Dostoevsky’s View of Russian History and Assimilation of Hegel’s Concept of “Spirit”

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Abstract

What gave rise to this Roundtable is the invasion by the Russian Federation of the sovereign state of Ukraine. This unprovoked act on the pretext of protecting Russian national security from a NATO threat (as a result of Ukraine seeking membership) has shaken the existing post-Cold War world order. The question which arose shortly after the 24 February 2022 and which is still valid is: how do we read Russian literature against the background of the daily pictures of arbitrary carnage and destruction in the Donbas region and elsewhere in Ukraine? Is this a performance of a regressive Russian history in what Hegel termed the “world-historical” process? The question is answered by looking at Dostoevsky’s assimilation of Hegel’s concept of “national spirit” and the contradictory views about Europe this yielded in Dostoevsky’s aesthetics and polemical articles. It is this split vision which characterizes the civilizational paradox of the Russian Federation’s attitude to its European neighbors.

Keywords

representation of Russian history – Pushkin Speech – Hegel’s alienation – Slavophiles and Westernizers as perspectives on Russian history – new national discourse

My paper deals with Dostoevsky, because of all the Russian and European novelists of the past, he remains a writer whose reception has not run its course yet, amongst general readers and academic researchers. He is still interesting as a cultural text, generating ever new interpretations and meanings. His literary works still have something to offer our contemporary world and need
to be part of world education, with its treatment of language and the loftiest human themes – the finitude of human life and the pathology of the human being. Dostoevsky also presents us with what he called “a living human example” – his example of a tragic life: political prison and Siberian exile, followed by a heroic struggle for the right to publish in Tsarist Russia post-exile, after 1859, and carrying on a life-long battle against debtor’s prison. Out of this tragedy arose two Dostoevskys: one the consummate artist, introducing Russian literature into a new (Modernist) phase, the other a journalist, trying to make a living by analyzing Russian cultural and civic life in conditions of a repressive regime, to which he paid tribute by expressing nationalist, pro-imperialist and rightwing views. Dostoevsky became a puzzle for me – a puzzle which I would like to understand in the light of the current demeanor of Russia as an imperialist, ultra-nationalist and terrorist nation.

I would like to take a closer look at one particular aspect of Dostoevsky’s legacy: his view of history. I would like to re-read all his novels through this new question: what is Dostoevsky’s view of Russian history? How did he represent it in his novels and his journalism?

For today, I can only answer a very small part of this large question. It will be based on two documents: a) first, Dostoevsky’s Pushkin Speech of 1880 – considered his “testament” about Russian literature, the Russian people and the Russia “national spirit”; and secondly, Dostoevsky’s analysis of the volunteer movement in Anna Karenina, published in a series of articles of Diary of a Writer for 1877, which preempt some main points of his Pushkin Speech. I will put this discussion in perspective with reference to the poetics of Dostoevsky’s literary works.

Hegel as Main Influence on Dostoevsky

Dostoevsky’s view of history comes to expression in his engagement with the phenomenon of Slavophilism, which is grounded in the concept of the “Russian national spirit”.

The concept of “spirit” (дух) is not naive and not an arbitrary metaphor. It belongs to Hegel’s philosophy of history and history of philosophy, as well as the dialectic of meaning, developed by Hegel in his Phenomenology of Spirit in the first three decades of the 19th century. Dostoevsky, who had a declared and documented interest in Hegel during his Siberian exile in 1854, appropriated the concept of “national spirit” (народный дух, дух народа) and other aspects of Hegel’s Berlin lectures on the philosophy of history. In particular, in
his poetics, Dostoevsky assimilated the notion of *history as genealogy* – which is a perspective on history displayed by Hegel: it is history not as past but as a discourse in the present, history as a slice of reality through the perspective of the present moment in time.¹

Dostoevsky’s artistic aim of representing “Russian contemporary life” (текущая жизнь) was grounded in his particular method of “studying” Russian civil society: he took “facts” from everyday life, gleaned from newspapers, social and political events, and treated these “facts” as ideas of Russian society about itself. In other words, Dostoevsky introduced self-consciousness into the perception of the Russian historical moment, framing this moment in a new novelistic structure called the polyphonic novel. This is an essential point about Dostoevsky’s creative legacy – that form and content always go hand in hand in his aesthetics. That is why interpretations of Dostoevsky’s so-called “views” about anything (history, God, morality etc) cannot be extracted from the content of his novels without taking into account the form of his novels.

