hachette, Paris, 1987, p. 160).

[1033] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 40.

modern crisis through the restoration of authority. Therefore, just like bourgeois liberalism, it represents another betrayal of the ideals of the French Revolution, and, more exactly, the supreme betrayal of those ideals. In *Du Pape*, Maistre argued that, whereas the concomitant excess of freedom and deficit of religion has led to the collapse of order in Europe, order will be eventually restored either through the restoration of religion, or through the restoration of slavery. If Maistre argued that, in order to govern millions of people, any state has to rely either on religion, or on slavery, or on both, Dostoyevsky's "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" indicates that a socialist tyranny, based on the combination between slavery and clerical manipulation, may represent "the final Western solution to the crisis of order"[1034]. The socialist construction of the Tower of Babel seems to be required by the conservation instinct of society itself. And if God refuses to participate in the construction of the Tower, then, as noted by Henri de Lubac, the builders must inevitably call on the devil to help them in their work.[1035]In this sense, it appears that if the Tower of Babel represents the necessary answer to the problem of consistent atheistic freedom, it is precisely those who join Satan in their rebellion against God who are called to erect the Tower of Babel. If the perfectly egalitarian order of the ant-heap can and must be built only through force, then the accomplishment of socialist egalitarianism demands, in the words of Verkhovensky addressing Stavrogin, "a dreadful aristocrat" like Stavrogin, for whom "it means nothing […] to sacrifice a life", whether his or "other people's"[1036]. Even more so since, according to Verkhovensky, the building of socialism may very well require people that are strong enough to take upon themselves the decision of sacrificing one hundred million lives[1037]. And if most men are "feeble mutineers", who are not able to carry the burden of their own

[1034] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, pp. 96-97.
[1035] Henri de Lubac, *Le drame de l'humanisme athée*, p. 335.
[1036] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, p. 465.
[1037] *Ibidem*, p. 452.

freedom, let alone to assume for themselves other similar burdens, inevitably, the building of socialism requires a selection process that will separate the "strong mutineers", those who are able to "sustain their mutiny", from the "feeble mutineers". This separation is translated into a separation between those who will govern and those who will be governed in the future socialist society. If the source of the modern crisis of order is represented by the rebellion against God, the resolution of the modern crisis of order seems to require an even more consistent rebellion against God. For Dostoyevsky, if modernity presupposes the rejection of the God-man, then the consistent search for man-godhood represents the necessary premise for the achievement of a new cornerstone, without which a new social order will not be possible.

In Dostoyevsky's view, the fate of socialism, which essentially means the social realization of atheism, is inherently related to the dramatic adventure of human freedom emancipated from religious normativity, an adventure that is lived, up to its ultimate consequences, by a minority of individuals whose response to the death of God is the bold and tragic quest for man-godhood through the exercise of self-will. In the meantime, one should also take into account the fact that, before becoming a mass phenomenon that subverts the conditions of social order, the irreligious spirit, as noticed both by Maistre and by Dostoyevsky, is first localized at the level of a small elite. This observation alone may be sufficient to confirm Raskolnikov's argument that humanity has always been separated between a revolutionary elite, which pushes humanity forward, due to its capacity to contest the existing norms and institutions, and a conservative mass whose natural condition is to be ruled by the above mentioned elite. From this point of view, far from representing the premise of a generalized emancipation of mankind, the Enlightenment's critique of religious authority may simply announce that, in the society of the future, those who are not able to bear the burden of atheism (or agnosticism) will be governed by those who are able to do

it. With cynicism, the Grand Inquisitor argues that this has always been and will always be the case, and, in this sense, "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" dismisses as unrealistic the Enlightenment's ideal to liberate all men from prejudice and authority through the popular dissemination of the critical consciousness, a rejection that ultimately turns into an attack against the Christian source of modern democracy. Here, Maistre's thought is once again particularly relevant. For, as stressed by Pranchère, Maistre's critique of the Enlightenment teaches us "*en même temps que les raisons du cynisme, les limites des Lumières [...], [car elle] expose le lien possible de la raison et de la domination que la pensée des Lumières, désireuse de mettre fin à la part violente de la civilisation, avait pour sa part dissimulé*"[1038]. Dostoyevsky's reflections concerning the relation between the revolutionary elite, which leads the socialist revolution, and the future socialist society, may be regarded as a continuation of this observation of Frederick II, concerning *les philosophes*, which is quoted by Maistre in *Quatre Chapitres sur la Russie*: "*Desormais ces messieurs vont gouverner l'Europe, comme les papes l'asujettissaient autrefois*"[1039].

As already indicated, *Notes from the Underground* represents a fundamental moment in the evolution of Dostoyevsky's literary creation, in as much as it represents Dostoyevsky's first engagement with the issue that concerns the nihilistic cultivation of self-will. At the end of the novel, Dostoyevsky's character is left in an uncertain situation, torn apart between his desire for reconciliation with God and fellow human beings, and his testified persisting incapacity of pursuing this desire to the end. Consequently, the man from the underground appears as equally incapable of proudly affirming self-will up to the point at which he would no longer experience the tormenting humiliation of his dependency on others and, ultimately, on God. The author ends

[1038] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 31.
[1039] Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, p. 121.

his novel at the point where his (anti)hero appears neither capable of returning to the community of the God-man, nor capable of making the definitive leap in the direction of man-godhood. As we remember, Jean Drouily argued that the two psychological experiences that maintain the man from the underground in a state of dissatisfaction with regard to his commitment to self-will, are the fear and remorse, which he experiences as a consequence of the absurd and vile exercise of his unleashed will. Moreover, it is these psychological experiences that open for the underground man the perspective of a transcendent realm where the contradictions of his being may be miraculously reconciled. Or, seen from the perspective of the one who is committed to the pursuit of man-godhood, it is precisely these psychological experiences that are preventing one from finally liberating himself from God. It follows that only the one who will defeat his fear of death and his pangs of conscience will become a mortal god, or, in Dostoyevsky's terms, man-god, taking thus the place of the God-man, and becoming the prophet of a new religion and the architect of a new humanity. In *Demons*, two characters in particular are distinguished by their tragic quest for man-godhood: Kirilov and Stavrogin.

If for Maistre and Bonald, the individual reason of the Enlightenment concealed in fact the subjective will that was opposed to the social rationality, this process of emancipation that begins with the rational criticism of religion finds its fulfillment, and becomes fully transparent, in Dostoyevsky's nihilist heroes who seek to fulfill the ideal of autonomy through the arbitrary exercise of the will. Opposing the independence of the self to the transcendence of utilitarian rationality, which bears in itself the traces of the former divine transcendence, Dostoyevsky's man from the underground practically restates Rousseau's thesis that, in the last instance, collective freedom presupposes the right of the people to harm themselves – with the difference that, unlike Rousseau, the man from the underground refers specifically to individual freedom, as

he draws the conclusion, to which Maistre and Bonald would have fully subscribed, that individual autonomy and society are mutually exclusive. As has been indicated, Rousseau's understanding of freedom determined Maistre and Bonald to conclude that nihilism represents the essence of the modern project of autonomy. More precisely, in its most consistent manifestation, the modern ideal of autonomy presupposes that while God wills the existence of both society and the individual – the divine will being imprinted in the natural order that includes man's sociality –, modern man ultimately seeks his freedom in both individual and collective suicide. This is precisely the way in which Kirilov from *Demons* seeks to affirm his freedom. Hence, Dostoyevsky's analysis of the nihilistic quest for man-godhood can be regarded as a continuation of the counter-revolutionary critique of the modern project of individual and collective autonomy. Suicidal in its essence according to Bonald, Rousseau's democratic ideal has been rejected by Maistre via Rousseau's own acknowledgment that, in the true sense of the word, the fulfillment of the ideal of collective autonomy would require "un peuple de dieux"[1040]. It is precisely through suicide that Kirilov seeks to become God, imitating, until the last consequences, God's freedom from any form of determination. Triggered by the French Revolution, the counter-revolutionary interpretation of modern nihilism takes the form of a political theology that reduces the modern problematic of autonomy to a conflict of sovereignty between the human will and the divine will. In this sense, the counter-revolutionary authors are tracing back the origins of the French Revolution to the original sin committed by Adam in the Garden of Eden. Dostoyevsky interprets history in a similar key: as the conflict between the God-man (Christ) and the man-god (Antichrist).

[1040] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social*, p. 165.

It is no coincidence then that Kirilov essentially wishes to appear as a second Christ. His tormenting meditations and mystical experiences take place in his room, at night, in front of the icon of Christ, which is always lightened by a burning candle. Kirilov has abandoned the *vita activa*, leaving Pyotr Verkhovensky's revolutionary organization, in order to dedicate himself completely to the *vita contemplativa*[1041]. The mystical experiences of this atheist bear striking similarities with the mystical experiences of another Christ-like figure, Prince Myskhin, and in both cases, these experiences are associated with epileptic states[1042]. Thus, relating one of these mystical experiences, Kirilov tell Shatov that, for him

> there are seconds when you suddenly feel the presence of an eternal harmony that has been fully attained. This is not something earthly. I'm not saying that it's heavenly, but that man in his earthly form cannot endure it. He must change physically or else die. It is a clear and unambiguous feeling. It's as if you suddenly have a sense of nature as a whole, and you suddenly say: yes, this is true […].This is higher than love. If it lasts longer than five seconds, your soul can't endure it and must disappear […].In order to endure ten seconds, one must change physically[1043].

Although Kirilov has left Verkhovensky's revolutionary organization, his dedication to the contemplative life doesn't mean anything else than dedication to the revolutionary cause in its highest possible form, free from all the ambiguities and impurities of historical life. One may argue that, just like Maistre, Kirilov tries to show that, like the Counter-Revolution, the true Revolution also is metapolitical in nature, and is accomplished only eschatologically. Addressing with his whole being the one essential question, "man or God?", Kirilov represents the ultimate expression of the modern ideal of autonomy, or, otherwise said, the limit case which, to use Carl Schmitt's terms, precisely because it is an exceptional case,

[1041] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, p. 644.
[1042] Although Kirilov does not have any epileptic fits, listening to him, Shatov warns him that these may be symptoms of epilepsy.
[1043] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, p. 653.

"proves everything" while "the rule proves nothing"[1044]. Thus, for Kirilov, the conflict between individual reason and the transcendence of religious authority, addressed by Maistre and Bonald, as well as the conflict between will and the transcendence of reason, addressed by the man from the underground, are all reduced to the conflict between the will of God and the will of man. "If God exists", Kirilov argues, "all will is his, and I can't escape his will. If he does not exist, then all will is mine, and I am obliged", he concludes, to assume the cross of this terrifying freedom, and "to proclaim self-will". For Kirilov, "to realize that God does not exist, and not to realize at the same time that you yourself have become God is absurd"[1045]. In the persistence of man's fear of death, Kirilov perceives, to use Nietzsche's terms, the shadow of God, which still lies heavy on man[1046]. Authentic freedom, Kirilov argues, can be experienced only by those for whom it does not matter whether they live or die. Only in the true freedom that comes from the indifference before death is there true life; only then one can fully rejoice in the plenitude of finite existence. God, according to Kirilov, is a product of fear, and fear is a sign of man's insufficient evolution, which prevents him from fully enjoying the mystical experience of an eschatology rendered completely immanent. A product of the fear of death and the fear of freedom, the two fears upon which all political and religious authorities are grounded, God therefore stands between man and the earthly paradise, in which man can enter only after he has liberated himself completely from God. If up until now man has been maintained in existence by the fear of God, while God has been maintained in existence by the fear of death and by the fear of freedom, if up until now "life is given in exchange for pain and fear", the purpose of Kriliov's suicide is to inaugurate

[1044] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 15.

[1045] *Cf*. Zarathustra's statement: "*If* there were Gods, how could I endure it to be no God! *Therefore*, there are no Gods!" (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, translated by Thomas Common, Dover Publications Inc., Mineola, New York, 1999, p. 56).

[1046] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Le gai savoir*, p. 147.

a new eschatological era in which life is enjoyed for itself, independently of the way it manifests itself, by the "happy", "proud" and indifferent new man: the man-god. Kirilov stresses the fact that, in their present physical condition, men cannot experience the "new life", for only the one who "conquers pain and fear" will "change physically" and "become God"[1047]. "Man until now", Kirilov argues, "has been so unhappy and impoverished, because he has been afraid to proclaim the most important aspect of self-will and has shown his self-will in marginal ways, like a schoolboy". "Man", Kirilov continues, "has done nothing but invent God in order to live without killing himself; that's the essence of world history to this point". But it is only through suicide that man can overcome the God complex, kill God and "live in the greatest glory". To be more specific, for Kirilov, once man overcomes God and manifests his absolute freedom, he no longer has to kill himself but can enjoy the happy existence of a "mortal god", for whom the fleeting moment of one's life is experienced as eternity, in as much as a complete indifference to death and what's beyond has firmly taken hold of man's soul. However, somebody has to be the beginner of the new life, "to open the door" and to "bring salvation"[1048]. In order for the man of the future to live happy and die happy, free from the fear of freedom and the fear of death, Kirilov, like Christ once, has to sacrifice himself, "trampling down death by death"[1049]. Like Christ in the garden of Gethsemane, Kirilov, the new Christ, confesses that he is "dreadfully unhappy" because he is "dreadfully afraid". But in his promethean ambition to confiscate and redefine the fundamental Christian concepts of freedom, eternal life and deification, Kirilov pursues to the end his own calvary, convinced of the fact that the only way in which he can put an end

[1047] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, pp. 128, 263, 683-685
[1048] *Ibidem*, pp. 684-686
[1049] *Cf*. the paschal hymn which is sung at the Easter service in the Orthodox Churches: "Christ is risen fom the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life".

to the Christian era is by rewriting the Gospel with his own blood. "I am proclaiming self-will", Kirilov declares,

> and I am obliged to believe that I don't believe. I'll begin and end and thus open the door. And I'll bring salvation. That is the only thing that will save all people and will cause them to be reborn in the next generation; for in his present physical form, as far as I have been thinking about it, it's impossible for man to be without his former God altogether. I have been looking for the attribute of my godhood for three years, and I have found it: the attribute of my godhood is – Self-Will! This is the only way I can show, in its main aspect, my independence and my terrible new freedom. For it is very terrible. I am killing myself in order to show my independence and my new terrible freedom.[1050]

Guardini argues that in the case of Kirilov, as in the case of Nietzsche, we are dealing with a radical will for immanence and self-deification, and with the belief that "*le passage*" from man to man-god "*doit s'effectuer par l'horreur et la destruction et conduire à une existence dont la liberté et la joie ont pour nos âmes d'aujourdhui quelque chose de terrible [...] et tout cela sortant de l'intime persuasion –en un sens mystique et prodigieux, mais tout ensemble absolument réel et intérieur au monde – qu'est venue l'heure du fini*"[1051]. Thus, before the moment of his suicide, Kirilov gives an eschatological cry that seems to proclaim the long awaited interruption of temporality, and its final melting into the "eternal harmony that has been fully attained". Kirilov screams "terribly" "now, now, now, now [...] about ten times", until the screams are ended by "a loud shot"[1052]. Yet, it is hard to realize whether the repeated screams reveal the glorious achievement of self-deification, or, simply, the terrible efforts of a man struggling until the last moment to defeat his terrible fear that prevents him from acting. Whatever the case, the mystical enthusiasm of self-deification stands in contrast with the grotesque circumstances in which Kirilov's suicide takes place. Kirilov locks himself in the room

[1050] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, pp. 685-686. The "three years" refers to the time period from the beginning of Christ's missionary activity and until his crucifixion.
[1051] Romano Guardini, *L'univers religieux de Dostoïevski*, p. 175.
[1052] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, pp. 653, 692.

and Verkhovensky, who wants to obtain Kirilov's signature before he kills himself breaks in; hidden in the dark, Kirilov bites Verkhovensky's finger who, in turn, howling, hits him on the head with the pistol. These comical circumstances ultimately indicate the fact that, like Maistre, Dostoyevsky ridicules the ideal of self-deification. Commenting on the relation between Nietzsche's murder of God and the subsequent self-deification of the overman, Eric Voeglin underlines the fact that "the nature of a thing cannot be changed; whoever tries to 'alter' its nature destroys the thing. Man cannot transform himself into a superman". Thus, "historically, the murder of God is not followed by the superman but by the murder of man". The case of Kirilov only reflects, at an individual level, the fact that, as Voeglin argues, "deicide […] is followed by the homicide of the revolutionary practitioners"[1053]. In this sense, it is relevant that Verkhovensky, who manages to convince Kirilov to write a suicide note in which he takes responsibility for Shatov's murder, absolving thus Verkhovensky and his gang (another parody of the Gospel narrative, given the fact that Kirilov, as the new Christ, takes upon himself the crime committed by Verkhovensky and the members of his revolutionary group), suggests to Kirilov who cannot find the right ending formula, to end the note with: "*Vive la république*". "Almost howling in ecstasy", Kirilov approves of Verkhovensky's suggestion, initially intends to write "*Vive la république démocratique, sociale et universelle ou la mort*!", and finally settles for "*Liberté, égalité, fraternité ou la mort!*"[1054] Thus, for Dostoyevsky, as for Maistre, the modern ideals of subjective and collective autonomy are ultimately identified with the nihilist aspiration towards universal extinction.

[1053] Eric Voegelin, *Collected Works*, (vol. 5 *Modernity without Restraint*), edited by Manfred Henningsen, University of Missouri Press, Columbia and London, 2000,p. 284.
[1054] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, p. 688.

As stressed by Jacques Madaule, with Kirilov, "*l'athéisme extrême rejoint la sainteté*"[1055]. From this point of view, in his quest for man-godhood, Kirilov has only his fear to confront, and, unlike the man from the underground, he does not have to stifle his conscience as well. When, half seriously, half jokingly, Verkhovensky tells Kirilov that it would be better to show self-will by killing someone else, not himself, thus becoming useful for the "common cause" in a different way, Kirilov replies that "to kill someone else would be the lowest point of my self-will"[1056]. Kirilov is particularly fond of children and he "[prays] to everything", even "to the spider crawling on the wall"[1057].

Things are totally different in what concerns Nicolas Vsevolodovich Stavrogin. In Stavrogin, probably suffering in its highest expression encounters the will to power in its highest expression, a fact suggested by the name of the character: Vsevolodovich means all-willing, while Stavrogin is related to the Greek term for cross (*stavros)*. While Kirilov has spent his life in solitary meditation, in his confession, which he presents to the monk Tikhon, Stavrogin informs his reader that throughout his life, he has "[devoted himself] to dissipation, in which" he "took no pleasure", but that he concomitantly felt "boundless anger and unbelievable pleasure" whenever he "was committing a crime", and "when [his] life was in danger". The same applied for every "situation in [his] life […], however unspeakably shameful, utterly degrading, vile and, most importantly, ridiculous". Stavrogin derives enormous pleasure from his transgression of the

[1055]Jacques Madaule, *Le christianisme de Dostoïevski*, p.175, quoted in Henri de Lubac, *Le drame de l'humanisme athée*, p. 331. In chapter 61 of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, the old Pope, who is out of service because God is dead, addresses Zarathustra in the following way: "O Zarathustra, thou art more pious than thou believest, with such an unbelief! Some God in thee had converted thee to thine ungodliness. It is not thy piety itself which no longer letteth the believe in a God? And thine over-great honesty will yet lead thee even beyond good and evil! [...] Though thou professest to be the ungodliest one, I feel a hale and holy odour of long benedictions" (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, pp. 185-186).

[1056] Fyodor Dostoyesvky, *Demons*, p. 684.

[1057] *Ibidem*, p. 264.

limits that circumscribe the common humanity, the flock, in particular from the affirmation of his absolute will whenever confronted with the feelings of shame and fear.

> If I was stealing something, [he confesses to Tikhon,] then while I was perpetrating the theft, my awareness of the depths of my vileness would send me into ecstasy. It was not vileness that I loved (here my reason remained intact), but rather, the ecstasy I derived from the tormenting awareness of having fallen so low that was so gratifying. By the same token, every time I stood facing my opponent in a duel, waiting for him to fire, I would experience the same feeling of shame and frenzy[1058].

That which brings him suffering also brings him pleasure. Moreover, Stavrogin does not derive pleasure from the possession of the object of his desires. In fact, as he himself confesses in his letter to Darya Pavlovna, he is completely alienated from natural objectivity, from the soil as well as from women to whose love he cannot respond, and his "desires are too weak" and "can't guide" him. He only experiences pleasure from the transgression of the limits that circumscribe the rest of humanity, and of the moral conventions of the flock, from the exercise of his arbitrary albeit terrible strength, which he tried "everywhere" and which "has always […] proved boundless". As in the case of Kirilov, through Stavrogin, one is confronted with the tragic attempt to achieve man-godhood by living beyond good and evil. Stavrogin effectively lives according to Nietzsche's revolutionary ethics as described in section two of *The Anti-Christ*. There, Nietzsche redefines good as "all that heightens the feeling of power", bad as "all that proceeds from weakness", and happiness as "the feeling that power *increases* – that a resistance

[1058] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, Appendix – "At Tikhon's", pp. 763-764.*Cf.* St. Augustine's observation from his *Confessions* concerning the satisfaction derived not from the sinful acquisition of a desired object, but from the transgressive act itself. St. Augustine relates an episode from his young age when, together with his friends, he has stolen pears from a tree not in order "to enjoy that thing which" he "desired to gain by theft", but in order "to enjoy the actual theft and the sin of theft", seeking "nothing from the shameful deed but shame itself". "O rottenness", Augustine exclaims! "O monstrous life and deepest death! Could a thing give pleasure which could not be done lawfully, and which was done for no other reason but because it was unlawful? [...] Did it please me that as a captive I should imitate a deformed liberty, by doing with impunity things illicit bearing a shadowy likeness of your [God's – *my note*] omnipotence?" (Saint Augustine, *The Confessions*, translated by John K. Ryan, Image Books, New York, 1960, pp. 69-73).

is overcome"[1059]. However, as in the case of Kirilov, Stavrogin's experience is meant to provide a living and tragic refutation of the Nietzschean definition of happiness, and implicitly, to delegitimize the Nietzschean ideal of the overman. For, being able to will everything, and being implicitly completely alienated from the reality that is reduced to a shapeless plasticine on which he can exercise his arbitrary will, Stavrogin stops desiring anything in particular. He derives pleasure from doing evil as well as from doing good, "but both feelings are shallow". It's all the same. And what grips his soul, as a consequence of his boundless strength, is a horrifying monotony and lack of meaning[1060]. Wanting to believe he embraces all possible ideologies, he believes in none. Wanting to escape monotony and to "feel", he throws himself into ever more vile sins, raping a ten-year old child whose memory haunts him ever since. He is tormented by the recurring vision of Matryosha "brandishing her tiny little fist" at him, a vision that he "can't help summon it up, even though [he] simply can't live with it", because, as a shadow of regret, it represents his only connection with the common humanity and its coherent universe. Nevertheless, he is unable to define what is occurring to him "as pangs of conscience". "Perhaps even to this very day I don't find the memory of what I did loathsome", he declares, "perhaps even now this memory contains something that gratifies my passion"[1061]. Unable to repent, Stavrogin fulfills Tikhon's prophecy ("perhaps a day, an hour before the great step, you will throw yourself into a fresh crime as a way out, only to *avoid*" public repentance[1062]) and takes the final step in the exercise of his self-will. He commits suicide, leaving behind him a note with only eight words: "No one is to blame, I did it"[1063].

According to Drouilly,

[1059] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, in *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, p. 115.
[1060] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, pp. 744-746.
[1061] *Ibidem*, Appendix – At Tikhon, p. 776.
[1062] *Ibidem*, p. 787.
[1063] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, p. 748.

en Stavrogin, nous reconnaissons l'homme du Souterrain, mais un homme du Souterrain […] démesurément agrandi. L'homme du Souterrain essayait à travers la souffrance, la sienne et celle d'autrui, de se prouver sa liberté et par là même son existence. Mais en martyrisant la pauvre Lisa il retrouvait, dans son remords même, les liens qui l'attachaient solidement au monde. C'est dans la mesure où il s'estimait coupable qu'il devait se sentir en mesure de fonder une morale l'arrachant au vertige d'une liberté absolue au-delà du bien et du mal. Derrière sa souffrance, il entrevoyait le Dieu sauveur qu'il cherchait […].Stavrogin, lui aussi, a le vertige de la liberté absolue, mais au-delà de son crime […], Stavrogin n'a rien trouvé qu'un aride désert sans larmes et sans remords où il est perdu […].Le drame de Stavrogin ce n'est pas qu'il ait commis une crime ; le drame, c'est qu'il ne se sente pas coupable, et que par conséquent l'acte qu'il a commis lui soit indifférent. C'est dans cette indifférence qui se révèle à lui l'absurdité d'un monde dont Dieu est absent[1064].

The death of God and the subsequent radical immanence preached by Kirilov, implies, as Stavorgin ironically observes in his discussion with the latter, that "everything is good": the autumn leaf blown by the wind no less than the one "who dies of hunger" and the one "who abuses and dishonours a little girl"[1065]. Thus, for Stavrogin, Kirilov's mystical harmony reveals itself as a nightmarish chaos, and this is where Stavrogin is led by his unlimited freedom. "*Un monde d'où le bien et le mal sont bannis*", Drouilly argues, "*n'est qu'un engrenage monstrueux où l'âme n'a plus de place*". Therefore, "*Stavrogin n'ayant plus de quoi mesurer et de quoi peser ses actes, sent dans l'absolue liberté qui est maintenant la sienne, s'évanouir non seulement le bien et le mal, mais l'existence même d'un monde cohérent*". His bizarre and grotesque villainies – marrying an insane woman, pulling by the nose a member of his club, biting the ear of the governor – all testify to this fact. In the end, Drouilly concludes, "*le suicide est pour lui la seule solution logique*"[1066], "another deception – the final deception in an endless series of deceptions"[1067]. In its simplicity, Stavrogin's final answer to Verkhovensky's insistences that he would take the lead of the world revolution that is set to begin in Russia, represents probably the

[1064] Jean Drouilly, *La pensée politique et religieuse de F.M. Dostoïevski*, pp. 372-373.
[1065] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, p. 263.
[1066] Jean Drouilly, *La pensée politique et religieuse de F.M. Dostoïevski*, pp. 373-376.
[1067] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, p. 746.

most profound retort of this novel which illustrates the drama of the modern man, condemned to inhabit a universe without meaning: "'*What for*?', Nikolay Vsevolodovich said in a serious and stern voice"[1068]. In a similar way, Kirilov's most profound confession from the novel suggests that, far from giving a new meaning to human existence and of inaugurating a new eschatological era, his suicide represents nothing else than the single truly honest attitude to be taken in the face of the definitive revelation of life's lack of meaning at the end of man's historical adventure. Moreover, Kirilov's confession no longer reveals the universe as a potential paradise that will become accessible to the man-god who, having defeated the fear of death completely, is able to completely integrate himself into the mystical harmony of the whole. Instead, the universe appears as an absurd and monstrous mechanism. Consequently, Kirilov's suicide, far from representing the happy affirmation of the man-god's earthly paradise, represents instead a radical condemnation, articulated in the manner of the ancient Gnostics, of the God-deserted universe. And the principle reason for the condemnation consists in the fact that the existing world is the world in which Christ had died. "There was", Kirilov tells Verkhovensky, shortly before his suicide,

> a certain day on earth, and in the centre of the earth stood three crosses. One man on a cross believed to such an extent that he said to another: 'Today you will be with me in paradise'. The day ended, both died, they went and they found nothing – neither paradise nor resurrection. What had been said proved unjustified. Listen: this man was the highest on the entire earth, he comprised that which allowed it to live. The entire planet, with everything on it, is nothing but madness without that man. There has never been one like *Him*, either before or after, even by virtue of a miracle. The miracle is that there never has been nor will there be another such man, ever. And if that's so, if the laws of nature didn't spare even *This One*, didn't even spare his miracle, but compelled even *Him* to live amidst a lie and to die for a lie, then it follows that the entire planet is a lie and rests on a stupid joke. It follows that the very laws of the planet are a lie and a farce put on by the Devil. What's there to live for, answer me, if you are a man?[1069]

[1068] *Ibidem*, p. 469. My italics.
[1069] *Ibidem*, p. 685.

The profound tragedy of Kirilov, comes from his intimate feeling that only through the affirmation of his divinity in the concomitant annihilation of both divinity and himself, he can remain faithful to the Christian ideal of authenticity. Since, as he himself confesses, he is "obliged to believe that he doesn't believe", in his attempt to imitate Christ until the end, Kirilov assumes the risk of being forever separated from the one whom he loves the most, and the only one who can truly understand him[1070].

According to Ward, if the man-god represents the cornerstone of "the final Western solution to the crisis of order", the tragic fate of Stavrogin, Kirilov or Ivan Karamazov reveals "the ascent to mangodhood as […] descent into nothingness". And consequently, "in betraying itself as an aspiration towards nothingness, the final Western social formula betrays itself at the same time as the manifestation of that spirit of 'self-destruction and non-existence' which is, for Dostoyevsky, the spirit of evil"[1071]. No wonder then that the same devil who inaugurates the modern world by handing over the sword of Caesar to the Pope, in Ivan's "Legend of The Grand Inquisitor", also reminds Ivan, now completely subjected to his power and in a state of delirium, of his other poem, "The Geological Revolution", in which he announces, like Kirilov, the future appearance of the man-god and the subsequent transformation of the earth into a paradise inhabited by mortal gods. For Dostoyevsky, the history of the modern West can be regarded as a cycle that begins and ends with the spirit of nothingness.

This revelation of the will for nothingness as ultimate essence of the quest for man-godhood determines Drouilly to argue that there is no real connection between socialism and Dostoyevsky's nihilist heroes. If Pyotr Verkhovensky confesses to Stavrogin that, he (Verkhovensky) is not a socialist but a nihilist "scoundrel" (or, in Stavrogin's, words "some sort

[1070] Henri de Lubac, *Le drame de l'humanisme athée*, p. 332.
[1071] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, pp. 143-144.

of political […] self-seeker"[1072]), Drouilly argues that all of the nihilist heroes from *Demons* "*cherchent ou ont cherché dans la révolution une façon de remplir le vide qu'ils sentent en leur âme. Leur drame c'est la vaine quête de Dieu. Ils ébranlent l'ordre social par une sorte de réaction secondaire devant le trouble qui les tourmente. Ils ne combattent pas pour un idéal constructif, même irréalisable ; ils veulent détruire les fondements mêmes de la société, sans se préoccuper de ce qui se passera après*"[1073]. To this, Ward replies that for Dostoyevsky, "nihilism and political order" may very well be "compatible", because, "the role of tyrant" is "the only political activity appropriate to those strong enough to be nihilists."[1074] The case of the man from the underground proves the fact that, for the nihilists, society represents an uninhabitable prison. As very well understood by Nietzsche too, those who are by nature strong need to distinguish themselves from the weak and from their conventional morality. Thus, unless they exercise their power over society, be it only in a purely destructive fashion, the nihilists are inevitably condemned to live in the underground. As a result of the catastrophic consequences of the modern crisis of order, the conservation instinct of the masses creates a thirst for order and, in particular, a thirst for socialism. But most of all, since, as shown by Stavrogin's drama, the essence of the modern crisis of order is a crisis of meaning, the masses need the man-god because socialism requires an ultimate justification and an "object of worship for the masses"[1075], whose consciousness, as indicated in "The Legend of The Grand Inquisitor", has to be enslaved before the Tower can be built. But first and foremost, the consciousness of the masses has to be enslaved in order to render existence bearable. It is in this sense that one should understand Verkhovensky's proposal, made to Stavrogin, that the latter take the lead of the future Russian

[1072] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, pp. 464-467.
[1073] Jean Drouilly, *La pensée politique et religieuse de F.M. Dostoïevski*, p. 351.
[1074] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, p. 128.
[1075] *Ibidem*, p.132.

Revolution pretending to be Ivan the Tsarevich, the just Tsar in hiding, who would soon reveal himself to the peasant masses like an earthly god that brings with him "a new truth" and "a new law", thus erecting socialism not on the basis of scientific theories, incapable, according to Shatov and Maistre, to support any social order whatsoever, but on the basis of the much more efficient Russian peasant myths and of new legends, created by Verkhovensky and spread by his followers "better than the castrates [are] able to do"[1076]. Like Shatov, Verkhovensky himself is not foreign to this need for worship. Stavrogin observes irritated that both Shatov, the Slavophile, and Pyotr Verkhovensky, the socialist, are desperately begging Stavrogin to "raise" their "banner"[1077] and become the leader of their cause. While, deeply agitated, Shatov tells Stavrogin that he "can't tear [him] out of [his] heart", "almost in ecstasy", Verkhovensky tells Stavrogin that while he is Stavrogin's "worm", Stavrogin is his "sun" and "idol"[1078]. Stavrogin's ascent towards man-godhood is an ever deeper descent into darkness, yet, for Verkhovensky, Stavrogin is the light. Living on the heights of nihilism, Stavrogin experiences the pain that derives from the consciousness of existence's lack of meaning. But it is precisely his capacity to endure the contemplation of the abyss that makes of him the ideal creator of values for the weak who are in a desperate search for meaning. Aspiring towards man-godhood, Stavrogin, just like Kirilov, becomes a substitute for Christ, the God-man. For it is precisely a Christological counterfeit that is suggested by the intersection between power (divine) and suffering (human) revealed by his life, as well as by his name.

This combination is also definitive for the Grand Inquisitor, the Roman Catholic prelate being the first example of a counterfeit Christ, or Antichrist, who, committed to the ideal of man-godhood, betrays Christ and usurps his authority. In Dostoyevsky's system of thought, the

[1076] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, pp. 464-468.
[1077] *Ibidem*, p. 281.
[1078] *Ibidem*, pp. 283, 464-465.

modern crisis of personal meaning and social order, which culminates in the nihilism of Stavrogin and Kirilov, has its origin in the Pope's usurpation of Christ's position as mediator between heaven and earth. Hence, formally opposed, Catholicism and nihilism, the two poles of Maistre's thought, are dialectically united, in accordance with the same Slavophile perspective that reduces Catholicism and Protestantism, and liberalism and socialism, to a single common denominator. For Dostoyevsky, this dialectical unity points towards the fact that the two will also be brought together historically. It is relevant in this sense that, before proposing to Stavrogin to assume the role of Ivan the Tsarevich, Verkhovensky confesses to the latter another possible method for edifying the socialist order. Thus, Verkhovensky declares that he thought to

> hand the world over to the pope. Let him come out barefoot and show himself to the rabble. 'This', he'll say, 'is what I've been brought to'. And everyone will begin to throng after him, even the armies. The pope on top, we all around, and under us Shigaylovism. All that's needed is that the Internationale should come to an agreement with the pope, and that's just what will happen[1079].

The Russian nihilist socialism, described by Dostoyevsky in *Demons*, joins finally hands with Catholicism. And whereas "the comedy of bourgeois unity"[1080] is pushing Europe towards war, revolution, and anarchy, for Dostoyevsky, the Pope appeared to be the perfect mediator of a new social pact that would satisfy both "[the] power-lust" of the nihilists "and the yearning of the weak for order"[1081].

The identity between Catholicism, as viewed by Dostoyevsky, and socialism, is reveled by the similarities between Shigaylovism, the ideology according to which Verkhovensky wants to organize the future socialist society, and the social philosophy of the Grand Inquisitor. Shigaylov is one of the members of Verkhovensky's revolutionary organization, who, just like the Grand Inquisitor, is characterized as "a fanatic in his love of mankind". Thus, at the meeting of

[1079] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, p. 464.
[1080] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol. 2, p. 1004.
[1081] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoevsky's Critique of the West*, p. 128.

Verkhovensky's revolutionary group, described in the chapter entitled "Among Our Own", Shigaylov presents the conclusion of his study "of the social structure of the society of the future". "Proceeding from unlimited freedom", he argues, "I end with unlimited despotism", and "there can be no solution of the social formula except mine". If freedom and equality cannot be reconciled through brotherhood, while both ideals and the subsequent conflict between them throw society into chaos, then order and the happiness of mankind can be restored only if freedom and equality are reconciled by concentrating absolute freedom in the ruling minority, and absolute equality in the majority that is ruled by the minority. Hence, like The Grand Inquisitor, Shigaylov "proposes, as a final solution" to the problem of the organization of mankind, "the division of" the latter

> into two unequal parts. One-tenth is to receive personal freedom and unlimited rights over the remaining nine-tenths. The latter are to lose their individuality and turn into something like cattle, and with this unlimited obedience attain, through a series of regenerations, a primordial innocence, something like the primordial paradise, although they will have to work[1082].

Later on, after leaving the meeting, Verkhovensky passionately expounds to Stavrogin the details of "the social structure of the society of the future": everybody is "watching the others and" is

> obliged to inform. Each belongs to all and all to each. All are slaves, and are equal in their slavery. In extreme cases, there's slander and murder, but the main thing is equality. The first thing is to lower the level of education, science and accomplishment. A high level of science and accomplishment is accessible only to people of high ability, and there's no need for high ability! People of high ability have always seized power and been despots […].The thirst for education is nothing but an aristocratic thirst. No sooner do we have the family or love than the desire for property arises. We will kill desire: we will foster drunkenness, gossip, denunciation; we will foster unheard-of depravity; we will kill every genius in its infancy. Everything reduced to a common denominator, complete equality. 'We have learned a trade, and we are honest people, we need nothing else' – that's the answer given recently by the English workers. Only what's essential is

[1082] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, pp. 446-449.

essential – that's the motto of the planet from now on. But a shaking up is necessary too: we, the rulers will take care of that"[1083].

Thus, "once every thirty years along comes Shigaylov to shake things up and everyone suddenly begins to devour each other, up to a certain point, only to avoid boredom. Boredom", as well reflected by Stavrogin's case, "is an aristocratic feeling". But "in Shigaylovism there will be no desires. Desire and suffering", Verkhovensky concludes, "will be for us, and for the slaves – Shigaylovism"[1084].

Liberated from the God of traditional religion, the man-god, as reflected by "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" and by Shigaylov's social theory, is called to 'redeem' mankind horizontally, within the strict limits of this world, correcting thus God's creation, as well as what the Grand Inquisitor regarded as his failed redemptive work. In the system of The Grand Inquisitor, this redemptive engineering, dealing both with the individual and with society, consists in the concomitant achievement of a radical unity of the subject and of the subsequent implementation of a radical social division. For, as already indicated, the Grand Inquisitor argued that man's misery was owed to the fact that he has been created, in mock, as a "feeble mutineer". In order to escape this miserable condition of inner division, those strong enough to be nihilists seek to become mutineers only. That is why they struggle to overcome their fear of death, and to constantly transgress the norms of conventional morality, until they enter the earthly paradise where, as stressed by Kirilov, 'all is good'. Then, the self is no longer divided by shame and fear, between a feeble side and a rebellious side. Moreover, once having achieved this condition, the man-god seeks to free the rest of mankind of its inner division. But since the rest of men "are

[1083] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, p.463. It is interesting how in Verkhovensky's development of the principles of Shigaylov, which are none other than those of the Grand Inquisitor, the equalitarian ideal intersects the reactionary theses of Joseph de Maistre, who was also recommending to Tsar Alexander I to lower as much as possible the masses' level of education.

[1084] *Ibidem*, pp. 463-464.

feeble mutineers, who are unable to sustain their mutiny", these have to be brought to unity through the elimination of the rebellious dimension, and thus, be granted the "quiet, reconciled happiness […] of feeble creatures"[1085]. Ultimately, God's creation is corrected through a radical social division that is instituted between the ruling mutineers, and the mass of feeble creatures who are ruled. If the ruling elite will achieve man-godhood, the mass will be effectively turned into happy cattle who look upon their masters as gods. The masters will have achieved freedom in the highest possible way. For the cattle there will be absolute equality. Finally, instead of being based on brotherhood, the unity of the social body will be reestablished through unlimited despotism[1086]. Thus, as the terrified Stepan Trofimovich will come to realize, in the course of a single generation, the initial modern ideal of the Russian liberal dreamers has suffered a monstrous mutation.

5.10. - Dostoyevsky and Maistre on Revolution

Although Dostoyevsky is a thinker who transcends the division between right and left, his novel *Demons* remains a landmark of the right-wing tradition of counter-revolutionary thought. *Demons* and *Considérations sur la France* are united by one fundamental assumption: the Revolution is a phenomenon that requires a theological interpretation, and the conclusion of this interpretation is that the Revolution is essentially a satanic phenomenon. If Maistre distinguished himself among the counter-revolutionary authors through his prophetic interpretation of the French Revolution, Dostoyevsky – as argued by numerous authors among which Berdyaev, Besançon, or Richard Pipes –prophetically foresaw the Russian Revolution, or, at least some of

[1085] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 334, 337.
[1086] *Ibidem*, pp. 337-338.

its fundamental characteristics. In the case of both authors, prophecy implies an attempt at exorcism. Triomphe argued that Maistre "*a été le premier grand peintre des démons européens*"[1087]. Dostoyevsky has been the greatest. Moreover, if Besançon argued that "all of Dostoyevsky's work after Notes from the Underground" represents "an anguished *vade retro*"[1088], the same description applies perfectly to Maistre's work beginning with *Considérations sur la France*.

It is important to stress the fact that some of the events narrated in *Demons* can be associated with some of Maistre's own predictions concerning Russia. Thus, while Maistre warned of the danger of a future Russian Revolution led by "*un Pugatcheff d'université*"[1089], this is precisely the role that is proposed by Verkhovensky to Stavrogin, when the former tells the latter to take the lead of the future Russian Revolution pretending to be the legitimate successor to Russia's throne and the liberator of the peasantry[1090]. Dostoyevsky's apocalyptic description of the fire set by Verkhovensky's arsonists situates itself in the same stylistic repertoire with Maistre's warning from *Quatre Chapitres sur la Russie*, concerning the threat of "*un incendie général qui consumerait la Russie*"[1091]. In *Demons*, the fire is set while the leading circles of the local Russian society and the representatives of the government are all gathered at the literary reunion

[1087] Robert Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre: Étude sur la vie et la doctrine d'un matérialiste mystique*, p. 599.
[1088] Alain Besançon, *Intellectual Origins of Leninism*, p. 141.
[1089] Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, p. 27.
[1090] As indicated by Stéphane Vibert, between the 17th and the 19th centuries, Russia experienced many peasant rebellions led by so called impostor tsars. More precisely, in the midst of the Russian peasantry there was widespread the myth that the oppressive regime of serfdom, exercised over it by the nobility, came as a consequence of the fact that the true inheritor to the throne, the just Tsar, had been replaced by an impostor. For example, the legend circulated that Peter the Great was actually a Swedish impostor (and in fact the Antichrist himself), who took the place of the true Peter when the latter has made his trip to Europe. In general, it was believed that the true Tsar, who could not agree with serfdom, had been the victim of an assassination attempt, which he miraculously survived; or it was believed that he was in exile as a result of a plot, and that in any case, he would return to liberate his people from the oppression of the nobility, this act of justice being considered among the peasantry as a sign of the Tsar's authenticity. In many cases, the leaders of the peasant uprisings pretended to be the legitimate Tsar, the case of Emelian Pougatchev, who pretended to be Peter III, Tsar killed by the partisans of Catherine II, being the most notorious (Stéphane Vibert, "*Pravda*: Vérité et justice", pp. 259-267).
[1091] Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, p. 22.

organized by the wife of the governor of the province, Yulia Mikhaylovna. The latter, a Bovaric and superficial upper class lady whose main concern is to prove her "open mindedness" and receptivity of the progressist ideals of the new generation, is manipulated by Verkhovensky, the real diabolical organizer of the event that begins with decadent estheticism and ends in a truly insurrectional state of generalized excitement. The fire, set by the arsonists while the progressist aristocracy and the duped government representatives are all busying themselves with the celebration of the latest Western literary and political fashions, is a metaphoric representation of the revolutionary fire that consumes the old world. As revealed by the circumstances in which the fire breaks out, the Revolution runs over an incompetent, immature and degenerate aristocracy that is irrevocably condemned by the judgment of history. Its weakness and incapacity contrast with the ruthlessness, self-determination, impertinence and diabolical intelligence of the revolutionaries. Moreover, the sight of this contrast draws the prophetic interpreter of the revolutionary phenomenon into a state of apocalyptical excitement. Contemplating the fire set by Verkhovensky's arsonists, the narrator from *Demons*, that is, Dostoyevsky himself, confesses that "the horror and a certain sense of personal danger coupled with the exhilarating impression created by a night-time fire, produces in the onlooker […] a certain concussion of the brain […], a gloomy feeling" that "is almost always intoxicating". No one "can look at a fire without a certain pleasure"[1092].

Thus, like the Apocalypse, the Revolution produces both horror and fascination, and this is precisely the state of mind that unites the Maistrian and the Dostoyevskyan approaches to the revolutionary phenomenon. Aware of the fact that "extremism in good as well as in evil" represents "one of the characteristics of Russianism", Dostoyevsky, in the opinion of Alain

[1092] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, p. 569.

Besançon, "could not escape a certain fascination" felt towards the revolutionary nihilists described in *Demons*. According to him, this fascination betrays in fact a relation of complicity between Dostoyevsky's religious thought and Communist ideology, to which the former "appeared as a sort of Christian double, openly opposed to it and secretly its accomplice". In Besançon's opinion, for Dostoyevsky, the "violence in evil which the revolution foreshadows" is "preferable, in spite of everything, to the utterly despicable West. The practical 'materialism' of the West is more to be condemned in Dostoyevsky's eyes, than the theoretical materialism of the revolutionaries, since the former expresses a state of satisfaction with the created world which Dostoevsky", Besançon argues, "feels to be totally insupportable"[1093]. These observations are worth comparing with Isaiah Berlin's views concerning the relation between Maistre and the Jacobins. "Temperamentally", Berlin argues, Maistre "resembled his enemies, the Jacobins; like them he was a total believer, a violent hater, a *jusqu'au boutiste* in all things […]. He attacked eighteenth-century rationalism with the intolerance and the passion, the power and the gusto, of the great revolutionaries themselves". In Berlin's opinion, this reveals the fact that, far from being a conservative, Maistre represents instead an "ultra-modern" precursor of "the paranoiac world of modern fascism". Despising all government weakness, including Louis XVI's weakness, Maistre could only be fascinated by the divine power that is able to

> create a new order out of revolutionary chaos […].The Jacobins and Napoleons may be criminals, tyrants, but they wield, they represent authority, they exact obedience, above all they punish and thereby restrain the centrifugal tendencies of weak and fallible men. Consequently they are a thousand times preferable to the critical intellectuals, the destructive peddlers of ideas who pulverize the social structure and destroy every vital

[1093]Alain Besançon, *Intellectual Origins of Leninism*, pp. 138, 141. For him, like early Slavophilism, Dostoyevsky's Christianity is contaminated by the same Gnosticism in which Besançon, on the traces of Eric Voeglin, identifies the essence of Russian Communism: "The Dostoevskyan version of Christianity is tainted with Gnosticism in the Manichean autonomy it confers on evil, the condemnation it lays on every viable form of civilization, its ethical anarchism, and the empty angelism of the Messiah" (*Ibidem*, p. 139).

process, until some force, however illegal, rises up in response to the claims of history, to sweep them out of its way[1094].

In *Demons*, the powerlessness of the old world and of its instituted authorities, in front of the mighty new destructive forces, is mirrored by the pathetic image of Von Lembke, the governor, yelling in despair in front of a fire that he can no longer contain, and being finally knocked down himself by a broken board falling off the roof of a burning house. The few words he yells reveal, however, a profound understanding of the disaster occurring, and of the hopelessness of any form of opposition or counter-revolutionary action: it is "impossible" to "[put] out" the fire, metaphor of the Revolution, because "the fire is in people's minds, and not on the roofs of houses". So it's "better to leave everything" and "let it go out by itself somehow"[1095], remarks that suggest that for Dostoyevsky, as for Maistre, the Revolution represents first and foremost a process of generalized moral degradation that has occurred in people's minds, and against which, ultimately, there are no political solutions.

But for Von Lembke, the revelation comes too late. He himself is one of those responsible for the disastrous outcome. In the face of the uncontainable fire, he pathetically and comically yells at his subordinates to "arrest that scoundrel", namely Pyotr Verkhovensky, who "worms his way into the honour of families […], [using] the governesses", or more specifically his own wife, "to set the houses on fire"[1096]. Yet, up until then, afraid of his wife's opinion, which in turn assures him that Pyotr Verkhovensky "has connections everywhere, as well as extraordinary influence on the young people in the capital", Von Lembke effectively abdicates from his duties in the face of the gangster tactics of Pyotr Verkhovensky. The latter openly announces to Von Lembke his plan to destroy the churches. Yet, desirous to demonstrate to Verkhovensky and his

[1094] Isaiah Berlin, "Joseph de Maistre and the Origins of Fascism", pp. 96, 109, 113, 146.
[1095] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, pp. 570-571.
[1096] *Ibidem*, p. 571

generation that he also is "an intelligent man", Von Lembke expresses his full agreement with regard to Verkhovensky's political direction. His only objections concern the rhythm of progress. Destroying the churches, Von Lembke argues, is a good idea in itself, just that "it's too early" for Russia to do that. Thus, instead of doing his duty, defending the fundamental institutions of the Russian land, Von Lembke is preoccupied of how to preserve both his job and the appreciation of the young people from the capital, without which, both his social status, and that of his wife, would be ravaged. Being disregarded by the young generation, which, as taught by the ideology of progress, is always smarter than the old one, is the last thing a person of social status would be able to face, in a society that, beginning with Peter the Great's era, worships the god of progress[1097]. Von Lembke is therefore an opportunist and a man of compromise; but, not the man

[1097] It is this fear of being disregarded by the new generation, that is, of not being sufficiently open-minded and progress oriented – a fear that takes over the upper classes of the Russian society – that represents, according to Dostoyevsky, the strongest ally of revolutionary nihilism. Like Maistre, Dostoyevsky understood that the first stage of the Revolution is the gaining of control over public opinion by a vocal and aggressive minority. When this happens, all those who refuse to collaborate face the possibility of being dragged and exposed before the tribunal of public opinion as retrograde reactionaries. This is exactly what happens to Varvara Petrovna and Stepan Trofimovich at the beginning of *Demons*. Departing from their provincial town to Saint-Petersburg, in order to have access to the highest circles of the progressive intelligentsia, the two are constantly insulted by "dubious new people", and more specifically "scoundrels", present at the intellectual gatherings held in Varvara Petrovna's house. But the two cannot react, because they depend on the opinion of "the scoundrels". Being younger than them, "the scoundrels" are implicitly closer to the ideal of progress, which is always in the future. And thus, after a General present at one of the gatherings dares to affirm his commitment to his sovereign, which he has served in battle, the next day, Varvara Petrovna, Stepan Trofimovich and the General are caricatured and lampooned in the local press as "three reactionary friends". Afterwards, although he "express[es] unconditional agreement with the uselessness and absurdity of the word 'fatherland'", and agrees "with the idea that religion was harmful", Stepan Trofimovich is nevertheless booed by his young audience because he declares that "boots" are "inferior to Pushkin". As a result "he [bursts] into tears in public" and, "more dead than alive", he tells Varvara Petrovna: "*On m'a traité comme un vieux bonnet de cotton*!" Finally, publicly humiliated, the two pack up and leave Saint-Petersburg. But before leaving, with the hope of restoring what can be restored of her public image, Varvara Petrovna gives in to the pressures of the representatives of the new generation, and decides to "turn [...] to them along with the funds to run it" the progressive magazine that she had decided to establish in order to strengthen her reputation in Saint-Petersburg (*Ibidem*, pp. 24-28). It is interesting to relate Dostoyevsky's analysis of the relation between the liberal fathers and the nihilist sons, with Jean-Claude Michéa's analysis of the implications of the "*imaginaire progressiste*" of modernity. The root of this "*imaginaire progressiste*", Michéa argues, should be localized in the successes of modern science that have demonstrated, beginning with the 17th century that, from this point of view, the Moderns were superior to the Ancients and, instead of learning from the latter, the former rather deserved to be the ancients' teachers. As argued by Michéa, when this conception surpasses the limited sphere of science and becomes "*la loi de la société dans son ensemble, on arrive à la thèse que Margaret Mead a formulée d'une manière particulièrement claire en disant : 'dans la société moderne, les enfants sont les véritables parents des parents' […]. À partir de là, vous remarquez que la problématique de l'éducation change radicalement. Si les enfants représentent l'avenir, et si*

of political compromise, as he tries to present himself; instead, he is the man of metaphysical compromise, the lukewarm liberal who tries to eschew what Donoso Cortés has described as the inevitable choice between Jesus and Barabbas[1098]; the man who is most despised both by the revolutionaries and the counter-revolutionaries, who otherwise respect each other[1099]. Disdainful and diabolical in front of his inept prey, Verkhovensky first gets Von Lembke to agree in principle on the destruction of churches. After the latter swallows the bait, Verkhovensky immediately turns him around and practically blackmails him with the agreement he had just snatched from him, asking him "what sort of government official is he", since he agrees in principle with the idea of "[smashing] up churches". And thus, embarrassed and cornered by Verkhovensky's diabolical strategy, Von Lembke is forced into a surreal and pathetic demonstration of the fact that, far from being opposed, nihilism and the established institutions are rather complementary. "You see", he tells Pyotr Stepanovich, "we are merely keeping a firm hand on what you are trying to topple", but by this,

> we are serving the common cause, just as you are […].We are not your enemies, by no means: we say to you: move ahead, make progress, even topple things, that is, everything that's old and subject to refashioning; but when necessary we shall also keep you within the necessary limits and thereby save you from yourselves […]. Dig a little deeper and you will see that we and you are mutually necessary to one another. In England the

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la vérité vient de l'avenir, alors nous ne sommes plus dans une logique de la transmission aux générations qui viennent de ce qui, dans le passé, est digne d'être conservé et protégé. Nous entrons dans une problématique de la rééducation permanente des adultes par les jeunes, processus dans lequel les adultes n'ont pas d'autre issue que de chercher à 'rester jeunes' par tous les moyens. Ce n'est donc pas par hasard si le XXe siècle a été celui des camps de rééducation, si vous voyez, dans les publicités modernes, l'enfant contempler d'un air de plus désolé, l'incapacité du père – ou de la mère – à comprendre une technologie nouvelle; c'est à lui, désormais, de leur enseigner la clé du 'meilleur des mondes' […]. L'imaginaire progressiste implique par nature le projet de la rééducation du 'vieil homme' par 'l'homme nouveau' – ce qui a été la matrice de tous les systèmes totalitaires, comme le montre bien Orwell dans 1984" (Pascal Bruckner, Jean-Claude Michéa, Alain Finkelkraut, *Les valeurs de l'homme contemporain*, Éditions du Tricorne, Genève, 2001, pp. 47-49).

[1098] Juan Donoso Cortés, *Essai sur le Catholicisme, le Libéralisme et le Socialisme*, p. 126.

[1099] In this sense, see Schmitt's observations concerning Joseph de Maistre and Donoso Cortés: "Both were diplomats and politicians with much experience and practice and had concluded sufficiently sensible compromises. But a systematic and metaphysical compromise was to them inconceivable" (Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 61).

> Whigs and the Tories are also necessary to one another. Well, then: we are Tories, and you are Whigs, that's precisely the way I understand it[1100].