The chief social question of the day, for Dostoevsky and for his contemporaries, was the relation of Russian history to Europe’s history and European civilization. This was also the question which animated the so-called opposing camps of Russian social thought and public discourse – the Slavophiles and the Westernizers.

The question of Europe and Russia fed on the widespread familiarity with and influence of Hegel’s ideas about the historical backwardness of the Slavic peoples, including the Russians, in comparison with the Germanic peoples: this was both a challenge and a provocation to the Russian intellectuals of the 19th century.

Vissarion Belinsky, the chief literary critic of the 1840s, who welcomed Dostoevsky on the Russian literary scene in 1846 with lavish praise for his *Poor Folk*, was under the spell of Hegel. Ivan Kireyevsky (1806–1856), credited with being one of the founders of the Slavophile movement, read Hegel and attended Hegel’s lectures in Belin in the late 1820s. An influential book by Nikolai Danilevsky entitled *Russia and Europe* (1869), serialized in the new journal *Zaria*, which Dostoevsky welcomed in his journal and correspondence, was a direct response to Hegel’s philosophy of history even if Hegel is mentioned only once or twice by the author.

¹ Charles Moser speaks of the collapsed “chronology” in *The Brothers Karamazov*, without realising that the telescoping of the different decades of Russian intellectual history, represented in the novel, constitute Dostoevsky’s new approach to history as genealogy. See Ch. A. Moser, “*The Brothers Karamazov* as a Novel of the 1860s”, *Dostoevsky Studies*, 7 (1986), 73–80. 74.
Hegel's discourse penetrated the Russian intellectual scene but was assimilated through a peculiar Russian discourse which was not strictly philosophical or not to the same degree of abstraction as Hegel's discourse. Hegel's dialectic of history was hard to understand, even harder to assimilate and impossible to imitate.

The main concept of Hegel's philosophy of history is spirit, in whose domain “world history” occurs. The starting point for a definition of spirit is freedom:

The nature of spirit may be understood by a glance at its direct opposite. As the essence of matter is gravity, so, on the other hand, may we affirm that the substance of, the essence (das Wesen) of spirit is freedom.²

There follows a dialectical explanation of the concept of freedom and its connection to spirit and world history, in their dynamic relation:

Spirit [by contrast with matter] may be defined as that which has its center in itself. It has not a unity outside itself, but has already found it; it is in itself and with itself. Matter has its essence outside itself; spirit is - being with itself [das Bei-sich-selbst-sein]. Now this is freedom, for when I am dependent, my being is referred to something else which I am not; I cannot be apart from something external. I am free, on the contrary, when I am with myself. This being with itself of spirit is none other than self-consciousness – consciousness of oneself.³

Self-consciousness and freedom have their roots in religion, according to Hegel's model of world history, but the one religion which is singled out in the world-historical process is Christianity, not as doctrine or belief but as the “Christian principle of self-consciousness”⁴. Hegel stresses that there is a distinction between a principle and its application. His philosophy of history is an in-principle analysis, not an applied historiography.

Dostoevsky, along with many of his contemporaries, found Hegel's model of historical development seductive and attractive. He adopted and adapted the concept of spirit but in order to transpose it into Russian social discourse – which needed to be understood by his contemporary readers and at the same

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³ Alvarado, 16–17.
⁴ Alvarado, 17.
time obfuscate the Tsarist censorship - Dostoevsky did not keep this concept strictly in the domain of principle: instead, he tried to apply it in the practice of evaluating Russia's historical development and in this applied process forfeited some of the abstract – metaphysical - quality of Hegel's concept. The result was his "soil" (почва) doctrine which merges with his understanding of and belief in Slavophilism. His Pushkin Speech is a repository of both concepts.

**Pushkin Speech**

The Pushkin Speech is a kind of summation of Dostoevsky’s lifelong attempt to map Russia's historical destiny in terms *not* of a prophetic “future” but a "genealogical" diagnosis of its current moment while trying to “read” this moment through the notion of an Absolute (the commentators in the *pss* 8 use the term "maksimalizm" which points in the direction of the Absolute)\(^5\), called by Dostoevsky – d'après Hegel - “вечовечный народный дух» – the age-old national spirit. Dostoevsky diagnoses that this “national spirit” first emerged in Russian historical consciousness with Pushkin, who therefore, by extension, ushered in the mode of philosophical history – Hegel's most mature ‘stage’ of historical self-awareness of a people - in the development of Russian civilization in the world-historical process.

According to Dostoevsky’s own summary, published subsequently in *Diary of a Writer* for 1880\(^6\), the two main points of his speech [which the newspapers of the day missed according to him], were:

1) Pushkin’s ability to “absorb” and represent the “national spirit” of other peoples – as it were, to enter into the national spirit of other nations (which he called “перевоплощение”), which no other world writer displayed (not even Shakespeare or Schiller); and

2) that this empathetic response to the cultures of other nations emanated wholly from a Russian “national spirit” which Pushkin represented and who, as a result was deserving of the title of “national poet”.

Thus Pushkin brought to expression the «всеотзывчивость» (universal resonance or responsiveness) и «всемирность» (universal embracing of the whole

\(^5\) Достоевский, Ф. М. *Полное собрание сочинений* в 30-ти томах. Том 26 (Ленинград: Издательство Наука, 1973), 475. It is given from now on as *pss* 26 plus page number.

\(^6\) *pss*, 26: 471.
world) русской культуры (of Russian culture); this capacity emanated from the national spirit («способность эта выходит из народного духа»).

These “code” words and phrases - “всеотзывчивость”, “перевоплощение” as the capacity for transformation or assuming the identity of another nation’s spirit - are ideologemes, not technical terms of literary criticism. Although widely adopted as textbook truths in the Soviet period, these terms do not offer the key to Pushkin's creative writing or his politics.

They demonstrate Dostoevsky's attempt to construct an equivalent discourse to match Hegel’s discourse on Geist as a historical force which comes to expression through the “national spirit” which is the cultural totality of a people, manifesting itself through the ages, through concrete particulars, which define every epoch.

What Dostoevsky formulated as Pushkin's empathy and ability to reproduce the “spirit” of other nations points to is Pushkin's sensitivity to European aesthetics and the historical genres of European literatures, which could be regarded as “national discourses”. Pushkin is the first Russian writer to transpose en masse the genres of European literature into a Russian idiom, to create a new literary language and a new national literary hero (Onegin), and with this to give expression to the awakening of a Russian national, historical consciousness:

«...Онегин именно принадлежит той эпохе нашей исторической жизни, когда чуть не впервые начинается наше томительное сознание и наше томительное недугование, вследствие этого сознания, при взгляде кругом. К этой эпохе относится и явление Пушкина, и потому-то он первый и заговорил самостоятельным и сознательным русским языком. (...)в эпоху Онегина, мы...стали впервые понимать, что такое значит быть русским...» (PSS, 19:10)

[Onegin belongs to that period of our historical life when our painful consciousness first arose, as well as our painful perplexity resulting from this consciousness, when we looked around ourselves. To this period also belongs the phenomenon of Pushkin (...), for he was the first to begin to speak in an individual and conscious Russian language. (...) in Onegin's epoch, we...began to comprehend for the first time what it means to be a Russian...]

Russia’s entry into history is thus, for Dostoevsky, a matter of language. This is ‘classic’ Hegel in the Lectures on the Philosophy of History, which Dostoevsky possibly read in 1854 in exile in Semipalatinsk. He wrote the

7 PSS, 26: 475.
8 PSS, 26:471.
above lines in *Vremia* in 1861, when Hegel’s lectures were still fresh on
his mind, encapsulating in them the seed of his future Pushkin Speech
and the major thesis that Pushkin was able to create a modern Russian
literary discourse which showed a seamless assimilation of European dis-
courses of the age of Romanticism and early Realism. With this, Pushkin
propelled the Russian spirit into self-consciousness, into being conscious
of itself as national spirit.

There is no other imitative or penetrative ability discernible in the various works
in which other nations figure in Pushkin’s poetry and prose (*Пир во время чумы*
is cited as an example), nor is it possible to fathom what the “national spirit” of
so many different other nations would have been because world culture, at any
given period, is an amalgam of intertextualities. It is when Russian literature
became intertextual (with Pushkin) that it entered the Spirit of world history.
[Hegel did not read Russian – he did not know about Pushkin, otherwise his
evaluation of the small Russian intellectual elite might have been positive].

Dostoevsky was himself a master at intuiting aesthetic discourses of all
times and the specificity of different literary canons, which he absorbed into
his own poetics. Following Pushkin, he took the Russian national spirit into
the next stage of its progress to self-consciousness, with the creation of a new,
modern “Russian aesthetics”, constituted in the poetics of his novels. To achieve
this historical progression, Dostoevsky was confronted with the need to trans-
pose certain concepts, in particular Hegel’s philosophical concepts which he
needed in order to speak about the specificity of the Russian national spirit
and Russian national consciousness in the historical process.