Thus, the governor and his wife fit precisely into the definition, generally attributed to Lenin, of useful idiots. The fact is cynically acknowledged by Verkhovensky, who ends his discussion with Von Lembke with the following conclusion: "still and all, you are paving the way for us, and preparing our success"[1101]. While the appointed guardians are politely engaging these ruthless and unbelievably shrewd enemies of everything sacred, lest they should be considered retrogrades, "active groups" are acting everywhere, "constantly undermining the authority of the local authorities, creating confusion in the villages, fostering cynicism, scandals and an utter lack of belief in anything at all, a burning desire for something better, and finally, using fires" in order "to throw the country […] into despair"[1102], and, from despair, directly under the governing authority of the central revolutionary committee. Reflecting on the origins of the French Revolution, Maistre referred to a diabolical conspiracy that, "*du palais à la cabane […], se glisse partout*" and "*infeste tout*". Moreover, "*par un prestige inconcevable, elle se fait aimer de ceux mêmes dont elle est la plus mortelle ennemie : et l'autorité, qu'elle est sur le point d'immoler, l'embrasse stupidement avant de recevoir le coup*"[1103]. In the meantime, ignored and even persecuted, the Jesuit watchdog was desperately yelling at the duped political authorities: "*Voilà le monstre! Prenez garde à vous! Point de milieu! Il vous tuera, si vous ne le tuez ou si vous ne l'enchaînez*"[1104]. Although a declared enemy of the Jesuits and of the inquisitorial methods of political exorcism, Dostoyevsky nevertheless shares with Maistre the status of the prophet who desperately warns his co-nationals of the catastrophic threats that are approaching, and yet, who

[1100] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, pp. 348-349.
[1101] *Ibidem*, p. 351.
[1102] *Ibidem*, p. 606.
[1103] Joseph de Maistre, *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques et des autres institutions humaines*, p. 400.
[1104] Joseph de Maistre, *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, pp. 176-177.

is nevertheless painfully aware of the utter incapacity of the ruling elite to defend both itself and the established order. As underlined by Drouilly, "*c'est un cri d'alarme que pousse en effet Dostoievski devant l'état dans lequel il croit voir sa patrie. La révolution*", brought from the West by the liberal fathers, and brought to a diabolical state of perfection by the nihilist sons, "*est à nos portes, s'écrie-t-il, et les points de résistance naturels cèdent les uns après les autres […]. L'élite démissionne devant une minorité de fous ou de coquins*"[1105].

Locating together the sources of the Revolution in the preliminary development of a progressist and, first and foremost, irreligious monopoly over public opinion, and in the degradation of the ruling elite through its association with the owners of this new monopoly, Dostoyevsky and Maistre likewise share the view that the Revolution is essentially a satanic phenomenon. In this sense, for both authors, the Satanism of the Revolution is manifested not only by the fact that its true adversary is Christianity, but also by the fact that, affirming their absolute freedom of self-determination in relation to God and tradition, the revolutionaries become in fact mere instruments in the hands of the demonic powers. From this point of view, the case of Raskolnikov is particularly relevant, given the fact that his crime is not a usual crime, but a revolutionary experiment[1106]. In principle, the ultimate goal of Raskonlikov is the establishment of a new and just social order. And through the murder of the pawnbroker woman, Raskolnikov tests himself to see whether he is capable of implementing his new legislation against the expected social resistance, while, at the same time, he tries to secure the material basis for his future career in the service of mankind. "I decided, having got hold of the old woman's money", Raskolnikov later confesses to Sonya, "to use it for my first years, so that I need not worry my mother, to provide for myself at the university, and to launch myself after the

[1105] Jean Drouilly, *La pensée politique et religieuse de F.M. Dostoïevski*, pp. 379-381.
[1106] Nicholas Berdyaev, *Dostoyevsky*, pp. 99-100.

university – and to do all this on a larger scale, thoroughly, so as to make a completely new career for myself and set out on a new road of independence"[1107]. And yet, the true motivation of Raskolnikov's crime, as Raskolnikov later admits, is the same as that attributed by Maistre to all those responsible for the French Revolution: not the intention to benefit mankind, but pride and the criminal instincts hidden in the depths of the soul[1108]. For, according to Maistre, the only outcome of the 18th century philosophy "*fut d'apprendre au crime à se couvrir d'un langage poli pour porter des coups plus dangereux*"[1109].

The revolutionary rationality of the crime is exposed in a discussion between two students that Raskolnikov hears through "a strange coincidence", just at the moment when he himself is thinking about exactly the same thing; more precisely, he had been obsessively thinking about this for days, and he was torn within between "his casuistry", which had "the cutting edge of a razor", and the tormenting difficulty of moving from the logical accuracy of the theory to concrete action. The theory, "simple arithmetic" that ignores religious authority as a prejudice, is thus exposed by the student, who, the narrator informs us, is simply engaged in what is "the most

[1107] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 399.

[1108] At the end of his confession to Sonya, Raskolnikov finally admits: "I longed to kill without casuistry, to kill for my own benefit, and for that alone! I would not lie about it even to myself! I did not commit murder to help my mother – that's rubbish! I did not commit murder in order to use the profit and power I gained to make myself a benefactor to humanity. Rubbish! I simply murdered; I murdered for myself, for myself alone, and whether I became a benefactor to anybody else, or, like a spider, spent the rest of my life catching everybody in my web and sucking the life-blood out of them, should have been a matter of complete indifference to me at that moment! And, most important, it was not money that I needed, Sonya, when I killed […]. What I needed to find out then, and find out as soon as possible, was whether I was a louse like everybody else or a man, whether I was capable of stepping over the barriers or not […]. Was I a trembling creature or had I the *right*…" (*Ibidem*, pp. 401-402). In *Considérations sur la France*, Maistre writes the following thing concerning those who claim that they had taken part in the French Revolution motivated by generous intentions : "*Si l'on nous dit par exemple: j'ai embrassé de bonne foi la Révolution française, par un amour pur de la liberté et de ma patrie; j'ai cru en mon âme et conscience qu'elle amènerait la réforme des abus et le bonheur public; nous n'avons rien à répondre. Mais l'œil, pour qui tous les cœurs sont diaphanes, voit la fibre coupable; il découvre dans une brouillerie ridicule, dans un petit froissement de l'orgueil, dans une passion basse ou criminelle, le premier mobile de ces résolutions qu'on voudrait illustrer aux yeux des hommes; et pour lui le mensonge de l'hypocrisie greffée sur la trahison est un crime de plus*" (Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 204).

[1109] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 169.

usual and ordinary […] talk and ideas" for the youth of Saint Petersburg: "on the one hand", the student argues,

> you have a stupid, silly, utterly unimportant, vicious, sickly old woman, no good to anybody, but in fact quite the opposite, who doesn't know herself why she goes on living, and will probably die tomorrow without any assistance […].On the other hand you have new, young forces running to waste for want of backing, and there are thousands of them, all over the place. A hundred, a thousand, good actions and promising beginnings might be forwarded and directed aright by the money that old woman destines for a monastery[1110].

The student therefore draws the following practical conclusion: "Kill" the old woman and take her money, on condition that you dedicate yourself with its help to the service of humanity and the common good […]. One death, and a hundred lives in exchange […].Scores of families saved from beggary, from decay, from ruin and corruption, from the lock hospitals – and all with her money! [...] What is the life of that stupid, spiteful, consumptive old woman weighed against the common good? No more than the life of a louse or a cockroach – less, indeed, because she is actively harmful[1111].

[1110] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 62.The old lady, an incarnation of the spirit of capitalism, who has spent all her life ripping off poor students like Raskolnikov, accumulates money in this world only in order to invest them into the afterlife. That is why she leaves to her step-sister – that she otherwise exploits and abuses without mercy – "only furniture and other chattels, while all the money" she leaves "to a monastery in N----- Province for masses for the eternal repose of her soul" (*Ibidem*, p. 61). Dostoyevsky's analysis of the economic behavior of the pawnbroker woman and of its religious fundament, may be regarded as an Orthodox critique of the relation between Calvinist theology and the spirit of capitalism. For Dostoyevsky, salvation in the Orthodox Church excludes the selfish quest for salvation, which is invested economically in Calvinist theology. Instead, salvation can occur only together with the ecclesial community reunited in *sobornost*; only if the person gives herself to all the others, not only in the order of political economy, but even at the level of the economy of salvation itself. In this sense, one has to compare the pawnbroker woman's transcendental selfishness with the moral of the fable about the woman whose only good deed during her life was that she gave an onion to a beggar-woman. The selfish woman dies and is thrown into "the fiery lake". Her guardian angel though, remembering her only good deed, tells it to God, and God tells the guardian angel to stretch out the onion to the woman and thus pull her out of the lake of fire, in case the onion would not break. The angel almost pulls her out, but then other sinners "began to catch hold of her, so that they should be pulled out together with her. But the woman was a wicked-wicked woman, and she began to kick them with her feet: 'I'm the one who's being pulled out, not you. The onion's mine, not yours'. And no sooner had she said that than the onion broke. And the woman fell back into the lake and burns there to this very day" (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 456). As stressed by Ivan Esaulov, the sad ending is owed neither to the woman's sins, nor to the fact that other sinners try to be saved with the same thin onion, but to the fact that "the sinner herself pushes […] away" her fellow sinners (Ivan Esaulov, "The Categories of Law and Grace in Dostoevsky's Poetics", p. 123). Redemption then is not the result of a bargain between man and God, but the result of selfless love, whose highest expression is provided by the Apostle Paul: "I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren" (Romans 9: 3).

[1111] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, pp. 61-69.

Raskolnikov kills the old woman in accordance with the principles exposed above by the anonymous student, principles that have otherwise been previously exposed by Raskolnikov himself in an article he had published a couple of months before committing his crime. In the article, Raskolnikov argued that, by the force of circumstances, the "benefactors and law-givers of humanity" have all been "blood-thirsty […] criminals […] Lycurgus, Solon, Mahomet, Napoleon", and one may very well include here Robespierre and Saint-Just, and "were without exception transgressors, by the very fact that in making a new law they *ipso facto* broke an old one, handed down from their fathers and held sacred by society". In doing so, "they did not stop short of shedding blood […] however innocent and however heroically shed in defense of the ancient law". Thus, Raskolnikov argues that humanity is naturally divided between an active minority of revolutionaries, which throughout the ages have pushed humanity ahead, destroying "what [existed] in the name of better things", and a passive or reactionary majority, which are "by nature staid and conservative", who "live in obedience and like it". The former "move the world and guide it to its goal", and to the extent that "it is necessary for one of them, for the fulfillment of his ideas, to march over corpses, or wade through blood, then […] he may in all conscience authorize himself" to do it[1112].

Wishing to improve the lot of mankind, Raskolnikov does exactly that which, according to Maistre, has been done by those responsible for the French Revolution: he rationalizes crime. But there is another highly interesting aspect that relates Raskolnikov's action with the revolutionary phenomenon as described by Maistre. The latter had argued that, while having the impression of self-determination in the highest sense, as they believed themselves to be taking history under control through the active demolition of the old order and the active building of a

[1112] *Ibidem,* pp. 249-251.

new one, the revolutionaries were in fact mere instruments in the hands of the devil, whose action in turn was controlled by the divine providence itself. When describing Raskolnikov's murder, Dostoyevsky, whose literary style has been described as fantastic realism, points to the presence of a diabolical invisible hand (which will later reappear in *Demons* and *The Brothers Karamazov* as the force that takes control of Stavrogin and Ivan Karamazov) that practically pushes Raskolnikov towards murder[1113]. Thus, the above mentioned coincidence, when Raskolnikov hears the unknown student exposing his own ideas concerning the pawnbroker woman, is just one out of a series of bizarre coincidences. Just hours before this strange occurrence, and the second day after he visited the pawnbroker woman in order to study the ground for the murder he was thinking about committing, it happens so that, walking on the street, he accidentally passes by the pawnbroker woman's sister, Lizaveta, who is talking to other people, and, hearing the conversation, he finds out that next day at seven o'clock his *still potential victim* (because he hasn't been able yet to reach a final decision) would be home alone. Dostoyevsky tells us that his hero "had recently become superstitious" and that, later in life, reflecting on these events, "he was always inclined to see something strange and mysterious in all the happenings of this time, as if special coincidences and influences were at work". Upon running into Lizaveta and her interlocutors, Raskolnikov has "a strange feeling of utter astonishment", and seconds later, when he realizes that fate itself informs him that he can act tomorrow at seven, as the old woman will be alone, "his first astonishment change[s] gradually into something like terror and a cold shiver run[s] up his spine". Then, "quite incapable of

[1113] The principles of Dostoyevsky's literary art overlap practically on the Maistrian hermeneutic of political history, and in particular of the French Revolution."*J'ai des vues bien particulières sur la réalité (en art)",* Dostoyevsky declared in one of his letters*: "ce que la majorité appelle fantastique et exceptionnel, forme parfois pour moi la substance même de cette réalité. Les phénomènes de tous les jours et l'angle banal sous lequel on les considère, ce n'est pas là, d'après moi, du réalisme mais bien tout le contraire*" (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Pis'ma*, t. II, p. 169, lettre du 10 mars 1869, quoted in Jean Drouilly, *La pensée politique et religieuse de F.M. Dostoïevski*, pp. 350-351).

reasoning", after the excess of solitary reasoning have brought him to the justification of murder, Raskolnikov "feel[s] with his whole being that his mind and will [are] no longer free, and that everything [is] settled, quite finally". Then comes the unbelievable encounter with the student and the officer who discuss about the pawnbroker's assassination with the purpose of serving mankind, an event which, the narrator informs us, "had an extraordinary influence on the subsequent development of the matter, as if there were indeed something fateful and fore-ordained about it". Finally, later on, as he leaves the house determined to commit the crime he had thought for so long now, proving his amateurism, Raskolnikov almost misses the whole opportunity for acting, because he simply takes for granted that Nastasya, the cook, would not be in the kitchen when he would go in to take his axe. But as he goes down the stairs, angry and humiliated at the thought of his deplorable failure, convinced that "[it's] all over", it so happens that "something shining [catches] his eye […] in the porter's dark little room": the axe with which he would finally kill Alëna Ivanovna and her sister. The accidental procurement of the murder weapon, the third in a series of coincidences, makes Raskolnikov think that "it was not" his "planning, but the devil, that accomplished that", as he "laugh[s] strangely, extraordinarily heartened by his stroke of luck". But by this point, Dostoyevsky the fantastic realist, or more precisely Dostoyevsky the demonologist, clearly lets us understand that "luck", understood as chance, is a completely inappropriate term for that which helps Raskolnikov in his actions, and that the strange nature of Raskolnikov's laugh, indicates that it is no longer Raskolnikov who is laughing, but *the one* who controls him. In the meantime, Raskolnikov's "reactions" become "almost completely mechanical, as though someone had taken his hand and pulled him along irresistibly, blindly, with supernatural strength and without objection. It was as if a part of his

clothing had been caught in the wheel of a machine and he was being dragged into it"[1114]. If his crime is a revolutionary experiment, paraphrasing Maistre, it becomes clear by this point that man does not lead the Revolution, but, quite to the contrary, he is lead by it[1115].

Later on, when Raskolnikov confesses his murder to Sonya, the latter's diagnostic with regard to what has happened to Raskolnikov, a diagnostic that Raskolnikov himself confirms, reproduces word by word Maistre's diagnostic concerning the French Revolution: "You have strayed away from God" Sonya tells Raskolnikov, "and God has stricken you, and given you over to the devil!"[1116] Raskolnikov's rent from God, and the murderous consequences that have resulted thereof, originate in Raskolnikov's attempt to ground ethics on an exclusively rational basis. His natural morality, which excludes God from the picture, turns man into the absolute master of life and death. The political consequence of this new morality, as exposed in the political philosophy of Joseph de Maistre, is the revolutionary crime, or, in Maistre's words, "*la barbarie savante, l'atrocité systématique*" and "*[la] corruption calculée*"[1117]. Precisely for its rationality, put into practice, the rational theory behind the Revolution manifests itself as satanic madness, through which guilty (Alëna Ivanovna) and innocent (Lizaveta) alike are perishing, and which completely takes over the revolutionary actors, mere instruments in the hands of the demonic powers that have been unleashed by the philosophical apostasy. More precisely, once again in accordance with Maistre's interpretation of the revolutionary phenomenon, everything happens as a result of the profound corruption of the public opinion, a reality reflected by the fact that the rational justification of crime has become the subject of "the most usual and ordinary

[1114] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, pp. 58-69
[1115] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 201
[1116] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, Part V, Chapter 4, p. 401
[1117] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 225.

youthful talk". This in turn is the direct consequence of the fact that, for the sake of progress, the Gospel has been replaced with "economic", and more generally scientific, "truth"[1118].

Ultimately, the case of Raskolnikov points towards the similar views of Maistre and Dostoyevsky, concerning the relation between the secular humanism of the Enlightenment, with its exclusive rational basis, and the inevitable inhuman consequences of this paradigm. In one of the articles from *The Diary of a Writer*, where, like Maistre, Dostoyevsky reflects on the relation between the modern civilization and barbarism, the Russian author argues that "notwithstanding our civilization […], if some 'competent' men would 'prove' that, at times, it is useful to the common cause to strip the skin of a certain back", then he will surely find a great audience to approve him and, furthermore, to put his principles into practice. Dostoyevsky's argument starts from a reflection concerning the barbarian atrocities committed by the Turks against the Bulgarians, among which the stripping of the skin of a man in front of his children, and whose occurrence the Western powers, Dostoyevsky argued, preferred to tolerate instead of tolerating a war of liberation lead by Russia, which risked destabilizing the global capitalist economy, and with it, modern Western civilization itself. Taking into account that atrocities are justified, for the sake of civilization, with utilitarian arguments, and that these arguments are easily accepted by the majority, in the West as well as among the Westernized upper classes and the intelligentsia from Russia, Dostoyevsky argues that in the end, "the stripping of skins" may very well occur in Saint Petersburg, on Nevsky Prospect. According to him, "the most complete aberration both in the minds and hearts of men is always possible, and in Russia, specifically in our time, not only it is possible but, judging by the course of events, it is inevitable". Dostoyevsky believed that unimaginable atrocities would happen in the future, precisely as a

[1118] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, pp. 63, 142.

result of modern civilization, which, bringing with it free thinking and "[smashing] to pieces all former authorities", has led to the situation were the majority of people are no longer able to "agree as to what is good and what is bad". Like Maistre, Dostoyevsky argues that the inevitable price paid for the excess of civilization is the eruption of barbarism, an eruption which, together with Maistre, he prophesizes for the future of Europe and Russia, a prophecy which, unfortunately, has proven to be accurate. Taking the same point of reference as Maistre, Dostoyevsky refers within this context to the Jacobin terror as the typical example of civilization's transformation into its opposite: "What about France in 1793?", Dostoyevsky asks. "Hasn't there been firmly established […] this very vogue of stripping skins – and this under the guise of the most sacred principles of civilization; – this after Rousseau and Voltaire!"[1119]. The same idea, concerning the French Revolution and the relation between modern civilization and barbarism, has been expressed by Joseph de Maistre in very similar terms:

> *Une illustre nation, parvenue au dernier degré de la civilisation et de l'urbanité, osa naguère, dans un accès de délire dont l'histoire ne présente pas un autre exemple, suspendre formellement […] la* loi d'amour *qui a veillé sur notre berceau […] : que vîmes nous ? en un clin d'œil, les mœurs des Iroquois et des Algonquins ; les saintes lois de l'humanité foulées aux pieds ; le sang innocent couvrant les échafauds qui couvraient la France ; des hommes frisant et poudrant des têtes sanglantes, et la bouche même des femmes souillée de sang humain*[1120].

As indicated by Gibson, one of the Soviet interpreters of Dostoyevsky has criticized the latter for the fact that he leads "Raskolnikov […] through crime to redemption, crime being given in the process a sort of providential sanction". Gibson argues however that Dostoyevsky's novel does not prove that crime "has been providentially planned, but" only "that it can be providentially worked upon". It proves, Gibson continues, "that intellectuals have an irresponsible way of getting hooked on ideas; that engaging in practice forces them to face the

[1119] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol. 2, pp. 602-605.
[1120] Joseph de Maistre, *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*, pp. 823-824.

consequences of the ideas they entertain; and that then, and then only, will they be driven to reconsider their ideas"[1121]. Maistre hoped that this effect would be finally accomplished, as a consequence of the fact that, given God's punishment through withdrawal from the impious 18thcentury, and from the modern age as a whole, "*le monde politique a croulé*"[1122]. Raskolnikov's collapse will finally lead to such an outcome. Moreover, just as Raskolnikov's collapse reflects the nature of the Revolution, as interpreted by Maistre, Raskolnikov's regeneration also reflects the nature of Maistre's longed-for Counter-Revolution, which, as the latter argues, "*ne sera point une révolution contraire, mais le contraire de la Révolution*"[1123]. In *Considérations sur la France* Maistre has argued that people tend to draw the following erroneous conclusion: because it is opposed to the Revolution, the Counter-Revolution is a movement of the same type but with the opposite sense. "*Il faudrait conclure tout le contraire*", Maistre argues, for "*le retour de la maladie à la santé […], la reconstruction […] est un autre ordre de choses*". In this case, "*[on] ne [détruit] que la destruction*" and all "*efforts [sont] positifs*". For, "*lorsque l'homme travaille pour rétablir l'ordre, il s'associe avec l'auteur de l'ordre […].Son action a quelque chose de divin ; elle est tout à la fois douce et impérieuse […] à mesure qu'elle opère, on voit cesser cette inquiétude, cette agitation pénible, qui est l'effet et le signe du désordre*"[1124].

It is exactly such a process of regeneration, which presupposes the miraculous entry into another logic of existence, that is experienced by Raskolnikov in his Siberian detention. Raskolnikov's exclusive reliance on reason has led him to crime, and to the subsequent disintegration of his personality. And, as long as Raskolnikov does not cease to rely only on his

[1121] A. Boyce Gibson, *The Religion of Dostoevsky*, pp. 100-101.
[1122] Joseph de Maistre, *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques*, p. 401.
[1123] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 276 .
[1124] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, pp. 258-260.

reason, he cannot overcome his inner torment. Faithful to his own theory, he can only look at himself with contempt, deducing logically that he deserves his misery, because his own atheistic arithmetic, proves to him that he belongs to the race of inferior creatures who deserve their miserable condition because they are not strong enough to live beyond good and evil. Thus, Raskolnikov's rationalism ultimately leads him to self-hatred, and to the inevitable disintegration of his personality. If according to the Slavophile authors, this was the inevitable consequence of rationalism, the inner crisis of disintegration, the same authors argued, could have been overcome only by the experience of faith, by faith experienced as life, that life, vibrating in Sonya's voice, which "[rings] like a bell with the power of triumph and joy", as she reads to Raskolnikov the Gospel about the resurrection of Lazarus[1125]. The resurrection, which overturns the logic of corruption, can be accomplished only through the power of God. Man doesn't have the right to kill because he does not have the power to give life. As stressed by Berdyaev, arrogating for himself the authority of God and, as a result, killing the pawnbroker and her sister, Raskolnikov actually killed himself[1126]. And just as Maistre believed that only a divine intervention can resurrect Europe and the French nation, after the latter's collective suicide, likewise, Dostoyevsky believed that only Christ can again raise Raskolnikov, as he has raised his friend Lazarus.

Throughout the novel *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov's heart is revealed as the battlefield of the confrontation that opposes *logic*, which leads him to madness, to *life*, which makes him regain a coherent perception of the world. Here one identifies once again the influence of the Slavophile concepts of *tselnost* and *sobornost*. For the *disintegrating* strength of Raskolnikov's logic is directly proportional to his degree of isolation, whereas the regenerative

[1125] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, pp. 313-315.
[1126] Nicholas Berdyaev, *Dostoyevsky*, p. 97.

strength of life is directly proportional to his degree of social *integration*, to his degree of closeness to his fellow human beings. In the beginning of the novel, before the murder took place, we learn that "Raskolnikov had resolutely withdrawn from all human contacts, like a tortoise retreating into its shell"[1127]. Later on, after the crime had been committed, Raskolnikov experiences "a dreary feeling of eternal loneliness and estrangement […]. He [does] not so much understand with his mind as [he feels] instinctively with the full force of his emotions that he could never again communicate with […] people in a great gush of feeling […], or in any way whatever […], even if they had been his own brothers and sisters"[1128]. But after he carries home a dying Marmeladov and gives away all his money to his desperate family, receiving the loving embraces of Marmeladov's children, Raskolnikov is suddenly overtaken by "a strange new feeling of boundlessly full and powerful life welling up in him, a feeling which might be compared with that of a man condemned to death and unexpectedly reprieved"[1129]. This conflict between reason, which leads to division, and life, which is nourished by the mystical power of *sobornost*, represents the central axis of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, and expresses Dostoyevsky's conviction that modern man is set before a choice between Christian brotherhood and the concomitant disintegration of both society and the self through rationalism. The battle between life and logic goes on in Raskolnikov's soul, including during his detention, until one day, during the second week after Easter, after Raskolnikov has spent Lent lying sick in the hospital, "life", Dostoyevsky informs us, suddenly takes "the place of logic". And thus, Raskolnikov enters the path of regeneration. On that day, "the Revolution" is over for him. The time when this is happening, in the Spring after Easter, the reappearance of Sonya's New Testament in the last paragraphs of the novel and the remembrance of the reading of the Gospel

[1127] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 25.
[1128] *Ibidem*, p. 98.
[1129] *Ibidem*, pp. 180-182.

about the raising of Lazarus, the author's reference to the "love" that "raises from the dead", all these elements, present in the last pages of the novel, point to the fact that together with his sin, Raskolnikov's "casuistry" and his subsequent inner torment have been defeated by the mystery of Christ's resurrection[1130]. The Counter-Revolution, as in the case of Maistre, belongs to the miraculous order of divine regeneration.

As indicated, Raskolnikov has confessed the fact that his crime was meant to be, so to speak, a laboratory experiment, which would represent the model for a future political transformation of society. In this sense, if *Crime and Punishment* ends with Raskolnikov abandoning his revolutionary ideals, *Demons* appears as the natural continuation of Raskolnikov's initial project. The hero from *Crime and Punishment* tests himself and his theory and fails to pass the test, while in *Demons,* we see Raskonlikov's ideas turned into concrete political activity. Raskolnikov's division of humanity between a ruling elite which lives beyond good and evil, and the herd over which the ruling elite has unlimited rights, is reproduced in the political system of Shigaylov. Likewise, we encounter Raskolnikov's utilitarian social arithmetic, as well as the implicit praise for the man-god who is strong enough to apply it for the benefit of mankind, in Pyotr Verkhovensky's justification of the cutting of "a hundred million heads". For him, this is an action that may very well be necessary for the benefit of mankind, if one takes into account the fact that, "despotism […], in a hundred years or so", may very well "consume not a hundred but five hundred million heads", also definitively compromising the possibility of a triumphant Revolution, without which "mankind" will never achieve "the freedom to build its own

[1130] *Ibidem*, pp. 526-527. Richard S. Haugh also underlines the Orthodox dimension of Raskolnikov's regeneration, which comes "from those streams of existence which are in contact with the 'heart', that symbol of the fountain of life" and the center of the spiritual life in Orthodox anthropology, and "that strange, mysterious and mystical atmosphere of Lent" (Richard S. Haugh, "A Critique of the Dostoevsky and Hawthorne Comparison", in Georges Florovsky, *Theology and Literature*, p. 155).

society"[1131]. Finally, those involved in Shatov's murder become the impotent victims of the same type of bondage that Raskolnikov experiences. But this time, the analogy holds up to a certain point. In the case of the small revolutionary group led by Pyotr Verkhovensky, the latter appears as the devil in person, and he exercises over his followers a truly diabolical control.

Maistre had used the metaphor of the Tower of Babel in order to describe the revolutionary assembly, and in particular the fate of the French Republic. The fact that the latter was born from an insurrection directed against the divine right monarchy in the name of popular sovereignty, implied for Maistre an inevitable individualistic disintegration. In this sense, as we remember, Maistre argued that "*il ne peut y avoir de société humaine sans gouvernement, ni de gouvernement sans souveraineté, ni de souveraineté sans infaillibilité*"[1132]. For Maistre, the contestation of authority, which represented the fundament of the revolutionary phenomenon, made impossible the aggregation of an insurgent political community, and, implicitly, it led to the establishment of a revolutionary dictatorship as the only political mechanism capable of preventing the disintegration of society. In this way, to paraphrase Dostoyevsky, articulated in the name of unlimited freedom, the Revolution naturally ended with unlimited despotism. Shigaylov's formula, which resumes the Maistrain and the Dostoyevskyan view of the trajectory of political modernity, perfectly reflects what is happening in the small revolutionary organization, described in *Demons*, which in turn represents a miniature of the future socialist society described by Shigaylov.

Thus, the tyrannical authority exercised by Verkhovensky over the other members of the group is required by the nature of the revolutionary phenomenon. Whenever his followers ask him uncomfortable questions, Verkhovensky answers that he has received strict orders from the

[1131] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, p. 452.
[1132] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 137.

central revolutionary committee abroad not to answer such questions. Whether such a committee really exists or not, remains a mystery. But Verkhovensky tells Stavrogin that the success of the Revolution requires the elimination of "democratic riff-raff" within all revolutionary groups, and their subsequent complete subordination to "one single magnificent, despotic will, like an idol, that rests on something fundamental yet external"[1133] – what we may define today as the ideology. It is this type of authority that Verkhovensky will try to construct for himself. Since the victory of the Revolution, conducted in the name of collective autonomy, requires collective action, then the unity of the collective has to be imposed through the absolute authority of one person, which will thus transform the centrifugal wills of many into a single will and, consequently, will put an end to the ideal of collective autonomy. It is perhaps no coincidence that Verkhovensky's government mechanism, absolutely necessary for the triumph of the socialist Revolution, corresponds with Dostoyevsky's definition of the papal power, and bears significant resemblances also with Maistre's definition of the latter. As underlined by Maistre, being an insurgent himself, the revolutionary leader no longer has the authority to preach submission to other insurgents. Verkhovensky knows that, and unable to impose himself through conviction, that is to gain legitimacy, he will impose himself through brutality and manipulation. When authority has vanished, as Donoso Cortés and Maistre have rightly emphasized, tyranny becomes a functional necessity and an inevitable outcome. Moreover, like Maistre, Dostoyevsky understood very well the fact that the contestation of a single link in the chain of authority, and, first and foremost, the contestation of the supreme authority of God, brings with itself the collapse of every authority. This is reflected in a scene related by Pyotr Verkhovensky to Stavrogin. The former has been drinking with some officers: "we were talking about atheism",

[1133] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, p. 584.

Verkhovensky informs Stavrogin, "and, naturally, we were giving God the boot". All the officers "were squealing" with delight, with the exception of "an old gray-haired duffer of a captain" who, after "keeping quiet the whole time […] suddenly walks into the middle of the room, and […] says aloud, as if to himself: 'If there is no God, then what kind of a captain am I after that'"[1134].

In *Demons*, the relation between the crisis of authority, and its inevitable tyrannical resolution, is probably best described in the chapter entitled "Among our own", in which the meeting of the members of Verkhovensky's revolutionary organization is being described. This ridiculous scene may be regarded as the comical version of Raskolnikov's terrifying nightmare from prison. Those present at the meeting of the organization, especially the youngest, struggle to overcome one another in the contestation of all norms and authorities, beginning with the authority of religion, and ending with the furious contestation of the authority of the others who are present. Thus, we find out that "the prejudice about God came from thunder and lightning", that the affection shown to children by parents is immoral because parents derive pleasure from it, and, also, that God's commandment "honour your father and your parents", so that "you will live a long life", is likewise immoral, because "God found it necessary to offer a reward for love". And ultimately, according to one of the interlocutors, a very vocal high-school student, all of this talk is anyway sheer non-sense because, after all, "there's nothing that is either moral or immoral". While everybody is arguing with everybody, somebody raises the absurd question whether those present "constitute some sort of meeting, here and now", or whether they are "simply a gathering of ordinary mortals who have come to visit". Initially, "everyone, as if by command, turned their eyes on Verkhovensky and Stavrogin", searching for an answer, or, more

[1134] *Ibidem,* p. 251.

precisely, instinctively searching for an authority that would free them from the torments of an impossible democracy. But then, Virginsky's wife, the hostess, proposes a vote on the issue; Virginsky is content with the proposition, thinking that this way "there will be greater order". But what follows is an ever greater manifestation of the spirit of Babel. The crowd cannot decide whether a hand raised means a yes or a no, nobody understands anybody, people are yelling, and somebody even asks "what does 'yes' mean". Then, spontaneously, although the crowd could not agree with regard to the constitutional procedures, it is decided however that what takes place is a meeting after all. Unanimity is nevertheless compromised by a puzzled voice crying: "what is a meeting?"[1135]

The meeting described above perfectly reflects Maistre's contention according to which any assembly naturally tends towards entropy unless its movement of disintegration is not stopped "*par le froid de l'autorité qui se glisse dans les interstices et tue le mouvement*"[1136]. As an insurgent assembly, the above mentioned group cannot have inner unity based on conviction. For, fully committed to the critique of authority, its members are left without any conviction on

[1135] *Ibidem*, pp. 436-444. It appears that this scene has been inspired by Dostoyevsky's experience as observer of the 1867 European Peace Congress, summoned in Geneva, and at which the representatives of various liberal, socialist and anarchist political movements from all over Europe, including Russia, participated. As indicated by Jean Drouilly, essentially a reunion of the European left, bringing together important figure such as Louis Blanc, Garibaldi, and Bakunin, the Congress had set for itself the goals of securing peace in Europe, of establishing "*les assises de la démocratie européenne, et si possible […] d'une vaste Société des Nations*". But, as argued by Drouilly, "*la grandeur du but qu'il visait fit ressortir avec plus de force le lamentable échec auquel il devait aboutir*". Present as an observer, Dostoyevsky was horrified by the vituperations against Russia and Christianity, and he remained speechless in the face of the atmosphere of generalized chaos reigning at the Congress. As related by those present at the Congress, "*le dernier jour [...] la confusion fut la plus totale [...]. Au milieu du tumulte, des orateurs, sous les hurlements de la foule, souffrant d'un discours rentré, occupèrent la tribune; comment on passa quand même au vote des résolutions finales; comment on recommença parce que certains n'avaient pas compris et que d'autres contestaient la validité du vote*". Finally, the assembly dissolves into generalized anarchy. According to Drouilly, "*Dostoïevski ne pourra jamais oublier les tirades incohérentes de ces hommes parlant en toutes langues, ne se comprenant pas les uns les autres, incapables en quatre jours de débats de s'entendre sur un seul point précis [...]. Et l'image de Bakunine proclamant avec une joie satanique qu'il faut que la Russie périsse, se fixe à jamais dans son esprit [...]. Désormais Dostoïevski a la certitude que socialistes et révolutionnaires sont non seulement des rêveurs, des utopistes et des imbéciles, mais que, dans leur volonté de détruire les assises religieuses sur lesquelles vit l'Europe et surtout la Russie, ce sont des malfaiteurs publics*" (Jean Drouilly, *La pensée politique et religieuse de F.M. Dostoïevski*, pp. 303-311). Supposing that Maistre would have lived long enough to assist at the Congress, he would surely have drawn exactly the same conclusion from the events.

[1136] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 95.

the basis of which group unity could be articulated. Affirming their own subjectivity against any authority above themselves, they cannot make any objective affirmation, but simply deny everything that is affirmed. And finally, their tongues get completely mixed and they lose the objectivity of a common language. The scene reflects perfectly Maistre's description of Protestantism and of its political expression, Republicanism. Or, as shown by Maistre, if the critique of authority makes impossible the constitution of an inner bond, based on conviction, as it leads to a constant negation of all affirmations, then an external bond, based on force, becomes the sole alternative. If the disappearance of the objectivity of a common language makes dialogue impossible, and implicitly, renders impossible a common agreement on truth, then the only way to achieve order and unity is through dictatorship: a dictator must dictate to the rest "his truth", no more or no less valid than any other personal "truth"; a truth that is not justified by any inherent value, but only by the social function it performs. Absolute freedom, as stressed by Shigaylov, necessarily leads to absolute despotism, both in the revolutionary committee and in society as a whole. Although theoretically moving in opposite directions, one centripetal and the other centrifugal, individualism and tyranny reciprocally nourish each other indefinitely. The final outcome? Dostoyevsky fully subscribes to Maistre's affirmation from *Considérations sur la France* : "*s'il ne se faisait pas une révolution morale en Europe, si l'esprit religieux n'est pas renforcé dans cette partie du monde, le lien social est dissous. On ne peut rien deviner, et il faut s'attendre à tout*"[1137].

In the meantime, as Maistre himself understood, once authority is lost, power is inevitably achieved by the one who proves to be the most brutal, most vicious, and most cunning, and who can thus compel the others into obedience and turn them into his instruments. In *Demons*,

[1137] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 211.

Verkhovensky demonstrates that he possesses the diabolical genius of tyranny. Notifying the gathering that any further common activity has to be preceded by a proof of absolute fidelity to "the common cause", Verkhovensky first stirs the paranoia of all those present with regard to the possible infiltration of informers, and then, shamelessly exploiting their distorted sense of honor, he extorts from all of them declarations of fidelity to "the common cause" and of refusal, under any circumstances, to inform the authorities about an eventual political assassination committed for the sake of the "common cause". This way, Verkhovensky manages to compromise everybody while sparing himself, as he does not answer the question that he addressed the others. From now on, he can blackmail anybody who does not obey his orders, threatening him that he will turn him in to the police. Moreover, knowing Shatov's Slavophile hatred for socialism, and knowing that he would never make a commitment such as the one made by the rest of those present, he manages to bring him to the meeting. As the latter walks out disgusted, after Verkhovensky's genial maneuver, without uttering a word, all those who have made the commitment know now that they have exposed themselves to an adversary of "the common cause", who has all the reasons to turn them in. Verkhovensky's final goal is to definitively seal the absolute unity of the group, under his absolute authority, through the involvement of all in Shatov's murder, now made to appear as absolutely necessary for the fate of each and of the "common cause"[1138]. While Stavrogin has told Verkhovensky that the best way to unite people is by making them all accomplices to the same murder, for Maistre, such gruesome and absolutely negative unity was the only type of unity that the Revolution could produce. For Maistre, the only thing that reunited all the insurgents was their contestation of the legitimate authority, and, implicitly, their complicity to murder. For Dostoyevsky, while true brotherhood was

[1138] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, pp. 452-457.

accomplished only through divine love, the revolutionary brotherhood was, for him as for Maistre, a satanic bloody brotherhood.

Caught in Verkhoensky's diabolical trap, from this point onwards, Verkhovensky's followers-victims simply lose their freedom and are dragged on against their will towards murder. Thus, the scenario involving Raskolnikov repeats itself, with the difference that while Raskolnikov was controlled by an invisible force, the members of Verkhovensky's group are controlled by the visible Verkhovensky, who, at his turn, is pushed from behind by the same invisible powers that enslave Raskolnikov, Stavrogin, and Ivan Karamazov. Take for instance the case of Liputin, the Fourierist. Verkhovensky treats him with the greatest contempt possible, and he in turn hates Verkhovensky with all of his being, he protests against his orders, he accuses him of constantly lying and manipulating everybody. But Verkhovensky has over him the power of a magnet. The greater this power is, the greater the contempt Verkhovensky feels for Liputin is, and the greater the hatred that Liputin feels for Verkhovenskyis, a scenario that we will see repeated in the case of Ivan Karamazov's relation with the devil. When Liputin tells Verkhovensky that he doesn't think anything is true in what he says about the "common cause", Verkhovensky humiliatingly replies: "It's all the more contemptible of you that you don't believe in the cause, yet you run after it […] and you're running after me now, like a mangy little cur". Furious, Liputin declares that he has every right to separate and form a new society. In response, Pyotr Stepanovich "[thunders] menacingly, his eyes flashing", and then "[continues] confidently on his way". Liputin suddenly wants to turn around, and knows within himself that if he doesn't turn around now, he will never do it. "This thought", the narrator informs us,

"occupied him for exactly ten steps, but on the eleventh, a new and desperate thought blazed in his mind: he didn't turn around and didn't go back"[1139].

In a similar way, as he gets closer to the moment and the place of the crime, Virginsky tries to convince the others to abandon their plan. His pure conscience tells him that what happens is wrong. He constantly repeats this, and after the murder has been committed, he keeps on repeating mechanically: "This isn't right, it isn't right! No, it's absolutely not right!"[1140] But, like others, despite the protests of his conscience, he is simply pushed forward by the power of circumstances and by the threats of Verkhovensky. Finally, if Virginsky is dragged along despite his conscience, Lyamshin, another failed man-god, is dragged along despite his cowardice. In the morning of the crime, apparently ill, he practically hides himself underneath his blanket, and later, he will be the first to turn himself in to the authorities. Moreover, right after the murder has taken place, together with Virginsky, Lyamshin will be involved in a pathological scene that reveals the absolute horror of the man arrived under the total control of a dark and impersonal power. Thus, contemplating Shatov's dead body in a state of shock, Lyamshin suddenly

> began to scream in a voice that wasn't human, but animal-like. Squeezing Virginsky with his hands tighter and tighter from behind, convulsively, he kept shrieking incessantly and without pause, his eyes goggling at everyone and his mouth wide open, his feet pounding on the ground as if they were beating a drum. Virginsky was so frightened that he himself began screaming like a madman, and in a kind of […] vicious […] frenzy […] he began to wrench free of Lymashin's arms, scratching and pounding him as much as he could with his hands behind his back[1141].

Taking into account all these grotesque events, culminating with Lyamshin's nervous breakdown, Verkhovensky's brief discourse, held just moments after the whole affair is over, astonishes one through its cynicism. Despite the fact that the whole affair has undoubtedly

[1139] *Ibidem,* pp. 610-615.
[1140] *Ibidem,* p.669.
[1141] *Ibidem,* p.670.

proven quite the contrary, Verkhovensky tells the small group which has just been united through murder that, undoubtedly, they should all

> now be feeling that proud sense of freedom that is associated with the fulfillment of an obligation freely undertaken. But if you are now unfortunately too upset to experience such feelings, you will undoubtedly feel them tomorrow, when it would be a shame not to feel them. I agree to regard Lyamshin's extremely shameful state of agitation as delirium, the more so since they say he really has been ill since this morning.[1142]

Witnessing with disgust the feebleness of the failed man-gods, incapable of withstanding the selection process presupposed by the Revolution, Verkhovensky concludes that "there are still many thousands of Shatovs in our future", and that it is necessary to "re-educate" the current "generation in order to make it worthy of freedom".[1143] Incapable of exercising their freedom through crime, people like Virginsky, Lyamshin and Liputin do not belong by nature to the revolutionary elite, a select club where there is a constant competition for power. Enslaved and manipulated by Verkhovensky, they naturally belong to the ant-heap inhabited by the mass of slaves. They are miles away from Verkhovensky's idol, that the latter wants to set at the helm of the future Revolution, Nikolay Stavrogin, for whom "it means nothing […] to sacrifice a life", whether his "or other people's", and without whom Verkhovensky, as he himself declares, is "nothing […], a fly, an idea in a bottle, Columbus without America"[1144]. But the chain of enslavement does not stop here. Verkhovnensky's idol, although he argues that he does not believe in God, "seriously and boldly" is forced to confess: "I believe in demons, I believe canonically in a personal demon, not an allegorical one"[1145].

As already indicated, Berdyaev has argued that, from Dostoyevsky's study of nihilism, and of its revolutionary expression, one can draw the following conclusion: "freedom of evil leads to

[1142] *Ibidem,* pp.671-672.
[1143] *Ibidem,* p.672.
[1144] *Ibidem,* p. 465.
[1145] *Ibidem,* p. 757.

the destruction of freedom itself and its degeneration into an evil necessity"[1146]. According to Berdyaev, Dostoyevsky's heroes reveal the fact that the man who denies God and assumes absolute freedom of self-determination, eventually "lets himself get obsessed by some fixed idea, and under its tyranny freedom soon begins to disappear"[1147]. For Berdyaev, what occurs on an individual level with Raskolnikov or Stavrogin, is perfectly reflected in the historical manifestation of the revolutionary phenomenon, and here, Berdyaev relates Dostoyevsky's reflections on the revolutionary phenomenon with Maistre's reflections from *Considérations sur la France*. Like Maistre, Dostoyevsky regarded "Revolution" as "madness, an obsession that attacks the personality, paralyses its freedom, and subjects it completely to an impersonal and unhuman force". The leaders of the Revolution "seem active, but in reality they are passive in the hands of the evil spirits they have let loose within themselves". Thus, "man in revolt loses his autonomy: he comes under the power of an impersonal inhuman force. There lies the secret of revolution, the inhumanity from which arise dishonor, absence of private opinion, the tyranny of some and the subjection of others"[1148].

[1146] Nicholas Berdyaev, *Dostoyevsky*, p. 70.
[1147] *Ibidem*, p. 96.
[1148] *Ibidem*, p. 151.

Chapter 6 – Dostoyevsky's response to the modern crisis

6.1. - Introduction

After analyzing Dostoyevsky's view of modernity, and in particular, his view with regard to the origins and the consequences of the latter, I will now turn to Dostoyevsky's theologico-political project, articulated in response to the modern crisis. I begin my analysis of Dostoyevsky's theolgico-political project in section 6.2., where I concentrate on the way in which, following the Slavophile ideal of a reconciliation between the knowledge of the Westernized intelligentsia and the faith of the people, Dostoyevsky reintegrates Stepan Trofimovich and Raskolnikov in the communion of the Russian people defined by *sobornost*. In the following section (6.3.), I present the coordinates of Dostoyevsky's Orthodox Enlightenment, articulated, once again on the footsteps of the Slavophiles, in response to the secular Enlightenment. In this sense, comparing Pranchère's interpretation of Maistre with Ward's interpretation of Dostoyevsky, I draw a parallel between Maistre's Catholic Counter-Enlightenment and Dostoyevsky's Christianized Enlightenment. In section 6.4. I explore the coordinates of Dostoyevsky's nationalism, analyzing in particular the relation between the latter and the idea of universality. Moreover, in the same section, I also compare the views of Maistre and Dostoyevsky with regard to war. Section 6.5 concentrates on the relation between Utopia and eschatology in Dostoyevsky's work. In the following section (6.6.), I analyze Dostoyevsky's view of the relation between transcendence and immanence, concentrating on his notion of incarnation. Finally, in section 6.7., starting from Dostoyevsky's ideal of the transformation of all social relations according to the ecclesial model, I explore Dostoyevsky's expectations

concerning the future of Russia and of mankind as a whole. In this sense, I argue that, as in the case of Maistre, Dostoyevsky's view of the future ultimately remains suspended between the prophetic announcement of an eschatological transfiguration of the whole earthly order, and the terrifying premonition of a revolutionary apocalypse.

6.2. - The repentant return to the People

Drouilly argues that there are three major theses that result from Dostoyevsky's *Demons*; three theses that explain the coordinates of Dostoyevsky's political theology, articulated in response to the nihilist phenomenon. The first thesis is that breaking away from the people leads to the loss of God and, from there on, to catastrophic consequences. Thus, as Shatov tells Stavrogin, the latter is "an atheist because" he is "a landowner's son". He lost God, and, implicitly, "the distinction between evil and good, because [he] stopped recognizing [his] own people"[1149]. This thesis leads logically to the second thesis : "*le socialisme moderne, sous la forme dégradée et criminelle qu'il a prise […] en s'incarnant dans des personnages comme Nečaev est le fruit du libéralisme idéaliste des années 40*"[1150]. Thus, if the purpose of Turgenyev, in *Fathers and Sons*, was to emphasize the rent between the liberals of the 1840s and the nihilists of the 1860s, the purpose of Dostoyevsky in *Demons* is, on the contrary, that of emphasizing the continuity between generations. The liberals promoted disdain for the people they oppressed and free-thinking. The nihilists were only strong enough to draw the conclusions. The latter's consistency makes them more worthy of respect, and turns them into the privileged object of

[1149] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, p. 283.

[1150] Jean Drouilly, *La pensée politique et religieuse de F.M. Dostoïevski*, p.353. *Demons* was inspired by a political murder that occurred on November 21, 1869. Together with some of his comrades, the young anarchist Sergey Nechayev (who has become the model of Pyotr Verkhovensky) murdered the student I.I. Ivanov, who had left Nechayev's secret revolutionary organization called *Narodnaya Rasprava* (*People's Reprisal*).

study when it comes to comprehending the essence of the modern phenomenon. Thus, Drouilly stresses the fact that the Dostoyevskyan analysis of nihilism represents first and foremost an "*acte d'accusation*", "*une œuvre de polémique*"[1151].

Dostoyevsky's hermeneutics of modernity faithfully reproduces the one put forward by Maistre. When analyzing the relation between Voltaire and Rousseau, on the one hand, and Robespierre and Marat, on the other hand, Maistre also argued that without the philosophy of the former we would not have seen "*les horreurs*" of the latter, as the former "*[ont] brisé […] ce frein*" that was meant to contain the latter[1152]. Now, this type of historical analysis, put forward by both authors, inevitably leads to the identification of an "original sin" that represents the original source, theological in both cases, of the "horrors" of nihilism. For Maistre, this original source was the Protestant Reformation. For Dostoyevsky, this original source was precisely the institution against which, in Maistre's interpretation of modernity, all the destructive energies of modern nihilism have been directed from the very beginning: the Holy See. Hence, Dostoyevsky's conviction that, if the ultimate source of the nihilism creeping into the Russian land is the Westernization of the Russian society – this being the third thesis emphasized by Drouilly –, the ultimate source of the Western disease itself, which now threatens to contaminate Russia and the whole world, is represented by the Roman Catholic perversion of Western Christianity. From all of these follows Dostoyevsky's Slavophile solution, proposed in response to the modern crisis: the West has to return to Christ, whose teaching has been preserved in its purity only in the Orthodox Church. Providence, Dostoyevsky will argue, once again like the Slavophiles, has granted to Russia the mission of accomplishing this process of regeneration, which can begin only with the return of the westernized Russian elite to Orthodoxy. The people

[1151] *Ibidem*, pp. 353-354.
[1152] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, pp. 177, 178.

could heal the elite of its disease because, deep down inside, it had remained unaffected by the spiritual degeneration coming from the West. This is the meaning of Shatov's exhortation, addressed to Stavrogin, to "acquire God through work […], Muzhhik's work", for "otherwise [he]'ll disappear like some nasty mould"[1153]. When the elite and the people will finally be reunited, then Russia will finally be able to utter its redeeming word to the West.

As indicated in the beginning of the section dedicated to Dostoyevsky, the Russian author has identified "the modern idea" with the ideal of brotherly love without Christ and immortality. As shown, for Dostoyevsky, the inevitable failure of this secularized Christian love triggers the degeneration of the modern idea into nihilism. Although the modern idea in itself is condemned to failure, its historical development however traces a line of demarcation between "the idealists" who end up by experiencing, first of all in themselves, its failure as a tragedy, and the cynics, opportunists and, first and foremost "scoundrels"[1154], for whom the collapse of the old Christian worldview represents only a great opportunity for the free exercise of their criminal instincts, and for the free pursuit of their desire for domination. In the first category we have Verkhovensky the father, a man who, Dostoyevsky confesses, "was dear to [him]"[1155]. In the second category we have Verkhovensky the son. Such a distinction, separating the misdirected idealists from the scoundrels, is completely absent from Maistre's analysis of modernity. In his case, we only have a separation between the misdirected representatives of the old order, especially the monarchs, and the various types of "scoundrels" – Protestants, philosophers, and revolutionaries – who, determined by motivations of a purely perverse nature, are taking profit from the naivety of the former in order to pursue their perverse goals. Nowhere in the work of Maistre, for reasons that

[1153] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, pp. 283-284.

[1154] According to Shatov, apart from the "dead and rotten" ideology of the liberals and the socialists, "the main thing" that determined him to separate from these people was the fact that among them he kept on meeting "scoundrels, scoundrels and more scoundrels everywhere" (*Ibidem*, p. 640).

[1155] *Ibidem*, p. 535.

shall be clarified in this section of the thesis, can one find exhortations similar to the one put forward by Zosima: "do not hate the atheists, the teachers of evil, the materialists, even the wicked among them, not only the good, for in their midst there are many who are good, especially in our time"[1156]. While good atheists are to be found also in the generation of the sons – what better example than Raskolnikov, this saintly criminal, which, although living in absolute poverty, gives away all of his money to those in need[1157]–, the idealist fathers are driven to despair by the impossibility of edifying a secular order on the basis of purely immanent brotherly love, and by the subsequent degeneration of the modern idea into Shigaylovism. But, this failure, Dostoyevsky will insist, is first of all a personal failure: it is the failure of those who promote the ideal, and yet, they are incapable of giving it flesh and making it real first and foremost within their own lives. Since the failure is personal, the overcoming of this personal failure can be achieved only through the personal encounter with Christ, the incarnate God.

Such will be the path of the repentant Stepan Verkhovensky, a character whose trajectory reveals Dostoyevsky's desire to redeem the Enlightenment in and through Christ. As indicated by Ward,

> in the early part of the novel, Stepan seems a caricature of secular liberalism, the hapless butt of Dostoevskian satire; but something changes as the novel progresses, and to the reader's [...] surprise, Stepan Verkhovensky takes on a certain grandeur. In Dostoevsky's own words, he becomes 'the cornerstone of everything' that Dostoevsky wanted to say in

[1156] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 216.More precisely, Joseph de Maistre would probably have nothing to object against Zosima's moral exhortation; but he would surely not subscribe to the latter's affirmation that within the above mentioned category one can also encounter good people. Dostoyevsky informs us that Alyosha wanted "to live for immortality" and would "accept no half-way compromise", because he had "been struck by the conviction that God and immortality existed". But, "by precisely the same lights, had he decided that God and immortality did not exist he would have immediately become an atheist and a socialist"; that is, he would have become one of the good atheists and socialists (*Ibidem*, p. 40).

[1157] Reflecting on the Nechayev affair, Dostoyevsky stressed in *The Diary of a Writer* the fact that, despite what public opinion may believe or may want to believe, individuals who commit crimes such as that committed by Nechayev, are not necessarily idiots, nor scoundrels, but many among them are "even endowed with good, but only misdirected hearts". And, Dostoyevsky continues, "the most pathological and saddest trait of our present time […], our present day calamity", is represented by the fact that "the filthiest and most villainous act may be committed by one who is not a villain at all" (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol. 1, pp. 146-149).

Demons about the three-cornered struggle within modernity among Enlightenment liberalism, nihilism and Christianity[1158].

In the beginning of the novel, Shatov reproaches Stepan Verkhovensky that he, together with Belinsky and the rest of the Russian Westernists, "never did love the people, didn't suffer for them and sacrificed nothing for them", but only imagined that they did so, in order "to make themselves feel good". For Shatov, who here utters Dostoyevsky's own ideas, these progressist thinkers, inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution, did not know and, for perverse reasons, refused to know the people. Instead, they "treated them with sickening contempt" while fetishizing "the French social insects". And, Shatov furiously continues his tirade, as a consequence of their separation from the people, they have lost God and "the faith of their fathers", becoming all "vile atheists or indifferent, depraved rubbish, and nothing more"[1159]. According to Shatov, who follows the theses of the Slavophile thinkers, such is the inevitable fate of the representative of the Russian intelligentsia that looses contact with the Russian soil: the loss of the people's God, brings with it depravation, and an inability to live in accordance with one's ideal standards, precisely because the vital force of religion has been lost. The separation from the soil of the universal/cosmopolitan man, who is no longer incarnated in the concrete history of a concrete people, explains the separation between ideal and flesh, and, more precisely, between thought and deed. Stepan Verkhovensky's frivolous and parasitic life, first and foremost in relation with the people who toil working the land, is exemplary in this sense: "his actual behaviour almost always fails to measure up to the loftiness of his ideas"[1160]. His younger enemies are all too aware of this fact, and thus, towards the end of the novel, when

[1158] Bruce K. Ward, *Redeeming the Enlightenment*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, 2010, pp. 195-196.
[1159] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, pp. 42-43.
[1160] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, p. 50.

Stepan Verkhovensky decides to publicly defend the old liberal idealism of the 1840s in the face of its brutal materialistic degeneration, his moral inconsistency is exposed and exploited by one of the representatives of the new generation. Stepan Verkhovensky's pathetic public defense of the esthetic principle in the face of the materialist socialists who argue that, unlike "petroleum" and "boots", Raphael's "Madonna serves absolutely no purpose", is cynically interrupted by one of the members of Pyotr Verkhovensky's gang, a seminary student, who publicly exposes Stepan Trofimovich's immorality. More specifically, he is publicly telling him about a certain criminal fugitive, Fedka the Convict, who is used by Pyotr Verkhovensky's terrorist sect and who is robbing the people in the area, having "just recently committed another murder". The nihilist seminarian then asks the liberal nobleman: "if you hadn't sent him [Fedka] off to the army fifteen years ago to pay off a gambling debt, that is to say, if you hadn't simply lost him at cards – tell me, would he have ended up doing hard labour? Would he be murdering people, as he's doing now, in his struggle for existence? What do you have to say about that Mr. Aesthete?"[1161]

In his public discourse from Yuliya Mikhaylovna's literary meeting, Verkhovensky the father confronts Verkhovensky the son's scientific materialism with the argument that "science itself

[1161] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, pp. 376, 536-538. In one of his polemical articles from *The Diary of a Writer*, Dostoyevsky denounced the hypocrisy of the Russian liberal Westernizers who were able to love mankind while oppressing their fellow countrymen whom they did not deem worthy of freedom. According to Dostoyevsky, the Russian "wanderers" who lived by the French social ideals, "hated serfdom not for the sake of the Russian peasant who", enslaved by them, "worked for them and fed them". Instead, they felt "abstract sorrow about slavery prevailing in mankind". As stressed by Dostoyevsky, "they pledged, sold or exchanged […] their peasants, and having thus raised money, they went to Paris and financed there the publication of French radical newspapers and magazines for the salvation of mankind, and not just of the Russian peasant". Revealing themselves to be "great rogues", they created through their perverse and oppressive class discourse the image of a Russian peasant who was "slavish", "idolatrous" and immoral, and this "contemptuous attitude […] always alleviated in their hearts the sharpness of their civic sorrow caused by serfdom, thus conveying to it an abstract and universal character with which one can live on very good terms, spiritually feeding oneself on the contemplation of one's moral beauty and on the largesse of civic thought, while feeding the body – and feeding it well! – with the poll tax levied from the same peasants" (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, Vol. 2, pp. 992-993). This accounted for the paradox (which Dostoyevsky underlined on the traces of Yuri Samarin – praised in the same article as an authentic democrat and fighter for the freedom of the people) that while "in Europe those who [called] themselves democrats invariably [stood] in defense of the people, or at least [relied] on them", Russian "democrats [were] frequently aristocrats and, in the last analysis, almost always come out in support of everything that tends to suppress the people, and they wind up with sheer domineering" (*Ibidem*, p. 986).

would not last a minute without beauty"[1162]. Thus, Stepan Verkhovensky opposes to exclusive rationalism and to its utilitarian conclusions, an ideal of wholeness, whose romantic and Slavophile origins are easily discernable. But, as seen, Stepan Verkhovensky himself afterwards is confronted with the separation between the esthetic and the ethic, which he experiences as a consequence of his moral failures, and which reveals his esthetic idealism as both guilty and insufficient. Disgusted by the degeneration of his ideals by his son's generation, but first of all disgusted with himself, Stepan Verkhovensky finally decides to leave behind his educated society that becomes the scene of murder, arson, madness and suicide. He returns, at the end of *Demons*, to the God-bearing people, treasury of the living Christian virtues. He returns to the people with the purpose of gaining true wholeness. The latter, a Slavophile concept is achieved only by the reintegration, through repentance, in the organic community of sinners, where every person is aware of the fact that he is "guilty as far as others are concerned"[1163]. The wholeness of spirit from which the uprooted Stepan Trofimovich has been deprived all his life is then achieved through the rediscovery of *sobornost*, for, as stressed by Romano Guardini, grounded in the dogma of the Trinity, Dostoyevsky's social anthropology "*se manifeste particulièrement dans le profond sentiment de notre solidarité dans le péché*"[1164]. Enlightened by the word of God, read to him by a pious woman whose name, Sofya, means wisdom, Stepan Trofimovich ends up by pleading guilty both to Shatov's and to the seminarian's accusations. And, moreover, he finally assumes responsibility for the development of his son's revolutionary nihilism. He therefore makes the following impressive confession on his death-bed: "I've told lies all my life. Even when I was speaking the truth", he adds, "I never said anything for the sake of truth, but only for myself". Confessing his inauthenticity and moral insufficiency, and assuming responsibility for

[1162] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, p. 537.
[1163] *Ibidem*, p. 713.
[1164] Romano Guardini, *L'univers religieux de Dostoïevski*, p. 85.

everything, Stepan Verkhovensky reintegrates himself through repentance in the community, bowing himself as "the first among sinners" in front of the whole repentant collectivity. Thus, receiving the gift of faith, he passes away in peace after receiving communion[1165].

As argued by Gibson, for Dostoyevsky the Russian people "had no feeling for institutional democracy, but was bounded together in an immemorial fellowship, not based on the Roman concept of rights, and therefore not excluding the transgressor, but rooted in the soil and growing imperceptibly into religion". And "it was through this natural unanimity leading into a relation to God that Dostoevsky finally received the feeling for God himself"[1166]. No matter how many and great were the sins of the people, Dostoyevsky argued, with one mind, the latter bowed down before the Christian ideal of holiness, whose fulfillment in the personal life of each was regarded as the only authentic solution to the problem of social injustice. Thus, Dostoyevsky argued that "the Russian people" should not be judged "by those villainies which they frequently perpetrate, but by those great and holy things for which they long amidst the very villainy"[1167]. Precisely for the fact that it was fully committed to this Christian ideal of holiness, the people was "incomparably purer in heart than our upper classes", for, unlike in the case of the latter, "the people's mind" was "not bifurcated to such an extent as to cherish, side by side with a noble idea, its dirty little antithesis"[1168]. The Russian people, Dostoyevsky argued, recognized sin as sin, and, confessing the freedom of the human person, as that which granted the latter dignity and raised it above the status of a "social insect", the people did not regard crime as something that

[1165] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, pp. 721, 731-732. In the Orthodox Liturgy, communion is preceded by the following prayer: "I believe oh Lord, that you are truly the Christ, the Son of the living God, who came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am first".

[1166] A. Boyce Gibson, *The Religion of Dostoevsky*, p. 22.

[1167] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, Vol. 1, p. 202.

[1168] *Ibidem*, Vol. 2, p. 702.

was only the result of the mistaken organization of society[1169]. "Christianity", Dostoyevsky argued, "fully recognizes the pressure of the milieu". And yet, it does not reduce crime to an inevitable outcome of the environment. While Christianity "makes it a moral duty for man to struggle against his environment [...], making man dependent on any error in the social organization, the environmental doctrine reduces man to absolute impersonality [...], to a state of the most miserable slavery that can be conceived"[1170], delivering him into the hands of social engineers like Fourier, Chernyshevsky, or Shigaylov. If like liberal individualists, the Russian people, indeed, regarded the criminal as guilty, yet, unlike liberal individualists, the Russian people also believed "that they themselves" were "also guilty in common with every criminal". This, Dostoyevsky believed, was a "strongly felt [...] unconscious idea" present in the minds of Russians[1171], which reflected the Orthodox conception of *sobornost*. According to this conception, society appeared neither as a contract between individuals, nor as a poorly organized ant-heap, but as an organic whole, in which everyone is affected by the actions of everyone, and thus rendered more or less vulnerable to sinning, depending on the sins or virtues of everybody else. *Sobornost* even surpasses the strict social boundaries, and takes a cosmic dimension. "All is like an ocean", Zosima teaches, "all flows and is contiguous, and if you touch it in one place it will reverberate at the other end of the world". That is the reason why one should not only ask forgiveness from all his fellow human beings, taking upon himself the responsibility for their sins and sufferings, but even from the birds, for "both birds and child and indeed all animals around you would feel easier", and by this less prone to sin, "if you yourself were inwardly

[1169] This in fact is a Fourierist idea, which is expressed in *Crime and Punishment* through the voice of Lebezyatnikov, an apostle of Fourierism. The latter blames the current organization of society for the fact that he has beaten Katerina Ivanovna. While Lebezyatnikov does not assume responsibility for his behaviour, he insists that, "in the future society", organized "in communes […], fighting is unthinkable" (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, pp. 351-352).

[1170] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, Vol. 1, p. 13.

[1171] *Ibidem*, pp. 14-15.

better-apportioned than you are now, even if they felt so by a single drop"[1172]. For the same reason, Dostoyevsky argued that, to the extent that a fidelity with the Orthodox Christian spirit of Russia was preserved, a guilty verdict in a Russian court should have represented only two things. First of all, a unanimous recognition of crime as crime, not as a mere mechanic consequence of the poor organization of society or, even worst, as "a honourable protest" against that same type of organization[1173]. In the second place, it should have represented a public declaration of collective guilt. Referring to Rousseau's *Du Contrat Social*, Michel Foucault has argued in *Surveiller et Punir* that the contractualist understanding of society turned the criminal, himself a signatory of the social contract, into an enemy of the social body; or, more precisely, given the fact that the social body was the result of a contract made by individuals, the criminal became an enemy of everybody else, a fact that justified his literal annihilation, by the whole reunited society, as traitor and enemy of the fatherland[1174]. But for Dostoyevsky, the understanding of society based on *sobornost* completely reversed this understanding of things. Instead of regarding him as a traitor and enemy of society, the Russian people, Dostoyevsky

[1172] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 413-414.

[1173] Dostoyevsky was deeply disturbed by the fact that, in his time, among Russian jurors, there was a growing fashion of acquitting criminals on the basis of the above mentioned criteria. For him, this meant nothing more than legitimizing crime as a normal practice at the level of the Russian public opinion, something which, he believed, not only distorted the Christian Orthodox understanding of crime, but was also having devastating consequences for the Russian society as a whole (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, Vol. 1, pp. 10-19). In *Surveiller et punir*, Michel Foucault argues that, in the context of the French mid nineteenth-century debates that concerned the relation between criminality and its social premises, the Fourierists went beyond the mere exculpation of the criminal on the grounds that his crime has been determined by social conditions. Instead, "*ils ont élaboré, les premiers peut-être, une théorie politique qui est en même temps une valorisation positive du crime*". The latter was regarded as a legitimate protest of human freedom against a repressive civilization, and valued as "*un instrument politique qui sera éventuellement aussi précieux pour la libération de notre société qu'il l'a été pour l'émancipation des Noirs*". In the articles in the Fourierist journal *La Phalange*, analyzed by Foucault, one can encounter the social philosophy that stands behind the actions of Raskolnikov (Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, pp. 338-342). Lebezyatnikov also values Sonya's decision to prostitute herself "as a spirited concrete protest against the organization of society". In the spirit of the Fourierist social philosophy, which presupposed a harmonization of all the human passions, Lebezyatnikov adds that, in principle, Sonya's condition "is the most normal condition for a woman". And while "in our present society", he adds, "it is not entirely normal […] because it is forced on her […], in the future it will be completely normal, because freely chosen […]. Her role will be given a different significance, under harmonious and rational conditions" (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, pp. 352-353).

[1174] Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, p. 107.

argued, regarded the criminal as a "sufferer" who bore the "burden for general lawlesness", that is, who bore with his chains not only his sins, but the sins of everybody else, including people who may have been in fact much more guilty than himself[1175]. That is the reason why, in his teachings, Zosima argues that "a criminal can have no judge upon the earth until that judge himself has perceived that he is every bit as criminal as the man who stands before him, and that for the crime of the man who stands before him he himself may be more guilty than anyone else"[1176]. Hence, like the Slavophiles, and unlike Maistre, who regarded the death penalty as a fundamental institution for the preservation of society, Dostoyevsky firmly opposes capital punishment, seeing in it only an expression of social hypocrisy and cruelty.

Thus, the same rediscovery of God through *sobornost* is experienced both by Stepan Verkhovensky as well as by Rodion Raskolnikov, another repentant representative of the educated strata of the Russian society. In the case of the latter, we have an experience that is closely related to Dostoyevsky's own experience, who, like Raskolnikov, has discovered the people, and, together with the people, the Orthodox alternative to the Enlightenment's secular ideal of brotherhood, in the Siberian imprisonment. According to Ivan Esaulov, Raskolnikov's "primary guilt [...], from the viewpoint of Orthodox consciousness [...], does not consist in the fact that he committed a legal crime"; but "in the fact that..., [setting] himself against other people", and thus "self-willfully trying to define the 'value' of his and others' lives" according to the sole conclusions of his isolated mind, "he has fallen out of the communal unity of the people", and thus "has forfeited Grace"[1177]. In Siberia, Raskolnikov is struck by the contrast between the convicts' affection and respect for Sonya, and their hatred and contempt for him. Convicts who have committed far greater crimes than he despise him and hate him, to the point

[1175] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol.1, pp. 15-16.
[1176] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 415.
[1177] Ivan A. Esaulov, "The Categories of Law and Grace in Dostoevsky's Poetics", p. 128.

of wanting to kill him, because he is a "gentleman" and an "atheist". But the development of his faith, although not proclaimed openly, just as he did not proclaim before openly any atheist convictions, instantly brings with it a change in their attitude towards him[1178]. Being felt rather than comprehended, the solidarity that unites the people reveals itself as a mysterious invisible bond, entirely different from the contractual organization of the modern Western society, and foreign to the rationalist and individualist premises of this artificial social construction. Thus, through this gradual reintegration in the common world of the community of repentant sinners, Raskolnikov regains, together with his common sense, his sense of transcendent realities such as "*l'amour [...], la souffrance [...], et la foi*", the ignorance of which has brought the collapse of his "*univers mental*". As stressed by Drouilly, this collapse, occurring at the end of a chain of syllogisms that led him to the commitment of a "*crime rationnel*", has showed him "*que le monde n'est pas rationnel ou plutôt que le système des valeurs qui le fonde est d'un autre ordre que le rationnel*". But the humble acceptance of the common standards of the collective consciousness, humble acceptance that represents for him the greatest challenge, opens to him the perspective of another universe, not shattered and isolated as his, but consistent and shared, a universe where "*tout est lié, les âmes sont enchaînées les unes aux autres par de fils invisibles, chacun y est coupable pour tous et tous pour chacun, dans la mesure où tous les hommes sont des fils d'un même père*"[1179].

[1178] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, pp. 522-526.
[1179] Jean Drouilly, *La pensée politique et religieuse de F.M. Dostoïevski*, pp. 282-284.

6.3. - Redeeming the Enlightenment versus *L'Autorité Contre les Lumières*

The redemption of Stepan Trofimovich, through his re-unification with the God-bearing people, as well as Dostoyevsky's overall sympathetic and compassionate attitude towards this character of his, ultimately reflects Dostoyevsky's different attitude towards modernity when compared with Maistre. Ultimately, this difference of attitude is explained by the different ways in which Maistre and Dostoyevsky conceive the nature and origins of modernity, as well as the theologico-political solution to the modern crisis. Locating the theological origins of modernity in the Protestant insurrection directed against Catholic authority, Maistre could regard modernity as pure negativity. For Maistre, the relation between Catholicism and Protestantism (together with all its descendents) was basically seen as a relation between good and evil, where evil does not have ontological consistency, being nothing else than the denial of good. That is why, for Maistre, there is nothing to redeem in modernity, in general, and in the Enlightenment, in particular. Instead, there is everything to overturn or exorcize. In the case of Dostoyevsky, things are different. Taking into account the fact that, for Dostoyevsky, the Reformation had represented a protest directed against a perverted form of Christianity, that is, a protest directed not against the good, as Maistre was arguing, but against the falsification of the good, then, inevitably, this protest could not be radically evil. Unfortunately, Dostoyevsky argued, misdirected, this protest had dialectically replicated the one-sidedness of Catholicism, and, throwing out the baby with the bath water, it has ended up by aggravating the crisis of the West. However, Dostoyevsky insisted on the fact that, despite being misdirected, the protest against Rome originated nevertheless in a completely legitimate state of dissatisfaction with the existing order of Western Christianity. Protestantism then appeared to Dostoyevsky as the lesser evil, and its legitimate aspiration for freedom appeared as redeemable. Naturally, as in the case of the

Slavophiles, this sympathetic perspective on Protestantism, implying a partial agreement with it, was transfered also to its descendent, the Enlightenment, whose goal, taking into account the crisis of Christian faith in the West, was to accomplish without faith in Christ, and outside of His Church, a series of Christian ideals such as freedom, equality, and brotherhood. The whole work of Dostoyevsky testifies the latter's conviction that the purity and vitality of these ideals, and, ultimately, their actual accomplishment on earth, to the extent that it is possible, remain in a relation of direct dependence to Christ, as God incarnate, and His Church. This is the significance of the fact that, on his deathbed, the repentant Stepan Trofimovich abandons the modern idea of "virtue wihout Christ", in the name of a both old and new idea, the Great Idea, which is nothing but the Christian rescue and accomplishment, through Christ, of all the worthy ideals contained in "the modern idea". "The fresh song of hope", and of praise for humanity, with which The Tower of Babel is erected in Stepan Verkhovensky's poem from the beginning of *Demons*, is changed, at the end of the novel, into a new song of hope and praise to God, which the repentant Stepan Verkhovensky utters on his death bed, against the background of the original idea's degeneration into murder and tyranny. Before passing away, Stepan Trofimovich testifies that

> just the constant thought that something exists that is immeasurably more just and happier than I am already fills my entire being with immeasurable tenderness and – glory – oh, whoever I may be, whatever I might have done! It is much more necessary for man to know his own happiness and to believe, every moment, that perfect and serene happiness exists somewhere, for all people and for everything [...].The entire law of human existence consists merely in the fact that man has always been able to bow down before something immeasurably great. If people are deprived of what is immeasurably great, they will cease to live and will die in despair. The immesurable and infinite are just as necessary to man as is this small planet on which he lives [...]. My friends, everyone, all of you: long live the Great Idea! The eternal, immeasurable Idea! Every man, whoever he is, needs to bow down the Great Idea![1180]

[1180] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, p. 734.

As it can be seen, this hymn of praise strongly resembles another one, that of the equally repentant Dmitry Karamazov, uttered before his departure to prison in Siberia, where he is condemned to suffer for a crime for which he is not legally guilty, but for which he assumes the moral (co)responsibility, according to the same principle, recurrent throughout Dostoyevsky's work, of authentic brotherhood manifested through solidarity in sin. Stepan Verkhovensky's declaration resumes Dostoyevsky's conviction that human happiness on earth does not presuppose the rejection of transcendence in the name of immanence, but on the contrary, requires the transfiguration of the latter by the former. As stressed by Ward, "the notion of humanity's two-fold relation to the eternal" ("the immeasurable and infinite") "and the earthly" ("the small planet on which [man] lives") "is the basis of Dostoyevsky's rejection of Kirilov's claim that it is the man-god who embodies loyalty to the earth". Instead, as it results from Stepan Trofimovich's confession, as well from the discourses of Father Zosima, for Dostoyevsky "the affirmation of the earth is inseparable" from the affirmation of the "immesurable and the infinite"[1181].

In Dostoyevsky's work, the episode of Stepan Verkhovensky's return to the people gives expression to the Slavophile ideal of reconciliation between the knowledge of the educated classes and the faith of the people. "We [...] have to bow before the people and await from them everything – both thought and expression", Dostoyevsky wrote, in *The Diary of a Writer*. "We must bow before the people's truth", Dostoyevsky continued, writing as a representative of the educated classes, "like prodigal children who, for two hundred years, have been absent from home [...]. On the other hand, however, we must bow on one condition only, and this – *sine qua non*: that the people accept from us those numerous things which we have brought with us"[1182]: in

[1181] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoevsky's Critique of the West*, 152.
[1182] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol. 1, p. 204.

particular "Western sciences", which, Dostoyesky believed, "will not dim the image of Christ, as in the West, where, however, it was dimmed not by science, as liberals maintain, but by the Western Church itself". "Science" Dostoyevsky continues "is one thing, but we do not have to borrow 'enlightenment' from Western-European sources, lest we adopt such social formulae as: '*Chacun pour soi et Dieu pour tous*' or '*Après moi le déluge*' ". According to Dostoyevsky, the Russian educated classes can "find at home a different kind of enlightenment", the "genuine enlightenment" that the Russian people possesses by virtue "of their acceptance of the quintessence of Christ's teachings". Attached to this solid religious basis, the "Western sciences" "will become a real blessing". Thus, Dostoyevsky concludes, "with faith in the people and their strength, we may develop some time in the future our Christian enlightenment in its full brightness and radiance", an Enlightenment whose "principal and vital foundation [...] must always be [...] the Christianity of our people"[1183]. This of course is nothing other than Ivan Kireevsky's "Orthodox Enlightenment", an integration within the teaching of the Orthodox Church of the highest achievements of European civilization, a synthesis that would constitute the philosophical and religious foundation for a new universal civilization that Russia was called to develop in response to the crisis of the modern West.

In his book *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, Ward argued that "Dostoyevsky's critique of the West was aimed chiefly at persuading Russian Westernism to find in Christianity the end of its yearning for the just order"[1184]. In a later book, entitled *Redeeming the Enlightenment*, Ward returns to this theme and approaches it in greater detail. Essentially, Ward subscribes to a thesis that has also been affirmed by Florovsky. According to the latter, if reactionary authors such as Konstantin Leontyev and, of course, Maistre, have argued that there is a radical incompatibility

[1183] *Ibidem*, vol. 2, pp. 983-987.
[1184] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, p. 179.

between the Christian tradition and the humanism of the Enlightenment, Dostoyevsky "saw only a lack of development [...] where Leontyev found complete contradiction"[1185]. Ward starts from Charles Taylor's observation according to which modernity is the scene of a three-level conflict between "secular humanists", "neo-Nietzscheans" and "acknowledgers of transcendence". But Ward finds the term "acknowledgers of transcendence" too vague, and the term "secular humanists" too narrow. More precisely, while Christianity cannot be reduced to the acknowledgment of transcendence, the Enlightenment cannot be reduced to secular humanism, for in reality, representatives of the Enlightenment such as Rousseau and Kant have acknowledged transcendence. However, according to Ward, their understanding of transcendence, and in particular of its relation to immanence, was not Christian. From this point of view, if, unlike Nietzsche and his followers, both Christianity and the Enlightenment affirm the dignity of each human person, the latter two are differentiated by the specific ontological/theological premises in which they ground their moral ideals. For this reason, instead of secular humanism, Ward prefers to use the term liberal humanism, as, according to him, this term better reflects the inner variety of the Enlightenment. At the same time, he refers to the Christians who affirm the metaphysical insufficiency of the Enlightenment, but who defend up to a certain point the same values defended by the representatives of the Enlightenment, as Christian humanists. In the three-level conflict that defines modernity, as reflected by the three level dialogue between Ivan Karamazov, Rakitin and Dmitry Karamazov, presented in section 5.4., each side can agree with another one of the three against a third. More specifically, liberal humanists can side with the nihilists in their opposition, whether partial or complete, to the Christian faith. Christian humanists will side with the nihilists in their denunciation, as

[1185] Georges Florovsky, "The Evolution of the Dostoevskian Conception of Human Freedom", p. 86.

inconsistent, of the liberal humanist attempt to defend Christian values while rejecting partially or totally the Christian faith. Finally, Christian humanists and liberal humanists would defend together (at least some of) the Christian values against the attacks of nihlism, although Christian humanists would label liberal humanism as inconsistent and blame it for the emergence of nihilism, while liberal humanists, in their turn, would denounce the fundamentalism of the Christian humanists[1186]. Although including various modern thinkers, such as Kant, Locke, Tolstoy or Kafka, the dialogue articulated in Ward's book is nevertheless centered around three key figures: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, as representative of the Enlightenment's liberal humanism, Friedrich Nietzsche, as representative of nihilist antihumanism, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky, as representative of Christian humanism.

Ward's thesis is that Dostoyevsky did not regard the liberal humanism of the Enlightenment as radically evil, given its official opposition to traditional Christianity. Instead, up to a certian point at least, he regarded liberal humanism as a legitimate protest directed against Western Christianity, but misdirected, in as much as it confounded Christianity with what Dostoyevsky regarded as its Western distortion, and with what Ward, less confessionally circumscribed, defines, in the traces of John Milbank, as "bad theology"[1187]. According to Ward, a careful study of Dostoyevsky's work proves his awareness that the Enlightenment was fed by Christian ideals extracted from the framework of Christian theology. Dostoyevsky believed that liberal humanism was unable to withstand, at least on a theoretical level, the destructive criticism of nihilism. While, in practice, the seriousness, the extent, and the foreseeable practical consequences of the contemporary crisis of liberal humanism remain difficult problems of historical interpretation, "in regard to thought", Ward argues that "contemporary liberalism

[1186] Bruce K. Ward, *Redeeming the Enlightenment*, p. 21.
[1187] *Ibidem*, pp. 6-8.

reveals itself as incapable of responding convincingly to a neo-Nietzschean critique of its moral principles". Or, more precisely, it reveals itself as incapable of providing a satisfactory answer to this fundamental question: why should one respect the values of the Enlightenment?[1188]. Dostoyevsky emphasized, throughout his work, this inconsistency and incompleteness of liberal humanism. Moreover, he believed that, due to its lack of a Christian foundation, "liberal humanism engenders a nihilism that undermines its own most cherished virtues, such as respect for equality, authenticity, tolerance, and compassion", the four values around which the three-level dialogue is articulated in Ward's book. For Dostoyevsky, Ward continues, "the way to the redeeming of these virtues from the darkness that engulfs them lies through their enactment in the alternative order witnessed to by a Christianity that, rather than deserving the Enlightenment criticism, is able to show itself as a fulfillment of what the Enlightenment at its best, sought"[1189]. Therefore, like the Slavophiles, Dostoyevsky wanted to redeem the Enlightenment, and with it the West as a whole, by redirecting its most noble aspirations towards their initial Christian source, whose purity, Dostoyevsky and the Slavophiles believed, had been preserved in the Orthodox Church.

Dostoyevsky's iconographic literary art and, more specifically, his capacity of representing all of his heroes, independently of their poverty or sinfulness, as beings created in the image and likeness of God, represents a strong foundation for the Enlightenment's ideal of equality and a more consistent defense from Christian positions of that ideal. Likewise, Ward argues that the Enlightenment's ideal of tolerance is supported by Dostoyevsky's dialogical art, and that Dostoyevsky's idea that all are guilty for all provides a much more profound and solid basis for the Enlightenment's ideal of tolerance. Ward also stresses the fact that the modern ideal of

[1188] *Ibidem*, p. 17.
[1189] *Ibidem*, p. 196.

subjective authenticity and self-determination, central to Rousseau's philosophy, degenerates into an impossible imitation of the self-sufficiency of God[1190]. Thus, the ideal of subjective authenticity, taken over from Rousseau by Nietzsche, arrives at the overman's rejection of the other three ideals of the Enlightenment –equality, tolerance and compassion –, and ultimately leads either to a radical form of domination, or to self-destruction. According to Ward, Dostoyevsky saw a single possible response to the modern crisis of subjectivity: the overcoming of "the logic of the underground", which represents a continuation of Rousseau's *Confessions*, "through the way of Christ-like *kenosis*, wherein one breaks through to one's self through self-*surrender* rather than self-*assertion*"[1191]. Finally, Ward stresses the fact that Dostoyevsky redeems Rousseau's ideal of compassion. The latter had been dismissed by Nieztsche as a perverse exercise of the will to power over a subject of compassion whose misery is in turn increased. Furthermore, Nietzsche argued that compassion not supported by divine command is an absurdity. Yet, although Rousseau does not deny the existence of God, stressing instead the capital importance that this belief has for morality, God for Rousseau does not manifest a "transformative presence in the world". Instead, the world remains under the absolute control of the all too human passions. As stressed by Ward, "for Dostoyevsky, compassionate love can be a mediator between this world and the other world"[1192]. Dostoyevsky's position is rooted in the Orthodox conception of immanence being united with transcendence in Christ. In Orthodox theology, creation is penetrated and deified by the uncreated energies of the Godhead. For this reason, "the fundamental point of divergence between Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky"[1193] is not belief in God as the supreme moral sanction, but the conception of life. Both Nietzsche and

[1190] *Ibidem*, p. 109.
[1191] *Ibidem*, p. 107.
[1192] *Ibidem*, p. 193.
[1193] *Ibidem*, p. 192.

Dostoyevsky are confronting the rationalist worldview with a philosophy of life. But whereas for Nietzsche life is "*the will to power - and nothing besides*"[1194], and therefore, just like transcendence, Christian love represents a delusion, for Dostoyevsky, by virtue of the Orthodox unity of transcendence and immanence in Christ, "agapic love [has] a real presence in the world already, and[is] not only […] the consequence of human obedience to an eternal command"[1195].

As it results from Stepan Trofimovich's last discourse, for Dostoyevsky, "the final consummation of human freedom, equality and brotherhood is enfolded in the mystery of eternal life. Yet, insofar as our transitory life on earth can contain it, the God-man order constitutes for Dostoyevsky an alternative to the Geneva idea of order – and at the same time the redemption of that idea"[1196]. Referring to Simone Weil, Ward argues that overall, Dostoyevsky's religious and political thought can be considered a reflection of her creed that "making the light of Christ fully incarnate implies illumining the modern secular with that light, showing it the way to the fulfillment of its best aspirations, rather than simply rejecting it"[1197]. From this point of view, it is interesting to emphasize the parallelism between Ward's interpretation of Dostoyevsky's relation with the Enlightenment and Pranchère's interpretation of Maistre's relation with it. The titles of the two books concisely resume the differences between the two ways of relating to the Enlightenment: *L'Autorité contre les Lumières* and *Redeeming the Enlightenment*. Indeed, if Maistre opposes to the revolutionary triad –*liberté, egalité, fraternité* – a counter-revolutionary triad – authority, hierarchy, religion –, Dostoyevsky's response to *liberté, egalité, fraternité* is nothing other than *liberté, egalité, fraternité*, but in and through Christ.

[1194] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, Weidenfield and Nicolson, London, 1968, p. 550.

[1195] Bruce K. Ward, *Redeeming the Enlightenment*, p. 192.

[1196] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, p. 161. As indicated in section 5.4. (see footnote 116) the Geneva idea of order, or the modern idea, finds its expression first and foremost in the moral and political philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

[1197] Bruce K. Ward, *Redeeming the Enlightenment*, p. 220.

The differences between Maistre and Dostoyevsky concerning this specific point can be reflected also by analyzing in detail Maistre's response to the four ideals of the Enlightenment enumerated in Ward's book. Maistre confronts the ideal of equality with the reality and necessity of hierarchy, which culminates in the identity between sovereignty and infallibility, a principle on which the existence of society itself depends. For this reason, inevitably, in response to the ideal of tolerance, Maistre argues that "*celui qui parle ou écrit pour ôter un dogme national au peuple […] doit être pendu comme voleur domestique*"[1198]. As argued by Pranchère, in reaction to the modern ideal of self-determination, Maistre will demonstrate that "*la subjectivité – ce qui fait d'un individu le sujet responsable de ses actes – n'est possible que sur le fond d'une sujétion ou d'un assujettissement*"[1199]; or, otherwise said, that the individual is a product of society that always exists before him, and that produces him through the mechanism of authority. The issue of compassion is much more complex. First and foremost, it would be profoundly misleading to argue that Maistre was a stranger to compassion. His thoughts on war, to take just one example, thoroughly reveal this fact. Reflecting on the horrific effects of Napoleon's Russian campaign, Maistre wrote that "*les souffrances de l'homme passent toute imagination, et ne laisse, même à l'égard du plus féroce ennemi, de place que pour la pitié*"[1200]. In fact, out of the four ideals of the Enlightenment analyzed in Ward's book, compassion is the only one that, although in a twisted form, is also encountered in the thought of Maistre. Or, more precisely, it is the only ideal of the Enlightenment that Maistre wants to claim back from the Enlightenment, while the other three are simply annihilated by his philosophical and rhetorical exercises. It is perhaps no coincidence that, albeit in a deeply troubling form, compassion is also the only one of the above mentioned four ideals that can be encountered in the philosophy of the Grand Inquisitor, where we are

[1198] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 701.
[1199] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 209.
[1200] Joseph de Maistre, *Œuvres complètes*, XII, p.344, in *Ibidem*, p. 353.

dealing with "a totalitarianism with a compassionate face"[1201]. As for Maistre, in reaction to the Enlightenment's critique of violence and to the Enlightenment's ideal of a world progressively liberated from violence, he will expose instead, together with the violence of the Enlightenment itself, the mystical and providential rationality of violence. In particular, Maistre's theodicy will try to demonstrate the fact that the sacrificial order ordained by Providence has a compassionate finality: the redemption of mankind and, possibly, the Origenistic redemption of all[1202]. Horrifying, violence is equally divine, for it is the manifestation of God in human history that announces the coming eschatological peace.

Last but not least, it is important to stress the fact that both in the case of Dotoyevsky and of Maistre, their attempt to redeem and respectively overturn the Enlightenment is concentrated in a critical approach to the thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Although, unlike Maistre, Dostoyevsky does not engage Rousseau directly, Ward argues that the parallel reading of Dostoyevsky and Rousseau reveals the fact that the work of the former constitutes a Christian answer to the issues raised by Rousseau. Moreover, Rousseau becomes the privileged target of a redeeming/constructive critique of the Enlightenment, due to the fact that his thought best reveals the contradictions and limitations of the Enlightenment, contradictions and limitations acknowledged by Rousseau himself. This is an interesting issue, taking into account the fact that there have been authors who have even contested Rousseau's belonging to the Enlightenment. In this sense, Ward argues that, as already illustrated in the section dedicated to Maistre's critique of Rousseau (1.5.), the latter "certainly does not fit neatly into an Enlightenment understood as an exclusively rational project for the building of a secular world based on individual self-interest". But, as "recognized by himself and by others", including "his worst enemies […],

[1201] Bruce K. Ward, *Redeeming the Enlightenment*, p. 190.
[1202] We will analyze in greater detail this issue in section 7.5.

Rousseau was" nevertheless "a full-fledged child of the Enlightenment", and, through his contradictions and limitations, which turn him into the Enlightenment's turning point, and therefore, into the preferential target of the Maistrian and Dostoyevskyan critique of the Enlightenment, Rousseau "is the living demonstration that the Enlightenment project was one of critique in Foucault's sense of an ongoing process that does not finally spare even itself"[1203].

6.4. - Nationalism, messianism and Christian socialism

For Dostoyevsky, the development and dissemination of the Christian Enlightenment, which he was articulating in response to the secular Enlightenment, required not only the bowing down of the educated classes before the people's truth, but the people's generalized access to education, a reform that, like the Slavophiles and unlike Maistre, Dostoyevsky was promoting wholeheartedly[1204]. Moreover, and naturally related to the universal access to education, the reconciliation between faith and reason is paralleled, once again as in the case of the Slavophiles, by a reconciliation between hierarchy and equality. In response to the conflict between the modern egalitarian ideal and the hierarchical ideal of the Old Regime, a conflict in which Maistre defends the right wing position, Dostoyevsky was arguing that, within Christianity, authentic hierarchy and authentic equality are compatible, and that only the perverse deformations of hierarchy and equality find themselves in a relation of mutual exclusion. In this sense, Dostoyevsky argued that, "in genuine Christianity, there are and always will be masters and servants, but a serf is inconceivable"[1205]. "Genuine Christianity" excludes both the disdain of the strong for the weak, as well as the resentment felt by the weak towards the strong. According to

[1203] Bruce K. Ward, *Redeeming the Enlightenment*, p. 12.
[1204] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol. 1, p. 189.
[1205] *Ibidem*, vol. 2, p. 998.

Dostoyevsky, where true Christians exist, freedom, equality, and brotherhood do not impose themselves through force. Moreover, they coexist harmoniously with an authentic hierarchy, whose universal recognition brings with it an implicit universal equality in dignity. In this sense, Dostoyevsky argues that in a truly Christian society, recognizing the genius of a Shakespeare, a common person will willfully serve Shakespeare, and through him "the common cause" of mankind, cleaning his room, so that the latter would thus be able to dedicate all of his time to his "great work". But this would not transform the common individual into a slave, for his capacity to recognize Shakespeare's superiority and to bow before such greatness, implicitly makes the former equal to Shakespeare from the point of view of "moral dignity"[1206].

According to Drouilly,

> *en tant que penseur politique, Dostoïevski présente le paradoxe de ne pouvoir être classé ni en homme de droite ni en homme de gauche [...]. Du réactionnaire il ne partage ni cet amour de l'ordre placé au-dessus même de la justice, ni cette tendance à voir dans le peuple une masse qui doit être fermement encadrée et guidée, ni cet amour aveugle des traditions, ni ce respect des situations acquises, ni enfin ce goût pour la stabilité et cette horreur du mouvement dans l'ordre matériel comme dans l'ordre spirituel.*[1207]

Despite some nuances, these reactionary aspects largely characterize Maistre's thought. Drouilly argues that the distance taken by Dostoyevsky from reactionary thought and the reactionary circles, with which he had otherwise interacted, is explained by the fact that "*des Évangiles*",

> *Dostoïevski a surtout retenu cette soif de justice, ce désir passionné d'un ordre chrétien qui, par-delà les cadres sociaux, établit une hiérarchie des valeurs qui est celle voulue par Dieu et par Dieu seul. Partout éclate le mépris de Dostoïevski pour les classes dirigeantes qu'il estime frivoles et corrompues, sa haine des sociétés bourgeoises, dominées par l'argent. Et c'est bien une aspiration révolutionnaire que cette aspiration à une transformation des âmes, prélude d'une transformation profonde des structures sociales et des hiérarchies établies [...]. Mais Dostoïevski n'en est pour cela un homme de gauche. Il n'en partage ni l'optimisme naïf qui croit à une marche continuelle de*

[1206] *Ibidem*, pp. 998-999.
[1207] Jean Drouilly, *La pensée politique et religieuse de F.M. Dostoïevski*, p.477.

l'humanité sur le chemin de la perfection morale, ni la tendance à se laisser duper par les grandes idéologies dans lesquelles se perd le sens du concret. Profondément pessimiste, persuadé que l'homme, s'il doit être cependant sauvé, est partout infecté par le péché, menacé par la maladie et par la mort, Dostoïevski ne pouvait que combattre socialistes et libéraux dans leur foi robuste à cet avenir meilleur qui attend l'humanité régénérée. Et puis son anti-intellectualisme, sa méfiance du rationalisme étaient là pour l'empêcher de souscrire à des opinions qui plaçaient l'intelligence humaine sur ce plan absolu que l'expérience mystique qui était la sienne lui interdisait de partager[1208].

Thus, we can say that Dostoyevsky's political thought, like that of the Slavophiles, is characterized by "anarchistic and socialistic elements of a Christian kind […] and", likewise, that Dostoyevsky's "monarchism was distinctly anarchic"[1209]. As for the Slavophiles, for Dostoyevsky, in relation to the Russian people, "the Czar […] is not an extrinsic force such as that of some conqueror (as were for instance the dynasties of the former Kings of France), but a national, all-unifying force, which the people themselves desired […].They are true, loyal children of the Czar, and he is their father"[1210].

The nineteenth-century political-theology of Dostoyevsky practically resumes the traditional Russian theologico-political conception of the third Rome. According to this conception, first affirmed in the fifteenth century by the monk Filofei of Pskov, after the fall of the first Rome into heresy, and the fall of the second Rome, Constantinople, under the Ottoman conquest, Moscow had become the third and last Rome. More precisely, the successive collapse of the first two Romes implied that Russia has remained the only Christian Empire in the world. As a consequence, Russia was invested with a messianic role that concerned the salvation of the whole world[1211]. For Dostoyevsky, while, as a consequence of its spiritual crisis, the West was

[1208] *Ibidem*, p. 477.
[1209] Nicholas Berdyaev, *Dostoyevsky*, p. 159.
[1210] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, Vol. 2, p. 1032.
[1211] "The church of the first Rome fell because of the godless heresy of Apollinaris. The gates of the second Rome at Constantinople were smashed by the Ishmaelites. Today the holy apostolic Church of the third Rome in thy Empire shines in the glory of Christian faith throughout the world. Know you, O pious Tsar,", Filofei addresses Ivan the Great, "that all empires of the Orthodox Christians have converged into thine own. You are the sole autocrat of the universe, the only Tsar of all Christians […]. According to the prophetic books all Christian empires have an end

ultimately compelled to choose between anarchical dissolution and the socialist system of the Grand Inquisitor, Russia was called to offer to the world the alternative of an authentic Christian socialism. The revival of the third Rome theory in Dostoyevsky's thought meant now that, for the Russian novelist, Russia was the country predestined by Providence to initiate a new era in what concerns the organization of mankind. Russia, according to Dostoyevsky, was predestined to edify a social order based on the Slavophile principles of *tselnost* and *sobornost*, and this future Orthodox Christian socialism would be, according to Dostoyevsky, Russia's "new word […], uttered to the world in opposition to future socialism", a "word" which "may again save European mankind".[1212] "The most momentous preordained destiny of the Russian people, within the destinies of mankind at large", Dostoyevsky declared, "consists in the preservation in their midst of the Divine image of Christ, in all its purity, and when the time comes, in the revelation of this image to the world which has lost its way"[1213]. But, first of all, Russians were fundamentally attached to Europe, that "land of holy miracles"[1214], which represented nothing less than their second motherland[1215]. For it was Europe that gave birth to an insufficient conception of universality, it was Europe that attracted Russia, through Peter's reforms, to the scene of universal civilization, and it was now time for Russia to respond to the European challenge by revealing to European mankind the authentic Christian conception of universality. Ultimately, the existence itself of the Russian nation was justified only through this dialectical relation with Europe; to such a point that, in Dostoyevsky's view, "to become a genuine Russian

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and will converge into one empire, that of our gossudar, that is, into the Empire of Russia. Two Romes have fallen, but the third will last and there will not be a fourth one" (Filofei of Pskov, quoted in Eric Voegelin, *Collected Works*, vol. 5: *Modernity without restraint*, p. 181, reference not given).

[1212] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol. 2, p. 906.

[1213] *Ibidem*, vol. 1, p. 63.

[1214] *Ibidem*, vol. 2, p. 1048.

[1215] *Ibidem*, vol. 1, p. 342.

means to seek finally to reconcile all European contradictions, to show the solution of European anguish in our all-humanitarian and all-unifying Russian soul"[1216].

Like the Slavophiles, Dostoyevsky believed that the necessary precondition for the accomplishment of Russia's mission was the repentant return of the upper classes to the people. "The people", Zosima prophesizes, "will go to meet the atheist and will conquer him", bringing him back to the Orthodox faith, and thus, "there will arise a united Orthodox Russia"[1217]. As in the Slavophile program, this new Russia is in fact a new civilization, a synthesis realized from the combination of the most precious aspects of modernity with the substance of the Orthodox faith. This new civilization would then become a global civilization, and, as such, Russia's gift to the world, for "service rendered to mankind as a whole, not only to Russia, not only to Slavs in general,"[1218] is what represents the Russian specificity. "The Russian national idea [...] is but the universal fellowship of men", and Dostoyevsky underlines the fact that "the Slavophiles held an identical view, and this is why they urged us to be more rigid, firmer and responsible Russians, specifically realizing the fact that the conception of universality of man is the principal personal characteristic designation of a Russian"[1219]. According to Dostoyevsky, in their aspiration towards universality, the Russian Westernizers did not realize that they were only giving expression to the most profound desire of the Russian popular soul. Thus, they had inevitably spread the prejudice of an otherwise inexistent conflict between a universal Westernism, and a parochial Slavophilism, which never really did exist. But, most importantly, they did not realize that the Russian people have preserved in their hearts that authentic Christian faith, without which universal brotherhood would never be possible. Moreover, like Khomiakov, Dostoyevsky

[1216] *Ibidem*, vol. 2, p. 980.
[1217] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 407.
[1218] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol. 1, p. 342.
[1219] *Ibidem*, vol. 2, p. 578.

believed that no other less lofty social ideal would have been able to mobilize the energies of the Russian people.

Longing for universal reconciliation and brotherhood, and, moreover, immune to the spirit of class struggle by reason of their authentic Christianity, the Russian people, Dostoyevsky argued, were free of the resentment that, according to Nietzsche, characterized the spirit of modern democracy, and which, according to the same author, had its origins in Christianity. Instead, Russia's social religion, if one may use that term, was not the decadent and resentful religion of *equality*, but the truly Christian religion of *brotherhood*. The Slavophile abandonment of politics and of the struggle for rights appears in Dostoyevsky's work as an indicator of the fact that, experiencing the plenitude of Christian brotherhood, the Russian people desired only to share this fellowship with all of mankind, including their current oppressors. As stressed by Zosima, having the pure image of Christ impressed in its heart from times immemorial, "free in aspect and behaviour, but without any sense of injury", the Russian people was "not servile [...], neither vengeful nor envious [...], and this after the servitude of two centuries". The Russian peasant honoured "without envy" nobility, richness, intelligence and talent when it met them, knowing that by this very fact he was "display[ing]" his "human dignity"[1220]. This is what made Russia the land where brotherly socialism was possible "by deeds, by the living example, by the factual need for brotherhood, and not under the threat of the guillotine, not by means of chopping off millions of heads"[1221]. In Russia, Zosima prophesizes, there will arise "a future glorious unity of men, when servants are not what a man will seek for himself nor what he will desire to make of those who are his like, as he does now, but, on the contrary, with all his might will himself desire to become the servant to all, in the manner described in the Gospels". In the end, under the

[1220] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 408-409.
[1221] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol. 2, p. 582.

influence of the people's example of living Christian brotherhood, "even the most depraved of our wealthy men", according to Zosima,"will end by being ashamed of his wealth before the poor, and the poor man, seeing this humility, will understand and yield to him with joy and with affection respond to his well-apportioned shame"[1222].

Thus, together with the end of inequality and of social injustice, the "terrible solitariness" that represents modernity's disease *par excellence*, "will" also "come to an end, and all will comprehend at once how unnaturally they have divided themselves one from the other"[1223]. The same authentic Christianity of the Russian people, which excludes the cultural premises of class struggle, also makes Russia foreign to the spirit of ethnic division and racial domination. If Aksakov had argued that Russia identifies itself with humanity as a whole, and "is a nation, only by virtue of being surrounded by other nations locked in their own exclusive nationality"[1224], in the context of the Oriental crisis, and in the perspective of a future union of liberated Orthodox nations lead by Russia, Dostoyevsky argued that "we" (Russians) "shall be the first to announce to the world that we seek to achieve our own welfare not through the suppression of national individualities alien to us, but, on the contrary, that we perceive our welfare in the freest and most independent development of all other nations and in brotherly communion with them"[1225].

As it can be seen, Dostoyevsky's nationalism justifies itself only in the perspective of a universal mission. Despite some undeniable ambiguities of his work which have attracted the criticism of various authors, and which shall be analyzed in this section, one cannot argue in the last instance that Dostoyevsky reduces Orthodoxy to nationality. This in turn constitutes the essence of Shatov's theologico-political creed, a creed that, despite the apparent similarities, is

[1222] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 409-411.
[1223] *Ibidem*, p. 393.
[1224] Konstantin Aksakov, i. 630, quoted in Andrezj Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 299.
[1225] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol. 1, p. 668.

not Dostoyevsky's own. On the contrary, if in *Demons* Dostoyevsky "display[s] atheism in all the horror of its variegated consequences", "it is a tribute to Dostoyevsky's unflinching honesty that he includes among them his own favourite stand-by, Russian religious nationalism"[1226]. Shatov declares that, "on this entire earth", the Russian people "is the only 'God-bearing' people, destined to renew and save the world in the name of a new God, and to whom alone have been given the keys to life and the new word"[1227]. For Shatov,

> every people is a people only as long as it has its special God and excludes all the other gods in the world without any compromise, as long as it has faith that it will triumph through its own God and will drive all the other gods from the world [...]. If a great people does not have faith that it alone embodies the truth (in itself alone, and in it exclusively), if it does not have faith that it alone has the ability and is called to resurrect all peoples and save them with its truth, then it immediately ceases to be a great people and immediately turns into ethnographic material [...]. A genuinely great people can never reconcile itself to playing a secondary role in humanity, or even a primary one, but must stand in the front rank, absolutely and exclusively[1228].

Of course, while Shatov speaks of a "Russian God" who is exclusively Russian, Orthodox Russians believe in the same God as the various Orthodox nations – Romanians, Serbs, Georgians, Greeks, etc. –, while the people that has been granted a redeeming mission by God, according to the Orthodox Christian faith, is the people of God, or, otherwise said, the Church, which is not composed exclusively of Russians, nor is it necessarily composed of Russians. In fact, for Shatov, God is nothing more than "the synthesis of the personality of an entire people, taken from its beginning to its end"[1229]. This radical historicization of religion inevitably leads to the paradox that, while the vitality of a nation depends on the belief that its God is the only true God, meant to conquer all the other gods, the victory of a single God seems neither possible nor desirable. If a universal religion were to be arrived at, then this would mean that the driving force

[1226] A. Boyce Gibson, *Dostoevsky's Religion*, p. 126.
[1227] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, p.274.
[1228] *Ibidem*, p. 279.
[1229] *Ibidem*, p. 278.

of all historical existence and the source of all greatness, which is the "search for" one's "own God", would cease its existence. And it is much more reasonable to expect then that universalism will be inevitably associated with syncretism, which in turn, is associated by Shatov with decadence:

> It has never been the case that all or many peoples have had a single common God, but each has certainly had its own special one. It is a sign of a people's extinction when gods begin to be held in common. When the gods come to be held in common, then the gods die and so does faith in them, along with the peoples themselves. The stronger the people, the more singular its God. There has never yet been a people without religion, that is, without the concept of evil and good. Each people has its own concept of evil and good, and its own evil and good. When many different peoples begin to hold concepts of evil and good in common, then the peoples die out, and then the very difference between evil and good begins to blur and disappear[1230].

As indicated by Henri de Lubac, Shatov speaks here like a disciple of Nietzsche, as he opposes to the moral decadence that the absence of faith inevitably engenders, the power of "*un 'sacré' bien équivoque*"[1231], which manifests itself as mysticism of the soil and exaltation of the vital force of the national organism[1232]. As we have seen, this Nietzschean exaltation of "*ce feu sacré qui anime les nations*"[1233] represents also a moment of Maistre's thought. Moreover, Shatov's ideology appears as a typical expression of what Pranchère defines as the nihilist anti-

[1230] *Ibidem*.

[1231] Henri de Lubac, *Le drame de l'humanisme athée*, pp. 380-382.

[1232] Nietzsche argues that "a people which still believes in itself still also has its own God". But "when a people is perishing; when it feels its faith in the future, its hope of freedom vanish completely; when it becomes conscious that the most profitable thing of all is submissiveness and that the virtues of submissiveness are a condition of its survival, then its God *has* to alter too. He now becomes a dissembler, timid, modest, counsels 'peace of soul', no more hatred, forbearance, 'love' even towards friend and foe […]. He […] becomes a […] cosmopolitan […] God for everybody […]. Formerly he represented a people, the strength of a people, everything aggressive and thirsting for power in the soul of a people: now he is merely the good God […]. There is in fact no other alternative for Gods: *either* they are the will to power – and so long as they are that they will be national Gods – *or* else the impotence for power – and then they necessarily become good"(Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, pp. 126-127). As "our God", the national God is necessarily beyond good and evil, expressing the will to power of a people. Thus, for Nietzsche, in comparison with the God of the Old Testament, the God of the New Testament is a decadent God (See *The Genealogy of Morals*, in Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of the Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals*, translated by Francis Golfing, Doubleday& Company, Inc. Garden City, New York, 1956, pp. 281-282).

[1233] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 149.

nihilism that haunts Maistrian thought[1234]. For in Shatov's case, belief becomes a substitute for truth, and awareness of the absolute need of belief accompanies the awareness of its absolute lack of foundation. Shatov, Stepan Trofimovich informs us, "believes of *necessity*, like a Moscow Slavophile"[1235], and the ideological character of this belief is reflected by Shatov's own affirmation, accompanied by a "crooked grin", that he "became a Slavophile [...] because it's impossible to be a Russian"[1236]. Belief is necessary, Shatov argues, because the separation from the "God-bearing people" has made us all "vile atheists or indifferent, depraved rubbish, and nothing more"[1237]. But one cannot believe organically, as the people believes, as long as one is aware of the need to believe, and this is what, in Shatov's view, institutes an unsurpassable gap between being a Russian and being merely a Slavophile. When asked by Stavrogin whether he believes in God, Shatov "[begins] to babble in a frenzy": "I believe in Russia, I believe in her Orthodoxy [...], I believe in the Body of Christ [...], I believe that the Second Coming will occur in Russia [...], I believe..."[1238] But he finally has to admit that, far from truly believing in God, he himself is still searching for Him. Thus, far from representing a viable rejection of the atheism of the possessed generation, which represents the problem addressed by the novel, Shatov's religious nationalism seems rather to represent the confirmation of that atheism. If the diagnostic attached to his beliefs is anti-nihilism which is nihilist because it has no other content than the need to resist nihilism, what better confirmation of this diagnostic than the genealogy of Shatov's creed? For Shatov has been converted to "Slavophilism"– or, more precisely, to an ideology that represents a profound distortion of the beliefs upheld by Kireevsky and Khomiakov –, by Stavrogin, who, at the same time, was converting Kirilov to atheism, and who was also the

[1234] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 434.
[1235] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons*, p. 41.
[1236] *Ibidem*, p. 632.
[1237] *Ibidem*, p. 43.
[1238] *Ibidem*, pp. 280-281.

source of inspiration for Pyotr Verkhovensky's revolutionary socialism[1239]. It is therefore the painful absence of meaning that represents the common source of all the ideological beliefs of modern man, which for this reason, are all, in a form or another, reproducing the existential nothingness that gives them birth. Revolutionary or counter-revolutionary, these beliefs may hypnotize the masses who are naturally searching for idols. But they will never satisfy the thirst for meaning of the suffering minority that is able to create them: only its thirst for meaningless power.

While it is as clear as possible that Dostoyevsky could not simply subscribe to Shatov's religious and political views, it is nevertheless legitimate to ask ourselves whether Dostoyevsky manages to fully overcome Shatov's position, despite his awareness of the inconsistency of this position. For up to a certain point, through Shatov's discourse, Dostoyevsky himself may be confessing the limits of his own theologico-political position, and one may wonder whether, like Maistrian thought, Dostoyevskyan thought does not have its own moment of nihilist counter-nihilism. In the interpretation of Gibson, Shatov does represent such a moment, but by this, it should be understood that Shatov represents one of the stages of Dostoyevsky's journey of faith, and, as such, another religious idea that Dostoyevsky has tested in his novels and that was abandoned due to its obvious insufficiency[1240]. The issue of Dostoyevsky's faith has been discussed in section 5.1. There I subscribed to Gibson's thesis that, since the struggle with doubts is part of the adventure of faith, it would be illegitimate to deny the authenticity of

[1239] In his study of Khomiakov's life and work, Berdyaev distinguishes between what he calls "[le] slavophilisme classique ancien", represented by the first generation of Slavophiles whose thought is presented in this thesis, and later degenerate developments of Slavophilism, which have deviated from the fundamental principles of the Slavophile doctrine. In this sense, Berdyaev argues that while the classical Slavophile period ends around 1860, during the next decades of the nineteenth century, "le slavophilisme se colore graduellement de naturalisme et de positivisme". The result is the appearance of a reactionary and exclusivist nationalism, based on biological determinism and characterized by "[un] culte païen de la force". According to Berdyaev, the main representatives of this degenerate form of Slavophilism are Nikolay Danilevsky (1822-1885) and Mikhail Katkov (1818-1887) (Nicolas Berdiaev, *Khomiakov*, pp. 156-157).

[1240] A. Boyce Gibson, *The Religion of Dostoevsky*, pp. 139-142.

Dostoyevsky's faith, because that faith was a struggling faith and not a blind one. Thus, as far as the relation between Dostoyevsky and his character Shatov is concerned, what remains to be analyzed in this section is the way in which Dostoyevsky conceived the relation between religion and nationalism.

The ambiguities concerning Dostoyevsky's position on this issue are best reflected by his public interventions related to the Oriental question, and in particular, by his public interventions in support of Russia's military campaign against the Ottoman Empire from 1877. Triggered by the brutal Turkish repression of the Bulgarian uprising, the military campaign led by Russia had been officially presented as a war whose purpose was the liberation of the Orthodox nations from the Ottoman oppression. Dostoyevsky did not doubt the purity of Russia's motives and he had championed this conviction in his articles, most of which had been thoroughly polemical. Dostoyevsky argued that Russia's mission didn't have anything to do with narrow Russian national strategic interests. Moreover, it went beyond the ideals of Panslavism, and even beyond the ideals of an ecumenical Orthodoxy, which was making no difference between Slavs and non-Slavs. In the last instance, the ultimate substance of the Russian military campaign was humanitarian, constituting an example of how Russia was sacrificing herself for "the benefit, love and service of mankind as a whole, for the defense of all the weak and oppressed throughout the world"[1241]. "In Europe", Dostoyevsky argued, "no one, and in no respect, would believe in Russian disinterestedness", but the reason for this, Dostoyevsky argued, was the absolute materialism of the bourgeois civilization, which was making Westerners incapable of even conceiving that countries may act independently of, or even contrary to, their selfish interests[1242].

[1241] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol. 1, p. 424.
[1242] *Ibidem*, pp. 360, 365.

The liberation of the Southern Slavs from Ottoman oppression raised the issue of their future political organization. Dostoyevsky argued that, in the aftermath of the military campaign, Russia had to organize under its leadership a union of Orthodox nations based on the principles of Christian brotherhood, and this presupposed, among others, the absence of any discrimination that would favour the Orthodox Slavs over the non-Slavic Orthodox[1243]. According to Dostoyevsky, "Russia will never", and "must never, think of enlarging her territory at the expense of the Slavs"[1244]. Russia was supposed to exercise its leadership as "a mother" and not as "a mistress", sacrificing itself "for the sake of the full individual liberty" of the liberated nations, and for the preservation of the "independent personality" of "each", in accordance with the principle of *sobornost*, "and not at all for the purpose that Russia may politically acquire them and through them increase her political power". According to Dostoyevsky, unlike the United States of America, the new political body led by Russia "would not be merely a political union and, of course, not one for the sake of political usurpation and violence", this being "the only way in which Europe can conceive the proposition". And it would not "be a union [...] for mercantile pursuit" and "personal gain". Instead, being a living expression of "brotherhood", this new union "would be a genuine exaltation of Christ's truth, preserved in the East, a new exaltation of Christ's Cross and the final word of Orthodoxy, which is headed by Russia"[1245]. This word surpassed the narrow limits of the Orthodox civilization, being a universal word that Orthodoxy would address to the world, in order to raise the world from the darkness in which it was led by the Western civilization. Russia was therefore seeking "to create [...] a great and mighty organism of a brotherly union of nations [...] not by means of political violence, not by

[1243] *Ibidem*, pp. 554-556; vol. 2, p. 905.
[1244] *Ibidem*, vol. 2, p. 900. (It did so, by the time that Dostoyevsky was writing these lines, at the expense of the Georgians and the Romanians, which of course were not Slavs).
[1245] *Ibidem*, vol. 1, pp. 362-365.

the sword, but by persuasion, example, love, disinterestedness – *by light*"[1246], with the ultimate objective of *enlightening* the West, and through it the whole world. The declared purpose was *to show* to the West an accomplished "Utopia", assumed as such by Dostoyevsky, so that, through the power of the living example, the West itself would finally be persuaded to abandon its individualism and materialism, joining the Orthodox nations in a universal brotherly unity in the name of Christ[1247]. Thus, just as the Russian people had the mission of peacefully conquering the Russian upper classes through the power of living example, likewise, Russia as a whole had the mission of conquering the West through the same means. Dostoyevsky specifically declared that, if Russia would decide to save Europe "through [...] iron and blood", in the manner of Bismarck, then Russians "could boldly congratulate" themselves "upon being *thorough Europeans*"[1248]. Otherwise said, in such an eventuality, Russia's mission would be inevitably compromised by the not at all idealistic means employed to accomplish it.

In the meantime, however, for Dostoyevsky, "the realization of that perpetual peace in which we are happy to believe"[1249] had to pass through the Russian conquest of Constantinople – by "iron and blood", I guess. For, Dostoyevsky argued, rejecting the pacifism of Tolstoy, in order to stop the atrocities committed by the Turks, "it is necessary to liberate effectively the oppressed, disarming the tyrants once and for all". To advocate passivity while the tyrants are "piercing the eyes" of the oppressed victims, "so as perchance not to kill a Turk", would be "a distortion of conceptions, the dullest and coarsest sentimentalism [...], fanatical narrow-mindedness" and "the fullest perversion of nature"[1250]. As for the fate of the Turks in the aftermath of the Russian liberation, Dostoyevsky argued that, after being disarmed, the Turks would simply go on with

[1246] *Ibidem*, vol. 2, p. 901.
[1247] *Ibidem*, vol. 1, pp. 63, 365; vol. 2, p. 906.
[1248] *Ibidem*, vol. 1, p. 259.
[1249] *Ibidem*, vol. 2, p. 668.
[1250] *Ibidem*, p. 812.

their lives as usual, continuing to freely practice their religion[1251]. Furthermore, Dostoyevsky argued that, at least for the time being, Russia could not abandon the control of Constantinople to the liberated nations, and had to maintain its presence in the Balkans in order to protect the newly liberated nations "from one another", and ultimately, from themselves. Dostoyevsky predicted that, without the leadership and guidance of Russia, led by their Westernized local elites, the immature Orthodox nations from the Balkans would edify their new political communities on the basis of the bourgeois principles of the modern West, which they would imitate. Converting themselves to the conflictual logic of the Western civilization, in the last instance, these nations would suffer the same fate as the one that Dostoyevsky predicted for the bourgeois West: generalized war, resulting inevitably from the loss of the spirit of brotherhood, which for the time being could be preserved only under Russia's guidance[1252].

Although it is true that the tendency to overlap the terms "Slav" and "Orthodox", manifested throughout *The Diary of a Writer*, can leave the impression that Dostoyevsky contradicts his own affirmations concerning Russia's commitment to Orthodox ecumenicity[1253], the affirmation that Dostoyevsky's religious nationalism falls under the condemnation of the 1872 Constantinopolitan Church Council is exaggerated and misleading[1254]. This interpretation of Dostoyevsky's work is otherwise part of a broader tendency of some recent Orthodox authors to

[1251] *Ibidem*, vol. 1, pp. 440-442. Unfortunately, this had not been the case for all the Turks, as large scale massacres and deportations had followed in the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire's defeat by Russia.

[1252] *Ibidem*, pp. 364, 436-437; vol. 2, pp. 903-905.

[1253] For example, in *The Diary of a Writer*, Dostoyevsky argues that the Orthodox union that Russia was seeking to build may at a certain point "even be joined by non-Orthodox European Slavs" (*Ibidem*, p. 364). But, unless one presupposes that for Dostoyevsky there is some sort of intrinsic connection between Orthodoxy and Slavdom, then it is hard to comprehend why "non-Orthodox European Slavs" should be more fit to join the Orthodox club than non-Orthodox European Latins or Germans.

[1254] See Sergei Hackel, "The religious dimension: vision or evasion? Zosima's discourse in The Brothers Karamazov", p. 157.

overbid the 1872 condemnation of phyletism[1255]. In this sense, it must be underlined that the 1872 Constantinopolitan Council did not argue that membership of the Church and a sense of national belonging, together with its political expression in certain limits, are incompatible. Instead, it had merely condemned the confusion between nationality and religion, in as much as it leads to the constitution of parallel ecclesial jurisdictions on ethnic principles, and, moreover, to the refusal of the members of one nation to accept into communion members of another nation[1256]. Dostoyevsky does not come even close to such a spiritual aberration. Indeed, his whole sense of Christian universality is completely alien to the petty nationalist divisions of Balkan Orthodoxy which he deplored in his articles. However, this does not mean that his conception of the relation between Christian identity and national identity does not remain problematic. But the problem is of a slightly different nature. The problem is not Dostoyevsky's nationalism, for different national identities are compatible with Christian universality, but Dostoyevsky's national messianism, in the conditions in which, as well argued by Berdyaev, after the coming of Christ, only the missionary consciousness remains legitimate, while the

[1255] Phyletism is a heresy condemned in 1872 by an Orthodox local Council reunited in Constantinople, in reaction to the non-canonical establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate. Displeased by the fact that in the territories inhabited by Bulgarians, the Patriarchate of Constantinople was imposing Greek-speaking bishops, as well as the use of Greek in Church services, the Bulgarian clergy has pursued throughout the nineteenth century a nationalist agenda (which otherwise reacted to the Greeks' own nationalist agenda) whose purpose was the establishment of an independent Bulgarian Church. Determined to put an end to the conflict, which had resulted in the expulsion of all the Greek bishops from the Bulgarian territories, the Sultan has finally accepted the demands of the Bulgarians for the establishment of a Bulgarian Exarchate, headed by a Bulgarian Exarch located in Constantinople, and composed only of Bulgarian bishops. The proclamation of the Bulgarian Exarchate has lead to the existence of two parallel Church jurisdictions on the same canonical territory, one Greek and the other Bulgarian, which were therefore distinguished on ethnic criteria. The move went against the canonical order of the Orthodox Church, not only for the fact that the autocephaly of the Bulgarian Church had not been granted to the latter by the Patriarchate of Constantinople, but first and foremost, because the establishment of the Exarchate implied a deviation from the canonical rule of Orthodox ecclesiastic organization, according to which dioceses are (or rather should be, because the problem of phyletism still persists in the Orthodox Church) organized on a territorial basis and not on an ethnic one – all the Christians from a given territory, independently of differences of nationality, are members of the same local Church. The Council of Constantinople had therefore excommunicated the Bulgarian Church on the grounds that the establishment of the Exarchate was based on a heretical ecclesiological conception, or, more precisely, on a confusion between Church and nation.

[1256] See Paschalis M. Kitromilides, *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy*, Variorum, Aldershot, Hampshire, UK and Brookfield, Vermont, 1994, p. 183.

messianic consciousness inevitably leads to "a rejudaization of Christianity"[1257]. Thus, while Dostoyevsky does not exclude any ethnicity from the universal communion in Christ, the idea that the Russian nation has the mission to raise the world out of darkness inevitably defunctionalizes the Church as a missionary organism. Likewise, it seems inevitable that, in a form or another, this idea would inevitably lead to the reintroduction in the Church of some form of hierarchical distinction between Jewish/Russian Christians and Gentile Christians.

Still even more problematic appears to be the relation between Christianity and political violence in the thought of Dostoyevsky. Dostoyevsky has often been accused of incoherence or hypocrisy. For example, he argues that the resolution of the Oriental Question, which passes through the conquest of Constantinople, is an intermediary stage in the fulfillment of the mission providentially attributed to Orthodox Russia: to resolve the deadly contradictions of the Western civilization. But, as Dostoyevsky repeatedly insists, these contradictions stem from an original sin of the papacy, which had betrayed Christ by drawing the sword in his name. However, as argued by Ward, "even the most sympathetic interpreters of Dostoyevsky's thought must find this sort of response to the Inquisitor's social formula objectionable – for it appears to constitute an acquiescence in that formula"[1258]. The issue of war is of particular interest. For if one were to compare the views concerning war of Maistre and Dostoyevsky, one may indeed reach some surprising conclusions. A precursor of Carl Schmitt from this point of view, Maistre was terrified by the new conception of war that the modern liberal state had inaugurated. For Maistre and Schmitt, the French Revolution had also revolutionized international relations, giving birth to a new type of war: the war waged in the name of "humanity" and "peace", which is ultimately the type of war supported by Dostoyevsky, clearly an idealist as far as the theory of international

[1257] Nicholas Berdyaev, *Dostoyevsky*, p. 182.
[1258] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, p. 186.

relations is concerned. For Maistre and Schmitt, the ideology of human rights was inevitably leading to permanent and total war. The friend/enemy distinction was radicalized through the inevitable transformation of the relative enemy, which stood in the way of the limited interests of a sovereign state, into an absolute enemy of peace and humanity[1259]. During the Oriental Crisis, Dostoyevsky had insisted that Russia's victory should not, and, moreover, *that it would not* be followed by bloody reprisals and acts of revenge. While Dostoyevsky's wishful thinking and lack of realism may be condemned as a form of guilty naivety[1260], we may argue that Maistre's ultra-realistic exposure of the sheer brutality and absurdity of war brings the latter into the vicinity of a radically pacifist discourse. At least, this represents one of the possible developments, beyond Maistre, of his thought. But within Maistrian thought, the possible connection between the realist exposure of the brutality and absurdity of war, and a possible pacifist agenda meant to contain the latter, is short-circuited by Maistre's sacrificial understanding of war. In this sense, Maistre argues that a society of nations, built with the purpose of putting an end to war among nations, has not been possible and will never be possible. Although in itself this idea is perfectly reasonable and praiseworthy, it will never be put into practice for the reason that, like in other instances of life (the organization of a political regime, for example), the apparent irrationality of war conceals a providential rationality: the blood of innocent soldiers must continue to be spilled because, through that innocent blood, the sins of the guilty are being expiated[1261]. As a consequence of the fact that, as it shall be seen in chapter 7, Maistre and Dostoyevsky approach the issue of theodicy in a completely different

[1259] See Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 79.

[1260] Once in Saint Petersburg, Maistre had made the affectionate remark that "*il n'y a de viril chez le Russe que la baionnette : tout le reste est enfant*" (Joseph de Maistre, *Œuvres complètes*, Vitte, Lyon, 1884-1886, t.XII, pp.68-69, quoted in Robert Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre*: *Étude sur la vie et la doctrine d'un matérialiste mystique*, p. 286).

[1261] Joseph de Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, pp. 654-655.

manner, Maistre's sacrificial logic, which makes war divine, as well as Maistre's punitive logic, which makes the executioner divine, are both completely foreign to Dostoyevskyan thought. However, although capital punishment radically separates Maistre and Dostoyevsky, the former being its fervent promoter while the latter was its fervent opponent, not the same thing can be said about the subject of war. Thus, although Dostoyevsky does not attribute any expiatory significance to the suffering and death of the innocent victims of war, he agrees with Maistre that war can lead to the moral and physical regeneration of nations. On one condition: that a nation goes to war in the name of a noble cause, not fighting for its selfish interests, but selflessly sacrificing itself for the cause of justice and humanity. Although admitting that "war is a calamity", Dostoyevsky nevertheless stressed the fact that "the exploit of bloody self-sacrifice for the sake of everything that we regard as sacred, is, of course, more moral than the whole bourgeois catechism"[1262]. Moreover, while a war motivated by a noble ideal was regenerating a nation and strengthening its unity, for a corrupted nation, peace was more detrimental than war. According to Dostoyevsky, "to an infected organism even so beneficial a thing as peace becomes harmful". Consequently, although "it is abominable if conceived abstractly", in practice, "it appears that war, too, is necessary for some purpose, that it is salutary and that it alleviates mankind"[1263]. Thus, further revealing the resemblances between his thought and Maistrian thought, Dostoyevsky argues that, at least for certain nations, it is "lasting peace, rather than war" that "tends to harden and bestialize man", always generating "cruelty, cowardice and coarse, fat egoism, and chiefly – intellectual stagnation"[1264]. Moreover, "in the long run, the lasting bourgeois peace itself, almost inevitably generates a war urge" as a result of the unrestrained greed of the bourgeois society. "In a word", Dostoyevsky continues, "for reasons

[1262] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol.2, p. 665.
[1263] *Ibidem*, p. 671.
[1264] *Ibidem*, p. 669.

which are not justified even by motives of self-preservation but which, on the contrary, bear witness to the whimsical and pathological condition of the national organism". Such a war, Dostoyevsky concludes, independently of whether it is victorious or not, always leads to the destruction of a nation. But a war motivated by a noble and selfless ideal, even if it is lost, always strengthens a nation[1265].

6.5. - Utopia and Eschatology

Eduard Thurneysen, a Protestant interpreter of Dostoyevsky who declares that it is not in his intention "to whitewash Dostoyevsky" is arguing that, despite what he considers to be his "grotesque" political "aberration[s] [...], at the culmination of these political conceptions of Dostoyevsky there breaks forth the totally supra-political proclamation of his deep perception of God"[1266]. Ultimately, the questionable political positions of Dostoyevsky are bound to remain limited aspects of his public interventions. Were these to be taken too seriously, they would inevitably clash with the fundamental premises of Dostoyevskyan thought. Various authors have argued that the political aspects of Dostoyevsky's Christianity are quite embarrassing for an author who has put such a strong emphasis on the realities of freedom and love, realities which inevitably escape any scheme of objective exterior organization of the world that the political inevitably presupposes[1267]. Overtaken by his political passions and by his patriotic emotions, Dostoyevsky may sometimes have lost sight of these embarrassing contrasts and incoherencies.

[1265] *Ibidem*, pp. 669-670. Joseph de Maistre also has underlined the idea that sometimes, wars which are won, nevertheless "*avilissent les nations […] pour des siècles*"; while it may be that lost wars "*les exaltent, les perfectionnent de toutes manières, et remplacent même bientôt, ce qui est fort extraordinaire, les pertes momentanées, par un surcroît visible de population*" (Joseph de Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 662). But, unlike Dostoyevsky, Joseph de Maistre does not indicate a connection between the justice of the cause for which a war is fought, and its different outcomes in what concerns the subsequent fate of a nation.

[1266] Eduard Thurneysen, *Dostoevsky: A Theological Study*, pp. 82-83.

[1267] Jean Drouilly, *La pensée politique et religieuse de F.M. Dostoïevski*, pp. 422-426, 460.

But overall, it would have been impossible, for an author who has understood so profoundly the existential drama of human freedom, not to realize the fact that, ultimately, it is utterly unrealistic to try to impose a Christian social ideal through military means, and that such an attempt could only lead to a caricature of Christianity. The terrible reality of human freedom, so often opposed to the grace of God, was inevitably leading Dostoyevsky towards the following political conclusion: there can be no absolute guarantee that the world will respond to Russia's call, or, for that matter, that Russia itself will respond to the call of God. In this situation, the only thing that remained was the force of personal example, as clearly emphasized in Father Zosima's last homilies, delivered before his repose. "In order that the great idea", praised by Stepan Trofimovich before his death, "shall not die [...], even though he does it individually, a man must suddenly show an example and lead his soul out of solitariness to a heroic deed of brotherly and loving communion, even though he does it in the capacity of a holy fool"[1268]. Confronted with the resistance of the surrounding world, the ascetic struggle directed towards the achievement of active love, and, through this, towards the visible transfiguration of the surrounding environment, has to remain united with hope and faith. "Have faith unto the end", Zosima exhorts his listeners in his final discourses before his death, "even though it should happen that all upon earth are led astray and you are the only faithful one remaining; even then make sacrifices and extol God – you, the only one remaining. And if two such as you should meet, then there you have the entire world, a world of living love, embrace one another in tender piety and extol the Lord: for though it is only in the two of you, His truth has none the less been replenished"[1269]. This can rightly be considered to be Dostoyevsky's last word.

[1268] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 394.
[1269] *Ibidem*, p. 416.

Zosima's appeal to hope does not concern merely the other world. For Zosima, the world is not inevitably a valley of tears, through which the Christian can only journey patiently in the expectation of the Kingdom *that is to come*. Instead, eschatology begins here and now, the Kingdom of God being *already here*, within the hearts of men (Luke 17: 21). And all that is asked from men is to become aware of this reality, opening themselves towards it through repentance and love. "When people understand" that they are "guilty for all creatures and for all things, as well as" for their "own sins", then "the Kingdom of Heaven" begins "for them, not in a dream but in actual fact", and they suddenly come to the awareness of the fact that "life is paradise"[1270]. Then, suddenly, the separation between masters and servants ceases to exist. All men are reunited in brotherhood, and this feeling of universal communion breaks beyond the boundaries of the social, acquiring a cosmic dimension. As Zosima says, one then begins "to pray to the birds too", and to all living beings, asking forgiveness from all, "tormented by an all-inclusive love as in some kind of ecstasy"[1271]. Paradise is actively anticipated in the life of the Church which liturgically transforms both social relations and the cosmos, and it is this active anticipation, this active utopia that maintains the hope of the final complete victory of the Kingdom of God. The hope is not merely otherworldly, but is rooted in the active transfiguration

[1270] *Ibidem*, p. 392.

[1271] *Ibidem*, p. 414. According to Vladimir Lossky, in Orthodox theology, and especially in Russian Orthodox theology, cosmology intersects ecclesiology: "the idea of the Church – as the place where union with God is accomplished – is already implied in that of the Cosmos […]. The entire universe is called to enter within the Church, to become the Church of Christ, that it may be transformed after the consummation of the ages, into the eternal Kingdom of God" (Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, New York, 1976, pp. 112-113). The idea of a love that includes all creatures was probably inspired once again by the ascetical teachings of St. Isaac the Syrian, which Lossky quotes in the context of his analysis of the relation between cosmology and ecclesiology: "What is a charitable heart?", Saint Isaac asks. "It is a heart which is burning with charity for the whole of creation, for men, for the birds, for the beasts, for the demons – for all creatures. He who has such a heart cannot see or call to mind a creature without his eyes becoming filled with tears by reason of the immense compassion which seizes his heart […]. Such a man never ceases to pray also for the animals, for the enemies of Truth, and for those who do him evil, that they may be preserved and purified. He will pray even for the reptiles, moved by the infinite pity which reigns in the hearts of those who are becoming united to God" (A. J. Wensinck, *Mystic treatises of Isaac of Nineveh*, translated from Bedjan's Syriac text. *Verhandenlingen der koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam, Afdeeling letterkunde, Nieuwe reeks*, XXIII, I, Amsterdam, 1923, p. 341, quoted in Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 111).

of this world by an incarnate otherworldliness. Orthodox monastic holiness, which the Russian people worship, appears as an icon and foretaste of the age to come. According to Dostoyevsky, in the proximity of monastic holiness, "the common Russian peasant, exhausted by toil and woe, and even more by perpetual injustice and perpetual sin, both its own and that of the world", can nevertheless say to himself: "Even if among us there is sin, untruth, unjustice and temptation, at least in certain places, somewhere on the earth, there are men who are holy and exalted; to make up for it, those men have truth and justice, to make up for it, those men know truth and justice; so it has not been lost to the world, and one day it will come to us, too, and will reign in all the world, as was promised"[1272]. It is in this sense that, as argued by Gibson, Dostoyevsky has managed to "[reintegrate] in a Christian perspective", the utopian socialism of his youth, which had, at a certain point in his life, "[collapsed] among the realities of Siberia". "The paradise which the earth can offer", Gibson argues, "is now near at hand, if only our habits can be guided into channels already provided by populist and Orthodox precedent"[1273].

As stressed by Richard S. Haugh, in Dostoyevsky's thought, the transformation of the world into paradise is not a purely objective transformation that imposes itself independently of "the desire of man to enter this 'Kingdom of God' re-created *for mankind* [...]. Only those who want to participate in the splendor of the transformed earth will participate on the basis of repentance and love". But all men have the possibility of participating. However, once again taking into account the reality of human freedom, which presupposes the possibility of rejecting paradise, the final accomplishment of Dostoyevsky's Christian Utopia on earth remains only an "ever present hope that mankind will change [...] through and in Christ and in repentance and love"[1274].

[1272] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 45.
[1273] A. Boyce Gibson, *The Religion of Dostoyevsky*, pp. 211-212.
[1274] Richard S. Haugh, "Dostoevsky's Vision of the Golden Age and Human Freedom" in Georges Florovsky, *Theology and Literature,* p. 189.

In this sense, if paradise cannot be realized through political means, neither should one interpret Dostoyevsky's prophecies of a future transformation of the earth in a deterministic key. For historical determinism is incompatible with an anthropology, such as that of Dostoyevsky, which lays such a strong emphasis on the reality of human freedom. And in fact, until the end, and just as in the case of Maistre, eschatological hope coexists in Dostoyevsky's mind with an apocalyptical anxiety, all too aware of the power of unleashed evil. However, Dostoyevsky's Christian Utopia remains not simply just a possibility, but *the only* possibility. "If the belief in this 'new word' which may be uttered by Russia, heading united Orthodoxy, is a 'Utopia' worthy of nothing but ridicule", then "let people class me, too", Dostoyevsky declares, "among these Utopians"[1275]. The Christian Utopia remains the only possibility, because, for reasons that have been indicated, all the other political solutions are inevitably condemned to fail, one by one. As in the case of Maistre, one deals here with a necessary historical process, gradually bringing about, through successive failures of modern political ideologies, the disenchantment of political modernity, and, implicitly, pushing history towards a final confrontation between the only remaining opponents: Christianity and nihilism. According to Pavel Evdokimoff,

> *à la fin de l'histoire, Dostoïevsky entrevoit une grande alternative eschatologique. Tous les échecs des solutions historiques du destin humain sont liés dialectiquement à cette alternative, mais d'un autre point de vue ils sont plutôt une grande réussite, car ils témoignent que la seule solution digne de l'homme est hors de l'histoire [...]. À mesure [que] [...] toutes les possibilités spirituelles de l'homme [...] s'épuisent, la perspective eschatologique devient plus nette [...], chaque nouvelle impasse[étant]une nouvelle possibilité spirituelle de se trouver devant la porte ouverte sur l'infini*[1276].

Evdokimoff's observation requires nevertheless some clarifications. For while Dostoyevsky's eschatological vision of the earthly paradise may be indeed regarded as an overcoming and accomplishment of history, this accomplishment, as in the case of Maistre, is

[1275] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, Vol.1, p. 365.
[1276] Pavel Evdokimoff, *Dostoïevski et le problème du mal*, Éditions du Livre français, Lyons, 1942, pp. 387-388.

nevertheless expected to occur here on earth. Thus, at the end of "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man", the main character of this short story makes the following declaration which expresses Dostoyevsky's theological creed: "I refuse and am unable to believe that evil is a normal condition in men". Therefore, "men can be beautiful and happy without losing their faculty of living on earth"[1277]. Such statements have determined Florovsky to argue that "Dostoyevsky, was strongly disturbed by the temptation of chiliasm" and, up until "his last novel", has "not always" been able "to vanquish" this temptation[1278]. Dostoyevsky's chiliastic tendencies are directly related with the ambiguities of his political theology, which is exposed to the implicit risk of a confusion between the secular and the spiritual. But for Ward, if Dostoyevsky's religious nationalism reflects the fact that his political theology is indeed exposed to the risk of confounding the two orders – the earthly and the divine –, this risk, Ward argues, is first of all one inherent in Christianity, while the opposite risk, that of separating the two orders, is no less significant than the first[1279].

In this sense, the interpretation of Dostoyevsky's chiliastic tendencies should take into account first of all the theological differences that separate Eastern and Western Christianity. In his study of Dostoyevsky, Romano Guardini underlines the fact that, when speaking about the visions of the earthly paradise that can be attributed to Dostoyevsky, such as those described by Makar Dolgoruky[1280] or by Zosima, we should take into account the fact that we are dealing with

[1277] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, Vol. 2, p. 689.

[1278] Georges Florovsky, "The Brothers Karamazov: An Evaluation of Komarovich's Work" in *Theology and Literature*, p. 93.

[1279] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, p. 190.

[1280] The Russian peasant Makar Dolgoruky, the legitimate husband of the peasant woman, Sofya Andreevna, whom Versilov corrupted and made her his illegitimate wife, describes the cosmic harmony that he experienced one night when he was at a monastery: "In the summer in July we were hastening to the monastery of Our Lady for the holy festival. The nearer we got to the place the greater the crowd of people, and at last there were almost two hundred of us gathered together, all hastening to kiss the holy miraculous relics of the two great saints, Aniky and Grigory. We spent the night […] in the open country, and I waked up early in the morning when all was sleeping […]. I lifted up my head, dear, and I gazed about me and sighed. Everywhere beauty passing all utterance! All was

a mysterious unification of heaven and earth that "*ne confond rien, qui maintient les distinctions nécessaires, et d'abord la distinction pure et simple entre la créature et Dieu, et qui pourtant rassemble ce qu'elle a distingué dans une inexprimable et définitive unité*"[1281]. Those who are rushing to accuse Dostoyevsky of chiliasm or pantheism, superficially using the argument that the Kingdom of God "is not of this world" (John 18: 36), ignore the fact that, while in the Orthodox conception, "*le Créateur n'a pas détaché de lui sa créature*", "*le sentiment religieux de l'Occidental semble être informé par la croyance que Dieu a achevé complètement, son œuvre, la livrant ensuite à son propre équilibre*"[1282]. "*Enfant de l'Orthodoxie*", according to Henri de Lubac, not so much by his doctrinal formulations as by the fact that "*il en a respiré l'atmosphère et qu'il s'en est assimilé profondément l'esprit*"[1283], Dostoyevsky, Guardini argues, conceives creation as being "*en perpétuel devenir, comme fluide, et soumis à je ne sais quelle mystérieuse et divine opération*"[1284]. Orthodox theologians also emphasize the fact that

> the tradition of the Eastern Church knows the creature tending towards deification, transcending itself continually in grace. It knows also the fallen creature, separating itself from God to enter upon a new existential plain – that of sin and death. It avoids however, the attribution of a static perfection to created nature considered in itself. For this would be to ascribe a limited fullness, a natural sufficiency, to beings which were created that they might find their fullness in union with God[1285].

These theological differences that separate the Christian West and the Christian East, as far as the issue of the relation between divine grace and created nature is concerned, inevitably have an impact on the relation between Church and State. We can argue that while in principle both

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still, the air was light; the grass grows – Grow, grass of God, the bird sings – Sing, bird of God, the babe cries in the woman's arms – God be with you, little man. […] And it seemed that only then for the first time in my life I took it all in. […] Life is sweet, dear! […] And that it's a mystery makes it only the better; it fills the heart with awe and wonder; and that awe maketh glad the heart: 'All is in Thee, my Lord, and I, too, am in Thee …' Do not repine, young man: it is even more beautiful because it is a mystery" (Feodor Dostoevsky, *A Raw Youth*, pp.394-395).

[1281] Romano Guardini, *L'univers religieux de Dostoïevski*, p. 75.

[1282] *Ibidem*, p. 27.

[1283] Henri de Lubac, *Le drame de l'humanisme athée*, p. 398.

[1284] Romano Guardini, *L'univers religieux de Dostoïevski*, p. 27.

[1285] Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 241.

East and West confess the same Chalcedonian Christology, due to theological differences that are not explicitly Christological but which indirectly impact Christology, the accent tends to fall more on the unity of the two natures, in Eastern Christianity, and, respectively, on their distinction, in Western Christianity. Thus, as argued by François Rouleau, in Byzantium, "Church and Empire form a single and unique, inseparable living reality, just like the soul and the body need each other in order to live". "The new harmony" of heaven and earth, "brought by Christ [...], does not concern only the interior life of people, but their whole life, because Christ's salvation penetrates all the created reality, including the political order". Just as the Greek East "has privileged and legitimized unity", the Latin West has "privileged and legitimized distinction". In the West, "the spiritual order must recognize the temporal order's own proper consistency", while "the latter, in its turn, must accept a subordination of man's temporal purposes to his spiritual purposes". As stressed by Rouleau, both visions presuppose their risks: "just as the byzantine solution risks inducing an idolatrizaton of the state", ultimately presupposing a perverse confusion between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Man, "likewise, the Roman solution risks inducing a laicization of society up to the point of radical atheism, and, implicitly, to a secularization of the Church itself". In the last instance, the "Church" itself is "deprived of the sense of the transcendent nature of her mission", and "ends by being satisfied with a social and moral role"[1286].

[1286] François Rouleau, "Vulturul Bicefal şi Cele Două Săbii" ("The Two-Headed Eagle and the Two Swords"), in Ioan I. Ică Jr. and Germano Marani (ed.), *Gândirea Socială a Bisericii (The Social Doctrine of the Church)*, Deisis, Sibiu, 2002, pp. 344-347 (my translation from Romanian).

6.6. - Incarnation and Resurrection

Given the presence in Dostoyevsky's work of the theme of the earthly paradise, authors such as Philip Rahv have reached the conclusion that Dostoyevsky is nothing less than an atheist, given the fact that he attributes to humanity the power to build (through its own forces, in Rahv's understanding) a paradise on earth. In this interpretation, Dostoyevsky's own "utopian" visions would not differ fundamentally from those put forward by Versilov and Ivan Karamazov. Florovsky, whose affirmations concerning Dostoyevsky's chiliast tendencies should therefore not be overestimated, includes in the same volume where he treats the issue of Dostoyevsky's chiliasm an article by Richard S. Haugh, who dismisses Rahv's thesis and attributes it to an ignorance in matters that concern Orthodox theology. According to him, "for Dostoevsky, the unity of mankind, the 'earthly paradise', the 'Golden Age', can only be achieved through the transfiguration of the cosmos by the God-Man"[1287], who represents for Dostoyevsky "that ultimate bridge between the other world and this world"[1288]. While Rahv argues that " 'Christian theology' " presupposes an unsurpassable distance between the divine and the earthly, and implicitly, the futility of the attempt " 'to realize the divine in the earthly' ", Haugh replies that, "to the contrary [...], the central message of Christianity is the realization of the Divine in the earthly; that is, 'God became man that we might become divine' " – the famous formula of St. Athanasius the Great. "And indeed", Haugh adds, "Eastern Christian theology recognizes the possibility in the here and now of *theosis*" (deification) "and of the vision of God"[1289]. Haugh therefore concludes that the utopian socialism of Dostoyevsky's youth, inherited from Rousseau via George Sand, has been practically Christianized, "[growing] into a spiritual profound

[1287] Richard S. Haugh,"Dostoyevsky's Vision of the Golden Age and Human Freedom", p. 186.
[1288] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, pp. 150, 153.
[1289] Richard S. Haugh, "Dostoyevsky's Vision of the Golden Age and Human Freedom", p. 186.

utopianism based on the repentance of all"[1290]. As for the central role of Christ, who represents for Dostoyevsky the cornerstone of the earthly paradise and of the just social order, Haugh quotes *The Notebooks from Demons*, where Dostoyevsky clearly argues that, although "many people think that it is enough to believe in Christ's moral teaching, in order to be a Christian [...], it isn't Christ's morality or his teaching, that will save the world, but faith, and nothing else, faith in the fact that *the Word was made flesh [...] God incarnate*"[1291].

Thus, if the whole earth is turned into a paradise, this is because of the fact that the earth has received a new life, in Christ, together with whom it is resurrected. The transformation of water into wine, from the wedding of Cana Galilee, dreamt by Alyosha while sleeping near the coffin of his reposed elder, thus signifies, "*la divinisation de l'être, le passage de la vie naturelle à la vie selon l'esprit*"[1292]. As argued by the same author,

> *le mystère central de l'Orthodoxie [...], le mystère de Pâques [...], n'entraîne pas seulement les hommes, mais le cosmos tout entier. Il l'innonde de sa lumière, et le croyant, pour qui tout est transfiguré, retrouve Dieu partout. Si par exemple, la Terre lui est sacrée, ce n'est point là retour au paganisme: c'est le christianisme conséquent*[1293]

Thus, Alyosha's mystical experience, described in the seventh Book of *The Brothers Karamazov*, testifies to the fact that "*le mysticisme des Frères Karamazov est celui même de la résurrection*"[1294].Woken up from his dream, after his faith had earlier that morning almost been lost due to the decomposition of Elder Zosima's body, Alyosha runs outside, in the night, with

> his soul filled with ecstasy, thirst[ing] for freedom, space, latitude. Above him wide and boundless keeled the cupola of the heavens, full of quiet, brilliant stars. Doubled from

[1290] Richard S. Haugh, "A Critique of the Dostoevsky and Hawthorne Comparison", in *Theology and Literature*, p. 168.

[1291] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notebooks for The Possessed*, Edward Wasiolek (ed.), translated by Victor Terras (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 181, quoted in Richard S. Haugh, "Dostoyevsky's Vision of the Golden Age and Human Freedom", p. 182.

[1292] Henri de Lubac, *Le drame de l'humanisme athée*, p. 407.

[1293] *Ibidem*, p. 398.

[1294] *Ibidem*, p. 408. Florovsky also agues that Alyosha's "vision […] goes beyond the edge of history", and as such, it "is […] not chiliasm, but transformation and resurrection" (Georges Florovsky, "The Brothers Karamazov: An Evaluation of Komarovich's Work" in *Theology and Literature*, p. 93).

> zenith to horizon ran the Milky Way, as yet unclear. The cool night, quiet to the point of fixity, enveloped the earth. The white towers and golden domes of the cathedral sparkled in the sapphire sky. In the flowerbeds luxuriant autumn flowers had fallen asleep until morning. The earth's silence seemed to fuse with that of the heavens, the earth's mystery came into contact with that of the stars. Alyosha stood, looked and suddenly cast himself down upon the earth like one who has had the legs cut from under him […]. Why he embraced it he did not know, he did not try to explain to himself why he so desperately wanted to kiss it, kiss it, all of it, but weeping he kissed it, sobbing and drenching it with his tears, and frenziedly he swore to love it, love it until the end of the ages. With each moment that passed he felt plainly and almost palpably that something as firm and unshakeable as this celestial vault was descending into his soul. Something that was almost an idea took mastery of his intellect – and now for the rest of his life and until the end of the ages. A feeble youth had he fallen to the earth, yet now he arose a resolute warrior for the rest of his life and knew and felt this suddenly, at the same moment of his ecstasy[1295].

Indeed, in this scene, transformed by the power of the Spirit, Alyosha appears as one in whom man's vocation of mediator between heaven and earth is being fulfilled. According to Saint Maximus the Confessor, this has been the vocation of the first man, Adam, who failed to fulfill it. The vocation was then fulfilled by Christ, the new Adam, and it can be fulfilled by all who partake of Christ's deified humanity through grace. Vladimir Lossky resumes the doctrine of Saint Maximus, arguing that

> it was the divinely appointed function of the first man […] to unite in himself the whole of created being; and at the same time to reach his perfect union with God and thus grant the state of deification to the whole creation. It was first necessary that he should suppress in his own nature the division into two sexes, in his following of the impassible life according to the divine archetype. He would then be in a position to reunite paradise with the rest of the earth, for, constantly bearing paradise within himself, being in ceaseless communion with God, he would be able to transform the whole earth into paradise. After this, he must overcome spatial conditions not only in his spirit but also in the body, by reuniting the heavens and the earth, the totality of the sensible universe. Having surpassed the limits of the sensible, it would then be for him to penetrate into the intelligible universe by knowledge equal to that of the angelic spirits, in order to unite in himself the intelligible and the sensible worlds. Finally, there remaining nothing outside of himself but God alone, man had only to give himself to Him in a complete abandonment of love, and thus return to Him the whole created universe gathered together in his own being. God Himself would then in His turn have given Himself to man, who would then, in virtue of this gift, that is to say by grace, possess all that God

[1295] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*,p. 469.

> possesses by nature. The deification of man and of the whole created universe would thus be accomplished […]. In his way to union with God, man in no way leaves creatures aside, but gathers together in his love the whole cosmos disordered by sin, that it may be at last transfigured by grace[1296].

According Gibson, as a character, Alyosha represents a response to the previous failure of one of Dostoyevsky's characters: Prince Myshkin. The latter represents only "a test case"[1297] and "a painful dialectical introduction [...] to the God-man"[1298]. For Gibson, Myshkin does not represent "a failure *of* Christianity" but "a failure *in* Christianity"[1299]. He fails because, unlike Alyosha, "he is not sufficiently incarnate"[1300]. In Myshkin's case, Christian idealism takes the place of Christianity. While in the case of Alyosha's mystical experience one witnesses the power of the Spirit, which penetrates and resurrects the flesh that has been submitted to temptation, the otherworldly intuitions of Prince Myshkin, fatally associated with the disease that finally triumphs over him, do not have any power over the surrounding reality, which remains controlled by the power of evil. Above all, Myshkin's deficit of incarnation is tragically revealed by the failure of his religion of equally powerless compassion. Instead of saving Nastasya Filippovna, Myshkin collapses together with her, thus failing "as a redeemer"[1301]. Prince Myshkin appears then as a case of Christian idealism that fails to past the test of reality, as a "tragic parody of [a] Christ, not invested with sufficient counterveiling force to resist, let alone stem the avalanche of avarice, lies and malice which prevails in this novel's world"[1302]. In a word, Myshkin is powerless goodness, goodness defeated by the power of evil and death. He is the Christ of the crucifixion, and of the crucifixion only, of the crucifixion without resurrection,

[1296] Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, pp. 109-111.
[1297] A. Boyce Gibson, *The Religion of Dostoevsky*, p. 104.
[1298] *Ibidem*, p. 38.
[1299] *Ibidem*, p. 114.
[1300] *Ibidem*, p. 109.
[1301] *Ibidem*.
[1302] Diane Oenning Thompson, "Problems of the Biblical Word in Dostoevsky's Poetics", in George Pattison and Diane Oenning Thompson (ed.), *Dostoyevsky and the Christian Tradition*, pp. 75-76.

as reflected by Holbein's painting of Christ taken down from the Cross, the central image of Dostoyevsky's "bleakest work"[1303]. Myshkin tells Rogozhin that "a man could loose his faith looking at that picture"[1304]. And, later on in the novel, Ippolit, an eighteen year old young man who is dying of tuberculosis and who decides to protest against his absurd faith by committing suicide, describes the picture in the following way:

> There was no hint of beauty in Rogozhin's picture; it is an out-and-out depiction of the body of a man who has endured endless torments even before the crucifixion – wounds, torture, beatings from the guards, blows from the populace when he was carrying the cross and fell beneath it, and finally the agony of the cross [...]. The face is terribly mangled by blows, swollen with terrible, swollen, bloody bruises, the eyes open and unfocused; the whites wide open, gleaming with a kind of deathly, glazed lustre. But it's odd; as you look at this corpse of a tortured man a most curious question comes to mind: if a corpse like that (and it must have certainly been exactly like that) was seen by all his disciples, his future chief apostles, and seen by the women who followed him and stood by the cross, by all in fact who believed in and worshipped him, how could they have believed, looking at such a corpse, that the martyr would rise again? The compulsion would be to think that if death was so dreadful, and nature's laws so powerful, how could they possibly be overcome? How could they be overcome when even he had failed, he who had vanquished even nature during his lifetime [...]? Looking at the picture, one has the impression of nature as some enormous, implacable, dumb beast, or more precisely, much more precisely, strange as it may seem – in the guise of a vast modern machine which has pointlessly seized, dismembered, and devoured, in its blind and insensible fashion, a great and priceless being, a being worth all of nature and all her laws, worth the entire earth – which indeed was perhaps created solely to prepare for the advent of that being! The picture is, as it were, the medium through which this notion of some dark, insolent, senselessly infinite force to which everything is subordinated is unwittingly conveyed[1305].

If from an iconographic point of view, Myshkin's figure is associated with Holbein's painting of Christ defeated by death, Alyosha's figure is instead associated with the Byzantine icon of the resurrected Christ defeating death and smashing the gates of hell[1306]. Unlike Myshkin,

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[1303] *Ibidem*, p. 76.

[1304] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 229.

[1305] *Ibidem*, pp. 430-431.

[1306] Holbein's picture can be found at: http://www.chrishorner.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/1o-holbein-christ_thumb4.jpg; The classical Byzantine representation of the resurrection (in the Byzantine iconographic tradition there are also other representations of the resurrection, but this represents by far the most widespread representation, as well as the one that best reflects the Orthodox understanding of soteriology) can be found at: http://www.google.ca/imgres?imgurl=http://saintsilouan.org/images/anastasis-

Alyosha, who Dostoyevsky practically raises up from Myshkin's tomb, appears "both physically robust and rooted in the Orthodox community"[1307]. He is able to withstand temptation, and in particular the temptation that comes from the confrontation of goodness with the power of death, and to raise again from his trial with a renewed and stronger faith. "*Il est capable de décision virile*", and "*son innocence n'empêche pas que la nature brutale des Karamazov soit la sienne*"[1308]. Myshkin remains instead a beautiful soul, alienated from the soil of the motherland, and caught inside an absurd and adverse universe: a universe that has not been transformed by the resurrection of Christ, but only bears the traces of some distant, otherworldly and forever lost paradise. In this sense, two different images of the cosmos correspond to the two different icons of Christ. One image represents a cosmos that is penetrated by the power of the creating and deifying Logos, as reflected in these verses from the Resurrection Mathins service of the Orthodox Church: "Now everything is filled with light, heaven and earth and all things beneath the earth: so let all creation celebrate the Resurrection of Christ on which it is founded". The other represents the evil cosmos of the ancient Gnostics, which in Dostoyevsky's literary art appears as a modern machine invested with a cruel, antihuman power of destruction.

Thus, while Myshkin is indeed a powerless Messiah who inhabits the essentially evil cosmos of the Gnostics, Besançon's diagnostic of Gnosticism that is applied to the whole Dostoyevskyan work, apparently on the basis of Myshkin's model, appears as illegitimate. We should not forget that it is not Myshkin, but Alyosha who represents Dostoyevsky's last word in his approach of

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[1307] A. Boyce Gibson, *The Religion of Dostoevsky*, p. 122.

[1308] Henri de Lubac, *Le drame de l'humanisme athée*, p. 405.

the issue of incarnation[1309]. In this sense, it is extremely relevant to compare Alyosha's ecstatic integration within the cosmic order, as revealed in the scene of his spiritual resurrection, with Myshkin's painful feeling of alienation in relation with the symphony of life. Bitterly affected by his incapacity to console Ippolit (who dies with the conviction that the universe is an absurd and cruel mechanism that man must hate, and hates Myshkin more than anybody else due to his incapacity to save him), Myshkin recalls how he himself in his youth, surrounded by the beautiful landscape of the Swiss Alps, was "[tormented]" by the fact that

> he was completely alien to […] this feast […], this permanent grand festival which had no end, to which he had for long been drawn, always – ever since childhood, but could not join. Every morning the same bright sun came up; every morning there was a rainbow on the waterfall; every evening the highest snow-capped mountain, far off at the sky's rim, glowed with purple flame; every 'tiny fly' buzzing near him in the hot sunlight was a participant in that chorus: it knew its place, loved it, and was happy! Everything had its own path and everything knew its own path, and went forth with a song and returned with a song; he alone knew nothing and comprehended nothing, not people, not sounds, he was alien to everything, an outcast[1310].

6.7. - Between "Churchification" and Apocalypse

According to Gibson, as Dostoyevsky's final response to the problem of incarnation, Alyosha does not surpass only Prince Myshkin. Instead, Alyosha also surpasses Shatov, who in turn, had represented the dialectical antithesis of Prince Myshkin, and through this, an equally unsatisfactory response to the problem of incarnation. While Myshkin's "ideal God [...] is insufficiently incarnate", Shatov's "Russian God [...] is too narrowly incarnate"[1311]. Thus, the mysticism of the soil cannot be considered to be a satisfactory response to the powerless otherworldly intuition. Instead, the incarnation, as it is represented through Alyosha, synthesizes

[1309] Alain Besançon, *Intellectual Origins of Leninism*, pp. 139-140.
[1310] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 446.
[1311] A. Boyce Gibson, *The Religion of Dostoevsky*, p. 142.

and surpasses these two opposite polls. If in Dostoyevsky's work Alyosha's Christianity surpasses Shatov's Christianity, then it seems necessary to conclude, together with Vladimir Solovyov, that "the social idea at which Dostoyevsky arrived" is "not the nation but the *Church*"[1312]. In the end, as it results from the discourses of the prosecution and of the defense from Dmitry's trial, Russia's future remains suspended between the image of a Russian "*troika* [...] rushing headlong, and possibly to its doom" while the other nations contemplate its march with "horror" and mobilize themselves in defense of civilization, and the image of a "a majestic Russian chariot" that "will solemnly and tranquilly attain its goal"[1313]. *The Brothers Karamazov* ends with an unexpected representation of the Church, whose triumph over the gates of Hell is unequivocally affirmed in the last lines of Dostoyevsky's last novel. Thus, the Church is represented as "a community" of children, established by Alyosha and "held together in agapic love"[1314]. After Ilyusha's funeral, at which Alyosha and "about twelve"[1315] children have participated, all of whom have stayed by Ilyusha's side throughout his final period of life, Alyosha appeals to the children that they shall

> never forget – in the first place, Ilyushechka, and in the second, one another. And whatever may befall us subsequently in life, even though we do not meet for twenty years hereafter – all the same, let us remember how we buried the poor boy, the one at whom you formerly threw stones [...] but whom everyone came to love so later [...].Let us, in the first place and above all, be kind, then honest, and then – let us never forget one another [...]. Let us never forget Ilyusha [...], who has united us in this kind and good emotion [...], and let there be for him an eternal and good memory within our hearts, from this day forth and to the ends of the ages! [...] I give you my word, gentlemen, that I shall never forget a single one of you; each face that gazes on me now, this moment, I shall remember, even though it be for thirty years[1316].

[1312] Vladimir Soloviev, "Three Speeches in Memory of Dostoyevsky" in *The Heart of Reality*, trans. Vladimir Wozniuk, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003, pp. 8-11 (the italics are in the original), quoted in Bruce K. Ward, *Redeeming the Enlightenment*, p. 215.

[1313] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 921-922, 953.

[1314] Bruce K. Ward, *Redeeming the Enlightenment*, p. 217.

[1315] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 975.

[1316] *Ibidem*, pp. 982-984.

In the interpretation of Ward, the closing scene of *The Brothers Karamazov* reveals a "multi-voiced unity" that

> does not diminish, but enhances the unique personhood of each friend [...].This community in which the I and the all find their fulfillment is a network of love: the love of Alyosha for the children, of the children for Alyosha, of Alyosha and the children for Ilyusha, whose memory constitutes a kind of icon. As icon, the memory of Ilyusha mediates eternal love into the temporal lives of children who will thereby be strengthened in the practice of the virtues in a world that is still characterized by evil and violence[1317].

And, with Alyosha's final affirmation of resurrection – "Without question we shall rise"[1318] – "the community" is "[extended] into the 'other world' "[1319]. In this representation of the Church from the final scene of *The Brothers Karamazov* we see how "*l'image de l'existence divine où le principe de la pluralité se fond avec le principe d'unicité est projeté dans le monde*"[1320]. The Church is then depicted as an icon of the Trinity, for in the Trinity, the one and the many, as well as transcendence and immanence, are united without confusion[1321].

Body of the incarnate and resurrected Christ, the Church, viewed from a political angle, appears as an anti-political agapic utopia, in as much as it is based on the belief that, true unity, between individuals and nations, can exist only through brotherhood. Conceived therefore in ideal terms, Russia's goal of ecumenical unity would inevitably represent

> a temptation to the mighty of this world, to those who thus far have been triumphant in it and who have always looked upon such 'expectations' with disdain and derision; to those who are even unable to understand that one may seriously believe in the brotherhood of men, in the general reconciliation of the nations, in a union founded upon the principles of common service to mankind, and, finally, in man's regeneration based on the true principles of Christ[1322].

[1317] Bruce K. Ward, *Redeeming the Enlightenment*, pp. 217-218.
[1318] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 985.
[1319] Bruce K. Ward, *Redeeming the Enlightenment*, p. 218.
[1320] Pavel Evdokimoff, *Dostoïevski et le problème du mal*, p. 125.
[1321] According to David S. Cunningham, the closing scene of *The Brothers Karamazov* would be only one of the many proofs that *The Brothers Karamazov* represent "a work of trinitarian theology" and, implicitly, "an incisive critique of both monism and dualism" (David S. Cunningham, "The Brothers Karamazov as Trinitarian Theology", in *Dostoyevsky and the Christian Tradition*, p. 136).
[1322] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, Vol. 1, p. 365.

When speaking of the Church and its mission, Dostoyevsky underlines the fact that he is "not speaking of church buildings, or the clergy", but "of the unquenchable, inherent thirst in the Russian people for great, universal, brotherly fellowship in the name of Christ [...], of our Russian 'socialism', the ultimate aim of which is the establishment of an oecumenical Church on earth [...] in so far as the earth is capable of embracing it". And this Church cannot be established, through "mechanical forms", which ignore or seek to annihilate freedom, but only "through the universal communion in the name of Christ"[1323], and, "with full respect for national individualities, for their preservation", and "for the maintainance of complete liberty of men"[1324]. Although circumspect theologians will argue that the terminology used by Dostoyevsky betrays, at least residually, an illegitimate nationalist and socialist translation of ecclesiology, it is fair to argue that, ultimately, for Dostoyevsky, the Russian nation is justified in the world only to the extent that it *truly* accomplishes the above mentioned ideal of universal brotherly unity, through means that are compatible with that ideal. Therefore, in the Dostoyevskyan conception of history, the tension between Russia and the West is ultimately subordinated to and surpassed by "the tension [...] between two ideas of order – the church and the state". The cornerstone of the first order is the God-man, while the cornerstone of the second order is the man-god. The first order is based on love, while the second order is based on coercion[1325]. And like the Slavophiles, Dostoyevsky also was all too aware of the fact that, ultimately, this was a conflict that was crossing Russian history itself[1326].

The nature of this conflict between Church and State is described in the fascinating discussion from the Optina monastery that unites, at the beginning of the novel *The Brothers*

[1323] *Ibidem*, Vol. 2, pp. 1029-1031.
[1324] *Ibidem*, p. 582.
[1325] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, pp. 165-166.
[1326] *Ibidem*, pp. 174-176.

Karamazov, the representatives of the three paradigms that, according to Ward, are engaged in a constant dialogue throughout all of Dostoyevsky's work: the secular humanists, the nihilists, and the Christians. We find out from the discussion that there are two ways in which the State can triumph over the Church: if the State submits the Church to its authority, or if the Church itself betrays its mission, assuming the attributes of the State and attempting to submit the State to its authority. The Church can triumph over the State in a single way: when the State is transformed into a Church. As argued by Father Paisy during the discussion that begins with Ivan's article concerning the Ecclesiastical-Civil Court, Rome, which had given in to "the third temptation of Satan", had thus transformed the Church into a State. After the Protestant Reformation and the collapse of Rome's theocratic dream, we see, in modernity, that the secular state pretends to replace the Church as the ideal community, seeing itself as the final historical realization of the Church idea on earth. According to this essentially Hegelian view, the historical evolution from Church to State represents an evolution "from a lower species to a higher one", and the Church must "subsequently […] vanish in" this higher species, "yielding to science, the spirit of the times and civilization"[1327]. Where the Church resists such a transformation, the Church is neutralized in the form of a State department and "kept under constant surveillance", as it "is generally the case throughout all the lands of Europe in our day"[1328]. Thus, the Church can no longer have any effect on the civil order, being submitted to a separation that annihilates its fundamental mission on earth: that of bringing about the transfiguration of social relations as an implicit consequence of its redeeming action upon souls. Whether one deals with the secular state or with the secularized Church, which, according to Ernst Kantorowicz, has represented the model of the secular state, in both cases, the ideal of Ancient Rome triumphs over the ideal of

[1327] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p.86.
[1328] *Ibidem*.

Christianity. However, through the voice of Father Paisy, Dostoyevsky argues that "according to Russian thinking and aspirations [...], the desirable outcome is not that the Church should evolve into a State, as from a lower type of existence to a higher one, but that, on the contrary, the State should end by being deemed worthy to become exclusively a Church and nothing other"[1329]. To the astonishment of the liberal Miusov, Father Paisy dismisses both the separation of Church and State, as well as the accusations of Ultramontanism. While "the Kingdom of Heaven is, of course, not of this world", Father Paisy continues, in the latter, one "cannot [...] [enter] except through the Church, which has been founded and established upon earth", and "is indeed a kingdom [...] appointed to rule and in its due course must indubitably manifest itself as a kingdom over all the earth – as it was promised to us...."[1330] This is not Ultramontanism, for the State does not submit itself to the authority of a Church that has taken upon itself the juridical prerogatives of a State. Instead, the State's "statality", which is nothing else than the mark of sin, is abolished through "churchification", and the whole earthly order is "churchified", just as in the flesh of Christ sin is defeated, and just as in the Liturgy, bread and wine become deified body and blood. Ivan Karamazov, who here expresses the theologico-political aspirations of Orthodoxy, confirms the affirmation of Father Paisy. Integrated as a consequence of Constantine's conversion into the Roman State, which still contained "too many vestiges of pagan civilization and wisdom", and, furthermore, remained pagan through its "very goals and principles" as State, "the Church of Christ could not of course surrender any of its own fundamental principles, hewn from the same rock on which it stood, and could not but pursue the very goals that once had been firmly set and prescribed for it by the Lord Himself, including the

[1329] *Ibidem*.
[1330] *Ibidem*, p.84.

goal of converting the entire world, and thereby the whole of the Ancient State"[1331]. For this reason, just like those who separate Church from State (the liberals) and those who turn the Church into a State (the Catholics), those who set for the Church "a precise and definite place in the State" (the Erastians[1332]), instead of regarding this situation merely "as a temporary compromise, still necessary in our sinful and imperfect times", are "[flying] straight in the face of the Church and its sacred, primordial and immovable destiny"[1333]. For the "churchification" of the state, and, ultimately, the fulfillment of the abolition of law in Christ through grace, Father Paisy concludes, "is [...] the great predestination of Orthodoxy upon earth"[1334]. As underlined by Father Zosima, although "Christian society is not yet ready for this and merely stands upon the shoulders of the seven men of honest report", yet, "it still firmly abides in the expectancy of its complete transformation from a society that is as yet little more than a pagan body into one Oecumenical and Sovereign Church. May it comes to pass even if only at the ends of the world, for it alone is predestined to be accomplished!"[1335]

This "négation théocratique-anarchique de tout étatisme"[1336], to paraphrase Berdyaev's characterization of the Slavophile political theology, represents then Dostoyevsky's Orthodox alternative to Maistre's Roman Catholic theocratic project, which was meant to solve the crisis of sovereignty triggered by the French Revolution, or, otherwise said, to put an end to the modern dialectic of anarchy and tyranny. Dostoyevsky interpreted political modernity in a similar way, but for him, instead of being the solution to the crisis, the theocratic ambitions of the papacy represented the origin of the crisis. For Dostoyevsky, the modern crisis could have

[1331] *Ibidem*, p.85.
[1332] Erastianism is a theologico-political doctrine which presupposes the subordination of the Church to the authority of the State. This doctrine practically defines the Anglican relation between Church and State.
[1333] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p.85.
[1334] *Ibidem*, p.90
[1335] *Ibidem*.
[1336] Nicolas Berdiaev, *Khomiakov*, p. 155.

been surpassed only through the authentic accomplishment, in and through Christ, of the ideal of brotherhood, which the French Revolution had proclaimed but had failed to put into practice. Thus, if for Dostoyevsky the modern crisis is resolved through the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, for the Grand Inquisitor, it was the initial coming of God on earth, a truly revolutionary event, which had represented the origin of the modern crisis of authority. Consequently, for the Grand Inquisitor, the resolution of this crisis required a radical reaffirmation of the clerical mediation that had been compromised by the Christian revolution, and the subsequent institution of an absolute separation between a totally otherworldly God, the only God that Ivan Karamazov can accept, and this world here which is being hermetically isolated from the contact with transcendence. The reestablishment within this world of the order that had been compromised by Christ, required a theocratic regime that would completely subordinate the secular to the spiritual, while securing a radical and completely uncontested power of mediation in the spiritual sphere through the principle of infallibility. From this point of view, we would expect that, with its decisionistic and therefore proto-totalitarian tendencies that brings it close to the theologico-politcal doctrine exposed in "The Legend of The Grand Inquisitor", the theocratic thought of Maistre would be fundamentally opposed to the prophetic fever that announces the descent of God's Kingdom on earth. For this kind of spiritual agitation, which the Grand Inquisitor brings to an end at the beginning of Ivan's poem by ordering Christ's arrest, is ultimately a revolutionary agitation that threatens the mediating power of the ecclesial institution. But here we are once again confronted with the paradox of Maistre's "double religion"[1337], which is revealed to us in *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, and, in particular, in the last dialogue of the book, where, despite the reservations of the Count, a particularly

[1337] Bernard Sarrazin, "Le Comte et le Sénateur ou la double religion de Joseph de Maistre", p. 15.

subversive eschatological enthusiasm breaks forth, ending thus the Maistrian creation with an eschatological vision that strongly resembles the one that is revealed to the reader of *The Brothers Karamazov*. The subversive potential of this novel should not be underestimated. For Dostoyevsky's affirmation that the Church should not content itself with a designated position within the State, but should seek instead to transform the State into a Church, represents an implicit denunciation of the existing relations between Church and State from Russia at that time, given the fact that, since the time of Peter the Great, the Russian Church had practically been transformed into a state department, in accordance with the model prevailing in the Protestant countries[1338]. Berdyaev has argued that the condition of servitude in which the Russian Orthodox Church found itself, had inevitably determined the Russian messianic consciousness to hope that "a new kingdom [...], the millennium of Jesus Christ", will come "in Russia". Just that, "instead of the 'third Rome' it was the Third International", and its builders regarded themselves as "light-bearers from the East, sent to enlighten the peoples of the West still plunged in the darkness of 'the bourgeoisie' "[1339].

Criticizing the modern phenomenon of revolution which is inherently associated with secularization, both Maistre and Dostoyevsky are ultimately seeking to reappropriate, in a Christian eschatological key, the concept of revolution. If Florovsky has stressed Dostoyevsky's very powerful chiliast temptation, for Pranchère, there are very strong indicators that Maistre's

[1338] For more details concerning the regime imposed by Peter the Great on the Russian Church, and maintained in its essence until the reestablishment of the Patriarchate during the Russian Revolution, see Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. 1, pp. 114-135.

[1339] Nicholas Berdyaev, *Dostoyevsky*, p. 183. According to Besançon, hating so much capitalism and the bourgeois spirit, the above mentioned authors, among whom he includes also Berdyaev, have thought that "anything was better, for Russia, than a Western style system of law and liberalism and a market economy. Anything, neo-Slavophiles like Berdyaev would say – even the Bolsheviks. For as far as the Slavophile spirit was concerned, the Bolsheviks were compatible with the Holy Ghost, but bourgeois liberals were not" (Alain Besançon, *Intellectual Origins of Leninism*, pp. 76, 138).

expected third revelation of the Holy Spirit should be understood from exactly the same perspective:

> *Un règne terrestre de Dieu; non pas à proprement parler l'Apocalypse, le Jugement dernier, mais bien la venue sur terre de Dieu pour la réalisation d'un nouveau monde où la violence et l'injustice seraient abolies. 'Il me semble', écrit Maistre en 1807, 'que sa Majesté la Providence dit:* Ecce! Nova facio omnia'. *L' 'apocalypse' d'une troisième revelation mériterait assurément d'être nommée une révolution faite par Dieu, car elle aurait tous les caractères de la révolution: la fusion du genre humain et la rédemption sur la terre. C'est là le dernier et le plus étonnant des paradoxes de la pensée maistrienne: le conservatisme maistrien ne vaut que dans l'attente de la révolution divine.*[1340]

It is interesting to compare these observations concerning Maistre with some of Berdyaev's observations concerning the revolutionary dimension of Dostoyevsky's thought. According to Berdyaev, although "no one has denounced more strongly than" Dostoyevsky "the falsehood and unrighteousness that make revolutions", yet, it would be a big mistake to regard Dostoyevsky "as a conservative or a reactionary in the current sense", for, in fact, Dostoyevsky "was revolutionary minded in a deeper way". Like Maistre, Dostoyevsky "saw no possibility of a return to[the] static and immovable […] conception of life […] that existed before the arising of the revolutionary spirit". Inevitably then, in the case of both authors, the critique of modernity, although rooted in the Christian tradition, is nevertheless oriented, like Christianity itself, towards the eschatological future. Berdyaev, himself the prophet of "New Middle Ages", stresses the fact that, while Dostoyevsky's mind "was too apocalyptic", it must be underlined that the apocalyptic mind is not the mind of the conservative. Dostoyevsky's "hostility against revolution was not that of a man with a stale mind who takes some interest or other in the old social organization, but the hostility of an apocalyptic being who takes the side of Christ in his supreme struggle with Antichrist". And thus, marching with Christ towards Armageddon, Dostoyevsky

[1340] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières,* pp. 426-427 – The original source from which Maistre's quotation is taken is *Correspondance avec Blacas (1804-1820),* éditée par E. Daudet, in *Joseph de Maistre et Blacas, leur correspondance inédite et l'histoire de leur amitié,* Plon, Paris, 1908, p.67.

"is a man of the future […] every bit as much as him who marches with Antichrist and fights in his ranks at the last day". In the last instance, just like Maistre, Dostoyevsky opposes to "the spirit of revolution […], the revolution of the spirit"[1341]. The fight of the traditional order with the revolutionary forces may be already lost. But the true battle, which represents the key for understanding all human history, is not the battle between Revolution and Tradition. For Christianity is and remains revolutionary. Instead, we have a conflict between a divine revolution and a satanic revolution, both of which are active in the world until the end of history.

Dostoyevsky's apocalyptic vision of Western history has inevitably given birth to a messianic nationalism. When he announced the imminent collapse of the West, Dostoyevsky has claimed that the tsunami coming from the West "will break only against" the "shores" of Russia, "and then it will be arrantly revealed to everybody to what an extent our national organism differs from the European"[1342]. From Russia, he argued, Elijah and Enoch will arise "*pour combattre l'Antéchrist, c. à d., l'esprit de l'Occident*"[1343]. Nevertheless, Russia's redeeming action in the world had to begin with the exorcism of its own demons. And here – setting aside the bitter irony resulting from Dostoyevsky's completely failed prophecy with regard to Russia's role in the context of the future proletarian revolution –, one is confronted with a striking paradox. If the West is the source of the atheist spirit of modern times, it is in Russia (the land destined to redeem the West), and more precisely in the midst of its Westernized intelligentsia, that the most radical manifestations of this spirit occur. For, as Ivan tells Alyosha, "the things that are hypotheses" in Europe "instantly become axioms in the hands of our Russian boys"[1344].

[1341] Nicholas Berdyaev, *Dostoyevsky*, pp. 134-136.

[1342] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, vol. 2, p.1004.

[1343] Dostoïevski, *Carnets des Demons*, p. 938-939, quoted in Théodore Paléologue, *Sous l'œil du Grand Inquisiteur*, p. 155.

[1344] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 307. Vladimir Kantor argues that "what for Ivan himself" remains "a problem" – the question of God's existence and its ethical implications –, "becomes for

Maistre had underlined the revolutionary potential of the Russians, warning the Tsar that "*il n'y a point d'homme qui veuille aussi passionnément que le Russe*"[1345], and, commenting on Dostoyevsky's analysis of socialism, Berdyaev has argued that "it is more easy to determine the nature of socialism in general" from the nihilist Russian socialism described by Dostoyevsky, which follows the logic of "all or nothing", "than from the more moderate and refined forms current in Europe"[1346].

The failure of Dostoyevsky's prophecy concerning the relation between Russia and the future socialist Revolution should not mislead us. For Dostoyevsky's prophetic hope and his staunch belief in the moral strength of the Russian people, had, until the end of his life, coexisted in his mind with a profound anxiety caused by his awareness of the unleashing of the "mystery of lawlessness" (2 Thessalonians 7: 12). It is sufficient to take a look at one of the question marks, timidly raised, only to be immediately denied, in one of his articles from *The Diary of a Writer*: "Are our people", Dostoyevsky asks himself, "predestined to pass through an additional phase of debauch and deceit", of approximately two hundred years, "similar to that through which" the Russian elite "[has] passed when [it has] been inoculated by civilization"? Will the people have to wonder as well, through the desert, like the upper classes, until it returns home? "In this connection", Dostoyevsky answers his own question, "I should like to hear something more encouraging. I am strongly inclined to believe that our people constitute such an immensity that

Smerdyakov an axiom" (Vladimir Kantor, "Pavel Smerdyakov and Ivan Karamazov: The Problem of Temptation", in George Pattison and Diane Oenning Thompson (ed.), *Dostoyevsky and the Christian Tradition*, p. 208). While Ivan goes insane as a result of the incapacity of his mind to settle the matter either in a positive or in a negative direction, Smerdyakov rushes to put into practice his nihilist philosophy by killing Fyodor Pavlovich.

[1345] Joseph de Maistre, *Quatres chapitres sur la Russie*, p. 21.

[1346] Nicholas Berdyaev, *Dostoyevsky*, p. 139.

in it all the new muddy currents, should they happen to spring up from somewhere, will be eliminated of their own accord"[1347].

However, later written fragments from *The Diary of a Writer,* as well as various passages from his novels, indicate that his strong faith in the people intersected an equally strong anxiety felt in the face of the degradation of the Russian land as a whole. Particularly relevant is Karamazinov's gloomy description of Russia's situation in *Demons,* and his equally gloomy prediction that while the West is built of stone and will not collapse during his lifetime, Russia instead is made of wood. And therefore, Karamazinov argues that in Russia "everything will dissolve into mud" at the first assault of Russia's revolutionaries, "Holy Rus" being completely incapable of putting up any sort of resistance[1348]. Verkhovensky's depiction of the situation, in which a series of disconcerting aspects addressed by Dostoyevsky himself in *The Diary of a Writer* are highlighted, is the most edifying in what concerns Dostoyevsky's own horror with regard to the apocalyptic perspectives that threatened his country. As argued by Verkhovensky, in Russia, the Revolution is advancing with the help of "the teacher who laughs along with the children at their God and at their cradle"; of "the lawyer who defends an educated murderer on the grounds that he is more highly developed than his victims and that in order to get some money, he couldn't help but kill"; of "the schoolboys who kill a peasant for the thrill of it"; of "jurors who acquit all criminals without discrimination"; of "the prosecutor in the courtroom who trembles in fear that he is not sufficiently liberal". All of them, Verkhovensky argues, are "ours". And if this is the situation with the educated classes, in the meantime, "the Russian God has already given up when it comes to cheap booze. The common people are drunk, the mothers are drunk, the children are drunk, the churches are empty, and in the courts it's 'either two

[1347] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer,* vol.1, p. 205.
[1348] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons,* pp. 410-412.

hundred lashes, or bring us a bucketful of vodka'"[1349]. All of these aspects, inspired from real cases that Dostoevsky approached in his editorial activity, point to the fact that Russia, from which the salvation of the West is expected, may very well be instead the vanguard of the coming Revolution. For Drouilly, Dostoyevsky reveals himself to be

> *un homme qui, déchiré de plus en plus entre une vision terriblement cruelle de la réalité qui l'entoure et les illusions auxquelles il s'est abandonné, passe sans cesse de l'inquiétude la plus vraie à l'espérance la plus naïve. C'est cette hésitation qui est l'essentiel, c'est elle qui donne au* Journal d'un écrivain *sa couleur véritable. Car les cris d'espérance qui traversent maintes pages de ce livre sont si évidemment puérils que l'on doute que Dostoievski y soit absolument sincère*[1350].

Ultimately, like in the case of Maistre, Dostoyevsky's prophetic enthusiasm remains haunted by a terrible anxiety with regard to the future. And, if like the Slavophiles, Dostoyevsky has invested all his hopes in the fulfillment of Russia's Christian mission, the other dark side of Dostoyevsky's twofold perspective on the future is absent from the thought of the early Slavophiles (with the partial exception of Aksakov). Berdyaev has argued that the Slavophiles were rooted in a patriarchal order of things, and that for this reason, the earth, from which all of Dostoyevsky's alienated heroes have been cut off, "seemed firm as a rock beneath" the Slavophiles' "feet". But according to Berdyaev, Dostoyevsky's generation assisted at the disintegration of this patriarchal order, and Dostoyevsky himself was "the man of underground convulsions". That is why, according to him, the apocalyptical fever and the feeling of the Antichrist's approach, which permeate all of Dostoyevsky's work, are completely absent from the thought of the early Slavophiles[1351]. Moreover, while the Slavophiles "had no theology of

[1349] *Ibidem*, pp. 465-466.

[1350] Jean Drouilly, *La pensée politique et religieuse de F.M. Dostoïevski*, pp. 406, 469.

[1351] Nicholas Berdyaev, *Dostoyevsky*, pp. 33, 214; Nicolas Berdiaev, *Khomiakov*, pp. 55, 105, 159. According to Andrzej Walicki, Dostoyevsky himself was a representative of the uprooted intelligentsia, and not a member of "the gentry", like the Slavophiles. As a consequence, he has "examine[d] the problem of the 'underground man' from the inside". His "utopia, like that of the Slavophiles, was essentially a conservative romantic protest against capitalist civilization", but, compared to the case of Slavophilism, "it was not a protest made from the standpoint of the pre-capitalist ruling class" (Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 547).

struggle against the forces of the devil, death, and corruption"[1352], Dostoyevsky had "a profound understanding of the demonic forces threatening the values defended by his" popular "utopia"[1353]. Probably, this feeling of impending crisis accounts for the fact that, like Maistre, and unlike the Slavophiles, who seem to have completely ignored this subject, Dostoyevsky had dedicated his last and most important work to the problem of theodicy, sensing that the deepest root of the modern contestation of Christianity was located in this theological ground, and that, consequently, a consistent defense of Christianity against the nihilist contestation could not eschew the assumption of this true cross of Christian theology. Then, although as it shall be seen, Maistre's response to the problem of evil and Dostoyevsky's response to the same problem are fundamentally different, as far as the problematic itself is concerned, what distinguishes Dostoyevsky from the Slavophiles – the feeling of the Antichrist's approach and the troubling meditation on the problem of evil – unites him at the same time with Maistre.

[1352] John S. Romanides, "Orthodox Ecclesiology according to Alexis Komiakov", p. 73.
[1353] Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 558.

Chapter 7 – The problem of theodicy in the thought of Joseph de Maistre and Fyodor Dostoyevsky

7.1. - Introduction

In response to the modern crisis of order, and, more specifically, in response to the modern dissolution of the social bond, Maistre and Dostoyevsky proposed two different theologico-political solutions, extracted from two different ecclesiologies. The Maistrian response was centered on the concept of authority, while the Dostoyevskyan response was centered on the concept of *sobornost*. Just as the ultimate basis of Maistre's system was the authority of God, from which both the monarchy and the papacy derived their authority, likewise, for Dostoyevsky, the God-man who could transfigure human nature and, as a consequence, social relations, represented the cornerstone of his Christian Utopia. Taking into account the fact that, as Maistre and Dostoyevsky both noticed, modernity's foundation was represented by a rational critique of Christian theology whose ultimate expression was atheism, it is understandable why, in the case of both authors, the critique of modernity, which begins with a reflection on the modern crisis of order, must culminate with a theological rejection of the philosophical critique of traditional Christianity. It should be underlined however that while both authors do try to demonstrate the existence of God (although, in the case of Dostoyevsky, as we shall see, the term "demonstration" does not accurately represent the nature of his approach of this issue) through different means – by rational arguments, in the case of Maistre, and by referring to a particular experience of the divine, on earth, in the case of Dostoyevsky –, this does not represent the epicenter of their response to the rationalist critique of Christian theology. Instead, their theological efforts were concentrated on the attempt to respond to the rationalist deconstruction

of the Christian theodicy. Thus, in this chapter, I will compare the different ways in which Maistre and Dostoyevsky approached this crucial problem.

I begin my parallel study of Dostoyevsky's and Maistre's approaches of the problem of theodicy in section 7.2 with a presentation of the mystical cosmology, marked by the mysterious duality of splendor and horror, with which the two authors confront the Enlightenment's view of the universe as a self-sufficient and perfectly ordained mechanism. Focusing on the study of Voltaire's *Candide*, and of his *Poème sur le Désastre de Lisbonne*, I analyze, in section 7.3, the latter's approach of the problem of theodicy, as well as the theologico-political implications that result first of all from his rejection of Christian theism, and second, from the inconsistency of his own deistic position. The thought of Voltaire is directly relevant for the present study, due to the fact that, if on the one hand Maistre's theodicy from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* represents first and foremost a polemical refutation of Voltaire, on the other hand, the nihilist antitheodicy of Ivan Karamazov can be seen as a continuation of Voltaire's reflections presented in this section. But the theologico-political conclusions that result from Voltaire's reflections on the problem of theodicy invite us to reflect on the overall relation between this problem and modernity. Therefore, in order to better understand the stake and the limits of Maistre's and Dostoyevsky's approaches of the problem of theodicy, as well as the place occupied by these approaches within the context of their critiques of modernity, I have decided to further analyze in section 7.4 the relation between the problem of theodicy and the origins and nature of modernity, referring in this sense to the works of Eric Voegelin and Hans Blumenberg. If Voegelin has identified modernity with the development of Gnosticism and Blumenberg has argued that the premise of the birth of modernity is the collapse of the Catholic theological system under the pressure of Gnosticism, in their approaches of the problem of theodicy, Maistre and Dostoevsky

will ultimately be confronted with the same problem. After presenting in sections 7.3. and 7.4., the background of the Maistrian and Dostoyevskyan approach of the problem of theodicy, I proceed in section 7.5 with an analysis of Maistre's theodicy from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*. I begin the section with an analysis of Maistre's refutation of Voltaire's deistic views as inconsistent. Next, I concentrate on Maistre's soteriology, in particular on his notion of reversibility, exploring the eschatological implications of this theological conception within Maistre's religious thought. At the end of the section, I try to clarify the role that is played by Maistre's theodicy within the context of his political theology. More precisely, after arguing in chapter 2 that Maistre makes an appeal to Providence in order to contain the potential decisionistic deviations of his political theology, I now raise the question whether Maistre's providentialism does indeed manage to contain the decisionist moment of his thought, or whether it in fact reproduces the latter. In section 7.6, I turn to the problem of theodicy as presented in *The Brothers Karamazov*, analyzing Ivan Karamazov's antitheodicy. Dostoyevsky's response to Ivan's challenge is analyzed in section 7.7. This closing section is constructed as a three-level dialogue between Dostoyevsky, Maistre, and Ivan. In this sense, I analyze first of all the views that are shared by all three participants in the dialogue, in particular their common rejection of the modern philosophies of history centered on the notion of progress. After that, I analyze in parallel the similarities and differences between Maistre's Christian discourse, articulated in response to the modern rejection of theodicy, and Dostoyevsky's Christian response to the same challenge, comparing the capacity of the two discourses to withstand the attack of Ivan's nihilism.

7.2. - Evil and the cosmic order

In the Maistrian and Dostoyevskyan work, the reflection on the problem of evil is an ontological reflection that concerns the ultimate meaning of things. It is thus fundamentally related to an intuitive perception of the world as a whole, and hence, it takes place in what may be described as a mystical atmosphere. To this atmosphere, which characterizes the two most important works of Maistre and Dostoyevsky, I intend to introduce the reader, beginning the section with three descriptions, two belonging to Maistre and one to Dostoyevsky, which are distinguished by their visual power.

After the description of war, and the disclosure of its divine sacrificial meaning, from the seventh dialogue of *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, the discourse of the Russian Senator continues with a vision of the order of nature as a whole, a vision which practically mirrors, through its constitutive organization as well as through the latter's meaning, the vision of man's historical existence that is proposed throughout the eleven dialogues. *"Cette loi déjà si terrible de la guerre",* the Russian Senator argues,

> *n'est cependant qu'un chapitre de la loi générale qui pèse sur l'univers […]. Dans le vaste domaine de la nature vivante, il règne une violence manifeste, une espèce de rage prescrite qui arme tous les êtres in* mutua funera *: dès que vous sortez du règne insensible, vous trouvez le décret de la mort violente écrit sur les frontières mêmes de la vie. Déjà, dans le règne végétal on commence à sentir la loi : depuis l'immense catalpa jusqu'au plus humble graminée, combien des plantes meurent, et combien sont tuées ? mais, dès que vous entrez dans le règne animal, la loi prend tout à coup une épouvantable évidence. Une force à la fois cachée et palpable se montre continuellement occupée à mettre à découvert le principe de la vie par des moyens violents. Dans chaque grande division de l'espèce animale, elle a choisi un certain nombre d'animaux qu'elle a chargés de dévorer les autres: ainsi, il y a des insectes de proie, des reptiles de proie, des oiseaux de proie, des poissons de proie, et des quadrupèdes de proie. Il n'y a pas un instant de la durée où l'être vivant ne soit dévoré par un autre. Au-dessus de ces nombreuses races d'animaux est placé l'homme, dont la main destructrice n'épargne rien de ce qui vit; il tue pour se nourrir, il tue pour se vêtir, il tue pour se parer, il tue pour attaquer, il tue pour se défendre, il tue pour s'instruire, il tue pour s'amuser, il tue pour tuer […]. Cependant quel être exterminera celui qui les extermine tous ? Lui. C'est l'homme qui est chargé d'égorger l'homme […]. [C]'est la guerre qui accomplira le*

décret. N'entendez-vous la terre qui crie et demande du sang ? Le sang des animaux ne lui suffit pas, ni même celui des coupables versé par le glaive des lois […]. [L]a guerre s'allume. L'homme, saisi tout à coup d'une fureur divine étrangère à la haine et à la colère, s'avance sur le champ de bataille sans savoir ce qu'il veut ni même ce qu'il fait […]. [I]l fait avec enthousiasme ce qu'il a en horreur […]. [I]nnocent meurtrier, instrument passif d'une main redoutable, il se plonge tête baissée dans l'abîme qu'il a creusé lui-même ; il donne, il reçoit la mort sans se douter que c'est lui qui a fait la mort […]. Ainsi s'accomplit sans cesse, depuis le ciron jusqu'à l'homme, la grande loi de la destruction violente des êtres vivants. La terre entière, continuellement imbibée de sang, n'est qu'un autel immense où tout ce qui vit doit être immolé sans fin, sans mesure, sans relâche, jusqu'à la consommation des choses, jusqu'à l'extinction du mal, jusqu'à la mort de la mort[1354].

Let us compare now this fascinating picture, both terrifying and mysterious, with Zosima's vision of the universal cosmic harmony from *The Brothers Karamazov*. Preparing to depart from the earth, which he has passionately loved throughout his life as a monk, and which he embraces and kisses one last time before his death, Elder Zosima recalls in his last discourses an enchanting summer night spent in the company of a Russian lad "of comely aspect". Long into the night, the two have been

> talk[ing] together about the beauty of this world that God has created, and about its great mystery […]. It was a light night in July, quiet and warm, the river was wide, a vapor rose from it, refreshing us, a fish jumped here and there with a splash, the birds had fallen silent, all was quiet and fair of form, all was immersed in prayer […]. Each stalk of grass, each little insect, each ant and golden bee, they all to a bewildering extent know the paths they must follow; having no intellect, they testify to God's mystery, incessantly accomplishing it in themselves, and I could see that the heart of the charming youth was fired. He confided to me that he loved the forest, the birds of the forest […]. 'I know of no better thing than to be in the forest', he said, 'and indeed it is all good'. 'Verily', I replied to him, 'all is good and magnificent because all is truth. Look,', I said to him, 'upon the horse, that great animal that stands close to man, or at the ox that nourishes him and works for him, thoughtful and with hanging head, look upon their countenances: what meekness, what devotion to man, who often flogs them without pity, what lack of malice, what trust and what beauty there is in their countenances. It is most moving to realize that they bear no sin, for all things and all creatures universally, all except for man, are without sin, and Christ is with them first, before he is with us […]. For his word is for all, and all creation and all creatures, each little leaf is striving towards the word, singing praise to God, weeping to Christ, unknown to itself, accomplishing this by the mystery of its sinless life. Yonder in the forest', I said to him, 'roams the fearsome bear,

[1354] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint Pétersbourg*, pp. 659-661.

> menacing and truculent, and yet in no wise guilty because of it.' And I told him the story of how once a bear came to a great saint who was living as a hermit in the forest, in a little cell, and how the great saint was moved to compassion for it, fearlessly went out to it and gave it a piece of bread, saying: 'Off you go now, Christ is with you', and how the truculent beast withdrew, obediently and meekly, causing him no harm. And the youth was moved at the notion that the bear had withdrawn without causing any harm, and that Christ was with him, too. 'Oh', he said, 'how good that is, how all God's things are good and wondrous[1355].

We have, thus, division and violence versus harmony and peace. The cosmic visions of Maistre and Dostoyevsky appear as cosmic reflections of their theologico-political perspectives: the tension between individual freedom and social unity, which demands an authoritarian and ultimately sacrificial resolution; and the harmonious integration of individual freedom and social unity through *sobornost,* which condemns the tendency to submit life to exterior norms and institutions. In Maistre's vision, this world, submitted to the law of sacrifice, which finds its highest expression in the sacrifice of Christ, is radically separated from the divine peace and harmony, which are only beyond and yet to come. In Dostoyevsky's vision, through the incarnation of the *Logos* to whom all created things relate, the divine peace and harmony transfigure creation here and now. In the first case, we have strife and violence, which are moving the world towards a final eschatological peace, where all evil has been expiated through the sacrificial mechanism. In the second case, the eschatological peace has already begun, despite the fact that sin still exists, and if one would only "want to understand […] that life is paradise", then "at once it will begin in all its beauty, and we shall embrace one another and weep"[1356]. However, a profound sense of mystery is the common denominator of the two visions. The depth of this mystery is deepened by the fact that, although, in the "here-and-now", Maistre gives priority to strife over reconciliation, while the opposite applies in the case of Dostoyevsky, for both authors, reality nevertheless presents itself under a dual aspect: otherwise said, the

[1355] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 382.
[1356] *Ibidem,* p. 388.

reality of both good and evil, of both beauty and terror, is undeniable. In this sense, the two pictures presented above may be balanced by two other pictures, extracted from the same two works.

Thus, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* begins with a fairy-like depiction of Saint-Petersburg, that city which in Dostoyevsky's work is situated at the boundary between dream and reality, and which in Maistre's description is enveloped in the light of the sunset (another key literary element, omnipresent in the work of Dostoyevsky, and symbolizing the transfiguration of the earthly by the divine). In fact, Maistre's literary description makes one think of Claude Lorrain's painting *The Return of Odysseus*[1357], Lorrain being one of Dostoyevsky's favorite artists, and his works being referred to in several of Dostoyevsky's novels. Coincidence or not, it is once again a July night, and the Count Joseph de Maistre, together with his two friends, the Russian Senator and the young French Knight, are sailing along the river Neva towards the residence of the Count, where the series of eleven dialogues concerning the ways of Providence is going to take place. As it shall be seen, the dialogues will be triggered by the painful acknowledgement of a striking contrast that scandalizes the human mind, and makes it question the ways of Providence: the contrast, underlined also in the description of universal harmony from *The Brothers Karamazov*, which opposes the magnificent beauty of the world, and the existence of human wickedness.

"*Rien n'est plus rare*", Maistre tells us,

> *mais rien n'est plus enchanteur qu'une belle nuit d'été à Saint-Pétersbourg […]. Le soleil qui, dans les zones tempérées, se précipite à l'occident, et ne laisse après lui qu'un crépuscule fugitif, rase ici lentement une terre dont il semble se détacher à regret. Son disque, environné de vapeurs rougeâtres, roule comme un char enflammé sur les sombres forêts qui couronnent l'horizon, et ses rayons, réfléchis par le vitrage des palais, donnent au spectateur l'idée d'une vaste incendie […]. Nous rencontrions de temps en temps*

[1357] http://www.flickr.com/photos/23227570@N07/2225135420/

d'élégantes chaloupes dont on avait retiré les rames, et qui se laissaient aller doucement au paisible courant de ces belles eaux. Les rameurs chantaient un air national, tandis que leurs maîtres jouissaient en silence de la beauté du spectacle et du calme de la nuit […]. À mesure que notre chaloupe s'éloignait, les chants des bateliers et le bruit confus de la ville s'éteignait insensiblement. Le soleil était descendu sous l'horizon ; des nuages brillants répandaient une clarté douce, un demi-jour doré qu'on ne saurait peindre et que je n'ai jamais vu ailleurs.[1358]

As the boat continues to sail and the enraptured passengers contemplate the beauty of the night, the silence is suddenly broken by the young French Knight, who cries: "*Je voudrais bien voir ici, sur cette même barque où nous nous sommes, un de ces hommes pervers nés pour le malheur de la société ; un de ces monstres qui fatiguent la terre…*". Asked what he would do in that case, the Knight answers: "*Je lui demanderais […] si cette nuit lui paraît aussi belle qu'à nous*"[1359]. In other words, confronting him with the splendor of God's creation, the Knight would demand from the perverse soul an account for the latter's wickedness. Why? The Knight's cry of indignation interrupts the enchanting peace of the night; the peace of the night that is a reflection of that original pristine peace of paradise, interrupted in its turn by that incomprehensible accident of being, which has left the latter since then incomprehensibly divided: evil. Thus, the interrogation of the Knight, addressed initially to an absent person, but whose very existence compromises the fairy-like harmony of the universe that the three friends contemplate with their hearts flooded with immaterial joy, turns into an interrogation addressed to the simultaneously present and absent God. Why does God tolerate evil, and, above all, why does he tolerate the wellbeing of the wicked and the suffering of the just? This question has haunted Maistre's mind beginning with his first major book, *Considérations sur la France*, and it is to this question that Maistre will consecrate his last work. After all, in Maistrian thought, there is a parallelism between the Revolution, the accident of history, and evil, the accident of being, both of which are

[1358] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, pp. 455-457.
[1359] *Ibidem*, p. 457.

incomprehensible phenomena that nevertheless cry out for an explanation. This can be offered only by God, but can never be fully contained by the limited human mind. It is no coincidence that the young Knight, whose tragic interrogation constitutes the introduction to what may be rightly called the apotheotic masterpiece of Counter-Revolutionary thought, has been, as Maistre informs the reader, "*jeté dans cette capitale*", Saint-Petersburg, by "*les orages de la révolution de son pays*" and by "*une foule d'événements bizarres*"[1360]. And thus, the three friends are "*conduits à sonder, autant du moins qu'il est permis à la faiblesse humaine,* l'ensemble des voies de la Providence dans le gouvernement du monde moral"[1361].

As for the examples of monstrosity and perversity, Dostoyevsky's novel from which the above mentioned vision of the earthly paradise has been extracted, contains a great deal. The first example that comes to mind is Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov, the father of the three brothers Karamazov, a buffoon and a monument of drunkenness, debauchery and cynicism, concerning whom his son Dmitry Karamazov exclaims in indignation in front of Elder Zosima and of the monks from the Optina Monastery: "Why is a man like that alive? [...] Can he really be permitted to go on defiling the earth with his person?" Then, of course, there is Smerdyakov, the illegitimate son of Fyodor Pavlovich, born as a consequence of the latter's raping of Lizaveta Smerdyaschaya, a mentally handicapped homeless woman. Smerdyakov begins his murderer career as a child by "stringing up cats"[1362], and ends it with the murder of his illegitimate father, in the aftermath of which he commits suicide. But the most disturbing examples are those given by Ivan Karamazov in his accounts of the suffering of children, accounts that constitute the premise for Ivan's radical indictment directed against the creator and providential governor of the universe. Ivan Karamazov enumerates a series of horrifying cases of child abuse and

[1360] *Ibidem*, p. 455.
[1361] *Ibidem*, p. 459.
[1362] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 166.

murders, beginning with the description of atrocities committed by the Turks against the Bulgarians, such as "throwing […] babes in the air and catching them on bayonets before their mothers' eyes"[1363], and ending with the account of an eight year-old boy "tore […] to little shreds" in front of his mother by the dogs of a general, who owned the mother and the child as serfs, and who decided to punish the child in such a way due to the fact that the latter, "while playing some game or other threw a stone and bruised the leg of the general's favourite beagle"[1364]. The earth, which Zosima kisses and embraces, in praise of its creator which has made "all […] things […] good and wondrous"[1365], is, according to Ivan Karamazov, an "earth […] steeped in human tears […], from crust to core"[1366]. And, for this very reason, the earth, according to Ivan, cries out against its creator. Thus, as in the case of Ippolit, who describes nature as a "vast modern machine" that, under the control of a "dark […] infinite force […], pointlessly [seizes, dismembers and devours]"[1367] innocent beings, for Ivan Karamazov, the world where the "little horse" is "[lashed]…with a knout on the eyes", and in which little girls are flogged until their "whole body" turns "into a mass of bruises"[1368], appears to be "a disorderly, accursed and, possibly, devilish chaos"[1369].

As it is reflected by the four parallel pictures presented above, both Maistre and Dostoyevsky are confronting the Enlightenment's vision of a rational and self-sufficient universe with the mysterious vision of a universe that is tragically divided within itself. In both cases, there is an irreducible presence of evil and horror in the world, which coexists side by side with undeniable beauty and goodness. Thus, instead of the perfectly rational mechanism created by the deists'

[1363] *Ibidem*, pp. 311-312.
[1364] *Ibidem*, p. 317.
[1365] *Ibidem*, p. 382.
[1366] *Ibidem*, p. 318.
[1367] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Idiot*, pp. 430-431.
[1368] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 314-316.
[1369] *Ibidem*, p. 300.

Great Architect, the cosmology of Maistre and Dostoyevsky reveals to us a mysterious world where "the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs", anticipating and awaiting a new order of things (Romans 8: 22)[1370]. Moreover, to the extent that the universe is reduced to itself, the finality of the perfectly ordained mechanism of the deists is not the natural happiness of the human being, but its merciless and senseless annihilation. According to Maistre, if the philosopher who studies nature without prejudices should confirm "*le carnage permanent*" that "*est prévu et ordonné dans le grand tout*"[1371], it is only through faith that one can grasp the sacrificial meaning and the eschatological finality of what otherwise appears as the senseless law of destruction that reigns over the universe. Likewise, in the case of Dostoyevsky, only through faith can one evolve from the awareness of "the devilish chaos", to the awareness of the earthly paradise, which can begin here and now. The terrifying conclusions of reason should prepare one for the leap of faith. However, as stressed by Maistre, while "*il n'y a que violence dans l'univers*", in its attempt to replace the supernatural ambitions of Christianity with an ideal of natural happiness, "*la philosophie moderne*" has deluded European mankind: "*nous sommes gâtés par la philosophie moderne*", Maistre wrote in *Considérations sur la France,* "*qui a dit que tout est bien, tandis que le mal a tout souillé, et que, dans un sens très vrai, tout est mal, puisque rien n'est à sa place*"[1372].

[1370] Passage from Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans quoted more than once by Maistre in *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*.
[1371] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg,* p. 660.
[1372] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France,* p. 218.

7.3. - Antitheodicy and Revolution

An analysis of Voltaire's approach of the problem of evil represents a necessary prelude to *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* and *The Brothers Karamazov*. In both works, Voltaire practically has the status of an invisible interlocutor, whose theological objections are being addressed. It is not by accident that Maistre's work dedicated to the justification of Providence contains, among others, also a devastating portrait of Voltaire, which ends with the sentence "*je voudrais lui faire élever une statue [...] par la main du bourreau*"[1373]. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, when Kolya gives Voltaire as an example of somebody who loved humanity without believing in God, Alyosha retorts that "Voltaire did believe in God, but I doubt if it was very much, and I doubt if he loved mankind very much either"[1374]. Dostoyevsky also refers to *Candide*, the only work by Voltaire that the fourteen year old Kolya has read, and which appears to have inspired his rejection of Christianity and his subsequent adherence to socialism, a move which, Dostoyevsky assures us, Alyosha himself would have made "had he decided that God and immortality did not exist"[1375]. Given the fact that, as in the case of *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, theodicy represents the central thematic of *The Brothers Karamazov*, the reference to *Candide* is not accidental. For Ivan Karamazov's ideas may be rightly regarded as a more consistent development of the ideas expressed by Voltaire in *Candide* and in *Le Poème sur le Désastre de Lisbonne*. And thus, Dostoyevsky's response to Ivan's nihilism contains also a refutation of Voltaire's religious views.

Attacking the central dogmas of Christianity, such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the belief in the Church and the sacraments, and furthermore, dismissing belief in miracles as superstition, Voltaire was a deist. He believed in a rational and good supreme being who created

[1373] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, pp. 555-558.
[1374] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 708.
[1375] *Ibidem*, p. 40.

the universe as a rational mechanism that was governed by fixed laws, in the functioning of which the divinity did not intervene. Voltaire's view of the ideal religion is briefly outlined in the eighteenth chapter of *Candide*. Visiting the fictitious land of Eldorado, apparently a Utopia of the Enlightenment, which unlike all the other places on earth is spared from the evils of tyranny, superstition, and fanaticism, Candide discovers that the people of Eldorado have only one religion, since there cannot "be more than one religion", and worship only one God, "since there are not two Gods, or three, or four" – an allusion to what Voltaire perceived to be the absurdity of the Trinitarian dogma. And since the one God has created a self-sufficient universe, governed by fixed laws, the people of Eldorado "*ne le pri[ent] point*": "*nous n'avons rien à lui demander*", Candide is informed by "*le plus savant homme du royaume[…]*"; "*il nous a donné tout ce qu'il nous faut; nous le remercions sans cesse*"[1376]. The religion of the people of Eldorado, which is the one also professed by Voltaire, seems perfectly fit for a land where it seems that "*tout va bien*"[1377]. But as a matter of fact, and thus revealing a fundamental contradiction in the religious thought of Voltaire, the thesis that "*tout est au mieux dans ce monde*"[1378] is precisely the thesis that is rejected by Voltaire in *Candide*, and earlier, in *Le Poème sur le Désastre de Lisbonne*. The thesis, defended by *Candide's* teacher, Pangloss, is an accurate expression of what Maistre has defined as the profoundly delusional "*philosophie moderne*", blind to the fact that, on the contrary, "*dans un sens très vrai, tout est mal, puisque […] le mal a tout souillé*", and therefore, "*rien n'est à sa place*".[1379] Yet, from a philosophical point of view, Pangloss' thesis seems to be the only one that is consistent with Voltaire's religious views. After all, since there is one good and rational supreme Being who could have created only a good and rational world, then this

[1376] Voltaire, *Candide*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1968, pp.100-101.
[1377] *Ibidem*, p. 100.
[1378] *Ibidem*, p. 62.
[1379] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 218.

world can only be "*le meilleur des mondes*"[1380]. As argued by Pangloss, it follows that "*les malheurs particuliers*" that are occurring "*font le bien général; de sorte que plus il y a de malheurs particuliers, et plus tout est bien*"[1381]. Since the people of Eldorado thank God, while they do not pray to him, then it must mean that they don't have anything to complain about. If they begin to complain, then, in order to be consistent, they should either start praying to God, or stop thanking him. As can already be anticipated, and as shall be stressed by Maistre and Dostoyevsky, the fact of evil makes deism an untenable position. One has to be either a Christian, or an atheist.

In *Candide*, while Pangloss is rejecting the Christian dogma concerning the contingency of evil and of man's responsibility for it, the boat on which Pangloss and Candide are sailing is "*assailli de la plus horrible tempête, à la vue du port de Lisbonne*"[1382]. The ship sinks, and only three passengers, among whom Candide and Pangloss, manage to arrive ashore. And then, a huge earthquake hits Lisbon. This event referred to in *Candide* is none other than the great earthquake that struck Lisbon on November 1, 1755, killing approximately sixty thousand persons, and to which Voltaire would dedicate his *Poème sur le Désastre de Lisbonne*. The event represented a profound shock for the European public opinion, and it also shook Voltaire's worldview, which until then had subscribed, although with some reserves, to the optimistic theodicy affirmed by the rationalist philosophers of the eighteenth century. Yet, the above mentioned natural disaster now confronts Voltaire with the view of:

> *Cent mille infortunés que la terre dévore,*
> *Qui, sanglants, déchirés et palpitants encore,*
> *Enterrés sous leur toits, terminent sans secours,*
> *Dans l'horreur des tourments leurs lamentable jours !* [1383]

[1380] Voltaire, *Candide*, p. 64.
[1381] *Ibidem*, p. 65.
[1382] *Ibidem*.
[1383] Voltaire, *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne*, Penmaen Press, Lincoln, Massachusetts, 1977, p. 12.

Voltaire had dismissed the Christian dogma of original sin as just another superstition, and could not find in it a satisfactory explanation of the sufferings that have affected Lisbon. "*Quel crime, quelle faute*", Voltaire rhetorically asks in *Le Poème sur le Désastre de Lisbonne*, "*ont commis ces enfants / Sur le sein maternel écrasés et sanglants ?*"[1384]His rationalized religion could not tolerate the idea that God may operate with a different notion of justice than that of man[1385]. But if the Lisbon earthquake cannot be regarded as a justified divine punishment, then, automatically, another question is automatically being raised: how is it possible that injustice occurs in a universe created by a just God?

Dieu tient en main la chaîne, et n'est point enchaîné ;
Par son choix bienfaisant tout est déterminé :
Il est libre, il est juste, il n'est point implacable.
Pourquoi donc souffrons-nous sous un maître équitable ?[1386]

For Voltaire, the theory of Leibniz and of his friend Alexander Pope, according to which evil is a necessary ingredient of the best possible worlds, redeemed however by the fact that, in its particularity, it always contributes to the greater general good, appears now to be totally unacceptable:

'Tout est bien, dites-vous, et tout est nécessaire'.
Quoi ! l'univers entier, sans ce gouffre infernal,
Sans engloutir Lisbonne, eût-il été plus mal ?
Etes-vous assurés que la cause éternelle
Qui fait tout, qui sait tout, qui créa tout pour elle,
Ne pouvait nous jeter dans ces tristes climats
Sans former des volcans allumés sous nos pas ?
Borneriez-vous ainsi la suprême puissance ?
Lui défendriez – vous d'exercer sa clémence ?[1387]

[1384] *Ibidem,* p.14.
[1385] Voltaire, *Homily On Atheism*, in *Voltaireon Religion*, translated and edited by Kenneth W. Applegate, Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., New York, 1974, pp. 46-47.
[1386] Voltaire, *Poème sur le Désastre de Lisbonne,* p. 18.
[1387] *Ibidem,* pp. 14-16.

Moreover, for Voltaire, explanations such as those mentioned above can only represent a proof of cruelty towards the victims, added on top of their suffering. And yet, if evil remains without explanation, then it is its absolute senselessness that provokes a feeling of horror that can no longer find its consolation in religion. As a consequence of the irreducible irrationality of evil, the rationality of nature as a whole then becomes questionable and, with it, a big question mark is raised with regard to man's possibility of improving his lot on earth through progress. Voltaire's acknowledged perplexity, in the face of the facts that suffer no explanation, is therefore profoundly bitter:

Quelque parti qu'on prenne, on doit frémir, sans doute.
Il n'est rien qu'on connaisse, et rien qu'on ne redoute.
La nature est muette, on l'interroge en vain ;
On a besoin d'un Dieu qui parle au genre humain.
Il n'appartient qu'à lui d'expliquer son ouvrage,
De consoler le faible, et d'éclairer le sage.
L'homme, au doute, à l'erreur, abandonné sans lui,
Cherche en vain des roseaux qui lui servent d'appui.
Leibnitz ne m'apprend point par quels nœuds invisibles,
Dans le mieux ordonné des univers possibles,
Un désordre éternel, un chaos de malheurs,
Mêle à nos vains plaisirs de réelles douleurs,
Ni pourquoi l'innocent, ainsi que le coupable,
Subit également ce mal inévitable.
Je ne conçois plus comment tout serait bien :
Je suis comme un docteur ; hélas ! je ne sais rien.[1388]

The conclusion from *The Poem* would be restated three years later in *Candide*. After a series of tragic events, the encounter of a black slave whose right hand and left leg have been cut by his Dutch master – the hand because the slave got his "finger caught in the machinery" while working in the master's sugar-mill; and the leg because he tried to run away afterwards –, represents the last drop for Candide. He begins weeping and dismisses once and for all Pangloss'

[1388] *Ibidem*, p. 26.

optimism, which he now defines as "*la rage de soutenir que tout est bien quand on est mal*"[1389]. This, of course, is none other than Maistre's conclusion from *Considérations sur la France* concerning the delusions of modern philosophy. According to Pranchère, Voltaire's practical conclusion from the end of *Candide*, "*[t]ravaillons sans raisonner […]; c'est le seul moyen de rendre la vie supportable*"[1390],

> *peut être lue comme une sorte de revanche prise par la pensée de Pascal à l'intérieur même de la pensée de Voltaire. Dans ses premières œuvres, et notamment dans les remarques sur Pascal des* Lettres philosophiques, *Voltaire avait eu pour souci de congédier l'insistance pascalienne sur le malheur de la condition humaine, en proie à la mort et au péché : à cette vision noire qu'il dénonçait comme 'l'idée d'un fanatique', il avait opposé le bonheur de l'existence terrestre. Selon un geste dont on peut penser qu'il est constitutif des Lumières, Voltaire proposait d'acquiescer joyeusement au monde afin de l'améliorer : au lieu de se laisser fasciner par le fait du malheur, il fallait accroître les commodités de la vie et donner au problème du mal une solution pratique – la production du bonheur par la maîtrise savante du monde. Ni le* Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne *ni* Candide *ne disent apparemment autre chose […]. On ne peut pourtant méconnaître le changement de ton […]. [L]'acceptation de ce qui est prend désormais la figure d'une résignation à un monde absurde ; et le travail qui doit améliorer le monde prend la figure d'une sorte d'attitude crispée par laquelle l'homme se contraint à ne pas raisonner pour ne pas céder au vertige, tout proche, du mal […]. On peut se demander si […] Voltaire ne propose pas en fait le travail comme une drogue destinée à nous étourdir contre la douleur du monde. Ce serait l'aveu que la condition humaine est bien ce qu'elle est selon Pascal : une réalité insupportable en elle-même* [1391].

It may then appear that the human condition can find its only consolation not in work but in religion. In fact, if the last word of the grim *Poème sur le Désastre de Lisbonne* is *hope*[1392], Voltaire would later argue in his *Homily on Atheism* that the justice of God, and together with the latter the existence of God itself, can be upheld only in the perspective "that God will cause us to pass from this life to a better one". In the same homily, Voltaire also dismisses as absurd the hypotheses of God's inexistence, of a powerless God, of a tyrant God, as well as the Manichean

[1389] Voltaire, *Candide*, p. 107.
[1390] *Ibidem*, p. 150.
[1391] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, pp. 395-396.
[1392] Voltaire, *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne*, p. 32.

perspective[1393]. Are Voltaire's arguments, and, together with them, the authenticity of his faith, convincing? A similar commitment to the acceptance only of truths that can fit into a Euclidean mind, has determined Ivan Karamazov to argue that, both in the perspective of its providential utility or of its inutility, the suffering of children, described both in *Le Poème sur le Désastre de Lisbonne* and in *The Brothers Karamazov*, excludes altogether, even in the perspective of eternal life, the possibility of the existence of a God who is both good and all-powerful. There is a discrepancy between Voltaire's rational demonstration of the existence of a just God from his 1765 homily, and the conclusion from *Candide*, according to which one should stop trying to demonstrate things, especially those involving the divinity. Moreover, the two characters from *Candide* who preach this particular type of wisdom, and who are never refuted nor ridiculed in the novel, are a scholar named Martin, and a "*derviche très fameux qui passait pour le meilleur philosophe de la Turquie*"[1394]. The former is a Manichean, who sometimes even has the impression that "*Dieu […] a abandonné*" the earth "*à quelque être malfaisant*"[1395]. When the dervish is asked by Candide and his friends to explain the existence of evil, he gives the following answer: "*Quand sa Hautesse* [the Sultan] *envoie un vaisseau en Egypte, s'embarrasse-t-elle si les souris qui sont dans le vaisseau sont à leur aise ou non?*" And then he slams the door in their faces[1396]. All of these aspects explain why Dostoyevsky has argued that Voltaire didn't believe in God very much, and why, young readers such as Kolya, who out of Voltaire's works have read only *Candide*, had arrived at the otherwise quite legitimate conclusion, given the circumstances, that Voltaire didn't believe in God.

[1393] Voltaire, *Homily on Atheism*, pp. 43-46.
[1394] Voltaire, *Candide*, p.148.
[1395] *Ibidem*, p.111.
[1396] *Ibidem*, p. 148.

In reality, from the very beginning, the attempt to cleanse religion of mysteries (superstitions, in Voltaire's terms), or, otherwise said, the attempt to replace the incomprehensible God of revealed religion, with the comprehensible God of natural religion (this being according to Leo Strauss the project of modern philosophy beginning with Spinoza), inevitably leads to the incapacity of the rationalist thinker to process the fact of evil. The replacement of revealed religion with a natural, rationalized religion, automatically presupposes that God operates with the same notion of justice as us. However, the same reason that has reduced God to its own dimensions is confronted, when it reflects on reality, with the evidence of evil, scandalous in as much as it cannot be justified from the perspective of the existence of a God that is both omnipotent and good. Consequently, the evidence of evil forces reason to arrive at one out of two possible conclusions: either God is good but not omnipotent, being Himself subject to the autonomous laws of the universe, as the Christ defeated by death from Holbein's picture which constitutes the central symbolic image of Dostoyevsky's *Idiot*; or, if God is omnipotent, then He is not just/good, as the tyrant God whose hypothesis, as we shall see, is launched by Maistre at a certain point in *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*. From a practical point of view then, the strict reliance on reason, as Maistre and Dostoyevsky both understood, can lead either to despair, in case God's omnipotence is denied, or to rebellion against God, in case His goodness is denied. At the limit, developed to its ultimate consequences, the hypothesis of a feeble God, who is subject to the absurd laws of an absurd universe, appears to inevitably lead to final atheistic conclusions. Inscribed in the order of things, evil then retains its absolute senselessness and becomes the irrefutable proof of the absurdity of existence as a whole. Moreover, one is also forced to conclude that evil is unsurpassable, if only for the fact that it has already taken place, and no future progress will ever be able to annul what has already happened. Therefore, capable

of arriving only at the conclusion according to which *"[r]ien ne doit arriver que ce qui arrive"* and *"rien n'arrive que ce qui doit arriver"* [1397], thus demonstrating the necessary and unsurpassable character of evil, philosophical reason (or reason reduced to itself), as Maistre has noticed, inevitably throws man into despair, as he deprives him of his former means with which he confronted the problem of evil: prayer and the subsequent hope invested in the incomprehensible and redeeming God of Christianity. The secularist solution articulated in response to this kind of despair at the end of *Candide*, was, as we have seen, work, understood both as an attempt to improve mankind's conditions of existence, as well as a practice meant to help man forget about his condition. Yet, this practical secularist solution may intersect another one, to the extent that one explores the other theoretical possibility, which remains a valid possibility until proven otherwise: that God, according to strictly rational criteria, is omnipotent but unjust. The practical solution which results from this theoretical conclusion, as Maistre and Dostoyevsky understood, is modern man's rebellion against an unjust God, as well as the subsequent rebellion against all existing authorities which, exercising power in God's name, are also inevitably unjust. The unjust God may be openly defied, as in the case of the nihilist Ivan Karamazov, or, belief in him, as in the case of the deist Voltaire, may simply be dismissed as an absurd fiction, promoted by the authorities who seek the support of religion in order to maintain their power. Therefore, humanity should be liberated from this fiction through the rational critique of religion, which, Maistre and Dostoyevsky believed, eventually ends up in atheism. Denying the divinity of Christ, both deism and atheism inevitably lead to the denial of the legitimacy of the existing political and clerical authorities, and, likewise, to man's determination to rely solely on his powers in order to organize his happiness in this world. On the other hand, if

[1397] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 559.

Christ's goodness has been defeated on the Cross, if therefore Christ was only a man with an ideal, then, as the "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" suggests, and as it is plainly affirmed by Kirilov, it is from a fidelity for the cause of the crucified but not resurrected Christ that the enemies of Christianity will try to demolish the Church and to erect in its place, in the name of a Christ reinterpreted in revolutionary key, the Tower of Babel. Fighting for justice in this world, the revolutionary hero is fighting alongside a Christ opposed both to the authority of the Church and to the authority of God, a Christ crucified in an unjust world that is ruled by unjust authorities. This idea, belonging to Belinsky, is expressed in *The Brothers Karamazov* by the young Kolya, who declares himself "a dyed-in-the-wool socialist". Rejecting Christianity, Kolya emphasizes the fact that he is "not opposed to Christ", who "was a thoroughly humane individual, and had he lived in our own times he would quite certainly have adhered to the revolutionary cause"[1398]. Indeed, in his famous letter addressed to Gogol, Belinsky had argued that whereas

> the Orthodox Church […] has always served as the prop of the knout and the servant of despotism […], Christ […] was the first to bring people the teaching of freedom, equality and brotherhood, and he set the seal of truth to it by martyrdom […]. The Church, on the other hand, was a hierarchy, consequently a champion of inequality, a flatterer of authority, an enemy and persecutor of brotherhood among men – and so it has remained to this day. But the meaning of Christ's message has been bared by the philosophical movement of the preceding century. And that is why a man like Voltaire, who by ridicule stamped out the fires of fanaticism and ignorance in Europe, is, of course, more a son of Christ […] than all your priests, bishops, metropolitans and patriarchs – Eastern or Western[1399].

In *L'Autorité Contre les Lumières*, Pranchère argues that "*c'est en vertu d'une nécessité interne que les Lumières, de Voltaire à Chamfort, ont prolongé leur refus du catholicisme par une accusation élevée contre Dieu, jugé coupable d'avoir permis le mal sur la terre. Cette accusation est au cœur de la Révolution, que Robespierre n'a pas hésité à présenter comme un*

[1398] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 709.
[1399] Vissarion Belinsky, "Letter to Gogol" in *Russian Philosophy*, vol. 1, p. 315.

effort pour disculper Dieu de ses fautes"[1400]. "*[N]ous voulons*", Pranchère quotes Robespierre, "*remplir les vœux de la nature, accomplir les destins de l'humanité, tenir les promesses de la philosophie,* absoudre la providence du long règne du crime et de la tyrannie"[1401]. In essence, the same revolutionary spirit will be made manifest in Ivan Karamazov. For, as argued by Vladimir Kantor, the consequence of the fact that "God was not able to establish the world on humane principles" is that "Ivan takes upon himself full responsibility for the world"[1402], and henceforth, abandoning the promises of the God-man, tries to correct his work, and to put into practice his utopia described in "The Geological Revolution". With no faith and no hope in divine justice, Ivan declares that that he wants justice, "not at some place and some time in infinity, but here upon earth, and in such a way that I see it for myself"[1403]. This reveals the fact that "the modern rebellion against 'divine justice' is rooted in an impatience with apparently unfulfilled promises, in an urge to *do* something *now* to wipe away the tears of human suffering"[1404], a feeling reflected also by these lines from Voltaire's *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne*:

Un Dieu vint consoler notre race affligée ;
Il visita la terre et ne l'a point changée !
Un sophiste arrogant nous dit qu'il ne l'a pu ;
'Il le pouvait, dit l'autre, et ne l'a point voulu :
Il le voudra, sans doute' ; et, tandis qu'on raisonne,
Des foudres souterrains engloutissent Lisbonne.[1405]

[1400] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, pp.275-276.
[1401] M. Robespierre, *Textes choisis*, t.III, p.113, quoted in *Ibidem*, p.276.
[1402] Vladimir Kantor, "Pavel Smerdyakov and Ivan Karamazov: The Problem of Temptation, in Dostoyevsky and the Christian Tradition", in George Pattison and Diane Oenning Thompson (ed.), *Dostoevsky and the Christian Tradition*, p. 195.
[1403] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 318.
[1404] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*, p. 163.
[1405] Voltaire, *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne*, p. 24.

7.4. - Gnosticism, theological voluntarism and the origins of modernity

As already indicated in the introduction of this chapter, in order to better understand the significance and the implications of Maistre's and Dostoyevsky's approach of the problem of theodicy, I will refer in what follows to the analyses of two twentieth century authors that have reflected on the relation between the problem of theodicy and the origins and nature of modernity: Eric Voegelin and Hans Blumenberg. The relation between the rebellion against divine justice and the secular eschatology of the Revolution has been analyzed in Eric Voegelin's studies concerning the relation between modernity and Gnosticism. From the very beginning, Voegelin argues, Christianity has been confronted with the Gnostic rejection of the idea that the God of redemption was also the God of creation. Gnosticism therefore separated God's goodness from his omnipotence. The world, the Gnostics believed, was the work of an incompetent or outright malignant being, from whom Christ came to liberate men, revealing to them a higher God, situated above the inferior or evil God of the Old Testament. For the Gnostics, matter was inherently evil and creation itself was an unfortunate accident, a lapse from the initial divine fullness (*pleroma*). Through the agency of an esoteric knowledge (*gnosis*), the Gnostic sought to liberate himself from matter and to ascend back into the original divine unity that was disturbed by the accident of creation. Taking into account the fact that Gnosticism originates in a state of dissatisfaction with the existing order of the world, Voegelin establishes an inherent connection between Gnosticism and the Christian apocalyptic expectation of the destruction of the old world, and of its recreation as a new one, in which peace and justice will reign. Developed mainly as a Christian heresy, Gnosticism, in Voegelin's view, is essentially related with the chiliastic actualization of the Christian eschatological expectation through the revolutionary establishment of Christ's Kingdom on earth. According to him, whereas the Medieval Catholic

Church had struggled to neutralize Gnosticism and the related chiliastic tendencies, "the essence of modernity" is represented by "the growth of Gnosticism"[1406]. Christianity, especially under the impact of Saint Augustine's interpretation of history, has evolved from the eschatological expectation "of the realm in history toward the eschatology of trans-historical, supernatural perfection"[1407], man no longer expecting the realization of Christ's Kingdom within history but his personal salvation after death and the final judgment. In this context, Voegelin argues that the chiliastic prophecies of Joachim of Fiore from the beginning of the 13th century -in particular his expectation of a third age of the Holy Spirit[1408] - break away from the Augustinian view and thus inaugurate the modern age. Joachim's attempt to immanentize the *eschaton* precedes, in Voegelin's opinion, the modern secularized eschatologies of authors such as Condorcet, Comte, Hegel, or Marx. Moreover, whereas Joachim's chiliasm still depended on a "transcendental irruption of the spirit", rooted in the chiliastic eschatology of the Third Realm, modern Gnosticism will evolve "from humanism to enlightenment" towards "a radically immanent fulfillment" that completely breaks away from transcendence. "In the eighteenth century", Voegelin argues, "with the idea of progress […] the increase of meaning in history [becomes] a completely intramundane phenomenon, without transcendental irruptions". "Secularization" therefore represents the "second phase of immanentization", and "secularism" is thus "defined as a radicalization of the earlier forms of paracletic immanentism"[1409].

As it can be seen, given the chiliastic aspects of Maistrian and Dostoyevskyan thought, from Voegelin's perspective, the Maistrian and Dostoyevskyan critiques of secularism appear to situate themselves in a complex theologico-political dialectic with modernity, and, more

[1406] Eric Voegelin, *Collected Works,* Vol. 5 – *Modernity without Restraint,* p. 190.
[1407] *Ibidem,* p. 176.
[1408] See in this sense the observations from the beginning of subsection 2.8.1.
[1409] Eric Voegelin, *Collected Works,* Vol. 5 – *Modernity without Restraint,* pp. 185-190.

precisely in a hidden relation of complicity with the intimate substance of modernity[1410]. Voegelin locates the origin of the Gnostic speculation in the difficulty of dealing with the dissatisfaction with the earthly condition, marked by suffering and injustice, solely through a "communication with the world transcendent God" that "is reduced to the tenuous bond of faith". "Men", Voegelin argues, "lust for massively possessive experience", and "the danger of a breakdown of faith to a socially relevant degree […] will increase in the measure in which Christianity is a worldly success […]. The more people are drawn or pressured into the Christian orbit", as it has been the case throughout the Middle Ages, "the greater will be the number among them who do not have the spiritual stamina for the heroic adventure of Christianity"[1411]. "Gnostic speculation", Voegelin argues, "overcame the uncertainty of faith by receding from transcendence and endowing man and his intramundane range of action with the meaning of eschatological fulfillment. In the measure in which this immanentization progressed experientially, civilizational activity became a mystical work of self-salvation. The spiritual strength of the soul that in Christianity was devoted to the sanctification of life could now be diverted", as Dostoyevsky himself has emphasized, "into the more appealing, more tangible, and above all, so much easier creation of the terrestrial paradise". Voegelin includes in the Gnostic "mystical work of self-salvation" successive currents of modernity, such as "the literary and artistic achievement that secured the immortality of fame for the humanistic intellectual […], the

[1410] Besançon's interpretation of Dostoyevsky and Slavophilism is most likely inspired by Voegelin. Voegelin indicates the fact that the national-socialist idea of the Third Reich, which appears as another pseudo-morphosis of Joachim's chiliastic eschatology, has been "picked […] up" by "the national-socialist propagandists […] from Moeller van der Bruck's tract of that name. And Moeller, who had no national-socialist intentions, had found it as a convenient symbol in the course of his work on the German edition of Dostoyevsky. The Russian idea of the Third Rome is characterized by the same blend of an eschatology of the spiritual realm with its realization by a political society as the national socialist idea of the *Dritte Reich*". For Voegelin, "in its secularized form", Dostoyevsky's "ambivalent vision of an autocratic, orthodox Russia that somehow would conquer the world and in this conquest blossom out into the free society of all Christians into the true faith […], inspires a Russian dictatorship of the proletariat that in its conquest of the world will blossom into the Marxian realm of freedom" (*Ibidem,* pp. 180-183).

[1411] *Ibidem,* pp. 187-188.

discipline and economic success that certified salvation to the Puritan saint […], the civilizational contributions of the liberals and Progressives, and, finally […], the revolutionary action that will establish the Communist or some other gnostic millennium"[1412]. If the different practical and theoretical expressions of Gnostic modernity are subject to historical evolution, the essential theological and psychological disposition is that which throws the Gnostic from the state of dissatisfaction with the order of being into revolutionary eschatology. Ultimately "the aim of parousiastic Gnosticism is to destroy the order of being, which is experienced as defective and unjust, and through man's creative power to replace it with a perfect and just order". But, "in order […] that the attempt to create a new world may seem to make sense, the givenness of the order of Being must be obliterated; the order of being must be interpreted, rather, as essentially under man's control". Thus, "taking control of being further requires that the transcendent origin of Being be obliterated: it requires the decapitation of being", Nietzsche's "murder of God", and the affirmation, through it, of the overman/man-god. For Voegelin (whose analysis of secular modernity, despite his critical view of Dostoyevsky, strongly resembles Dostoyevsky's analysis of the same subject matter) this represents the final stage of the Gnostic Revolution[1413]. Originating in the condemnation of the material world, Gnosticism eventually ends in the most radical form of atheistic immanentism.

At the end of his 1938 essay, *The Political Religions,* Voegelin was suggesting the fact that the profound root of modern and ancient Gnosticism is represented by the impossibility of both "knowledge" and "Christian determination" to "solve the mystery of God and being", and in particular, "the question of theodicy": why does "God's creation [contain] evil"? Why is "the

[1412] *Ibidem,* p. 193.
[1413] *Ibidem,* p. 278.

splendor of Being […] clouded by human misery"?[1414] These questions, according to Voegelin, can only be confronted by a both fragile and heroic faith. If Voegelin has identified modernity with the development of Gnosticism, Hans Blumenberg has argued in *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* that, while there is a fundamental connection between Gnosticism and modernity, the latter nonetheless is not, as Voegelin argues, a Gnostic age. Criticizing the interpretation of modernity that regards the latter as a set of secularized theological concepts, Blumenberg argues that the modern philosophies of history are illegitimate attempts to answer, with inappropriate modern means, some pre-modern and, more specifically, Christian problems – such as the problem of history's meaning[1415]. Blumenberg defines modernity as the legitimate program of "self-assertion" of Western man, articulated in response to the inner crisis of Western Christianity[1416]. Not bound to any form of secular eschatology and to any belief in the imminent realization of an earthly paradise, from the very beginning, this program of "self-assertion" was based on the belief in "possible progress"[1417] through the increase of man's scientific control over an adverse environment. According to Blumenberg, the astonishing successes of the natural sciences, obtained in a relatively short time after the beginning of man's search for "a possible progress", have further strengthened modern man's decision to continue his advance on the path of secularization.

According to Blumenberg, while the Catholic Middle Ages may be indeed regarded as an anti-Gnostic system of theological thought, the attempts of Catholic theologians to contain Gnosticism have lead in the end to certain theological transformations that, according to the

[1414] *Ibidem,* p. 71.

[1415] Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, translated by Robert M. Wallace, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 1995, p.49; Robert Wallace, "Translator's Introduction", in Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, pp. xx-xxvii.

[1416] Robert Wallace, "Translator's Introduction", in Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, p.xxii.

[1417] *Ibidem,* p.xxi.

German author, have represented the premise for the articulation of the modern project of self-assertion. As stressed by Blumenberg, the Gnostics separated the God of redemption (the otherworldly God revealed by Christ) from the God of creation (the evil demiurge, which, according to the Gnostics, was the evil God of the Old Testament) in order to exculpate the God of redemption from the blame for evil's existence in the world. But "[t]he price of" the new Gnostic vision "was the attachment of a negative valuation to the Greek cosmic metaphysics and the destruction of the trust in the world that could have been sanctioned by the biblical conception of creation"[1418]. The cosmos no longer represented a providentially ordained creation, whose rationality made possible the organization of life in this world in accordance with a given order of nature, but a prison ruled by a satanic demiurge who, on the contrary, willed what was bad for his prisoners. While the conflicts between Orthodoxy (which affirmed that the God of creation and the God of redemption were one) and Gnosticism were already active by the 2nd century, Blumenberg argues that the apocalyptic expectations of early Christianity diminished the importance of the theological polemics with regard to the origin of the world. Taking into account the expectation of the imminent destruction and recreation of the world, "[i]t was meaningless to pursue the questions of the creation of the world and the lord of its history when this episode was soon to come to an end"[1419]. However, the inevitable result of the delay of the second coming was that Gnosticism, as a system, lost its initial force of persuasion. In Blumenberg's view, this "was due not to the inner superiority of the dogmatic system of the Church but to the intolerability of the consciousness that this world is supposed to be the prison of the evil god and is nevertheless not destroyed by the power of the god who, according to his

[1418] Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, p. 130.
[1419] *Ibidem*, p. 131.

revelation, is determined to delivered mankind"[1420]. "To retrieve the world as the creation from the negative role assigned to it" in the Gnostic system, "and to salvage the dignity of the ancient cosmos for its role in the Christian system" has then become, according to Blumenberg, "the central [theological] effort" of the Church "all the way from Augustine to the height of Scholasticism"[1421].

The theological reaffirmation of the goodness and dignity of the world, Blumenberg further argues, was nevertheless confronted, once again, with the problem that concerned the origin of evil. In the Platonic system, "what [was] bad in the world" was explained by the fact that, the demiurge (not to be confused with the evil demiurge of the Gnostics) that created the world according to the eternal ideal forms, was not omnipotent, but was limited in his action by the fact that matter, which had to be shaped according to reason, was "a formless substrate of unknown origin", defined by an inherent negativity that could be corrected by the demiurge only up to a certain point[1422]. Limited by "[n]ecessity", the Platonic demiurge could therefore only make the world "as good and as worthy of himself as he was able"[1423]. But taking into account the fact that the origin of matter ultimately remained, for Plato, as for Classical Antiquity as a whole, a mystery, implicitly, the ultimate origin of what was bad also remained a mystery. However, the concomitant affirmation of God's goodness and of his omnipotence in Christianity, as well as the subsequent doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, which resulted from the attribute of omnipotence, inevitably pointed towards the patristic explanation of evil as a result of man's sin, rendered possible due to the fact that, as the Fathers of the Church argued, man was endowed by God with free will. Limiting himself to the study of Saint Augustine's analysis of the relation between

[1420] *Ibidem*.
[1421] *Ibidem*, p. 130.
[1422] *Ibidem*, pp. 127-128.
[1423] *Ibidem*, p. 132.

freedom and grace, which had been the next step in the evolution of Christian theology, and not referring to other patristic sources, Blumenberg defends the thesis according to which, under the impact of Augustine's ultimate theological response to the Gnostic challenge, and more precisely, under the impact of his doctrine of absolute predestination, Western theology had finally arrived, in the 14th century, at the emergence of the theological conception of the nominalist theologians, which viewed God as an omnipotent being whose justice was reduced to His arbitrary will[1424].

Blumenberg argues that Augustine has transferred the burden of responsibility for creation's imperfection from God to man, presenting "the deficiencies of the world not as an original failure of the construction of the world", but as "God's subsequent intervention in His work", with the purpose of justly punishing the disobedience of man[1425]. However, according to Blumenberg, as a result of Augustine's doctrine of absolute predestination, which has represented the final outcome of his lifelong reflection on the relation between freedom and grace, the Gnostic idea of the responsibility of the creator of the world for the corruption of the world, "the elimination of which has been the point of" Augustine's "whole exercise […], was after all reintroduced indirectly through the idea of predestination"[1426]. As stressed by Blumenberg, "the later Augustine, the theologian of original sin and predestination, was to become the most important source and authority for the theological speculation of the later

[1424] *Ibidem*, pp. 132-137; According to Augustine, all mankind has been condemned due to the original sin, committed by Adam and Eve, and inherited by all their descendants. This sin has led to the perversion of man's will, no longer able to orient itself towards the good, and has attracted God's punishment for mankind as a whole. Due to Christ's redeeming passion, God has granted the grace of forgiveness, and with it the ability to will that which is good, only to a minority of elect, through the salvation of which He wished to reveal his mercy. The rest of mankind remained a *massa damnata*, to which grace has been refused. If through the minority of elect God revealed his mercy, through the *massa damnata*, condemned to eternal torments, God revealed his justice. Grace was in no way deserved by the minority of elect, and in this sense, God's decision to redeem some but not others remained completely incomprehensible. As far as man was concerned, this decision appeared as purely arbitrary.

[1425] Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, p. 133.

[1426] *Ibidem*, p. 135.

Middle Ages". And in this sense, the Gnosticism which in Augustine's thought "had not been overcome but only transposed", will return, in the thirteenth century "in the form of the 'hidden God' and His inconceivable absolute sovereignty"[1427]. Practically speaking, Blumenberg's thesis is that, in response to the Gnostic challenge that separated goodness from omnipotence, the attempt of Western theology to affirm both of them, thus maintaining the unity between the God of creation and the God of redemption, has finally lead to the situation where goodness has been reduced to omnipotence. Or, otherwise said, Western theology has arrived at the theological thesis according to which good is simply what God wills, in the conditions in which there is no other law than the will of God, and therefore, no law according to which God's actions may be qualified as unjust, or to which man could appeal against the Lawgiver of the universe. Paradoxically, the attempt to reject the Gnostic notion of the evil demiurge has lead only to a pseudomorphosis of this notion, and this hybrid version of the evil demiurge has been transferred from the Gnostic system into the anti-Gnostic system, becoming the very foundation of the theological system that was meant to reject Gnosticism in the first place. The God of theological voluntarism, whose affirmation has overturned the scholastic attempt (in particular that of Thomas Aquinas) to reconcile goodness with omnipotence, and the idea of a natural order with the idea of creation, was the new version of the evil demiurge of the Gnostics, with the difference that, unlike the latter, the former was omnipotent. Thus, there was no other God, and hence, at the dawn of the modern age, Western European man could not flee anywhere from this "capricious God, fearsome in his power, unknowable, unpredictable, unconstrained by nature and reason, and indifferent to good and evil"[1428]. A God who saved the saints today and not the sinners, but may very well do the opposite tomorrow, who could "overturn anything he has

[1427] *Ibidem*.

[1428] Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2008, p. 29.

established, interrupt any chain of causes, or create the world again from the beginning if he wants to"[1429]. At the limit, as stressed by Michael Allen Gillespie, this God who did not seem to love man at all, appeared in fact to be "the devil in disguise"[1430].

It is not in my intention, and certainly the limits of my thesis do not permit it, to resume all the details of this complex theological evolution which, according to Blumenberg, represents the premise of the emergence of modernity[1431]. What is relevant for the purpose of the present study is the fact that the conception of God described in the preceding paragraph, represents, according to Blumenberg, the theological premise of the modern age, and the knowledge of this fact, as we shall see, helps us better understand the relevance and the implications of the different ways in which Maistre and Dostoyevsky approach of the problem of theodicy, within the context of their critique of modernity. As stressed by Gillespie, apart from depriving man of any guarantee for his salvation, the doctrine of theological voluntarism replaced man's former belief in the providential order of a universe that had been created for him, with the vision of a world that appeared as "a radical chaos of utterly diverse things in which humans could find no point of

[1429] *Ibidem*, p. 23.
[1430] *Ibidem*, p. 25.
[1431] As far as I am concerned, it remains unclear, at this point, whether this theological evolution of Western Christianity was or was not inevitable. The Catholic Church, it must be argued, has repeatedly condemned nominalism throughout the 14th century, but independently of these condemnations, "nominalism became one of the most powerful intellectual movements in Europe". Thus, as argued by Gillespie, nominalism has been sufficiently strong and widespread, as an itellectual current, in order to become the theological paradigm that has triggered the emergence of modernity. For example, "by the time of Luther, there was only one university in Germany that was not dominated by the nominalists" (Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, p. 27). Taking into account the fact that, in his analysis of the origins of modernity, Blumenberg limits himself to Augustine's response to the Gnostic challenge, and to the theological legacy left by Augustine to Western Christianity, it would be interesting, in this context, to make a detailed comparative analysis of the way in which Augustine, on the one hand, and the Greek Fathers, on the other hand, responded to the Gnostic challenge. In fact, the comparison between Maistre's critique of modernity and Dostoyevsky's critique of modernity, two authors who belong to the Catholic and respectively Orthodox tradition, may also be regarded as the prelude to such a study, which could clarify, in general, the relevance of the differences between the two theological traditions in the context of the relation between Christianity and modernity.

certainty or security"[1432]. Thus, the result of theological voluntarism was man's profound feeling of alienation and insecurity in the world. But this insecurity, which was expected to lead to unconditional faith[1433], has lead also to a powerful valorization of man's minimal potential for "possible progress" in the mastery of what now appeared as an essentially hostile and insecure universe[1434]. As a consequence, Blumenberg argues that "the primeval right to self-assertion becomes comprehensible long before Descartes and Hobbes as the essence of the modern age's understanding of itself – that is, as the anthropological minimum under the conditions of the theological maximum"[1435]. "Deprived by God's hiddenness of metaphysical guarantees for the world, man", Blumenberg argues, now "constructs for himself a counterworld of elementary rationality and manipulation"[1436]. He is no longer limited in his technical manipulation of reality, because the pagan universe has been disenchanted by Christianity, while the arbitrariness of theological voluntarism has destroyed the Christian idea of Providence and has radically devalued God's creation. Thus, Blumenberg argues that if "Gnosticism made […] *cosmodicy* conditional on *theodicy*", the modern age will respond to the crisis of theological voluntarism with an "*anthropodicy*" justified by "the world's lack of consideration of man", by "its inhuman order"[1437]. Blumenberg's project ultimately represents a late vindication of the Enlightenment, seen as the modern man's legitimate and, most importantly, original response, to a theological alienation that otherwise represented the necessary premise for the genesis of the modern age. The modern *anthropodicy* seems to present itself as an *antitheodicy*, or, more precisely, as a

[1432] Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, p. 25; Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, pp. 154-155, 161-162, 138-139.

[1433] The Lutheran and Calvinist thesis according to which faith alone saves, and not works, and likewise, the reaffirmation by Luther and Calvin of the Augustinian view on predestination, is fundamentally related to the previous evolutions of Western theology in the direction of theological voluntarism (Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, pp. 32-34).

[1434] Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, p. 178.

[1435] *Ibidem*, p. 196.

[1436] *Ibidem*, p. 173.

[1437] *Ibidem*, p. 142.

vindication of Voltaire's conclusion from *Candide*: stop asking questions to which you will never find answers, and, resigned with the human condition, seek to ameliorate the conditions of man's existence to the extent that they can be ameliorated.

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At this point, it is important to summarize the main conclusions at which we have arrived thus far. If, according to the optimistic cosmology of the Enlightenment, the universe was seen as a self-sufficient and perfectly ordained mechanism, in whose functioning God did not intervene, Maistre and Dostoyevsky confront this vision with a vision of a world divided in itself as a result of the reality of evil, and that therefore needs the active intervention of God in order to be restored to its initial unity. As we have seen, through his deistic perspective, Voltaire cannot make sense of the reality of evil, and, pursued to its logical consequences, the rationalism on the basis of which Voltaire has rejected the Christian theodicy, with its notions of sin and redemption, must ultimately erode also the deist theology, for, in the conditions of the existence of evil, consistent rationalism must conclude that God cannot be both omnipotent and good. The collapse of the deist theodicy, with its rationalist presuppositions, can lead to two possible attitudes: a) bitter resignation (if not complete despair) in the face of the evidence that evil is unsurpassable, and a subsequent commitment to work, not only as a way of improving, to the extent that it is possible, man's conditions of existence, but also as a form of therapy meant to make man forget his existential condition; b) rebellion against the omnipotent and unjust God, which is inevitably followed by a rebellion against all the religious and political authorities that derive their authority from God, and the revolutionary attempt to reorganize a world without transcendence according to just principles. From this point of view, whereas for Voegelin

modernity represents a Gnostic revolution, which evolves from the rejection of the Christian theodicy to a secularized eschatology, for Blumenberg, in reaction to the failure of the Christian theodicy, modernity represents the legitimate abandonment of metaphysical questions in favor of a program of gradual pragmatic improvement of man's living conditions, to the extent that it is possible. The fact that the last and most important works of Maistre and Dostoyevsky, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, are dedicated to the problem of theodicy, reveals the fact that, like the interpreters of modernity whose thought has just been summarized, Maistre and Dostoyevsky had a profound awareness of the capital importance of this problem. Both of them were united by the belief that the modern ideal of a secular world found its most profound root in a rebellion against God motivated by the existence of evil. Hence, whether modernity is understood as a secularized eschatology whose central concepts are the man-god and the earthly paradise, or, whether modernity is regarded as the gradual development of a religious indifference that meets man's resignation with regard to his limited possibilities on earth and his pragmatic development of those possibilities (both perspectives being present in the work of Dostoyevsky), the Christian critique of modernity's secular project has to respond, in a way or another, to the cries of rebellion which, since the ancient Gnostics and until the modern nihilists, are stirred by the scandal of evil.

7.5. - The problem of theodicy in *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*

Maistre's *Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* had been conceived with the express purpose of counteracting the "*débordement de doctrines insolentes qui jugent Dieu*"[1438]. These "*doctrines*

[1438] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 701.

insolentes" were born out of the pride of the philosophical spirit, which Maistre holds accountable for the emergence of "*la déplorable génération qui a fait ou a laissé faire tout ce que nous voyons*"[1439]. The critique of Voltaire plays a key role in the economy of the book. In this sense, one should engage in a careful analysis of Maistre's arguments from the eighth dialogue. There, Maistre tries to demonstrate, with rational arguments, that evil's existence in the universe does not justify atheism as a logical conclusion, nor the conclusion that the universe is ruled by a God who cannot be at the same time all-powerful and good.

First of all, Maistre rejects the arguments of the atheist. Maistre argues that the atheist who denies the existence of God based on the argument that there is disorder in the universe, implicitly presupposes and confesses the idea of order, for disorder is nothing else than a transgression of order. According to Maistre, one could not argue that there is disorder in the universe unless he would also see order in it. The universe, Maistre claims, presents itself "*sous l'aspect d'un vaste cabinet d'histoire naturelle ébranlé par un tremblement de terre. La porte est ouverte et brisée ; il n'y a plus de fenêtres ; des armoires entières sont tombées ; d'autres pendent encore à des fiches prêtes à se détacher. Des coquillages ont roulé dans la salle des minéraux, et le nid d'un colibri repose sur la tête d'un crocodile. Cependant*", Maistre argues, "*quel insensé pourrait douter de l'intention primitive, ou croire que l'édifice fut construit dans cet état ?*" "*Toutes les grandes masses*", Maistre continues, "*sont ensemble: dans le moindre éclat d'une vitre on la voit tout entière; le vide d'une layette la replace: l'ordre est aussi visible que le désordre*"[1440].

Reality therefore reveals itself as essentially ambivalent. But Maistre does not limit himself to the facts, a position which would later be adopted by Ivan Karamazov. If he did that, just like

[1439] *Ibidem*, p. 594.
[1440] *Ibidem*, pp. 698-699.

the scholar Martin, from *Candide*, he would arrive at the Manichean conclusion, according to which, just like God, the Devil is also present in all things[1441]. The observer would then simply contemplate the division of the order of being, without granting ontological priority to none of the two aspects, order and disorder, under which reality presents itself. Thus, Maistre's argumentation takes a scholastic turn and somewhat recapitulates the ontological argument. Maistre argues that in the world there are "*deux intentions visibles au lieu d'une, c'est à dire l'ordre et la restauration. Mais*", Maistre continues, "*en nous bornant à la première idée, le désordre supposant nécessairement l'*ordre*, celui qui argumente du désordre contre l'existence de Dieu la suppose pour la combattre*"[1442].

If Maistre's arguments directed against the atheist may not seem very convincing, the arguments that are targeting Voltaire directly appear to be much more consistent. Thus, according to Maistre, if in the case of the atheist we are dealing only with "*une erreur*", in the case of those who believe in the existence of a just God, but nevertheless complain because of the state of things in the world, we are confronted with "*une absurdité*". As indicated by Maistre, since God is the source of law, everything He does is just, since there is no higher law above Him, and consequently no other judge above Him, to whom man can appeal against injustice. In reality, the appeal to such a law would betray the fact that man is actually placing his individual judgment above God, and that, ultimately, he does not believe in God but in himself. In this sense, Maistre raises the following question : "*si le théiste croit que l'idée de Dieu n'emporte point celle d'une justice semblable à la nôtre, de quoi se plaint-il?*" "*Que si au contraire*", as it was the case with Voltaire, "*il croit Dieu juste suivant nos idées, tout en se plaignant des injustices qu'il remarque dans l'état où nous sommes, il admet sans y faire attention une*

[1441] Voltaire, *Candide*, p. 111.
[1442] Jospeh de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 699.

contradiction monstrueuse, c'est-à-dire l'injustice d'un Dieu juste"[1443]. Maistre underlines the fact that, once we admit the existence of God, as well as his justice "*comme un attribut nécessaire de la divinité, le théiste ne peut plus revenir sur ses pas sans déraisonner, et il doit dire au contraire:* Un tel ordre de choses a lieu sous l'empire d'un Dieu essentiellement juste: donc cet ordre de choses est juste par des raisons que nous ignorons*; expliquant l'ordre des choses par les attributs, au lieu d'accuser follement les attributs par l'ordre des choses*"[1444].

Thus, just like Dostoyevsky, Maistre raises a big question mark with regard to the authenticity of Voltaire's faith, emphasizing the fact that the rationalization of religion, attempted by the modern thinkers from Spinoza to Voltaire, inevitably leads to atheism. Maistre was otherwise convinced that, from Bacon and Locke to the Encyclopedia, the modern philosophers have deliberately deluded their readers. As stressed by Pranchère, whether we talk about the British empiricists or the French encyclopedists, Maistre is convinced that we are dealing with perverse authors who "*visent à* abuser *les lecteurs naïfs sur leur véritable contenu*". Writing both esoterically and exoterically, in order to pursue their secret agenda, these authors "*visent à tisser les fils d'une intelligence avec les lecteurs avertis qui partagent leurs intentions*". Finally, "*ils visent […] à initier les lecteurs susceptibles de leur être favorables, le masque moral et chrétien servant à faire entrer insensiblement ces lecteurs dans une conjuration qui est en fait immorale et antichrétienne*"[1445].

The great question however remains the suffering of innocents, for which, Voltaire argued, the human mind could not conceive any justification whatsoever. Rejecting the pride of reason that refuses to accept its limits, Maistre underlines first of all the fact that, as humans, we are

[1443] *Ibidem*, pp. 699-700.
[1444] *Ibidem*, p. 700.
[1445] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p.306.

incapable of evaluating the degree of culpability of any human being. "*S'il y a des vérités certaines pour nous*", Maistre writes,

> *c'est que l'homme n'a aucun moyen de juger les cœurs ; que la conscience dont nous sommes portés à juger le plus favorablement, peut être horriblement souillée aux yeux de Dieu ; qu'il n'y a point d'homme innocent dans ce monde ; que tout mal est une peine, et que le juge qui nous y condamne est infiniment juste et bon : c'est assez, ce me semble, pour que nous apprenions au moins à nous taire*[1446].

Maistre therefore decries "*l'inconcevable folie qui ose fonder des arguments contre la Providence, sur les malheurs de l'innocence* qui n'existe pas"[1447]. And, if Voltaire and Ivan Karamazov would use the innocence of children as the key argument against the idea of a just Providence, Maistre will emphasize the fact that "*nous naissons tous despotes, depuis le monarque le plus absolu de l'Asie, jusqu'à l'enfant qui étouffe un oiseau dans sa main pour le plaisir de voir qu'il existe dans l'univers un être plus foible que lui*"[1448]. With regard to the children who, as Voltaire argues, are simply too young in order to manifest their "despotism" in any way, Maistre writes the following things:

> *Je me flatte que Voltaire n'avait pas plus sincèrement pitié que moi de ces malheureux* enfants sur le sein maternel écrasés et sanglants*; mais c'est un délire de le citer pour contredire le prédicateur qui s'écrie :* Dieu s'est vengé; ces maux sont les prix de nos crimes*; car rien n'est plus vrai en général. Il s'agit seulement d'expliquer pourquoi l'innocent est enveloppé dans la peine portée contre les coupables [...]. Je doute d'ailleurs que Voltaire, qui écrivait si vite, ait fait attention qu'au lieu de traiter une question particulière, relative à l'événement dont il s'occupait dans cette occasion, il en traitait une générale; et qu'il demandait, sans s'en apercevoir,* pourquoi les enfants qui n'ont pu encore ni mériter ni déméritер, sont sujets dans tout l'univers aux mêmes maux qui peuvent affliger les hommes faits?*[...] Pourquoi ces enfants naissent-ils, ou pourquoi meurent-ils? Qu'arrivera-t-il d'eux un jour? Ce sont des mystères peut-être inabordables; mais il faut avoir perdu le sens pour argumenter de ce qui ne se comprend pas contre ce qui se comprend très bien*[1449].

[1446] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 547.
[1447] *Ibidem*, p. 545.
[1448] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p.204.
[1449] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, pp. 565-567.

Before this paragraph Maistre has been even more clear with regard to the fate of dead infants. When making an analogy between God's decision to destroy Lisbon for its sins and the decision of a monarch to punish a rebellious city. Maistre is asked the following question by the Knight: "*qui empêcherait ce bon roi de prendre sous sa protection les habitants de cette ville demeurés fidèles, de les transporter dans quelque province plus heureuse, pour les y faire jouir, je ne dis pas des mêmes privilèges, mais des privilèges encore plus grands et plus dignes de leur fidélité ?*". Maistre then gives the following answer: "*C'est précisément ce que fait Dieu, lorsque des innocents périssent dans une catastrophe générale*". Finally, Maistre stresses the fact that the manner of dying is a question that concerns more our own mature sensitivity than the actual experience of the child:

> *Il faut considérer que, dans ces grands malheurs, une foule de circonstances ne sont que pour les yeux. Qu'un malheureux enfant, par example, soit écrasé sous la pierre, c'est un spectacle épouvantable pour nous; mais pour lui, il est beaucoup plus heureux que s'il était mort d'une variole confluente ou d'une dentition pénible. Que trois ou quatre mille hommes périssent disséminés sur un grand espace, ou tout à la fois et d'un seul coup, par un tremblement de terre ou une inondation, c'est la même chose sans doute pour la raison; mais pour l'imagination la différence est énorme*[1450].

The nonexistence of innocence, asserted by Maistre, appears to contradict his thesis concerning the merits of suffering innocence that profits the guilty. In fact, here we are dealing with a profound paradox of Maistre's theology. In *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*, Maistre subscribes to Origen's soteriological views. "*C'était son* [Origen's] *opinion bien connue*", Maistre writes,

> *'que le sang répandu sur le Calvaire n'avait pas été seulement utile aux hommes, mais aux anges, aux astres, et à tous les êtres créés' […]. C'est dans cette immense latitude qu'Origène envisageait l'effet du grand sacrifice […] [:] 'Contemplez l'expiation de toute le monde, c'est-à-dire des régions célestes, terrestres et intérieures, et voyez de*

[1450] *Ibidem*.

combien de victimes elles avaient besoin !... Mais l'agneau seul a pu ôter les péchés de tout le monde'[1451].

Maistre further subscribes to Origen's theological positions, and, together with the latter, "*passe […] de cette rédemption générale, opérée par le grand sacrifice […] à ces rédemptions particulières qu'on pourrait appeler* diminuées, *mais qui tiennent toujours au même principe*"[1452]. In this particular case, Maistre speaks about the redemptive efficiency of the martyrs' sacrifice. But beyond this case, the incommensurable event that is Christ's sacrifice appears, at the same time, as the supernatural confirmation of a universal/natural law, confessed by the practice of all existing societies. "*[L]e paganisme*, which according to Maistre has anticipated all Christian dogmas,

n'a pu se tromper sur une idée aussi universelle et aussi fondamentale que celle des sacrifices, c'est-à-dire de la rédemption par le sang *[…]. Les hommes des tous les siècles n'ont cessé d'avouer la dégradation primitive et universelle, et de dire comme nous, quoique d'une manière moins explicite* : nos mères nous ont conçus dans le crime *[…]. [E]n confessant plus ou moins clairement cette Chute […], tout peuple […] confessait aussi le besoin et la nature du remède*[1453].

Consequently, the One whose perfect sacrifice has redeemed not only men, but has also served angels, and may very well redeem according to Maistre beings that may exist on other planets, is only one of the millions of victims, that unlike him, are not perfect. What is more important, the incommensurable sacrifice of Christ does not put an end to the sacrificial order. Maistre explicitly rejects in *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* the Orthodox idea that to confer redemptive efficiency to the suffering of the just would mean to diminish the significance of Christ's crucifixion. "*Nos frères séparés*", he adresses the Russian Senator, "*ont dit: l'Homme-Dieu a payé pour nous; donc nous n'avons pas besoin d'autre mérites; il fallait dire: Donc les*

[1451] Joseph de Maistre, *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*, pp. 834-835.The quotations from Origen are taken from P. D. Huetti Origen., lib. II, cap. II, quaest. 3, n°20. – *Orig. opp*. tom. IV, p. 149 and Origène, *Homélies sur les Nombres*, XXIV, "Les sacrifices. Les vœux".

[1452] *Ibidem*, p. 836.

[1453] *Ibidem*, pp. 806, 832-833.

mérites de l'innocent peuvent servir au coupable"[1454]. The suffering of innocence has, according to Maistre, two motivations, both of which are hard to comprehend in the light of a divine sacrifice whose worth it would be impious to limit. As such, Maistre argues that, by suffering, the righteous pays for his own sins – at the limit for the inherited sin. But "*le juste, en souffrant volontairement, ne satisfait pas seulement pour lui, mais pour le coupable par voie de réversibilité ; […] coupable, qui de lui-même ne pourrait s'acquitter*"[1455].

This, according to Maistre, is "*un des plus grands et des plus importantes vérités de l'ordre spirituel*", which the rationalist pilosophy of the eighteenth century has ignored. Therefore, in the face of the contestations of philosophical reason, which has to acknowledge its incapacity to provide any explanation for the phenomenon of evil, and, first and foremost, for its most scandalous manifestation, which is the suffering of innocence, Maistre rehabilitates the authority of the so called "prejudices" and the legitimacy of the mystery, denounced by the Enlightenment as superstition. In this sense, in the ninth dialogue from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, the Knight quotes in parallel from Maistre's *Considérations sur la France*, where Maistre had first argued that the sufferings of the innocent victims of the French Revolution should be understood in the light of "*le dogme universel et aussi ancient que le monde,* de la réversibilité des douleurs de l'innocence au profit des coupables", and from a book written by an English author, and entitled (according to the French translation) *Vue de l'évidence de la religion chrétienne considérée en elle-même*. The author, Soame Jennings, argues that "*'malgré l'espèce d'absurdité apparente que présente'* " the doctrine of reversibility,

> *'elle a cependant été universellement adoptée dans toutes les âges […]. Nous voyons toutes les nations, tant civilisées que barbares, malgré la vaste différence qui les sépare dans toutes leurs opinions religieuses, se réunir dans ce point et croire à l'avantage du moyen d'apaiser leurs dieux offensés par des sacrifices, c'est-à-dire par la substitution*

[1454] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 752.
[1455] *Ibidem*, pp. 693, 706.

des souffrances des autres hommes et des autres animaux. Jamais cette notion n'a pu dériver de la raison puisqu'elle la contredit ; ni de l'ignorance, qui n'a jamais pu inventer un expédient aussi inexplicable ; […] ni de l'artifice des rois et des prêtres, dans la vue de dominer sur le peuple'[1456].

Therefore, Maistre argues that Christianity has only confirmed what the universal consciousness of mankind has always taught, "*car il n'y a pas un dogme chrétien qui n'ait sa racine dans la nature intime de l'homme, et dans une tradition aussi ancienne que le genre humain*"[1457]. For Maistre, who further quotes Jennings, the " *'instinct naturel'* " and the "*'révélation surnaturelle'* " are " *'également des opérations de la puissance divine'* "[1458]. Thus, attacking the rational criticism of the Enlightenment, Maistre argues that when it comes to doctrines such as the one mentioned above, "*les grands mots de* superstition *et de* préjugé *n'expliquent rien, car jamais il n'a pu exister d'erreur universelle et constante*"[1459]. Finally, quoting the same M. Jennings, Maistre argues that while the Christian revelation confirms the universal belief, concerning the reversibility of the innocent's merits to the profit of the guilty, as far as the motivation behind God's acceptance of such sacrifices is concerned, we are dealing with something " *'sur quoi le christianisme garde le silence; et ce silence est sage'* "[1460]. Prudent, in as much as he is aware of the enormity of the tribute of suffering, which mankind has offered and will offer until the end of times, Maistre ends his defense of Providence where the divine abyss begins. In so doing, he once again seems to follow Origen:

Il faut des recherches profondes pour se former une idée même très imparfaite de la loi en vertu du laquelle ces sortes des victimes purifient ceux pour qui elles sont offertes […]. Un vain simulacre de cruauté voudrait s'attacher à l'Être auquel on les offre pour le salut des hommes ; mais un esprit élevé et vigoureux sait repousser les objections

[1456] Soame Jennings, *Vue de l'évidence de la religion chrétienne considérée en elle-même*, translated from English by Pierre Letourner, Paris, 1769, in-12. Conclusion, n°4, p. 517, quoted in *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, pp. 707-708.

[1457] Joseph de Maistre, *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*, p. 806.

[1458] Soame Jennings, *Op. cit.*, p. 517, quoted in Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 708.

[1459] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 710.

[1460] Soame Jennings, *Op. cit.*, p. 517, quoted in Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 708.

qu'on élève contre la Providence, sans exposer néanmoins les derniers secrets *: car les jugements de Dieu sont bien profonds ; il est bien difficile de les expliquer ; et nombre d'âmes faibles y ont trouvé une occasion de chute*[1461].

In response to the Enlightenment's rational critique of prejudices and superstitions, Maistre underlines the fact that the authority of tradition confirms beyond any doubt fundamental truths that the modern consciousness, to its own perdition, ignores; and it does so because, while these truths are rationally incomprehensible, the modern consciousness acknowledges reason as the single authority. But Maistre opposes, to what he considers to be the noisy foolishness of the philosophical spirit, the silent wisdom that contemplates the mystery that it humbly accepts. "*Celui qui ne comprend point*", Maistre wrote in *Du Pape*, "*comprend mieux que celui qui comprend mal*"[1462]. Articulated in reaction to the Enlightenment's conception of a natural order that rejects by itself the concepts of *miracle, mystery, and authority* (to paraphrase the Grand Inquisitor), Maistrian historicism points towards history as the scene, both terrifying and enchanted, on which the incomprehensible God manifests Himself. Truly acting as a "*Voltaire retourné*"[1463], Maistre deliberately scandalizes a public opinion that has now been won over by the Enlightenment, as he argues that God's revelation in human history occurs with predilection through that which horrifies the Enlightenment the most, in as much as it is a fact that cannot be rationalized. Moreover, it occurs through that which, as argued by Maistre, as well as by Adorno and Horkheimer later, the Enlightenment itself has tragically radicalized: violence. As Pranchère sustains, for Maistre, history is an ambivalent concept. Maistre wrote that "*[t]oute question sur la* nature *de l'homme doit se résoudre par l'histoire*"[1464]. For Pranchère, this means that, "*dans la mesure où 'la lumière de l'histoire'* [Maistre's term] *éclaire la nature, elle est aussi la lumière*

[1461] *Orig. ubi sup*. quoted in Joseph de Maistre, *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices,* pp.836-837.
[1462] Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, p. 142.
[1463] The formula belongs to Edmond Schérer (quoted in Émile Faguet, *Politiques et moralistes au dix-neuvième siècle*, Société Française d'Imprimerie et de Librairie, Paris, 1901, Première Série, p. 66).
[1464] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 96.

de la raison"[1465], for history, and more particularly tradition, constitutes the source of common sense that protects us from the madness of reason. But in as much as it rejects the conclusions of abstract reason history

> *n'est plus […] la lumière de la raison: elle est* le fait de la déraison. *La lumière de l'histoire, c'est alors l'étrangeté et* l'irrationalité *des faits historiques dont la raison doit pourtant reconnaître la* nécessité *puisqu'ils sont voulus par Dieu ; ce peut être, en particulier,* l'irréductibilité du mal*, de la violence et du malheur – dont aucune lumière de la raison ne peut venir à bout […].En ce point le rationalisme s'interrompt : la raison doit faire silence dans la contemplation étonnée des désastres de l'histoire et de l'épiphanie paradoxale de Dieu qu'ils constituent*[1466].

According to Pranchère, by his affirmation of the dogma of reversibility, which leads to his thesis concerning the divinity of war and Revolution, Maistre "*sanctifie le mal comme un instrument de Dieu et fait de l'horreur même la manifestation de Dieu*"[1467]. Thus, articulated in reaction to the incomprehensible revolutionary irruption of violence in the century of reason, Maistre's attempt to theologically make sense of this violence through the dogma of reversibility (anticipated, as he argues, by the sacrificial practices of the pagan world, whose expiatory logic has been confirmed by the sacrifice of Christ) can only lead to "*la violence même de l'idée que la* souffrance *peut avoir un* sens"[1468]. And yet, there are very strong reasons to suspect that, through the justification of a Providence that acts in a brutal, or even sadistic manner, in human history, justification that scandalizes today many reformist and progressive Catholics[1469], Maistre tries to avoid precisely the approval of "*une autre violence possible de la religion chrétienne: la*

[1465] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières,*p. 354. The quotation from Joseph de Maistre is taken from *Œuvres complètes*, Vitte, Lyon, 1844-1886, vol. VIII, p. 435.

[1466] *Ibidem*, pp. 354-355.

[1467] *Ibidem*, p. 414.

[1468] *Ibidem*.

[1469] Thus, if in his *Histoire de l'enfer*, Georges Minois has argued that the Maistrian vision of divine punishment has more to do with the Marquis de Sade than with Catholic theology, François Mauriac would not hesitate to qualify this vision as "atrocious" and "horrible". According to Mauriac, this vision "is not even a caricature of" that presented by the Beatitudes: "it constitutes exactly the negation of it" (See Jean-Yves Pranchère, *The Persistence of Maistrian Thought*, p. 302).

violence de la théologie augustinienne de la massa damnata"[1470]. In this sense, it is important to mention that in *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, Maistre argues that the sacrifical order that governs the universe requires that *"tout ce qui vit doit être immolé sans fin, sans mesure, sans relâche, jusqu'à la consommation des choses, jusqu'à l'extinction du mal, jusqu'à la mort de la mort*". In another place, he stresses the fact that, since the murder of the innocent Abel by his brother Cain, *"le sang de martyrs, les sacrifices et les larmes de l'innocence s'accumulent sans relâche pour faire équilibre au mal qui, depuis l'origine des choses verse dans l'autre bassin ses flots empoisonnés. Il faut*", Maistre argues, "*qu'à la fin le côté du salut l'emporte*"[1471]. Through his sacrificial suffering the innocent expiates the sins of the guilty, acquitting thus the latter's debt towards God that he could not pay by himself, and that would otherwise result in eternal punishment. Moreover, as already indicated, it seems that for Maistre, the redeeming efficiency of innocent suffering exists independently of the voluntary union of one's suffering with the redeeming suffering of Christ, and therefore, it includes the victims of all wars, tyrannical regimes or natural catastrophes[1472]. If one takes into account all of these aspects, then the immeasurable amount of suffering imposed by the (providential) terror of history could find a justification if one regards it as the necessary means for the complete acquittal of humanity's debt towards God. As an instrument of God, the scandal of evil, whose ultimate expression is the immolation of innocents, may then become the prelude of Origen's *apokatastasis*: the final redemption of all created beings.

To be certain, as in other cases where Maistre's thought borders on heresy, one could not extract from him any official repudiation of a Catholic dogma, and neither does Maistre openly

[1470] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 415.
[1471] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, pp. 661, 751.
[1472] As already indicated, from this point of view Joseph de Maistre steps outside the boundaries of Roman Catholic orthodoxy (see section 2.7., footnote 197).

deny in this case the dogma of eternal punishment[1473]. Moreover, Maistre's affirmation of man's real possibility to reject God's grace would seem to exclude the certainty that all will be saved eventually[1474]. Yet, as argued by Pranchère, one cannot but be astonished by the fact that, although Maistre's declared purpose in *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* is to reject the "blasphemous" accusations that the representatives of the Enlightenment have raised against Providence, never in the book, nor elsewhere in his work does Maistre address the principal and most furious objection of the Enlightenment thinkers concerning Christianity. More precisely, never does Maistre defend against the critique of *les philosophes*, what the latter regarded as the infinitely scandalous theological doctrine according to which God would submit some of his creatures (the vast majority according to Augustine) to eternal torments for their sins, eternal torments that, in view of their eternity, appear as necessarily disproportionate, and that, furthermore, far from putting an end to the scandalous phenomenon of evil, appear instead as its ultimate and irreversible divine sanction.[1475] Instead of trying to address this objection, Maistre prefers to insist on how much common sense is presupposed by the dogma of purgatory, rejected by the Protestant *"insurgés […] du XVIe siècle"* which, at that time, *"ne voulaient rien rabattre de l'enfer pur et simple. Cependant"*, Maistre continues, *"lorsqu'ils sont devenus philosophes, ils se sont mis à nier l'éternité des peines, laissant néanmoins subsister un* enfer à temps*"* – given the fact that they realized how scandalous it would be to send to heaven saints and criminals at the same time. *"Mais un enfer temporaire"*, Maistre argues, *"n'est autre chose que*

[1473] We are dealing here with the same ambiguity that is specific to Maistre's theological thought, already mentioned in subsection 2.8.2, and that reveals Maistre as the paradoxical figure of a staunch defender of the dogmatic authority of the Church, who nevertheless flirts with a variety of heretical spiritual streams.

[1474] "*L'épouvantable grandeur de l'homme*", Maistre writes, "*est telle qu'il a le pouvoir de résister à Dieu et de repousser sa grâce: elle est telle que le dominateur souverain, et le roi des vertus, ne le traite qu'AVEC RESPECT. Il n'agit pour lui, qu'avec lui; il ne force point sa volonté […] ; il faut qu'elle acquiesce ; il faut que, par un humble et courageuse coopération, l'homme s'approprie cette satisfaction, autrement elle lui demeurera étrangère*" (Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 752).

[1475] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, pp. 414-415.

le purgatoire ; en sorte qu'après s'être brouillés avec nous parce qu'ils ne voulaient point de purgatoire, ils se brouillent de nouveau parce qu'ils ne veulent que le purgatoire"[1476]. If the Count simply eschews the Enlightenment's objections against the doctrine of hell, the arguments that the young Knight gives in favor of the dogma of purgatory, which he defines as "*le dogme du bon sens*", implicitly indicate an agreement with the above mentioned objections[1477]. Arguing that "*les peines*" always have to be "*proportionnées aux crimes*", principle which therefore excludes the idea of eternal punishment, the Knight rhetorically asks: "*Qui jamais a imaginé de faire fusiller un soldat pour une pipe de faïence volé dans la chambrée? cependant il ne faut pas que cette pipe soit volée impunément; il faut que le voleur soit purgé de ce vol, avant de pouvoir se placer en ligne avec les braves gens*" "*[P]uisque tout péché*", the Knight concludes,

> *doit être expié dans ce monde ou dans l'autre, il s'ensuit que les afflictions envoyées aux hommes par la justice divine sont un véritable bienfait, puisque ces peines, lorsque nous avons la sagesse de les accepter, nous sont, pour ainsi dire, décomptées sur celles de l'avenir. J'ajoute qu'elles sont un gage manifeste d'amour, puisque cette anticipation ou cette commutation de peine exclut évidemment la peine éternelle. Je trouve surtout que les nouveaux raisonneurs qui ont nié les peines éternelles sont d'une sottise étrange, s'ils n'admettent pas expressément le purgatoire: car, je vous prie, à qui ce gens-là feront-il croire que l'âme de Robespierre s'élança de l'échafaud dans le sein de Dieu, comme celle de Louis XVI?*[1478]

Supported by the common authority of the universal consciousness and of the divine revelation, the dogma of reversibility, or the idea that the innocent pays for the guilty, which constitutes the cornerstone of the Maistrian theodicy, represents one of those truths which, Maistre admits, scandalizes philosophical reason. This truth enters in the category of truths "*qui*

[1476] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 692.

[1477] Note the fact that, as elsewhere in *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, in order to maintain the appearance of a firm obedience in relation to the teaching authority of the Church, Maistre states his less orthodox opinions through his interlocutors. If in the last dialogue Maistre's thought is brought in the vicinity of Joachim of Fiore's heresy, concerning the Third Age of the Holy Spirit, through the discourse of the Russian Senator, here, it is the Knight's discourse that suggests Maistre's agreement with the Origenist heresy concerning the redemption of all created beings.

[1478] *Ibidem*, pp. 690-691.

ne se prouvent point par le calcul ni par les lois du mouvement". Therefore, it can only be accepted by a humble heart, which is willing to acknowledge the limits of reason. But

> *[c]elui qui a passé sa vie sans avoir jamais goûté les choses divines ; celui qui a rétréci son esprit et desséché son cœur par des stériles spéculations qui ne peuvent ni le rendre meilleur dans cette vie ni le préparer pour l'autre ; celui-là, dis-je, repoussera ces sortes de preuves, et même il n'y comprendra rien*[1479].

Thus, together with Pascal, Maistre emphasizes the fact that, "*il est des vérités que l'homme ne peut saisir qu'avec* l'esprit de son cœur"[1480]. For Maistre, this comprehension centered on the heart does not exclude reason. Maistre describes the philosophers who, relying exclusively on their rational faculty raise their voice against Providence, as "*têtes folles* dont le raisonnement a banni la raison"[1481]. Moreover, the philosopher who, in the pride of his heart, rejects religion as a delusion staged by the priests, becomes in fact "*dupe de lui-même; il prend*", Mastre argues, "*les sophismes de son cœur naturellement rebelle […] pour des doutes réels nés dans son entendement*". And thus, Maistre argues that si "*quelquefois la superstition* croit de croire, *comme on le lui a reproché, plus souvent encore, soyez-en sûrs, l'orgueil* croit ne pas croire"[1482]. It is legitimate then to ask whether the role attributed to the heart in the knowledge of truth, by Maistre, does not justify a parallel with the Slavophile concept of integral knowledge, which plays a key role also in the work of Dostoyevsky. As already indicated in the section dedicated to the Slavophiles, Pranchère has argued that "*alors que la pensée romantique*" (category in which many interpreters have included the Slavophile thought),

> *souhaite transgresser les limites de l'entendement fini, la théologie politique de Maistre veut que nous nous résignons à notre ignorance ; elle ne vise pas à déborder la raison dans un savoir d'un autre genre, mais à démontrer rationnellement les limites de la*

[1479] *Ibidem,* p. 711.
[1480] *Ibidem*.
[1481] *Ibidem,* p. 544.
[1482] *Ibidem,* pp. 459-460.

raison ; elle vise à faire taire les disputes rationnelles pour laisser place à la seule voix de l'autorité[1483].

Indeed, when he speaks of truths that can only be perceived by one's heart, Maistre does not seem to refer to a mystical experience that may pose a risk to the clerical mediation instituted in the Church. Instead, Maistre argues that humility, a virtue of the heart, is required in order to accept the teaching of the ecclesial authority, which, as far as the dogma of reversibility is concerned, only confirms a truth that is scandalous, when approached from the perspective of abstract reason, but that appears to be a "common-sense truth" if one takes into account the fact that it is supported by the belief of all existing societies. This being said, it should nevertheless be indicated that in *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, just like Dostoyevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Maistre refers, at a certain point, to the personal experience of sanctity as a different, and ultimately superior manner of rejecting the protests that the proud mind raises against God due to the suffering of innocence. In this sense, Maistre underlines a fundamental paradox: supposing that one would consider the complaints against Providence to be legitimate, these complaints could be expressed legitimately only by "*le juste souffrant. Mais c'est précisément ce qui n'arrivera jamais*". Maistre then refers to the example of an eighteen year-old girl from Saint-Petersburg who, since the age of five

est tourmentée par un horrible cancer qui lui ronge la tête […].En proie aux souffrances les plus aiguës, une piété tendre et presque céleste la détache entièrement de la terre, et semble la rendre inaccessible ou indifférente à la douleur […]. Je ne suis pas, dit-elle, aussi malheureuse que vous le croyez ; Dieu me fait la grâce de ne penser qu'à lui. Et lorsqu'un homme de bien […] lui dit un jour : Quelle est la première grâce que vous demanderez à Dieu, ma chère enfant, lorsque vous serez devant lui ? Elle répondit avec une naïveté angélique : Je lui demanderai pour mes bienfaiteurs la grâce de l'aimer autant que je l'aime […]. Certainement, messieurs, [Maistre concludes]*, si l'innocence existe quelque part dans le monde, elle se trouve sur ce lit de douleur […] et si l'on pouvait adresser à la Providence des plaintes raisonnables, elles partiraient justement de la bouche de cette victime pure qui ne sait cependant que bénir et aimer. Or, ce que nous*

[1483] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 100.

voyons ici, on l'a toujours vu, et on le verra jusqu'à la fin des siècles. Plus l'homme s'approchera de cet état de justice dont la perfection n'appartient pas à notre faible nature, et plus vous le trouverez aimant et résigné jusque dans les situations les plus cruelles de la vie. Chose étrange ! c'est le crime qui se plaint des souffrances de la vertu ! [...] Qui donc a donné à ces téméraires le droit de prendre la parole au nom de la vertu qui les désavoue avec horreur, et d'interrompre par d'insolents blasphèmes les prières, les offrandes et les sacrifices volontaires de l'amour ?[1484]

For Maistre, the capital fault of philosophy consists in the fact that "*elle ne connaît pas l'huile de la consolation. Elle dessèche, elle racornit le cœur, et lorsqu'elle a endurci un homme, elle croit avoir fait un sage*"[1485]. According to Maistre, philosophy is bound to always arrive at the same conclusion: that everything which happens is reduced to natural necessity. But the belief in "*lois invariables de la nature*", belief preached by "*tous les philosophes de notre siècle*", is

la tentation la plus perfide qui puisse se présenter à l'esprit humain […]. Ce système […] mène droit à ne plus prier, c'est à-dire à perdre la vie spirituelle ; car la prière est la respiration de l'âme […].Les hommes n'ayant jamais prié qu'en vertu d'une religion révélée (ou reconnue pour telle), à mesure qu'ils se sont approchés du déisme, qui n'est rien et ne peut rien, ils ont cessé de prier ; et maintenant vous les voyez courbés vers la terre, uniquement occupés des lois et d'études physiques, et n'ayant plus le moindre sentiment de leur dignité naturelle. Tel est le malheur de ces hommes qu'ils ne peuvent même plus désirer leur propre régénération, non point seulement par la raison connue qu'on ne peut désirer ce qu'on ne connaît pas, mais parce qu'ils trouvent dans leur abrutissement moral je ne sais quel charme affreux qui est un châtiment épouvantable […].Tel est l'homme qui ne prie plus ; et si le culte public (il ne faudrait pas d'autre preuve de son indispensable nécessité) ne s'opposait pas un peu à la dégradation universelle, je crois, sur mon honneur, que nous deviendrions enfin de véritables brutes[1486].

The effects of philosophy determine the Russian Senator to conclude that, whereas one should still respect reason, "*malgré tout le mal qu'elle nous a fait*", "*toutes les fois qu'elle se trouve opposée* au sens commun", contained within the religious convictions, "*nous devons la*

[1484] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, pp. 548-549.
[1485] *Ibidem*, p. 564.
[1486] *Ibidem*, pp. 558-559, 563.

repousser comme une empoisonneuse"[1487]. Thus, the theodicy from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* culminates with a reactionary attack against free thinking and "*les académies*". *Il appartient"*, Maistre argues, *"aux prélats, aux nobles, aux grand officiers de l'état d'être les dépositaires et les gardiens des vérités conservatrices ; d'apprendre aux nations ce qui est mal et ce qui est bien ; ce qui est vrai et ce qui est faux dans l'ordre moral et spirituel : les autres n'ont pas droit de raisonner sur ces sortes de matières spirituelles*"[1488]. For unlike the former, "*les philosophes ont tous un certain orgueil féroce et rebelle qui ne s'accommode de rien […] ; il n'y a point d'autorité qui ne leur déplaise : il n'y a rien au-dessus d'eux qu'ils ne haïssent […]. Ils attaqueront tout, même Dieu, parce qu'il est maître. Voyez si ce ne sont pas les mêmes hommes qui ont écrit contre les rois et contre celui qui les a établis !*"[1489].

With this conclusion, which reaffirms the intrinsic relation between political authority and divine authority, we can therefore clarify the issue that concerns the place occupied by the theodicy from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* in the general context of Maistre's theologico-political thought. Maistre begins with the attempt to justify the authority of the absolute monarchy in *De la souveraineté du peuple*, continues, in *Du Pape*, with the subsequent attempt to justify the principle of Papal infallibility, which can then become the theocratic support of the absolute monarchy, and ends, in *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, with a theodicy meant to justify the ultimate source of authority, which is God Himself. At each of these stages of his thought, Maistre confronts the philosophical spirit that is the enemy of the principle of authority, and each time he arrives at the same practical political conclusion: philosophical thinking must be reduced to silence, and the access to science must be submitted to a regime of censorship, with the purpose of protecting society from the political anarchy and the moral anomy that are

[1487] *Ibidem*, p. 559.
[1488] *Ibidem*, p. 701.
[1489] *Ibidem*, p. 702.

the fruits of pride. Moreover, as we remember, in its opposition to the modern doctrine of natural law that has served as a justification for the French Revolution, Maistre's theory of sovereignty risked degenerating into a decisionistic justification of any form of sovereignty, no matter how tyrannical. Confronted with this problem, Maistre had tried to secure the fate of the fallible absolute monarchy by its subordination to the infallible papacy. Yet, justified with arguments extracted from the theory of sovereignty, the principle of papal infallibility risked being contaminated by the very decisionism it was meant to contain. At this point, Maistre makes an appeal to Providence, for, he argued, it was God himself who, by virtue of his promise, guaranteed the correspondence between truth, the tradition of the Church and the dogmatic decisions of the Popes. However, as we have seen, *les philosophes* who Maistre is confronting, had denounced not only the "tyranny" of the monarchs and the abuses, fanaticism, and mystifications of the clerical authorities. Inevitably the attack against the oppressive institutions of the *Ancien Régime* had turned into a denunciation of the idea of divine justice, due to the fact that God has permitted (at least) the existence of these institutions, and the existence of evil in general. Consequently, if the philosophical discourse of the Enlightenment could have only ended with an attack against Providence, Maistre's Counter-Enlightenment could have only ended with a justification of Providence, meant not only to repel the attacks of philosophy, but also, to definitively neutralize the decisionism to which the Counter-Revolutionary attempt to re-establish the theologico-political authority seemed to be inevitably condemned.

However, we cannot close this section without referring to a passage from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* that raises a legitimate question mark with regard to Maistre's capacity to truly (or fully) neutralize the decisionist/nihilist dimension of his thought, solving thus the inner crisis of his theologico-political system. As we remember, in response to Voltaire's complaint

against the injustice of the just and comprehensible God of deism, Maistre has argued that, in order to remain coherent, Voltaire would have had to explain the order of things through the divine attributes, and not to accuse the divine attributes through the order of things. More exactly, instead of complaining about the injustice of a just God, he should have argued that the works of God, including the Lisbon earthquake, are just for reasons that we cannot comprehend. Consequently, Maistre's argument automatically dismissed deism as an untenable theological position, re-establishing thus the authority of the incomprehensible God of religion against the (supposedly) comprehensible God of the philosophers. Yet, Maistre does not stop here. Instead, right after completing the argument according to which the apparent injustices of God are just for reasons that we cannot comprehend, Maistre moves a step further and launches himself in a speculation concerning the possibility that, after all, the ruler of the universe is simply an unjust tyrant. This position would seem to represent the inevitable conclusion of Voltaire's rationalist theology, a conclusion that Voltaire seems incapable of drawing, but which will later be affirmed unequivocally by Ivan Karamazov. Supposing, Maistre argues, "*qu'il n'y a pas moyen de justifier le caractère de la divinité*", and, more precisely, supposing that "*Dieu est injuste, cruel, impitoyable*" and "*se plaît au malheur de ses créatures*", what must one do?

> *Sortir de l'empire peut-être? impossible: il est partout, et rien n'est hors de lui. Se plaindre, se dépiter, écrire contre le souverain? c'est pour être fustigé ou mis à mort. Il n'y a pas de meilleur parti à prendre que celui de la résignation et du respect, je dirai même de l'*amour*; car, puisque nous partons de la supposition que le maître existe et qu'il faut absolument servir, ne vaut-il pas mieux (quel qu'il soit) le servir par amour que sans amour ? […] Plus Dieu nous semblera terrible, plus nous devrons redoubler de crainte religieuse envers lui, plus nos prières devront être ardentes et infatigables: car rien ne nous dit que sa bonté y suppléera*[1490].

"*À reléguer Dieu hors du monde et des affaires humaines*", Emil Cioran wrote in his study of Maistre, "*à le déposséder des vertus et des facultés qui lui eussent permis d'y faire sentir sa*

[1490] *Ibidem,* pp. 700-701.

présence et son autorité, les déistes l'avaient rabaissé au niveau d'une idée et d'un symbole, à une figuration abstraite de la bonté et de la sagesse". But, "*après un siècle de 'philosophie'* ", Cioran argues, Maistre has had the privilege of rehabilitating the tyrant God that is the true God of every religion[1491]. The passage from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* in which Maistre speculates with regard to the hypothesis of a divine tyranny, can indeed be considered, in light of its cynicism and brutality, as the most radical expression of the refutation of Voltaire's deism. For Cioran, in this passage, "*la Providence est dévoilée, dénoncée, rendue suspecte, par celui-là même qui s'était attaché à en célébrer la bonté et l'honorabilité*". In one word, the passage should be regarded as nothing less than the subtle recognition of the fact that "*l'idée de la culpabilité de Dieu n'est pas une idée gratuite, mais nécessaire et parfaitement compatible avec celle de sa toute-puissance : elle seule confère quelque intelligibilité au déroulement historique, à tout ce qu'il contient de monstrueux, d'insensé et de dérisoire*"[1492]. A nihilist thinker like Cioran, himself the author of a book entitled *Le mauvais Démiurge*, could not have missed the opportunity to put forward such a straightforward interpretation of Maistre, raising the veil that would supposedly conceal Maistre's intimate beliefs, just as Maistre had supposedly unveiled, in this troubling passage, the true nature of the Providence that he defends.

Yet, officially, Maistre's hypothesis from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, remains only a speculative exercise. In itself, the idea of a tyrant God is characterized by Maistre himself as a "*coupable et non moins folle proposition*"[1493], and elsewhere, Maistre has vituperated against what he defined as "*[les] dogmes atroces*"[1494] shared by the Jansenist and Calvinist theologians, which, reducing God's justice to God's will, effectively presented God as a tyrant by arguing

[1491] Emil Cioran, "Joseph de Maistre. Essai sur la pensée réactionnaire", p. 24.
[1492] *Ibidem*, pp. 25-27.
[1493] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 700.
[1494] Joseph de Maistre, *De l'Église gallicane,* p. 109.

that, from eternity, God has predestined some for eternal bliss and others for eternal torments, and that damnation had nothing to do with man's free rejection of God's grace, but was simply the result of God's incomprehensible and arbitrary decision, who chose to bestow grace, and with it the capacity to choose good instead of evil, on some and not on others. According to Pranchère, Maistre's speculative justification of a hypothetical divine tyranny represents only an "*ad hominem argument*", directed against those who think that the limited human mind would have the right to protest against a justice that is beyond human understanding, or, would propose, as a practical rule of life, any other solution than resignation before God's will. Yet, the same author also argues that it is nevertheless legitimate to ask ourselves whether Maistre's attempt to defend the theodicy of a tyrant God does not betray the fact that, "contained *by*" the providential order, Maistre's decisionistic tendencies from *Du Pape* are in fact "contained *in*" that order. Transposed in the first place from the theory of sovereignty to ecclesiology, where it has been cushioned by the providential understanding of the history of the Church, decisionism would then break loose and end up by contaminating "the very authority of God". The terror of history, which the Maistrian theodicy tries to justify, would then become nothing more than the incomprehensible will of a terrorist God[1495]. "The proposition according to which history is the unfathomable decision of God" may itself flip over and become a new proposition: "*the will of God is for us nothing other than the unfathomable decision of history*". The seawall would then break and, as a consequence, "radical historicism" would flood "the fields of morals and metaphysics"[1496]. The Maistrian view of the world would ultimately reveal itself as fundamentally nihilist.

[1495] Jean-Yves Pranchère, "Joseph de Maistre's Catholic Philosophy of Authority", pp. 147-150.
[1496] *Ibidem,* p. 150.

To the extent that one accepts Pranchère's hypothesis, three observations should then be made. First of all, as indicated in the previous section, Blumenberg has argued that modernity must be understood as the legitimate self-assertion of the secular, in reaction to the inner crisis of Christianity, or more specifically of Medieval scholasticism, whose incapacity to withstand the Gnostic deconstruction of the Christian theodicy has finally lead to the emergence of the God of the nominalist theologians, or the God of theological voluntarism. Practically speaking, the existence of such a God excluded the existence of a predictable natural order, and consequently, of any guarantee of personal salvation. It is precisely this God who appears in Maistre's speculation concerning the tyrant God, and, if one accepts the thesis that despite Maistre's declared intentions, the inner logic of Maistre's political-theology ultimately arrives at this position, then one must conclude that the Maistrian critique of modernity is caught in the vicious circle of modernity. Second, we should remember that Maistre's theodicy supports his ecclesiology, which in turn supports his theory of sovereignty through which he seeks to put an end to the modern crisis of order, and to prevent thus the apocalyptic dissemination of anarchy and nihilism. Each time when he appeals to a higher supporting authority, Maistre does so in order to prevent the degeneration of his reversal of modern nihilism into a confirmation of that nihilism, a confirmation that is implicit in the decisionist resolution of the crisis of order. If one accepts Pranchère's hypothesis that Maistre's attempt to contain the decisionism inscribed in the inner logic of his theologico-political project eventually ends with a decisionist contamination of God's authority itself, the highest authority above which there is no other authority, then one may indeed speculate about a possible evolution of Maistre's thought despite and beyond itself, and, moreover, beyond the boundaries of orthodoxy. If Maistre's political thought naturally seeks a theological support in the papacy and ultimately in God, we should remember that the

belief according to which the scandal of evil has irremediably compromised the authority of the creator and ruler of this world, determined the Gnostics to appeal to the authority of a higher otherworldly God. This appeal inevitably implied an irrevocable condemnation of the world as a whole. At this point, one could analyze the connection between this possible evolution of Maistrian thought beyond itself (one may even talk about Maistre's suppressed Gnosticism) and the chiliast doctrine that appears in the last dialogue of *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg,* from the perspective of Eric Voegelin's analysis of the relation between the Gnostic drive towards the destruction of the order of Being compromised by evil, and the chiliast expectation of a new world where evil will be abolished, a new world born from the eschatological destruction of the old world[1497]. In this sense, *"en laissant entrevoir pour finir, comme le sommet du monde violent de la réversibilité, l'abolition de la violence de la réversibilité, et en faisant place à l'espoir d'une rédemption de ce monde en lui-même",* as a result of its chiliast expectations, *"la pensée maistrienne n'est pas loin de porter une condamnation sans retour contre l'ordre établi de ce monde dont elle s'est faite pourtant l'apologiste".*[1498] Finally, if the re-establishment of the theologico-political authority contested by modern nihilism represents an imperative necessity (for otherwise, mankind as a whole faces catastrophic consequences), while at the same time, Maistre's attempt to re-establish this authority is condemned to reproduce at its highest level, through the inevitable decisionist resolution of the crisis of order, the same nihilism that it wants to reject, then there may be no other practical solution than to *conceal,* through mystification, the decisionism/nihilism that cannot be *contained*[1499]. Based on a truly nihilist vision of the world,

[1497] The secularization of the chiliast doctrine leads, as Voegelin has argued, to the revolutionary ideology and practice which seeks the destruction of the old theologico-political order and its replacement with a new one, erected on the basis of just principles.

[1498] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières,* p. 427.

[1499] In fact, this is precisely the presupposition which is implicit in Cioran's interpretation of *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg,* and in particular, of the role played by the hypothesis of a tyrant God in the context of the work

Maistre's theologico-political project would then become the same theologico-political project as that which is proposed by Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor. In fact, the failure of theodicy and the subsequent Gnostic condemnation of the existing world as a whole, will lead Dostoyevsky's nihilist hero from *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan Karamazov, to the same practical solution. It is the thought of the latter that we will analyze in the next section.

7.6. – The problem of theodicy in *The Brothers Karamazov*

As we have seen, after rejecting with more or less convincing arguments the philosophical contestation of the Christian theodicy, Maistre has argued that, at the limit, even presupposing that theoretical reason would be forced to simply admit that God is unjust and cruel, practical reason would still point towards resigned acceptance of God's will as the wisest attitude that man could adopt. More precisely, from a practical point of view, this remained the only possible attitude. Thus, Maistre's final argument directed against philosophy was a practical argument: far from producing any benefits, philosophy could only make men's life harder, and ultimately unbearable, both in this world and in the world to come. However, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoyevsky will not attempt to provide reasonable and pragmatic arguments for those who are reasonable and pragmatic enough to assimilate them. Instead, in his treatment of the problem of theodicy, Dostoyevsky starts from the premise that, independently of the problem of God's existence, rebellion against God, even at the tragic price of madness in the most concrete

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and of Maistre's thought. Thus, Maistre would say what he actually believes in a marginal passage, which he presents as a mere speculative exercise, denying that he actually believes in the idea which is expressed in that passage. Yet, in reality, this would represent his actual belief and his esoteric message. The rest of the work, in which Maistre, on the contrary, affirms the justice of God, would represent Maistre's exoteric message. Thus, the interpretation of Maistre which sees in the latter a hypostasis of the Grand Inquisitor is inevitably associated with a Straussian reading of Maistre's writings.

understanding of the term, may nevertheless reveal itself to be a proof of absolute intellectual honesty and human dignity, as long as God reveals himself to be unjust. Nietzsche believed that at the heart of modern disbelief and of the modern rebellion against Christianity, there was found a certain will for truth that modernity had inherited from Christianity itself[1500]. In order to justify Christianity, Dostoyevsky chooses to confront, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, a character which, just like Nietzsche, "*est, en effet, d'une honnêteté intellectuelle qui va jusqu'à la cruauté et surtout jusqu'à la cruauté envers soi-même*"[1501]. Before Cioran, Nietzsche also argued that God was killed by compassion, whose manifestation in Christ would inevitably turn against the creator and judge of the world, and, in general, would lead to the modern rebellion against authority and the sacrificial violence presupposed by the latter. "Thus spake the devil unto me, once on a time", Zarathustra declares: " 'Even God hath his hell: it is his love for man'. And lately did I hear him say these words: 'God is dead: of his pity for man hath God died' […]. He saw how *man* hung on the cross, and could not endure it; –[…] his love to man became his hell, and at last his death"[1502]. Or, Ivan's cruel honesty will be correlated with the fact that, prompted like Zarathustra by the same spirit of division, he also will turn Christian compassion against Christianity itself. Ivan "claims that his compassion is more compassionate than that of Christianity – of *Christ himself*", and therefore, it is in the name of compassion that Ivan will reject "God and immortality"[1503]. For Dostoyevsky, the claim that truth/honesty and

[1500] "Honest and intransigent atheism", Nietzsche argues, "is […] not opposed to asceticism, all appearances to the contrary. Rather it is one of the last evolutionary phases of that ideal, one of its natural and logical consequences. It is the catastrophe, inspiring of respect, of a discipline in truth that has lasted for two millennia and which now prohibits the lie implicit in monotheistic belief […]. Christianity as dogma perished by its own ethics […]. The Christian ethics with its key notion, ever more strictly applied, of truthfulness" and "the casuistic finesse of the Christian conscience, translated and sublimated into the scholarly conscience, into intellectual integrity to be maintained at all costs", have finally destroyed Christianity from within (Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, pp. 296-297).

[1501] Théodore Paléologue, *Sous l'œil du Grand Inquisiteur*, p. 197.

[1502] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, pp. 59, 184.

[1503] Bruce K. Ward, *Redeeming the Enlightenment*, p. 189

love/compassion are better represented by the modern anti-Christian rebellion than by Christianity itself, or, otherwise said, the claim that, arrived at the full consciousness of the meaning of its rejection of Christianity, modernity revealed itself to be more Christian than Christianity itself, was not something that the Christian apologist could simply ignore. Confronted with a claim of intellectual honesty assumed to the point of self-destruction, Christianity, Dostoyevsky believed, could not seek, and, ultimately, could not find refuge in intellectual cowardice, the comfort of superficiality, cynicism, or bad-faith. Neither could it resort to the hypothesis of a tyrant God in order to simply crush the rebellion. Instead, it was obliged to face such a challenge with courage and respect for the one who was raising it. And only by its ability to face the challenge could Christianity prove that it was more deeply rooted in truth and love than its contesters. As well indicated by Boyce Gibson, Dostoyevsky believed that, in order to truly justify the Christian God, the Christian apologist must first of all let the devil speak with his own voice[1504]. And that is why, while as a Christian Dostoyevsky was committed to Christ, as an artist, he was committed to polyphony, a commitment in which Florovsky could only see the proof of a strong and authentic faith[1505]. Sophism and casuistry are then set aside, making room for "the furnace of doubt", out of which the triumphant "hosanna" is expected to emerge, at the end of the trial.

Let us now move on to Ivan Karamazov's arguments. In the beginning of the discussion from the fifth book of *The Brothers Karamazov*, which takes place between Ivan and his brother Alyosha, Ivan enounces an epistemological creed that has fundamental ethical and religious consequences. "If God exists", Ivan argues, "and if he really did create the earth then, as common knowledge tells us, he created it according to Euclidean geometry, while he created the

[1504] A. Boyce Gibson, *The Religion of Dostoevsky,* p. 6

[1505] George Florovsky, "The Quest for Religion in 19th Century Russian Literature", in *Theology and Literature*, p. 26.

human mind with an awareness of only three spatial dimensions". Some geometers and philosophers, Ivan continues, "doubt that" the universe "was created solely according to Euclidean geometry" and, moreover, sustain that "the two parallel lines which according to Euclid can on no account converge upon earth may yet do so somewhere in infinity". But for Ivan, just like God, this is a truth that is out of this world, and that, accordingly, his Euclidean mind cannot comprehend. For Ivan, if man was created with a Euclidean mind and set in a world created according to the rules of Euclidean geometry, then it means that God cannot ask of him to be preoccupied with things that surpass his faculties. The question of God's existence is "unsuited to a mind that has been created with an awareness of only three dimensions".[1506]

Thus, from the very beginning, Ivan stresses the fact that he has no problem in accepting God, together with "His supreme wisdom and His purpose, both of which are completely unknown to us". What he cannot and will not accept is the world which has been created by God[1507]. For in this world, Ivan argues, there are things that happen that, from the perspective of Ivan's Euclidean mind, cannot have any justification whatsoever, and that, for this reason, irremediably compromise the world created by God. Ivan tells his brother that there are numerous examples of the manifestation of evil that can be given, but that he limits himself to the most striking one: the suffering of children, depicted in detail in a series of accounts that Ivan has recorded with journalistic precision. Practically, Ivan gathers together documents describing facts that, out of intellectual honesty, he refuses to understand. In a phrase recalling Voltaire's confessed perplexity, in the face of the innocent victims made by the Lisbon earthquake, Ivan

[1506] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 307. In his discussion with the old Pope, Zarathustra justifies his rejection of God with the following arguments: "I love everything that looketh bright and speaketh honestly. But" God " – thou knowest it, forsooth, thou old priest, there was something of thy type in him, the priest-type – […] was equivocal […]. How he raged at us, this wrath-snorter, because we understood him badly! But why did he not speak more clearly? And if the fault lay in our ears, why did he give us ears that heard him badly? If there was dirt in our ears, well! who put it in them?" (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, p. 185).

[1507] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 307-308.

Karamazov tells his brother Alyosha that the suffering of children is incomprehensible, and, moreover, that he wants it to remain incomprehensible: "I don't understand anything […] and […] I don't want to understand anything […] either. I want to remain with the facts […]. If I understand anything I shall instantly be untrue to the facts, and I decided to remain with the facts"[1508]. The facts recorded by Ivan are basically gathered in the prosecution file of a trial, in which, as it results from "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor", God is being judged by man, or, more precisely by the man-God. For Ivan, the theological explanation of the suffering of children as a consequence of their parents' sins is "a truth that is not of this world", and, being unable to understand it, he refuses to accept it[1509]. Ivan cannot accept that the suffering of children is being instrumentalized as something whose occurrence is necessary for the future establishment of an eternal harmony[1510]. "It is out of the question", Ivan argues, directly opposing Maistre's doctrine about the reversibility of merits, "that the innocent one shall suffer for another, especially when it is such an innocent as that"[1511]. "If everyone must suffer in order with their sufferings to purchase eternal harmony", then, Ivan asks his brother, "what do young children have to do with it […]? Why have they also ended up as raw material, to be the manure for someone else's future harmony?"[1512] If it is argued that the suffering of children is the price paid for the knowledge of good and evil, which Adam and Eve have acquired by eating the forbidden fruit, Ivan replies that "the entire universe of knowledge is not worth the tears of" a tortured "little child addressed to 'dear Father God' "[1513].

[1508] *Ibidem*, p. 318.
[1509] *Ibidem*, p. 319.
[1510] *Ibidem*.
[1511] *Ibidem*, p. 311.
[1512] *Ibidem*, p. 319.
[1513] *Ibidem*, p. 316.

As indicated, the direct consequence of Ivan's rebellion against the otherworldly God, triggered by the scandalous and unjustifiable injustice that reigns upon the earth, is his desire, directly proportional in intensity with his rebellion, of realizing justice "not at some place and some time in infinity, but here upon earth, and in such a way that I see it for myself"[1514]. And yet, Ivan is tragically aware of the fact that his desire is futile, and that, in his mutiny, he is condemned to "remain" only "with" his "unavenged suffering and unassuaged indignation"[1515]. For, as long as one remains limited to the coordinates of this world, inevitably, the sufferings of some will represent only "raw material" for the future happiness of others. Without immortality, inevitably, the victims will be deprived forever of their compensation. Moreover, independently of the fact that justice is realized in this world or in the other world, evil has already happened. If no future harmony can change what has already happened, for Ivan, no future harmony can justify the suffering of innocence that has been required for its accomplishment. Torn within, Ivan wants both justice and reconciliation through forgiveness. But, by the nature of things, he can have neither, and Euclidean geometry surely excludes the possibility of having both of them together. "*L'harmonie de la miséricorde et de la justice*", Evdokimoff writes in *Dostoïevski et le Problème du Mal*, "*est un grand mystère de Dieu et ne peut être qu'un objet de foi*"[1516]. Refusing to accept the mystery, Ivan can only conclude that there can be no "harmony […] where there is hell", especially given the fact that "vengeance" and "hell" cannot "put" anything "right again" after "those children have been tortured to death"[1517]. As for forgiveness, Ivan argues that the mother of the child eaten by the dogs "may forgive the torturer her limitless maternal suffering; but as for the sufferings of her dismembered child, those she has no right to forgive, she dare not

[1514] *Ibidem*, p. 318.
[1515] *Ibidem*, p. 320.
[1516] Pavel Evdokimoff, *Dostoïevski et le problème du mal*, p. 253.
[1517] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 320.

forgive his torturer, even if her child himself forgave him! And if that is the case, if they dare not forgive, where is the harmony? Is there in all the world a being that could forgive and have the right to forgive?"[1518]

Tormented by the contradictions of God's world, reflected in his own inner division that leads him to self-destruction, Ivan nevertheless refuses, both for himself and for the universe, a redemption/reconciliation that he longs for with all his being, but that he cannot accept. In this sense, Ivan chooses to remain a tragic "enigma"[1519], in which the desire for eternal harmony and the spirit of mutiny, Karamazovian debauchery fed by nihilism and the socialist ambitions of the Grand Inquisitor, and the love of life and the will for self-destruction, all coexist side by side, tearing apart a soul that, for the sake of "honesty", refuses to be saved. Zosima told him, and he knows it, that if his "enigma" "cannot be resolved in a positive direction, it will never be resolved in a negative one either", "and therein lies all" the "torment" of his "heart"[1520]. Ivan understands

> what shaking must rend the universe when all that is in heaven and under the earth flows together in one laudatory voice and all that liveth and had lived exclaims: 'Just and true art Thou, O Lord, for Thy ways are made plain!' And when the mother embraces the torturer who tore her son to pieces with his dogs, and all three of them proclaim in tears: 'Just are Thou, O Lord', then, of course, the day of knowledge will have dawned and all will be explained. The only trouble is that it's precisely that I cannot accept. And for as long as I am on earth I shall hasten to make arrangements of my own. You see, Alyosha, it may very well be, perhaps, that when I reach the moment in my life at which I see it, or rise up from the dead in order to do so, I myself may exclaim with all the rest, as I watch the mother embracing the torturer of her little child: 'Just and true art Thou, O Lord!', but it is something I do not want to do. While there is still time I shall hasten to guard myself, and so I decline the offer of eternal harmony altogether. It is not worth one single small tear of even one tortured little child that beat its breast with its little fist and prayed in its foul-smelling dog-hole with its unredeemed tears addressed to 'dear Father God'!...I do not want harmony, out of a love for mankind I do not want it…Let me rather remain with my unavenged suffering and unassuaged indignation, *even though I am not right*. And in any case, harmony has been overestimated in value, we really don't have the money to

[1518] *Ibidem*.
[1519] *Ibidem*, p. 300.
[1520] *Ibidem*, pp. 95-96.

pay so much to get in. And so I hasten to return my entry ticket. And if I am at all an honest man, I am obliged to return it as soon as possible. That is what I am doing. It isn't God I don't accept, Alyosha, it's just his ticket that I most respectfully return to him[1521].

7.7. - A three-level dialogue between Joseph de Maistre, Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Ivan Karamazov

In analyzing Dostoyevsky's response to Ivan's challenge, one should first of all stress the fact that Dostoyevsky neither fully agrees, nor fully disagrees with his character, Ivan Karamazov. Dostoyevsky found some of Ivan's conclusions to be totally legitimate, and he uses them in order to reject the modern ideal of progress and of earthly happiness. However, Dostoyevsky rejected his final nihilist conclusions, making instead the choice for Christ. As underlined by Henri de Lubac, Dostoyevsky had openly confronted nihilism and his Christian faith had managed to withstand the test. Dostoyevsky "*a pressenti la crise […] dont Nietzsche va se faire l'annonciateur et l'ouvrier. Il l'a vécue. Il a assisté à la 'mort de Dieu'* ". Like Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky "*aussi dissipe les illusions rassurantes, il déchire cruellement les voiles que l'homme ne cesse de tisser pour ne pas se voir tel qu'il est. Mais Dieu n'est pas pour lui l'un de ces voiles*". Thus, in the opinion of the French Catholic author, confronted with the same existential crisis as Nietzsche, "*nonobstant toutes les complicités qu'ils trouvaient en lui, très délibérément, quoique non sans luttes renouvelées*", Dostoyevsky nevertheless chose to follow a different path then the one chosen by Nietzsche[1522].

Having clarified the general lines of the relation between Dostoyevsky and his autonomous character Ivan Karamazov, it would be interesting to establish a three-level dialogue on the subject of theodicy between Dostoyevsky's character, Dostoyevsky the author and Maistre. A

[1521] *Ibidem*, pp. 319-320.
[1522] Henri de Lubac, *Le drame de l'humanisme athée*, pp. 296-297.

dialogue which, unlike the three-level dialogue between Christian humanism, the Enlightenment and nihilism, put forward in Bruce K. Ward's *Redeeming the Enlightenment*, is a dialogue between Christian humanism, Counter-Enlightenment, and nihilism. The dialogue would reveal the fact that, together with his nihilist character, Dostoyevsky rejects almost completely Maistre's Christian theodicy from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*. But he does so only to replace Maistre's theodicy with what may be defined as a "meta-theodicy". For, as indicated in a letter written to Pobedonotsev, the procurator of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, Dostoyevsky has decided to reject Ivan's position, not directly, through counter-arguments, but " 'indirectly', by means of an 'artistic picture' "[1523].

But before moving to the differences, one should first of all underline that there are some views that are shared by all three participants in the dialogue. First of all, Maistre, Dostoyevsky, and Ivan Karamazov all reject the optimistic view of the universe. For them, taken in itself, nature is neither good nor rational, and as a consequence, it cannot support the Enlightenment's ideal of a reasonable earthly happiness. Instead, nature is prey to division and unsolvable contradictions that cry out for an otherworldly, incomprehensible resolution. Man is not and can never be at home in this world. For, interpreted only through the rational faculty, the universe does not reveal itself as a rational order reflective of the rationality of its creator. Instead, it reveals itself as "a disorderly, accursed and, possibly, devilish chaos"[1524], where "tout est mal, *puisque rien n'est à sa place*"[1525]. The rationality and goodness of the universe, if it exists, can only be perceived by an act of faith that would raise the mind beyond its Euclidean limits. Otherwise said, one can make sense of the world only by gaining access to another world. This,

[1523] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Pis'ma*, vol.4, p.109, quoted in Sergei Hackel, "The Religious Dimension: Vision or Evasion? Zosima's Discourse in The Brothers Karamazov", p. 143.
[1524] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 300.
[1525] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 218.

in turn, presupposes the rehabilitation of the *mystery* that the Enlightenment has dismissed as *superstition*. Thus, both Dostoyevsky and Maistre subscribe to Nietzsche's contention from *Twilight of the Idols* according to which "*with the real world we have also abolished the apparent world*"[1526]. This metaphysical sentence has political implications. For, Maistre argues – and Dostoyevsky fully subscribes to his thesis –, when God withdraws, the political crumbles: into revolutionary violence, tyranny, anarchy[1527]. Moreover, according to the same theologico-political logic, the consequence of the collapse of the Christian concepts of Providence and eschatology is a subsequent condemnation of the modern ideal of progress. It seems that Ivan Karamazov's protest directed against the secularization of Christian providence and eschatology under the form of a modern religion of progress, has been inspired by Belinsky's famous condemnation of Hegelianism from the standpoint of the victims of history, sacrificed for the sake of progress as to a modern Moloch.[1528] "The universal", Belinsky argued,

> is the executioner of human individuality […]. Thank you very kindly, Yegor Fyodorovich [Hegel] […], but if I should succeed in climbing to the highest rung of this ladder of development, even there I would ask you to render me an account of all the victims of real life and history […]. Otherwise I should hurl myself head foremost from the top rung of this ladder. I do not want happiness even as a gift if my conscience is not easy with regard to each of my brethren"[1529].

Although "the executioner" plays a central role in Maistrian thought, Maistre is not foreign to the feelings expressed in Belinsky's protest. In *Considérations sur la France*, a few paragraphs before approaching for the first time the problem of suffering innocence, Maistre attacks Condorcet, "*ce philosophe si cher à la Révolution, qui employa sa vie à préparer le malheur de*

[1526] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, p. 41.
[1527] Joseph de Maistre, *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques*, p. 401.
[1528] Avril Pyman, "Dostoevsky in the prism of the Orthodox Semiosphere", in George Pattison and Diane Oenning Thompson (ed.), *Dostoevsky and the Christian Tradition*, p. 107.
[1529] Belinski, *Pisma* [Letters], ed. Lyatski, St. Petersburg, 1914, II, p. 213 - quoted in Vladimir Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, pp. 267-268.

la génération présente, léguant bénignement la perfection à nos neveux"[1530]. In *Esquisse d'un Tableau des Progrès de l'Esprit Humain*, Condorcet argued that

> *[le] tableau de l'espèce humaine affranchie de toutes ses chaînes, soustraite à l'empire du hasard, comme à celui des ennemis de ses progrès et marchant d'un pas sûr dans la route de la vérité, de la vertu et du bonheur, présente au philosophe un spectacle qui le console des erreurs, des crimes, des injustices dont la terre est encore souillée*[1531].

But, like Ivan Karamazov, Maistre confronts this comforting image with another one which, firmly denying the possibility of a consolation of philosophy, sharply repudiates the illusions of both philosophy and progress. To the "*tableau des progrès de l'esprit humain*", Maistre opposes "*le tableau si fatigant des innocents qui périssent avec les coupables*"[1532] on the path of progress. Men, Herzen wrote, are sacrificed on the altar of progress as to a "Moloch who, as the toilers approach him, instead of rewarding them, draws back; and as a consolation to the exhausted and doomed multitudes, shouting 'morituri te salutant', can only give the […] mocking answer that after their death all will be beautiful on earth"[1533]. Thus, as argued by Pranchère, Maistre confronts the "*projet du 'bonheur raisonnable'*", which is the "*projet constitutif*" of the Enlightenment, with "*l'impossibilité d'abolir le mal et le malheur; impossibilité établie par le seul fait que le mal et le malheur ont* déjà eu lieu *et qu'aucun bonheur futur sur la terre ne pourra abolir les malheurs passés de l'histoire humaine – ce qu'exigerait pourtant le projet d'une véritable abolition du malheur*"[1534]. Had he read Hegel, Pranchère argues, Maistre would have surely rejected his philosophy of history as "*impie et vaine*", for in it, individuals "*se voient sacrifiés sur l'autel de l'histoire sans pouvoir comprendre les raisons et les fins de ce sacrifice*", and being "*privées à tout jamais de toute participation au sens de leur propre sacrifice. Il est*

[1530] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 217.
[1531] Nicolas de Condorcet, *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*, p. 363.
[1532] Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, p. 217.
[1533] Alexander Herzen, quoted in Isaiah Berlin, "Joseph de Maistre and the Origins of Fascism", p. 16 (reference not given).
[1534] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, pp. 354-355.

probable", Pranchère continues, "*que Maistre aurait objecté à Hegel qu'il laissait entier le problème du mal, puisqu'il échouait à donner un sens à la souffrance du juste pour le juste lui-même – et non seulement pour le philosophe*"[1535]. In what concerns Ivan Karamazov, Berdyaev argues that, "in his revolt", Ivan "lets slip a truth that is Dostoyevsky's own. If there be no God, if there be no redeemer and no atonement, if there be no meaning in the process of history, then we ought to repudiate the world and its coming harmony and to regard the idea of progress as a thing detestable"[1536].

Returning now to the differences that separate Maistre and Dostoyevsky, one can argue that, on many points, the Maistrian theodicy is unable to withstand the nihilist critique assumed by Dostoyevsky, and which Dostoyevsky himself regards as legitimate. As it can be seen, Maistre's hardly convincing refutation of atheism is of no use in this case, for Dostoyevsky's hero is, properly speaking, not an atheist. For Ivan Karamazov, the existence or non-existence of God is not the issue because Ivan does not reject God but his creation. Refusing to accept non-Euclidean truths, Ivan also remains immune to Maistre's affirmation that, given the mysterious ways of Providence, the order of the world is just for reasons we cannot comprehend. Ivan does not deny this possible truth. He merely argues that God has created him with a Euclidean mind and set him, or rather thrown him, into a world ruled by the rules of Euclidean geometry. Consequently, Ivan chooses to remain with "the facts", which indicate that "children have been tortured to death"[1537]. He refuses to abandon the world of real suffering for heavenly truths, which he considers to be useless in view of the existing tragedy of the earth. "The absolute possibility of […] a metaphysical world", Nietzsche wrote in *Human, All to Human*,

[1535] *Ibidem*, 402.
[1536] Nicholas Berdyaev, *Dostoyevsky*, p. 156.
[1537] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 318-320.

> can hardly be contested […], but we cannot even begin to do anything with it […]. For we could assert nothing at all about the metaphysical world except its otherness, an otherness inaccessible to and inconceivable for us […]. Even if the existence of such a world were to be proven ever so well, any knowledge of it would certainly still be the most irrelevant of all knowledge: even more irrelevant than knowledge of the chemical composition of water must be to a sailor endangered by storm[1538].

Needless to say, both for Dostoyevsky as well as for his nihilist character, the idea that children suffer for the salvation of their tormentors appears as simply monstrous. And if, as argued by Pranchère, in its scandalous justification of violence, the Maistrian theodicy fulfills the function of abolishing the more terrifying violence of eternal damnation, Ivan Karamazov will argue that the eternal damnation of some or the general salvation of all are equivalent perspectives. The first perspective excludes love and the second perspective excludes justice. But while justice and love exclude each other, yet, both are needed in order for harmony to exist. Moreover, whereas as argued by Ivan Karamazov, hell cannot abolish the evil that has already happened, the salvation of the guilty through the suffering of the innocent not only does not abolish the evil that has occurred, but, moreover, it aggravates it, precisely because it turns the personal victim into the instrument of an impersonal salvation. Owen Bradley has underlined the fact that Maistre's "depersonalized, decontextualized, reified account (of sacrifice) tends to lose altogether the 'who' of the victim" who "is allowed no protest", whose "uniqueness is effaced", and whose "singularity is excluded from Maistre's general considerations"[1539]. It is precisely the "who" of the victim that is invoked in Ivan Karamazov's protest[1540]. Through his iconographic

[1538] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human*, translated by Gary Handwerk, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1995, pp. 20-21.

[1539] Owen Bradley, "Maistre's Theory of Sacrifice", in Richard Lebrun (ed.), *Joseph de Maistre's Life, Thought, and Influence*, pp. 82-83.

[1540] The same argument may be made with regard to the guilty victim of the executioner. Given his understanding of the sacrificial arithmetic in which human existence was integrated, Maistre believed that if less guilty blood would have been shed by the human justice, than automatically, more innocent blood had to be shed by the divine justice. The divine justice had to compensate for the insufficiency of the human justice, because all sins required expiation in this life or in the hereafter. Ignoring "the who" of innocent and guilty victims alike, as he was only concerned with the reestablishment of a necessary metaphysical harmony, Maistre therefore dismissed the

art, Dostoyevsky aimed to reject modern disbelief "artistically", representing the transfigured human person who bears a living witness of the otherworldly transfiguration of the world. In this sense, Dostoyevsky's choice to reject Ivan's nihilism through an image of monastic holiness has profound Orthodox theological roots. However, precisely because it can be used as the "medium" of communication between the earthly and the divine, the image of the human person, where the two dimensions meet, can also become the foundation for Ivan's protest, rendered much more intense precisely because of this concrete and visual expression of evil. In an article occasioned by the 2004 earthquake and tsunami that struck various south-Asian countries, the Orthodox theologian David Bentley Hart, addressing the problem of theodicy, has argued that Voltaire's *Poème sur le Désastre de Lisbonne* "is a very feeble thing compared to the case for 'rebellion' against 'the will of God' in human suffering placed in the mouth of Ivan Karamazov by […] Dostoevsky. The evils Ivan recounts to his brother Alexey are acts not of impersonal nature but of" real "men", committed against real innocent children, something that grants "Dostoevsky's treatment of innocent suffering […] a profundity of which Voltaire was never even remotely capable". "Inveigh[ing] against a variant of the 'deist' God, one who has simply ordered the world exactly as it now is, and who balances out all its eventualities in a precise

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abolition of the death penalty as "*fausse humanité*" (Joseph de Maistre, Letters to the Chevalier de Rossi, August 22, 1807, and December 19, 1810, in *Oeuvres complètes*, Lyon, Vitte et Perrussem, 1884-1893 - quoted in Richard Lebrun, *Throne and Altar: The Political and Religious Thought of Joseph de Maistre*, note 62, p. 129). Dostoyevsky's rejection of the death penalty is based not only on his vision of guilt as a collective reality that should be dealt with fraternally. If, as it has been seen, unlike Maistre, Dostoyevsky regards sacrificial violence as no less meaningless than punitive violence, Dostoyevsky's most impressive argument against the death penalty refers to the inhuman experience of the one who is waiting to be executed – an experience through which Dostoyevsky himself has passed. Through the voice of Prince Myshkin, which recalls an execution at which he assisted while he was in France, Dostoyevsky argues that "to kill for murder is an immeasurably greater evil than the actual crime itself. Judicial murder", Myshkin continues, "is immeasurably more horrible than one committed by a robber". For, "someone killed by a robber […] certainly keeps hoping for rescue right up to the last second". Yet, "all this final hope which makes dying ten times easier is taken away by […] the fact that", when sentenced to death, "you know for certain that in an hour's time, then in ten minutes, the now, at this moment […] you will cease to be a man, and that this is certain to happen; the main thing is that it's *certain*"; and "there's no greater torture in the world than that". "Who can say", Myshkin asks rhetorically, "that human nature can bear a thing like that without going mad?" No", Myshkin concludes, "a man should not be treated so!" (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 23).

equilibrium between felicity and morality […], Voltaire's poem" does not represent "a challenge to Christian faith". According to Hart, "Voltaire sees only the terrible truth that the actual history of suffering and death is not morally intelligible". Instead, "Dostoevsky sees — and this bespeaks both his moral genius and his Christian view of reality — that it would be far more terrible if it were"[1541]. While Voltaire only reveals his incapacity to make sense of his own rational system designed to replace the "superstitious" Christian cosmology, Ivan Karamazov turns Christianity against itself. For Dostoyevsky, evil is irreducible precisely for the fact that, as image of God, as person, the victim is irreducible. If one starts from this premise, then, to integrate the victim with "formulaic neutrality"[1542], as Maistre does, in a universal scheme of redemption based upon an expiation mechanism, can only make things worse. For Hart, it is better for man to remain in a "morally unintelligible universe" than to render the universe "morally intelligible at the cost of a God rendered morally loathsome"[1543]. Ultimately, for Dostoevsky, evil does not represent a breach in the general order of the universe, and it may be argued that Maistre's reified view of the expiatory mechanism that reestablishes the cosmic order remains tributary to the mechanistic cosmology of the Enlightenment. Instead, evil is less theoretical and much more immediate: it is the disfigurement of the image of God in man, both in the victim, and, in a more profound sense, in the one who is responsible for the suffering of the victim. The medium of communication between the earthly and the divine succumbs to a fatal ambiguity, in as much as man, created as the image of God, can become for the very same reason the subject of a reversed iconography that is demonic. Ivan tells Alyosha that "if the Devil doesn't exist and, consequently, man has created him, he has created him in his own image and

[1541] David Bentley Hart, "Tsunamy and Theodicy", in *First Things*, No. 151, March, 2005, pp. 7-8.
[1542] Owen Bradley, "Maistre's Theory of Sacrifice", p. 83.
[1543] David Bentley Hart, "Tsunamy and Theodicy", p. 8

likeness". "Just in the same way he created God, in that case"[1544], Alyosha responds, both sentences being equally legitimate taking into account the human condition as it is revealed on earth. Thus, to paraphrase Pranchère, it is the image of God in man that constitutes the "*arrière-plan métaphysique*" that explains "*l'horreur du mal*"[1545], and makes of Ivan Karamazov's existential protest a paradoxical confession of the most immediate and less speculative Christian truth: God revealed, as Levinas emphasizes it, through the human face.

Conceived largely as a refutation of the protests of an inconsistent deist, the Maistrian theodicy seems hardly convincing in the face of the nihilist assault. At this point, the rebellious resilience of Dostoyevsky's nihilist hero who is determined to prove that he is not "a feeble mutineer", may determine the Christian apologist to make a final move that Maistre may not manage to finally avoid – at least not completely. It is no wonder that, at the level of metaphysical speculation, this move is analogous with the move made in the theory of sovereignty, when, as stressed by Carl Schmitt, "the moment of the decision" is "heightened to such an extent that the notion of legitimacy", its "starting point", is "finally dissolved"[1546]. For according to Carl Schmitt, the modern conception of sovereignty, which is shared by Rousseau and Maistre, represents a secularized theological concept whose origin is traced back to the God of theological voluntarism[1547]; the God that is associated by Blumenberg with Christianity's

[1544] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 312.
[1545] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, p. 396.
[1546] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 65.
[1547] "All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state", Schmitt argues, "are secularized theological concepts […]; the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver" (*Ibidem*, p. 36). According to John Milbank, the Hobbesian theory of sovereignty and the Hobbesian anthropology, which remain the fundamental coordinates of political modernity, are both political reflections of a theology for which omnipotence represents the divine essence. Given these theological presuppositions, man "come[s] closest to the *imago dei*" when he exercises his absolute and unrestricted right of property, and, especially, when he exercises absolute sovereignty (John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, pp. 15-16). Ultimately, the modern individual who legislates for himself, and whose most consistent development is the man-god, represents nothing else than a secularized version of the God of theological voluntarism. As counterfeit images of Christ, as Anti-Christs, Kirilov and Stavrogin are imitators of a God conceived as pure omnipotence.

incapacity to neutralize the Gnostic challenge, as well as with the origins of the modern project of secular autonomy that has been triggered by this theological crisis. In this sense, the hypothesis, launched by Maistre at a certain point in *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg,* of a tyrant God who "*se plaît au malheur de ses créatures*"[1548], may secure the force of sovereignty for God. But this would inevitably transfer legitimacy to the devil. In other words, it will inevitably legitimize Ivan's return of the ticket as a gesture that confirms that the rebellious creature loves creation more than its creator. This is precisely what Ivan wants to demonstrate. Rather than solving a crisis of authority by the sheer force of sovereignty, the latter, both at a political and at a metaphysical level, only confirms and aggravates the former. Of course, this is not what Maistre wants anyway, and neither is this a danger of which he would not be aware. But it is legitimate to ask whether the premises of the Maistrian system of thought do not inevitably push the latter towards an inner crisis, the Maistrian hypothesis from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* being in this case only a symptom of the crisis.

Continuing Pranchère's observations concerning the relation between the decisionistic tendencies of Maistre's theory of sovereignty and the theodicy of a tyrant God from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg,* we may argue that in both cases, the abuse of power is in fact a sign of weakness. Indeed, it can indicate the fact that, from the theory of sovereignty to theodicy, Maistre's opposition to the nihilism of modern philosophy may reveal his religion as nothing else than a form of nihilistic counter-nihilism: "*l'autorité […] n'a pas d'autre contenu que la négation du nihilisme […]; l'autorité est le choix aveugle qui n'a d'autre sens que d'éviter le nihilisme et qui par là même le confirme et le maintient*"[1549]. For this reason, it is perhaps no coincidence that Ivan Karamazov's nihilism and the nihilism that haunts the religious thought of

[1548] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg,* p. 700.
[1549] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières,* p. 434.

Maistre are meeting precisely at the point where the strongest possible affirmation of the authority of God meets and legitimizes the strongest possible contestation of the latter, while both metaphysical positions, equally nihilist, converge towards a common political solution that is represented by the system of "The Grand Inquisitor". At this point, the crucial difference between Maistre's confrontation of nihilism and Dostoyevsky's confrontation of nihilism manifests itself once again. In the face of the nihilist "mutiny", Maistre first of all makes use of a series of syllogisms, and as a last resort, to paraphrase Carl Schmitt, Maistre heightens the authority of God to the point where the latter looses all its legitimacy. Moreover, Maistre justifies an authoritarian order meant to forcefully silence the protests of individual reason. Instead, the Christ from "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" remains silent and responds only with a kiss to Ivan Karamazov's challenge[1550]. The nihilism of reason cannot be rejected, dialectically, by reason, while the force of authority, or rather the authority of force, confirms and legitimizes the nihilist rebellion. Dostoyevsky thus understood that the only true authority is the authority of love, and that hell is not the space over which rules Maistre's executioner God. Instead, as argued by Elder Zossima, it is "the suffering of no longer being able to love"; an interior torment, not "an outward one"[1551], corresponding to an interior authority which is love[1552]. The differences between the Maistrian and the Dostoyevskyan approaches of the

[1550] According to Malcolm Jones, "behind Jesus's silence in 'The Grand Inquisitor' lies the Orthodox tradition of apophatic theology with its stress on paradox and silence and the ultimate unknowability of God" (Malcolm Jones, *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of the Religious Experience*, p. 53; for more details concerning Orthodox apophatism see Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, Ch. 2, pp. 23-43).

[1551] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 417-418.

[1552] The Orthodox theologian Dumitru Stăniloae argues that "paradoxically, those who think that God institutes hell through an act of exterior justice (Thomas Aquinas and Dante)", as well as those who, together with Origen, argue that all will be saved through a universal process of regeneration, "are showing the same incapacity to understand bliss as communion of the created being with God; and, through this, those that deny the judgment of God affirm, like those who recognize it as an act of exterior justice, the same universal hell. For a happiness which is given as an exterior state [...], and not as communion, is also a kind of hell of eternal relativity". Stăniloae opposes to these two views, which are dialectically united by a common premise, the understanding of hell present in the writings of Saint Maximus the Confessor and Saint John of Damascus, and concludes that "Christianity, and especially Orthodox Christianity, explains heaven as well as hell [...] from the perspective of communion. For, in as

problem of theodicy seem therefore to reflect the differences between the Maistrian and the slavophile ecclesiology.

Love then is not a counter-argument. The antithesis is inevitably caught in the dialectic of the thesis and therefore, in its attempt to refute it, it always replicates it. Instead, love is a counter-experience that Dostoyevsky will oppose to the experience of Ivan Karamazov. For, to a certain extent like Maistre, but following the tradition of Orthodox epistemology, Dostoyevsky will argue that it is the experience of the heart that determines a certain understanding of the world, and not vice-versa[1553]. Life, Alyosha will argue, is prior to logic, and only by loving life "before logic" could one "understand" its divine meaning[1554]. Oppositely, if one gives priority over life to the understanding of life, as Ivan Karamazov does, then one is cut off from the source of life and, given his inner torment, he inevitably arrives at the conclusion that life is meaningless. This experiential refutation of the nihilist conclusions of autonomous reason has determined André Gide to argue that the ultimate substance of Dostoyevskyan thought consists in a "*dépréciation évangélique de l'intelligence*"[1555]. However from the point of view of the Slavophile epistemology, which continues the Greek patristic epistemology, we are not dealing with a renunciation of intelligence, but with the access to a superior type of intelligence. Thus, it is not the conclusions of reason that represent the point of contention that separates philosophy from

much as the attitude towards communion is a matter of freedom, also the issue of heaven and hell represents a problem of freedom and, as a consequence, it is beyond the possibility of rationalization" (Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. 3, pp. 268-270). The Maistrian theodicy with its Origenist tendencies may be interpreted as the violent means employed in order to avoid eternal punishment. But, just as he conceives the eternal punishment as an exterior act of justice, Maistre conceives the universal process of salvation as an exterior process in which the identity of the victim is being effaced, as the latter becomes merely a brick in the architecture of a future objectified happiness that triggers Ivan Karamazov's protests. There is therefore a direct connection between the depersonalization of the sacrificed victim and the absence of an understanding of heaven and hell as essentially interpersonal realities.

[1553] Bruce K. Ward, *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the Wes*t, pp. 137-139, 191-193.

[1554] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 301-302.

[1555] André Gide, *Dostoïevski* (*Œuvres complètes*, t. XI), pp. 257-258, 287, 289-290, quoted in Henri de Lubac, *Le drame de l'humanisme athée*, pp. 373-374.

revelation, but the definition of reason itself. This is the perspective from which the religious thought of Dostoyevsky and its critique of "Euclidean reason" should be understood.

If, in the face of the nihilism of reason that rejects God's offer of eternal harmony, the experience of divine love remains Dostoyevsky's one and only argument, it is important to stress the fact that in *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, aside from scholastic syllogisms, otherworldly threats from hypothetical tyrant gods and the mystery of redemption through the shedding of innocent blood, the experience of divine love also represents one of the mysteries of which Maistre makes use in his polemic against the philosophical contestation of God's justice. The multiplicity of disparate and even contradictory arguments, put forward by Maistre in *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, confirms Sarrazin's thesis that, as an author, Maistre remains "*écartelé*"[1556]. As it has already been argued, the experience of love for Maistre does not seem to lead to a mystical knowledge, which supernaturally overcomes the natural tension between reason and revelation, but rather gives one the capacity to accept, in humility, the divine truths which are taught by the ecclesial authority that mediates the relation between the natural and the supernatural. Cioran has argued that Maistre cannot be considered a true mystic. "*Indifférent à la rencontre de la solitude humaine avec la solitude divine*", Maistre "*[a] opté pour un mystère abstrait, annexe de la théologie ou de la dialectique, concept bien plus que expérience*"[1557]. Unable to enter eternity through the mysticism that suppresses temporality, but only from the posture of the prophetic visionary who anticipates an extraordinary event that will transfigure history, Maistre interrogates the mystery, historicizes it, and uses it as a means of explanation, instead of living the mystery "*comme on vit dans un réalité*"[1558]. It is precisely this "concrete mystery", in which "we live as in a reality", with which Dostoyevsky confronts, in the chapter

[1556] Bernard Sarrazin, "Le Comte et le Sénateur ou la double religion de Joseph de Maistre", p. 25.
[1557] Emil Cioran, "Joseph de Maistre. Essai sur la pensée réactionnaire", p. 40.
[1558] *Ibidem*, pp. 39, 44-45.

dedicated to "The Discourses of the Elder Zosima", the anti-theodicy of Ivan Karamazov and its nihilist theologico-political conclusion. The debate is moved on another level, and thus, instead of confronting an *argument* with a *counterargument*, Dostoyevsky confronts *an experience* with *another one*. And, despite the mentioned general differences that separate Maistre and Dostoyevsky, one can nevertheless indicate that the example of the girl suffering from cancer, from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, and the story told by Elder Zosima about his brother Markel, from *The Brothers Karamazov*, speak essentially about one and the same experience. More exactly, the example from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* surpasses the level of an "abstract mystery" that constitutes an "annex of theology", and represents rather a point of intersection between Maistrian thought and Dostoyevskyan thought.

The mystery of divine love, which, as Maistre argues, is the privilege of the just who suffers willingly, is experienced, in both cases mentioned in the paragraph above, in the midst of suffering, and in the proximity of death. Markel, Zosima's brother, died at the age of seventeen, apparently of tuberculosis. Six months prior to his death, Zosima recalls, Markel had begun to visit a well known philosophy professor who had been exiled from Moscow, to the family's small province town, for freethinking. Under his influence – malefic, Maistre would add – and to the desperation of his family, the dying Markel became an atheist and gave "God's temple a good rating" when his mother asked him gently to fast and receive communion. Up to this point, the case seems similar to that of Ippolit from *The Idiot*. However, unlike Ippolit, who dies prey to resentment and existential despair, Markel will become the subject of a "complete spiritual alteration". Markel decides to fast and receive communion, at first only to "calm" his mother's "fears", but soon after he becomes convinced that "life is paradise": "we are all in paradise", he tells his mother, "but we don't want to realize it". Unlike in the case of Maistre, which, as argued

by Cioran, can only anticipate prophetically the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth through a future divine (Counter-) Revolution, for Dostoyevsky, the Kingdom of God is already here, within the hearts of men (Luke 17: 21), and its "establishment in all the world tomorrow" requires only that people would come to realize that "life is" indeed "paradise". In turn, this realization comes through *sobornost*, when man suddenly feels solidarity with everyone and, moreover, even with everything that lives; both servants whom he wills to serve, and birds from whom he asks forgiveness. This integration into the eternal harmony begins here and now for the one who, loving life ecstatically and in a spirit of complete self-offering, arrives at the conviction, which is felt prior to the capacity of explaining it, that everyone "is guilty before the other for everything", and he himself "more than any"[1559]. "In the degree to which" one "succeeds […] to love [his] fellow human beings actively and untiringly", says Zosima, one "also" becomes "convinced of God's existence and of [his] soul's immortality. And", when one "[attains] complete self-renunciation in [his] love for [his] fellow creatures, then [he] will unfailingly come to believe, and no form of doubt will ever be able to visit [his] soul"[1560]. But this experience cannot become accessible as long as one remains within the coordinates of Euclidean thinking. While Christ's silence before the Grand Inquisitor speaks of itself, Dostoyevsky will not reject the Euclidean arguments of Ivan Karamazov, which he considers to be perfectly consistent and legitimate within their own system of reference. Instead, Dostoyevsky will reject Euclidean thinking itself, and will associate it, as Maistre also does (although in order to demonstrate a different truth), with a certain disposition of the heart. He will reject it as something that "*n'est pas santé mais maladie*"[1561], as something that is contrary to the life that Ivan himself claims to love more than anything else. Sketching the coordinates of another

[1559] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 372-375.
[1560] *Ibidem*, pp. 77-78.
[1561] Henri de Lubac, *Le drame de l'humanisme athée*, p. 364.

epistemology, based on the living experience of the mystery that Ivan rejects, Zosima argues that while "much upon earth is concealed from us […], in recompense for that we have been gifted with a mysterious, sacred sense of our living connection with another world, with a celestial and higher world", where "the root of our thoughts and emotions" are to be found. "That is why", Zosima concludes,

> the philosophers say that it is impossible to grasp the essence of things upon earth. God took seeds from other worlds and sowed them upon this earth and cultivated his garden, and all that could come up, did so, but that which has grown lives and has its life only in the sense of its mysterious contiguity with other worlds, and if that sense weakens or is destroyed in you, then what has grown dies in you. Then you become indifferent to life and even conceive a hatred of it[1562].

When giving the example of the dying girl who praises God in the middle of her sufferings, Maistre has sarcastically emphasized the fact that "*c'est le crime qui se plaint des souffrances de la vertu*", interrupting thus "*par d'insolents blasphèmes les prières, les offrandes et les sacrifices volontaires de l'amour*"[1563]. Maistre's sarcasm was directed against the thinkers of the Enlightenment who had accused God of injustice, thinkers who, on the basis of the principle that "*celui qui argumente est plus coupable que celui qui assassine*"[1564], were otherwise held responsible by Maistre for the crimes of the French Revolution. This type of argumentation appears also in *The Brothers Karamazov*, where Smerdyakov claims that the moral author of the parricide that he committed is his brother Ivan Karamazov, whose nihilist principles he claims to have followed. "The principal murderer in it all", Smerdyakov tells his brother Ivan, "is exclusively you, sir, and I am only the less principal one" for "you taught me that 'all things are lawful' "[1565]. Indeed, the relation between Ivan and Smerdyakov seems to faithfully replicate the relation between Jean-Jacques Rousseau and "*Lebon, le bourreau d'Arras*" who claims to have

[1562] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 414-415.
[1563] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, pp. 548-549.
[1564] Joseph de Maistre, *De l'Église gallicane*, p. 107.
[1565] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 801, 807.

followed the principles of the former during the Terror[1566]. In this sense, Berdyaev stresses the fact that "the mutual relationship between Smerdyakov and Ivan is an excellent type of the relationship between 'the people' and the intelligentsia at a time of revolution"[1567]. Moreover, the parallel views of Maistre and Dostoyevsky concerning the relation between ideologues and assassins who put the former's theories into practice are completed by the fact that, like Maistre, Dostoyevsky also emphasizes the paradox that, whereas the suffering innocent praises God in his sufferings, it is the guilty who complain about the suffering of the innocent. And since all are guilty for each sin (except children) while each sin affects all (including children), the guilty who rebels against God for the suffering of the innocent does not take into account the fact that he too actively contributes, through his sin, to the suffering of all creation. Maistre has argued that there are many ways in which the theologian can respond to the question of the guilty modern philosopher concerning the motivation for which "l'innocence souffre dans ce monde"; *"mais nous pouvons en choisir une plus directe et plus touchante peut-être que toutes les autres* […:] elle souffre pour vous, si vous le voulez"[1568]. The theological premise of Maistre's response is the notion of reversibility, which is absent from Dostoyevsky's religious thought. Instead, Dostoyevsky's notion of universal responsibility for sin leads to another implicit response: the innocent suffers, among others, *because of you*, because we are all guilty for all.

It is relevant in this sense to compare the case of Ivan Karamazov with the case of Ilyusha, the son of the retired Captain Snegiryov. A child from a family living in terrible poverty, Ilyusha suffers not only because of poverty, but first and foremost due to the public humiliation of his powerless father, at which he has assisted, and that afterwards leads to constant humiliations that Ilyusha has to endure from his class-mates. These humiliations lead to resentment and to

[1566] Joseph de Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, p. 178.
[1567] Nicholas Berdyaev, *Dostoievsky*, p. 153.
[1568] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 753.

Ilyusha's desire for revenge. Ilyusha's attempts to take revenge on his classmates lead to a further escalation of the existing tensions. However, under the influence of Alyosha, an "[imitator] of Christ in a world given over to violence"[1569], the vicious cycle is broken through forgiveness. And thus, the group of children, formerly united by the persecution of their victim, becomes a new community, a community whose members are now united by their common solidarity with the victim and with its memory. As already indicated in section 6.7., the group of children reunited by their solidarity with Ilyusha represents an image of the Church. And it seems that their story is a metaphoric representation of the process through which the old society, based on relations of power, is baptised into a new society based on relations of love[1570].

[1569] Bruce K. Ward, *Redeeming the Enlightenment*, p. 137.

[1570] Ward relates the cycle of persecution and resentment, revealed by the scene of Ilyusha's persecution, and Alyosha's intervention in defense of the persecuted victim, to René Girard's analysis of the relation between religion and Christianity (*Ibidem*, pp. 130-138). According to Girard, religion is a sacrificial order, centered on the concept of scapegoat, which performs an essential social function: that of maintaining the cohesion of society by redirecting the inner tensions within society, which give birth to cycles of violence that otherwise threaten to destroy it, towards a designated scapegoat whose sacrifice by society as a whole restores the latter's unity. In this sense, Girard connects the religious sacrificial practice with the persecution mechanisms to which all societies resort in times of crisis. As resumed by Ward, for Girard, "the roots of the crisis of order to which human societies are prone lie in the conflict generated by mimetic desire, desire 'learned' or 'borrowed' by the imitation of models (virtually all desire, according to Girard, which is not attributable to basic biological instinct). When the imitated models become obstacles to the acquisition of the objects of desire, a situation made inevitable both by the mutually reinforcing dynamics of the model-imitator relationship and by the fact of scarcity, rivalrous conflict ensues. When the rivalry 'spreads' beyond a few to engulf an entire group in a competitive tension, the situation of social 'scandal' becomes a potentially deadly war of 'all against all' […]. [T]he potential for violence in the crisis of 'all against all' can be averted, or better, 'vented', by transforming the situation into 'all against one' " (*Ibidem*, pp. 133-134). Violence is then redirected towards a demonized scapegoat, and, in the aftermath of the murder, the latter is divinized, as society is deluded into believing that he truly was both the cause of the social crisis, as well as of its miraculous ending. For Girard, such an event is at the origin of the sacrificial practice of all societies, which, by periodically renewing the unity of society, protects the latter from the consequences of its own ever recurring inner tensions. According to the same author, rooted in the Old Testament tradition, the Gospel narrative of Christ's passion is the only religious text that exposes the true nature of the sacrificial mechanism ("it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish" [John 11, 50]) and of the scapegoat ("they hated me without cause" [John 15, 25]), insisting on the latter's innocence. If all religions are centered on the sacrifice of the innocent victim, Christianity is the only religion that, siding with the victim, denounces sacrificial thinking and the persecution mechanism. Thus -and here it is interesting to relate Girard with Joseph de Maistre-, for the former, rather than confirming the truth contained within the universal practice of sacrifice, on the contrary, Christianity exposes and denounces "*la genèse imbécile des idoles sanglantes, de tous les faux dieux des religions, des politiques et des idéologies*", defending at the same time "*toutes les victimes persécutées par tous les bourreaux*" (René Girard, *Le Bouc Émissaire*, Éditions Grasset & Fasquelle, Paris, 1982, p. 295). As stressed by Ward, Girard concludes that "Christianity betrays itself utterly" not only when it becomes a persecuting religion, "but also" through "the sort of theological doctrines of atonement that, ironically, endorse Caiapha's statement" (Bruce K. Ward, *Redeeming the Enlightenment*, p. 135). As we shall see, while Girard's reading of Christ's Passion is fundamentally opposed to that

Reciprocal forgiveness, fed by the awareness of a common responsibility for sin, is the necessary prerequisite of baptism. We therefore have here an image of the spiritual Revolution that Dostoyevsky was expecting for society as a whole, a humble miniature, at the end of *The Brothers Karamazov*, of the glorious process of churchification that was announced in the first pages of the novel.

Forgiveness is natural and easy among children, and forgiveness, as shown by the story of Ilyusha and his friends, brings with it the reconciliation that Ivan longs for but cannot accept. Ivan refuses to become like a child and thus gain access to the Kingdom of Heaven. He chooses to remain an adult with a "Euclidean mind", an adult whose "suffering" is "unavenged" and whose "indignation" is "unassuaged"[1571]. He defends his choice with the argument that, if he were to respond to the Gospel's call of being childlike (which, of course, is a very different thing than being childish), he would then betray the "unredeemed tears" of children. Giving priority to abstract thought over concrete experience, Ivan is unable to forgive or accept forgiveness, because the starting point of his reflection on evil is not the awareness of his co-responsibility for it, and therefore, his own need to be forgiven. This aspect of his personality automatically excludes him from *sobornost*, thus throwing him into a nihilist chain of syllogisms, and, moreover, determines him to assume the position of prosecutor of God. But all of this will eventually turn against himself bringing about his final collapse. The same intellectual honesty that has determined him to reject God and his offer of forgiveness would inevitably determine Ivan to furiously reject himself, as he would become aware that, like his father and brother, he too is one of those reptiles that, as he argues, only deserve to succumb to the predatory logic of

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of Maistre, Dostoyevsky's view of it (and in general, the Orthodox view) appears to be much more compatible with it.

[1571] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 320.

their species[1572]. Thus, while fed by the belief in the victory of good over evil, Alyosha's compassion actively brings reconciliation in the world, fed by disbelief in the possibility of such a victory, Ivan's compassion is forced to cohabitate with the cynical acknowledgment of the fact that the power of evil is both undefeatable and, ultimately, not subject to any coherent critique since there is no "other world" from the perspective from which it could be articulated. This cynicism, required ultimately by the commitment to intellectual honesty as understood by Ivan, constitutes the profession of faith of the Grand Inquisitor and is reflected by several of Ivan's deeds and declarations, among which, the one mentioned above that concerns the relation between his father and his brother. But this cynicism manifests itself as an active cultivation of the evil due to which Ivan rejects God in the first place. Ivan therefore condemns himself. Overcome by the vicious circle of humiliation and prideful ruthlessness towards his own self, masterfully analyzed throughout the Dostoyevskyan work, Ivan will essentially collapse due to his inability to solve his guilt complex. At Dmitry's trial, he is painfully aware of the fact that it is now time for Ivan the prosecutor to judge with the same severity with which he has judged God, Ivan the murderer. People "give themselves airs, before one another", he cries at the trial, but they are all "liars", "[reptiles]" consuming one another, for "they all desire the death of their fathers"[1573]. As well understood by Alyosha, his mad cries are ultimately a reflection of the fact that he is unable to forgive himself[1574].

Making now a comparison between Ivan and Ilyusha, one remarks that Ilyusha has the capacity to forgive, and, through this, to move from the natural condition of "division" to the supernatural condition of reconciliation in *sobornost*, because, although he is merely a victim of adult perversity, he nevertheless feels guilty. In this sense, it is instructive to analyze an episode

[1572] *Ibidem*, p. 187.
[1573] *Ibidem*, p. 875.
[1574] *Ibidem*, p. 837.

from *The Brothers Karamazov* that is often overlooked. As recounted by Kolya, sometime before his illness, Ilyusha has somehow come into contact with Smerdyakov, "who had gone and taught the little fool a stupid trick, that is to say a brutal trick, a vile trick – to take a piece of bread, from the soft part of the loaf, stick a pin in it and throw it to some yard dog, the kind of dog that will swallow anything without chewing, and see what happens". The experiment is performed on a "shaggy-coated dog" called Zhuchka who "rushed at the bread, swallowed it and then", as Ilyusha told Kolya, "began to yelp, went round in circles and at last threw itself into flight, fled, yelping all the while, and disappeared". Later, as he is lying sick, Ilyusha makes the following moving confession to his father: "I am sick, papa, because I killed Zhuchka that day, and this is my punishment from God"[1575]. If Ilyusha is the victim in whose name Ivan Karamazov puts God on trial, his repentance is an accusation of Ivan. For Ilyusha is a victim of Smerdyakov, who appears in this scene as a personification of the devil corrupting innocence[1576]. Smerdyakov is the disciple of Ivan, who taught him that everything is permitted: from the killing of dogs to the killing of fathers. Yet, Smerdyakov is only secondarily the product of Ivan's education. Given his sinister birth, he is first of all the product of "Karamazovian baseness", that "power" which, Ivan tells his brother, can endure everything, even the "hell" that Ivan carries within his heart and mind[1577]. But apart from perversity, what characterizes Smerdyakov is a morbid lifeless coolness – that same feeling that overtakes Stavrogin and Svydrigailov, and that, as in the case of Smerdyakov, leads them in the end to suicide. For Vladimir Kantor, this is a suggestion of the fact that the Karamazovian life force, which is the life force disconnected from its otherworldly source, actually ends by drying out the streams of life (Apocalypse 7:17)[1578].

[1575] *Ibidem*, pp. 683-685.
[1576] Vladimir Kantor, "Pavel Smerdyakov and Ivan Karamazov: The Problem of Temptation", p. 216.
[1577] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 342-343.
[1578] Vladimir Kantor, "Pavel Smerdyakov and Ivan Karamazov: The Problem of Temptation", p. 201.

Thus, for Dostoyevsky, Ivan is ultimately rejected by his own practice, while practice also, and more specifically active love, is that which ultimately confirms for him the truth of Christianity. If the practical conclusion of Ivan's protest against the God who tolerates evil is the perpetuation of evil, it is Alyosha who actively resists evil by his active concern for the suffering of children. Moreover, while the novel ends with Alyosha's praise of life in his final discourse uttered by Ilyusha's stone, his brother Ivan, who likewise affirmed earlier in the novel his love of life, nevertheless, collapses in the end into an all-destructive self-hatred, as Zosima argued that it inevitably happens when one severs his connection with the other world. In a deeper sense though, the division between Ivan's thought and his practice is reflective of the fact that, as a person, he is not whole. His Euclidean division of the Godhead is the expression of a divided heart. The devil, spirit of division, who visits Ivan, after Ivan's last visit to Smerdyakov, is in fact the new hypostasis of Smerdyakov[1579], Ivan's "brother". Smerdyakov is thus a part of Ivan, that "most loathsome and stupid"[1580] part of him, as he describes it, and which he hates both externally and internally. And in this sense, the appearances may be misleading. Smerdyakov tells Ivan that he has acted as his disciple when killing Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov[1581]. But the tragedy of Ivan consists in the fact that, only apparently he is "the tempter". In reality, he "is the tempted […], for Smerdyakov is an active force for evil at work on a delicate, corruptible, still undecided soul"[1582].

[1579] Vladimir Kantor, "Pavel Smerdyakov and Ivan Karamazov: The Problem of Temptation", p. 216.
[1580] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 814.
[1581] *Ibidem*, pp. 796-798.
[1582] Vladimir Kantor, "Pavel Smerdyakov and Ivan Karamazov: The Problem of Temptation", p. 223

Epilogue in lieu of Conclusion

Maistre and Dostoyevsky were aware of the fact that, at the most profound level of the modern consciousness, the mysterious and scandalous problem of evil had been turned into a motivation for an anti-Christian insurrection. But the concrete outcome of this insurrection, the two authors believed, could only have been an unprecedented unleashing of evil upon the face of the earth. The Christian religion, which was now repudiated because the Christian God had permitted the existence of evil, represented for the two authors the irreplaceable power appointed to contain the very dissemination of evil. Moreover, in response to Voltaire's claim that Christ's descent on earth has left the latter unchanged and the problem of evil unresolved, both authors insisted on the truly revolutionary transformation of the world, which has been accomplished by Christianity, and announced the final eschatological completion of this transformation (or at least its possibility). The Moderns appeared to be divided in two categories. One is the superficial majority, incapable of comprehending the tragic nature of the above mentioned paradox and its terrifying implications. Unconsciously heading towards the abyss with the belief that it was heading towards the earthly paradise, this majority was accompanied by a minority of nihilists – the second category –that were capable and willing to draw the conclusions. Ready to challenge God's omnipotence by their bold affirmation of the will to power, the representatives of this minority sought to destroy everything, for everything was imperfect and bore the mark of God's injustice towards man.

Before being a political challenge, modernity presented, then, first and foremost a theological challenge, which could not be ignored, and which required that God's omnipotence and His goodness be concomitantly affirmed. If this is the problem that is faced both by Maistre and by

Dostoyevsky, the two different ways in which the authors address this challenge are directly related to the different ways in which Maistre and Dostoyevsky understand the nature and origins of modernity. Given the fact that for Maistre modernity essentially defines itself as a crisis of authority, the Maistrian critique of modernity takes the form of a justification of the contested authority. This justification culminates with a theodicy meant to justify the authority of God from which monarchical and papal authority derives. According to Maistre, like divine punishment, the state's repressive exercise of power, even when it exceeds the legitimate boundaries, is rendered necessary by human wickedness. Observation shows us that "*l'homme est mauvais, horriblement mauvais…;* l'homme entier n'est qu'une maladie". But"*[il] est impossible […] que Dieu l'eût créé mauvais […]. Or*", Maistre continues, "*toute dégradation ne pouvant être qu'une peine, et toute peine supposant un crime, la raison seule se trouve conduite, comme par force, au péché originel*". Man, Maistre concludes, "*ne peut être* méchant *sans être* mauvais, *ni mauvais sans être dégradé, ni dégradé sans être puni, ni puni sans être coupable*"[1583]. Therefore, in this world and in the world to come, punishment is rendered necessary by human wickedness, which punishment must contain. Not God, but man is responsible for the horror of evil. The peak of this horror is the suffering of the innocent. This innocence remains relative, and therefore, given the general participation of mankind in Adam's sin, the suffering of innocence also represents a just and necessary punishment. This suffering is integrated by Maistre in a providential plan whose finality is the redemption of both guilty and innocent. Responding to Voltaire's interrogation concerning the suffering of innocents in a universe reigned by "un maître équitable", Maistre reconciles "*la justice divine et l'injustice de la souffrance des hommes […] en faisant de la violence du monde et des hommes une œuvre de*

[1583] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, pp. 487-489.

la charité de Dieu s'exerçant à travers la réversibilité des mérites ; réponse violente qui ne fait en un sens qu'exprimer sans fard toute la violence de l'idée même d'un sens de l'histoire"[1584]. Assuming the role of advocate of the old order, Maistre had inevitably also assumed the role of advocate of God. But, as we have seen, the fulfillment of this role bears the risk of transforming Maistrian theodicy into a justification of Ivan Karamazov's mutiny. In order to secure God's sovereignty over a world that otherwise would be completely overtaken by the senseless power of evil, Maistre risks transforming God Himself into a tyrant whose justice is completely absorbed by the arbitrary exercise of His will, a God that one could not love but only serve cynically or cowardly. The God defended against his rebellious creature risks being disfigured to the profit of the latter, who would be endowed instead with the image of promethean tragic greatness, and thus, would receive a paradoxical endorsement of its antitheology meant to liberate mankind from the oppressive fiction of religion. This suppressed inner tension of Maistre's theodicy has determined Pranchère to launch the following hypothesis in the closing paragraph of his book, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*:

> *De façon inattendue, il se pourrait que l'œuvre de Maistre nous retienne parce qu'elle continue en dépit d'elle-même la protestation de Job contre Dieu. Dieu déclare à la fin du Livre de Job que seul Job, qui L'a pourtant insulté et accusé d'injustice, a parlé de Lui d'une manière digne – et non les amis de Job, prêcheurs de théodicées. Kant interprète ce point comme une reconnaissance par Dieu de la droiture de Job. D'autres l'ont interprété comme la reconnaissance paradoxale d'une vérité dans la protestation de Job contre Dieu – comme la reconnaissance, à la fois conforme et contraire à la conclusion du livre de Job qui montre le droit despotique de la toute-puissance divine, d'un droit de l'homme contre Dieu.*[1585]

Suppressed, Maistre's "subconscious" protest against the authority of God seems to find its release in the millenaristic expectation that closes the Maistrian work, in general, and the Maistrian theodicy, in particular, "*car le millénarisme suppose que Dieu n'est pas quitte de sa*

[1584] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, pp. 447-448.
[1585] *Ibidem*, p. 449.

dette, qu'Il n'a pas achevé son œuvre mais qu'Il doit encore aux hommes d'éliminer enfin le mal par la création d'une nouvelle terre"[1586].

Apart from the answer contained within the Maistrian theodicy, the only other possible answer that could have been given in response to Voltaire's interrogation was that "*Dieu n'est* pas tout-puissant *mais* limité*, faible, voire inconscient […], une […] réponse [qui] était pour Maistre impensable*"[1587]. If Maistre is rather exposed to the risk of overbidding divine omnipotence at the expense of divine goodness, haunted by the tragic figure of Prince Myshkin, Dostoyevsky's theology is exposed to the opposite threat. The balance between divine power and divine goodness, in the case of the two authors, is reflected by the different ways in which the two authors articulate the relation between God the Father and God the Son. If Emil Cioran has argued that Maistre "*préférait le Père au Fils*" (adding that "*il préférera encore le Pape à l'un et à l'autre*")[1588], Émile Faguet declared himself "*étonné devant ce christianisme où je ne trouve pas le Christ lui-même*". Seeing in Jesus "*une 'victime sanglante', et rien de plus […], de Maistre n'a ni l'amour, ni le culte, n'a pas même l'idée de Jésus*"[1589]. In the opinion of Besançon, in Dostoyevsky's thoroughly Christocentric religious thought, the idea of Christ plays, on the contrary, a rather disproportionate role, to such an extent that Dostoyevsky's religion is not "Christianity" but "Christism". For Besançon, rejecting the Law in the name of Grace, and reason in the name of experience, Dostoyevsky ultimately "[detaches]" Christ "from the Father and […] from truth". Detached from the Father, "the Dostoevskyan Christ", is "also separable from the notion of omnipotence". In the opinion of Besançon, Dostoyevsky's attempt to isolate Christ's absolute goodness from the violence presupposed by the providential governing of a

[1586] *Ibidem*.
[1587] *Ibidem*, p. 448.
[1588] Emil Cioran, "Joseph de Maistre. Essai sur la pensée réactionnaire", p. 40.
[1589] Émile Faguet, *Politiques et moralistes du dix-neuvième siècle*, p. 59.

sinful world inevitably turns Christ into powerless goodness, into a purely otherworldly presence that is incapable of actively transforming the world. Thus, if Maistre is exposed to the risk of theological voluntarism, according to Besançon, Dostoyevsky succumbs to the opposite risk. His Christianity is "tainted with Gnosticism" and therefore "lacks the incarnation"[1590].

However, Besançon's arguments say more about the temptation with which Dostoyevsky had to deal than about a temptation to which Dostoyevsky had actually succumbed. Besançon's interpretation of Dostoyevsky, with which I disagree, is based on the presupposition that, whereas Myshkin is Dostoyevsky's icon of Christ, Shatov is Dostoyevsky's "spokesman"[1591]. But I agree with Gibson that both propositions are false, and that, through Alyosha, to whom Besançon does not make any reference, Dostoyevsky situates himself beyond the opposition between the insufficiently incarnate Myshkin and the "too narrowly incarnate" Shatov. The substance of Dostoyevsky's religious thought from *The Brothers Karamazov* is precisely a Trinitarian theology that overcomes the logic of "either/or" and "the law of the excluded middle", the common premises of both "radical monotheism and Gnostic dualism"[1592]. The battle for the incarnation is central to Dostoyevsky's theological project, and what applies to the relation between the humanity and the divinity of Christ, implicitly applies also to the relation between divine power and divine love, and, ultimately, between God the Father and God the Son. The two attributes of God, and the two persons of the Trinity, remain, beyond rational comprehension, united but distinct. In this sense, it is important to underline that there are three images of fatherhood in *The Brothers Karamazov*. First, there is Fyodor Pavlovich, characterized by his Karamazovian strength, as well as by the perverse and tyrannical use he makes of it. His

[1590] Alain Besançon, *Intellectual Origins of Leninism*, p. 139.
[1591] *Ibidem*.
[1592] David S. Cunningham, "The Brothers Karamazov as Trinitarian Theology", p. 137.

son, Ivan Karamazov, who in the chapter *Mutiny* rebels against " 'dear Father God' "[1593], practically makes an alliance with the Devil/Smerdyakov (himself begotten out of Fyodor Pavlovich's debauchery), an alliance whose goal is the murder of the evil father, which generates demonic forces. In the second case we have the retired Captain Snegiryov, a loving but powerless father. While Ilyusha assists powerless at the humiliation of his father, overtaken by the evil in the world, Snegiryov assists powerless at the suffering and death of his son, "a kind and brave boy" who "had a sense of the honour and of the bitter insult that his father bore, and for which he rose up"[1594]. This binary opposition between the strong and evil father, and the loving but powerless father, is overcome in the third father figure of the novel, Father Zosima, in whom love is combined with a "strength" which "is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). According to the same iconic logic, Zosima's spiritual son, Alyosha, "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh" (John 1:13), appears as the founder of the Church, represented as a community of children, and as Dostoyevsky's final artistic response to the question that concerns the iconic representation of Christ within the world.

As already indicated, the different accents of Maistre's and Dostoyevsky's theology, and the different threats to which the two authors are being exposed, are related to the way in which the two authors interpret the nature and origins of modernity. Unlike Maistre, who interpreted modernity as an institutional crisis of authority, Dostoyevsky considered that the true origin of the modern crisis was a much more profound spiritual crisis. Leo Strauss has located the origins of the modern world in the Machiavellian Revolution, which distinguishes itself by a "*colère antithéologique*" which is at the same time *colère antiutopique*. "*La colère antithéologique*", Daniel Tanguay writes in his intellectual biography of Leo Strauss,

[1593] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 316.
[1594] *Ibidem*, p. 983.

est nourrie chez Machiavel par un antiutopisme qui se reconnaît par le refus intransigeant des royaumes imaginaires tant du christianisme que de la philosophie ancienne. La critique de la religion et de l'utopisme des anciens veut provoquer une prise de conscience : l'homme doit faire face à son dénuement originel, à sa situation d'être abandonné au sein d'une nature hostile dominé par la Fortune. L'homme ne doit plus tourner son regard vers les Cieux dans l'espoir d'y trouver un secours ou une consolation, mais regarder sans broncher l'horreur de sa condition. Cette prise de conscience détruira les illusions de la vie contemplative et forcera l'homme à se mettre au travail et à transformer les conditions réelles de son monde[1595].

In Dostoyevsky's interpretation, the modern revolution whose coordinates are described in the above mentioned quotation, had in fact begun centuries before Machiavelli, within the Catholic Church itself. The West had abandoned the hopes of a heavenly world, and had been committed since then to a "quest for the earthly paradise" (the subtitle of Ward's book *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West*). Based on the Platonic noble lie, and on the subsequent strict hierarchical distinction between those capable and those incapable of contemplating the terrifying truth about the human condition, the system of the Grand Inquisitor was regarded by the Russian author as the highest and most efficient expression of what was essentially the Machiavellian ideal of the Western world: the edification of the Tower of Babel, and, more generally, of the secular order. For Dostoyevsky, the origin of this theocratic Machiavellianism was the Inquisitor's loss of confidence in the power of Christian love as revealed through Christ. The Roman Catholic Church, Dostoyevsky argued, had returned to the Roman ideal when it reached the conclusion that, while efficiently subverting the ancient basis of authority, the love of Christ nevertheless revealed itself as incapable of actively changing the world[1596]. No wonder then that the prelude to "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" is a virulent antitheodicy directed

[1595] Daniel Tanguay, *Leo Strauss: Une biographie intellectuelle*, Éditions Grasset&Fasquelle, Paris, 2003, pp. 307-308.

[1596] Addressing Christ, the Grand Inquisitor practically states Machiavelli's thesis that all "unarmed" prophets came to ruin" (Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, translated by Peter Bondanella, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, p.22). And, since Christ has not been sufficiently realistic, the Grand Inquisitor "corrects His work" and arms himself in the name of Christ.

against the God that had created a world in which innocent children are suffering, and are still suffering two thousand years after the crucifixion. Thus, Ivan Karamazov's antitheodicy may be regarded as a double discourse that is rooted in a single Euclidean premise. Practically speaking, in the same discourse, Ivan Karamazov rejects both God the Father (the omnipotent sovereign) because He is cruel, and God the Son because He is powerless. Ivan's antitheodicy strikes at the heart of Trinitarian theology. Consequently, his antitheodicy, which is a "s*atanodicy*", can imply either a justification of Satan's rebellion against what appears to be an unjust God, or a justification of the Inquisitor's pact with "the ruler of this world" (or rather, it implies both of them at the same time). In the second case, the Grand Inquisitor abandons the Christian utopia. He arrives at the conclusion that he has to lower the Christian standards, adapting himself to the reality of a world that is not actively transformed by God, but which God has abandoned in the devil's hands. Evil then cannot be defeated by good, but evil must be confronted by evil. Thus, atheism, it should be underlined, does not represent a theoretical or a scientific conclusion. It rather represents a moral and/or practical decision to which one is led as a consequence of his inner spiritual problems.

In response to Ivan's challenge, Dostoyevsky had to restore faith not merely *in the power of God*, but in *the power of God's love*. Dostoyevsky had to show this love regenerating a world that had been wounded by evil. Thus, he could not rehabilitate God's omnipotence at the expense of his goodness[1597], not even through a providential identification of good and evil. Unlike

[1597] Dumitru Stăniloae emphasizes the fact that, "in the Eastern tradition, God is most of the time" referred to, not as "omnipotent", but as, "the One who holds all things". Thus, as argued by Stăniloae, "God manifests from the infinite reserve of his omnipotence […] only as much as it is necessary for the conservation, redemption and leading of his creation to the fullness of its communion with Him". The above mentioned term, which is "preferred in the Eastern Church", is meant "to underline that God's omnipotence, in its relation to the world, has exited the state of indeterminacy and has, voluntarily and out of love, defined itself in relation to the world as power, at the level which is bearable by the world and for its use, and never against it". In the West, Stăniloae continues, "the term omnipotent was connected with the idea that God may act also against the world, if not for its destruction, at least for its continuous limitation and domination, to continually sustain within it the consciousness of its own nothingness. If in

Maistre, he could not separate the purpose (redemption) from the means (the sacrificial order). Instrumentalized in the service of the good, evil, according to Dostoyevsky, is definitively confirmed and therefore becomes unsurpassable. An eternal happiness "bought by the unwarranted blood of" even a single "small, tortured child", is unacceptable and inconceivable[1598]. It is necessarily an impersonal and therefore unreal happiness, bought at the price of a personal and therefore real suffering. In Maistre's case, while the motivation behind God's request for innocent blood in exchange for forgiveness remains a terrifying and completely inaccessible mystery, the suffering of the innocent is however revealed and justified as the means through which the redemption of the guilty takes place. Otherwise said, as far as Maistre's theodicy is concerned, we ultimately do not know why God asks for innocent blood; but we do know that He asks for innocent blood, and that he offers redemption in exchange. Taking into account the fact that Dostoyevsky concomitantly rejects the vision of an omnipotent God which thirsts for innocent blood as well as the idea of a powerless God that cannot put an end to the shedding of innocent blood, it follows that for him, unlike for Maistre, the suffering of the innocent remains totally incomprehensible. Thus, while an impenetrable mystery is preserved in the case of both authors, in each of the two cases the mystery is situated at a different level, and thus, while in the first case it remains partially inaccessible, in the second case it remains fully inaccessible. However, as indicated by Pranchère (and, in essence, his judgment with regard to Maistre applies also to Dostoyevsky, independently of the different ways in which the two authors approach the problem of theodicy),

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the Eastern doctrine God's omnipotence is the source of the creature's deification, God's power being communicated to the creature, in the West, omnipotence has been conceived more as a means of defense for God against His creature. On the basis of this premise, Catholicism has justified the domination of states and of the human society by the Church, while Protestantism has affirmed the exclusive efficiency of God against any human efficiency, always regarded as sin. Salvation itself is seen as a satisfaction brought to God's honour for its vexation by men, or as the appeasement of God's anger" (Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, Vol. 1, pp. 230-231).

[1598] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 321.

> *si la théodicée maistrienne n'explique pas comment la toute-puissance de la bonté divine est compatible avec la puissance du mal, c'est qu'une telle explication ne doit pas entrer dans le projet d'une théodicée. Le projet d'une défense de Dieu n'a de sens et de nécessité que parce que le mal est un phénomène irréductible et que le plan divin doit rester transcendant à la raison humaine ; une théodicée qui produirait une justification intégrale du mal serait à la fois négation de la transcendance divine – autrement dit athéisme – et négation du problème qui fait sa raison d'être*[1599].

Maistre was not unaware of the profoundly scandalous implications of his theodicy. But, "*pour en diminuer le scandale, [il] accentuait à sa manière la culpabilité collective de l'humanité, due à ce qu'elle participe en chacun de ses membres au péché originel*". "*La théodicée du comte savoyard*", Théodore Paléologue writes, "*sa justification acharnée du 'gouvernement temporel de la Providence' ont leur support anthropologique dans un pessimisme radical, qui fait apparaître toute souffrance comme une juste punition*". From this point of view, for Maistre, the thesis concerning "*l'innocence des enfants*" is dismissed as "*un mensonge philosophique*"[1600]. "*Le problème du rapport de la nature humaine avec la théodicée, d'une part, avec l'autorité, de l'autre*", Paléologue argues, represents the key element of Ivan Karamazov's discourse and of Dostoyevsky's refutation of the latter. "*En effet*", the Romanian author continues,

> *Joseph de Maistre établit une unité pour ainsi dire monolithique entre la justification de la Providence, le principe de l'autorité et le pessimisme anthropologique, tandis que dans son roman Dostoïevski adopte une autre géométrie de ces connexions [...]. La vie et les enseignements du staretz Zossime recomposent, le plus souvent de manière non-discursive, les* membra disjecta *du triplet théologico-politique décomposé par les acrobaties mentales d'Ivan Karamazov. Tout d'abord, il donne un autre sens à l'autorité, la faisant reposer sur de tout autres bases anthropologiques. En second lieu, sans proposer une justification systématique de la Providence, il livre l'exemple d'une attitude à son égard [...]. On n'a plus affaire à une équivalence stricte et figée entre les deux paramètres de l'autorité et de la nature humaine, comme c'était le cas chez Joseph de Maistre et Donoso Cortés. Pour le moine hésychaste qu'est Zossime, l'autorité et l'obéissance constituent le moyen par lequel la nature humaine accède à sa plus complète réalisation, c'est-à-dire à la sainteté, à la déification par 'l'acquisition du Saint-Esprit', selon les mots de saint Séraphim de Sarov. L'hésychasme suppose une*

[1599] Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, pp. 401-402.
[1600] Théodore Paléologue, *Sous l'œil du Grand Inquisiteur*, p. 201.

conception de la nature humaine d'après laquelle celle-ci n'est point asservie au péché originel au sens d'une culpabilité du genre humain dans son ensemble. Dans cette perspective, l'homme est considéré comme capax Dei *en un sens très fort. C'est pourquoi Zossime parle avec tant d'insistance de l'innocence des enfants, en lui conférant même une dimension eschatologique en tant que préfiguration du Royaume à venir*[1601].

The above mentioned affirmations concerning Maistre's anthropology should be taken with a grain of salt. For, as already argued, Maistre does not justify political authority only on the basis of man's sinfulness, but also on the basis of his sociality. Despite his rhetoric concerning human degradation from *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, Maistre, as Paléologue himself stresses at a certain point, is not Hobbes. In fact, Maistre's characterization of man as "*un scélérat*" in whose heart "*les lois de la justice et du beau*" remain nevertheless "*gravées […] en caractères inéffaçables*"[1602], situates the Maistrian anthropology not far away from the Dostoyevskyan anthropology, as reflected by Dmitry's words, for whom man is situated between "the ideal of Sodom" and "the ideal of the Madonna", the Devil and God struggling with each other on "the battlefield" which is "the human heart"[1603]. If Maistre and Dostoyevsky largely agree with regard to the anthropological effects of the fall, what differentiates them is the notion of culpability, and this explains, to a great extent, the different ways in which they treat the problem of theodicy. What is essential here is the fact that, compared with the Augustinian tradition, followed by Maistre, the tradition of the Greek Fathers, followed by Dostoyevsky, does not speak of a generalized culpability of mankind, and therefore, does not regard suffering and death as divine punishments motivated by the original sin. According to the Orthodox conception, instead of inheriting Adam's guilt, as a consequence of Adam's separation from the source of life (God), the descendants of Adam have only inherited mortality (providentially permitted by God so that

[1601] *Ibidem*, pp. 201-203.
[1602] Joseph de Maistre, *Contre Rousseau (De l'état de nature)*, p.62.
[1603] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 145.

evil will not become eternal) and the propensity to sin[1604]. According to John Romanides, if "for Augustine, mankind's fall into the hands of the devil and death is by the will and justice of God because the entire human race shares Adam's guilt", for Orthodox theologians, "God does not will the present unjust activity of Satan and man but only tolerates it so that those who would be saved can be tried and perfected through temptations"; and, "above all [...], because God desires the freedom of His rational creatures"[1605]. Another Orthodox theologian, Florovsky, argues that "God's absolute response to evil was the Cross of Jesus". Evil, Florovsky continues, "causes God himself to suffer, and he accepts this suffering to the end. And the glory of eternal life shines forth victoriously from the tomb of God incarnate"[1606]. Not providing a theoretical justification for the suffering of innocents, in response to Ivan's mutiny, Alyosha also has simply pointed towards the mystery of the Cross, through which the "Being" that "can forgive everything" and "everyone [...], because It gave Its innocent blood for all things and all men"[1607], has been revealed to the world. Unlike Maistre, in the crucifixion, Dostoyevsky did not see the divine confirmation of the law of reversibility that governs the universe. Instead, for him, as for

[1604] John Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, translated from Greek by George S. Gabriel, Zephyr Publishing, Ridgewood, 1998, pp. 155-169. Saint Cyril of Alexandria writes: "Our nature [...] became diseased by sin through the diobedience of one, that is, of Adam. Thus, all were made sinners, not by being co-transgressors with Adam, something which they never were, but by being of his nature and falling under the law of sin [...]. Human nature fell ill in Adam and subject to corruptibility through disobedience, and, therefore, the passions entered in" (Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Romans*, P.G. 74, 788-789, quoted in *Ibidem*, p. 168). It is deeply regretable that, among other Western commentators of Dostoyevsky, even Boyce Gibson has raised a question mark with regard to Dostoyevsky's Orthodoxy on the basis of Vasily Rozanov's critical interpretation of *The Brothers Karamazov*. According to Rozanov, Dostoyevsky strays away from the Orthodox doctrine because, in response to Ivan's mutiny, he does not argue that the suffering of children is the punishment which they suffer as a consequence of their parents' sins (A. Boyce Gibson, *The Religion of Dostoevsky*, p. 7; Vasily Rozanov, *Dostoevsky and the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*, translated by Spencer E. Roberts, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1972, pp. 110-113). Moreover, like Drouilly and Jones, Gibson also relies on Konstantin Leontyev's authority when he is questioning the Orthodoxy of Dostoyevsky's theological positions (For an Orthodox critique of Leontyev's critique of Dostoyevsky see George Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. 2, pp. 69-73).

[1605] John Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, p. 156. Upon meeting "a man who was blind from birth", the disciples ask Christ: " 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind. Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him' "(John 9: 1-3).

[1606] Georges Florovsky, *Creation and Redemption*, vol. 3 of *Collected Works*, Nordland Publishing Company, Belmont, Massachusetts, 1976, p. 83.

[1607] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 321.

Orthodox theologians, the crucifixion simply meant that out of love for man, God assumes, in His crucified flesh, all the potential tragic consequences of the freedom with which he endowed His creation, with the purpose of restoring the latter's original condition, and ultimately, with the purpose of deifying it. Consequently, the meaning of innocent suffering could not be grounded in the meaning of Christ's crucifixion, for the reason that the crucifixion did not have, for Dostoyevsky as for Orthodox theology, an expiatory meaning[1608].

[1608] Taking into account the fact that, unlike in the case of the Augustinian tradition, the Greek Fathers understand the fall not in juridical, but in ontological terms, the motivation of Christ's incarnation and crucifixion is also understood differently. The Greek Fathers were foreign to Anselm of Canterbury's theory of satisfaction, which has defined the coordinates of soteriology in the West. This theory starts from the presupposition that God the Father was offended by Adam's sin (a presupposition rejected by orthodox theologians). The reconciliation of God and man required a compensation for God's offended majesty, or, more precisely, the satisfaction of the Father's thirst for justice. Since "the juridical axiom '*honor est in honorante, injuria in injuriato*' (honour is measured by the dignity of him who gives it, offence by the dignity of him who receives it) shows that mortal sin appears in a way an infinite malice and that nothing short of a person possessing infinite worth is capable of making full amends for it", it follows that "the personal union of the human nature with the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity — is the necessary basis of Redemption because this, in order to be efficacious, must include as attributions of the one Redeemer both the humiliation of man, without which there would be no satisfaction, and the dignity of God, without which the satisfaction would not be adequate. 'For an adequate satisfaction', says St. Thomas, 'it is necessary that the act of him who satisfies should possess an infinite value and proceed from one who is both God and Man' (iii:1:2 ad 2um)". Thus, Catholic theologians argue, "it is the unmistakable teaching of Revelation that Christ offered to His heavenly Father His labours, sufferings, and death as an atonement for our sins."(Joseph Sollier, "Redemption."*The Catholic Encyclopedia*.Vol. 12. Robert Appleton Company, New York, 1911. http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12677d.htm) Later, in Luther's theology, God's thirst for justice would be replaced with God's anger. The soteriology of the Greek Fathers is based instead on the following principle: "That which is not assumed is not healed, but that which is united to God is also saved" (Gregory the Theologian, *First Epistle to Clidonius*, P.G. 37, 181 C., quoted in John Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, pp. 34-35). Christ therefore dies on the Cross, so that through death, he could destroy death and "him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2: 14). "It is quite the opposite in the West", Romanides argues, "where salvation does not mean, first and foremost, salvation from death and corruptibility but from divine wrath. And the termination of the penalty of death and illnesses simply follows as a result of the satisfaction of divine justice. For the West, this is quite natural since, on the one hand, God is believed to punish all men with death while, on the other hand, it is man who provokes the punishment because he bears inherited guilt" (John Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, p. 35). In one of his paschal homilies, Saint Gregory the Theologian argues that Christ's blood was neither offered to the devil, as a ransom for those whom he held captive (for this would be "[outrageous]"), nor was it offered to the Father: "For it was not by" the Father "that we were being oppressed. And second, why should the blood of the Only-Begotten delight the Father, Who would not receive even Isaac when he was being offered by his father but changed the sacrifice, putting a ram in place of the human victim? Is it not evident that the Father accepts Him, neither having asked for Him nor having demanded Him, but on account of the dispensation and because man needs to be sanctified by the humanity of God, that He might deliver us Himself and overcome the tyrant, and draw us to Himself by the mediation of His Son, Who also executed this to the honor of the Father, to whom He clearly defers in all things? This", Saint Gregory concludes, "is as much as we shall say of Christ: the greater portion shall be reverenced with silence" (Gregory the Theologian, Homily 45, *On the Holy Pascha*, 22, P.G. 36, 653, quoted in John Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, pp. 100-101).

Yet, Malcolm Jones argues that "Orthodoxy is finally killed off in Dostoesvky's world [...] because the radical challenges offered" by Ivan Karamazov, "although deriving from Western inspired polemics, seem equally applicable to Orthodoxy and indeed to all types of theism"[1609]. So it is legitimate to ask ourselves: can Ivan find a satisfactory response to his tormenting questions in the Orthodox tradition, which Dostoyevsky presents as an alternative to the Catholic one? Apparently not. If the suffering of children is simply the tragic outcome of human freedom, "without [which] [...] man would not be able to survive upon earth, for he would not know good from evil", Ivan answers that it does not make any sense to "recognize that devilish good-and-evil" if "it costs so much [...].The entire universe of knowledge is not worth the tears of that little child addressed to 'dear Father God' "[1610]. But can the suffering just/innocent find a satisfactory response to his unjust suffering in Dostoyevsky's Christ? This is an altogether different question, to which neither the advocates of God, nor His prosecutors, are entitled to provide an answer. Speaking in the name of God, and of the innocent victim, Maistre and Ivan Karamazov appear to make a similar mistake: they ignore the fact that, as far as the problem of theodicy is concerned, one can only speak for oneself. Speaking either in the name of God, or of the innocent victim, we inevitably become inauthentic. We speak for us while pretending that we speak for others, and thus, like Stepan Trofimovich, we come to realize the fact that we are actually lying. Or, as revealed by the story of Job, ultimately, the suffering of the just is an issue that can be discussed only between the just who is suffering and God. A discussion that takes place at the end. The monologism of the Grand Inquisitor, which is also present in Maistre's system of thought, is the inevitable consequence of Ivan's decision to speak for the innocent victim. It is true, Ivan's tragedy comes from his urge to provide a voice to the voiceless, for the tortured "small creature

[1609] Malcolm Jones, *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of Religious Experience*, p. 50.
[1610] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 316.

that is not yet able to make sense of what is happening to it"[1611]. Here, it is perhaps necessary to distinguish between the just, who has a voice, and the innocent, who does not have one yet. Neither justifying the suffering of the innocent, like Maistre, nor condemning God, like Ivan Karamazov, Dostoyevsky simply waits, with fear, trembling, and hope, for the day, the last day, in which God will grant a voice to the voiceless, so that they will be able to utter their word. In the meantime, the practical lesson to be drawn from *The Brothers Karamazov*, and in particular from Alyosha's example, is the following: when confronted with the terrible reality of suffering, rather than attempting to construct theodicies (whether religious or secular), it is better to simply remain silent and, to the extent that we are capable, to manifest an active compassion for the one who is suffering. Ultimately, one cannot justify the suffering of another, because, at the end, one cannot cry hosanna for another. Everybody will have to do it with his own unique voice. I think that this is the sense in which the rebuke of Job's friends by God should be interpreted. Inevitably, the preachers of theodicies take away the voices of the victims. But apart from this, conceived as means of defending the authority of God, theodicies inevitably end up in an usurpation of God's authority, since ultimately, only God, and not a man, can answer Job's tormenting interrogations. Perhaps this is the most profound sense of Dostoyevsky's dialogism; the most profound sense in which, as well understood by Bakhtin, Dostoyevsky the novelist imitates God the creator. In Dostoyevsky's world, everybody has his single and unique voice. Even the devil. And all creation still expects the final word.

It would seem then that, unless we consider the Maistrian work to be a paradoxical continuation of Job's protest, as Pranchère does, the parallel between *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* reflects the eternal dialogue between Job and his friends.

[1611] *Ibidem*.

"Who are you to say 'I am righteous before the Lord' " (Job 35: 2), Elihu rebukes Job? Millennia later, Elihu is echoed by Maistre: "*Où est donc l'innocence, je vous en prie? Où est le juste?*"[1612] If according to Maistre, the crucifixion has represented the divine confirmation of the universal law of reversibility, Dostoyevsky believed instead that, rather than solving the mystery of Job's suffering, the crucifixion had definitively sealed that mystery. But for Dostoyevsky, the crucifixion was not the end. If "the mockers and the blasphemers" are scandalized by the fact that "the Lord" has delivered Job, "the most beloved of his saints to the idle ploys of Satan", in response to their "proud words", not attempting to decrypt the mystery of Job's suffering, Zosima simply points towards the no less greater, and no less incomprehensible mystery of Job's regeneration. Zosima admits that the afflictions that have struck Job are incomprehensible. But no less incomprehensible, he argues, is the fact that

> God gives Job back his well-being, grants him wealth anew, again many years go by, and lo, he has more children, new children and he loves them – Lord, but how can he love these new children, one might think, when the ones he had before are no more living, when he has lost them? Remembering them, how can he be truly happy as he was before, with new ones, however dear those new ones are to him? But he can, he can,

Zosima insists, and this is a concrete fact. This is the incomprehensible miracle that redeems the incomprehensibility of evil. Despite the mind's incapacity to comprehend the phenomenon, nevertheless, "the old grief of the great mystery of human life gradually passes into a quiet, tender joy"[1613]. Life, which one must love before its meaning, in order to understand its meaning, triumphs over death. No eternal objective happiness is rendered intelligible by the preceding suffering. Instead, Dostoyevsky limits himself to the indication of a fact: the last word is the word of life, which triumphs in those who love it more than its meaning. The mystery of the Cross is defeated, not abstractly, but experientially, in the mystery of the Resurrection, and the

[1612] Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, p. 545.
[1613] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 378.

promise from the Book of Revelation, "behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21: 5), is fulfilled. At least, this is the experience that Dostoyevsky chose to communicate to us, an experience, which, like all experiences, can be understood only from within. And, whereas Job, after receiving once again from God His blessings, has been buried in the expectation of the Resurrection (Job 42: 18), it is not Job, but the devil that tempted Job, who, despite his acknowledged desire for reconciliation, refuses nevertheless, "out of common sense", to join the choir that sings hosanna on Resurrection night[1614].

Upholding his righteousness, Job nevertheless rebukes his wife who tells him: "How long will you hold out saying, Behold, I will wait a little longer, looking for the hope of my salvation? [...] But say a word against the Lord and die!" Thus, "in all [the] things that happened to him, Job", the Scripture says, "did not sin with his lips against the Lord" (Job 2: 9-15). Suspended between the awareness of his suffering's lack of meaning, and the expectation of this meaning's revelation in life's triumphant return, Job is the archetype of a tragic existential condition, which through his life, Dostoyevsky, Stefan Zweig writes, has revealed as "*encore [possible] dans notre monde*"[1615]. If Maistre expels rebellion from himself in an exteriority, and turns it into an object of combat, Dostoyevsky assumes it within himself and carries it as a cross. The different antagonistic words of his characters, which he carries inside of him, threaten to tear him apart. But Dostoyevsky neither gives in, nor does he reduce the plurality of voices to silence, expecting, like Job, the final word, the Word of God into which all opposing words are reconciled. "*Comme Jacob*", Zweig argues, Dostoyevsky "*lutte éternellement avec l'ange, éternellement il se révolte contre Dieu*"; "*comme Job, il s'humilie éternellement*"[1616]. His destiny

[1614] *Ibidem*, p. 827.
[1615] Stefan Zweig, *Trois maîtres: Balzac, Dickens, Dostoïevski*, translated by Henri Bloch and Alzir Hella, Belfond, Belfond, Paris, 1988, p. 101.
[1616] *Ibidem*.

is utterly cruel: an unhappy childhood, the death sentence cancelled at the last moment, Siberia, epilepsy, the exile in foreign lands, the gambling addiction and the constant pressure of his creditors, the exhausting work under constant pressure, the death of his first wife, the death of his brother, the death of two children, and finally, his sudden death just after the moment of his glory in Russia. But Dostoyevsky, Zweig argues, "*paraît avoir le sentiment vague de cette volonté puissante qui le domine ; jamais il ne se révolte contre son sort, jamais il ne lève le poing. Son corps malade se tord dans les convulsions, un cri rauque jaillit parfois de ses lettres comme un flot de sang, mais l'esprit, la foi triomphent de la révolte. Le mystique qu'est Dostoïevski devine que cette main est sacrée, il a l'intuition du sens tragique et fécond de son art*"[1617]. And thus, "*ses mains ouvertes sont encore clouées à la croix qui porte sa dualité, les clous du supplice sont encore enfoncés dans son corps émacié*", when "*celui qui de tous a le plus souffert*", announces, through Alyosha, at the end of his work, that " '*avant tout il faut que tous nous apprenions à aimer la vie'* ". "*À ces paroles*", Zweig continues,

> *un jour naît, un jour d'apocalypse; les tombes et les prisons s'ouvrent, ils sortent des profondeurs, les morts et les emmurés, ils s'arrachent à leur douleur, ils s'approchent pour être les apôtres dépositaires de sa parole. En foule ils arrivent des cachots, de la Katorga en Sibérie en faisant sonner leur chaînes, des bouges, des lupanars, des cellules des cloîtres, ils sont là tous, les grands possédés de la passion; leurs mains sont encore ensanglantées, leur dos est encore meurtri des coups de knout, ils plient encore sous le poids de la colère et des infirmités; et déjà la plainte s'éteint dans leur bouche; la confiance scintille dans leurs larmes [...]. Sur leurs lèvres ardentes la malédiction se mue en bénédiction, dès qu'ils entendent l'hosanna du maître [...]. Aucun ne veut mourir, ne veut quitter la vie, la vie sacrée et chérie... [Tous veulent] chanter leur partie dans l'hymne [...]. Nulle souffrance n'est assez profonde pour qu'il l'échange contre la mort, son éternel antagoniste. Des ténèbres du désespoir, d'entre les murs épais de cet enfer retentit soudain la glorification du destin; du purgatoire s'élève la flamme fanatique de la reconnaissance. La lumière infinie y pénètre à flots; le ciel de Dostoïevski s'entrouvre au-dessus de la terre; au dessus d'eux tous on entend le grondement de la dernière parole qu'il a écrite, le mot des enfants lors du discours de la grande pierre, le cri sacré et barbare: 'Hourra pour la vie !'*[1618].

[1617] *Ibidem*, pp. 101-102.
[1618] *Ibidem*, pp. 210-212.

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