To clarify this idea of the transposition of concepts from one national spirit
into another, let us pause for a moment to compare the analytic of Geist in Hegel’s
philosophical discourse with Dostoevsky’s analytic of the “superfluous man” or
the “Onegin type” in Russian culture; it will demonstrate what Dostoevsky had
to contend with in this process of transposing “Geist” into Russian discourse.

**Transposition of Concepts**

According to Hegel, Geist itself produces itself out of a permanent struggle
with itself ⁹.

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⁹ All citations are from G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen uber die Philosophie der Geschichte. Werke
in 20 Bänden, Band 12.* “Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 612” (Frankfurt am Main:
Suhrkamp, 1986). They are abbreviated to Werke 12 plus page number. See Werke 12:75–6.
Was der Geist will, ist seinen eigenen Begriff zu erreichen; aber er selbst verdeckt sich denselben, ist stolz und voll von Genuss in dieser Entfremdung seiner selbst.\footnote{Werke 12:76.}

[What spirit really strives for is the realisation of its own concept: but in so doing it hides that goal from its own vision; it is proud and quite enjoys itself in this alienation from itself.]\footnote{G.W.F. Hegel, \textit{Lectures on the Philosophy of History}. Complete and unabridged, newly translated by Ruben Alvarado (based on the 1857 translation by John Sibree). Aalten, The Netherlands: WordBridge Publishing, 2011, p. 51. From now on cited as Alvarado plus page number.}

Alvarado’s is a weak translation in that it ignores the force of Hegel’s expression - “ist voll von Genuss” – and the non-standard German in the personalisation of spirit and concept in the expression “was der Geist will ist seinen Begriff zu erreichen”.

My suggested translation is, in paraphrase: spirit wants to “reach” its own concept; but spirit “represses” its own concept – and is proud and full of jouissance (Genuss) in this alienation from itself.

Dostoevsky is receptive to Hegel’s idea of “alienation” but he applies it not to Geist; instead, he personalises it and attaches it to his version of Hegel’s “world-historical individual”, whom he calls a “type”. The use of “type” in this context is not inconsistent with Hegel’s nomenclature who speaks of “civilizational types”. However, the lofty ground of Hegel’s abstract concept of spirit and its self-production in negativity and alienation is left behind in Dostoevsky’s transposition in favour of quasi-sociological categories of the “Russian wanderer” (русский скиталец), who is “alienated” from his “soil” and the “people” (“отчужденный от народа, от почвы”) because of his European education.

While Dostoevsky does not qualify the noun “type”, subsequent Soviet criticism did not hesitate to add “social” and make Pushkin’s aesthetical and historico-philosophical discovery into a sociology – with a new Russian “social type” entering Russian national culture.

If we look at Dostoevsky’s poetics, it becomes immediately clear that for Dostoevsky, “type” did not mean a “sociological type” but represented something abstract as a direct borrowing from Hegel – namely, a world historical individual (welthistorischer Mensch). In a polemical discussion about “ordinary people” in Part IV of \textit{The Idiot}, Dostoevsky’s narrator mounts a critique of the sociology of typical characters as the vehicle for the novelist to express a historical truth about his age. Moreover, the chief characteristic of the
“ordinary” people (ординарные люди) represented in his novel (Gania, his sister Varia and her husband, the usurer Ptitsyn) is that they are acutely aware of their “concept” – of what they are, and are suffering from it (like Goliadkin). Thus consciousness and self-awareness are the hall-marks of Dostoevsky’s “world-historical individual”, who is not a type but is an “ordinary” particularity, according to Dostoevsky’s representation of the world-historical process in his fictional work. [It should be noted that this reading would be impossible without an intimate knowledge of Hegel's works – and which general reader in Russia or Europe has had such knowledge over the past 200 years? Hence the proliferation of myths about what Dostoevsky’s “beliefs” were.]

By contrast with the fictional representation of history in his aesthetics, Dostoevsky's interpretation of Russian cultural history in his journal articles of 1877 and his Pushkin Speech of 1880, is reductionist: a concept which arose on metaphysical ground – Hegel's “spirit” - and portrayed in its expression in a universal movement called by Hegel the “world historical process”, is transposed into a separate and exclusive “national history” and its expression in that separate development through national historical stereotypes, generalised as the “Russian superfluous man” phenomenon or the “Onegin type” of a “suffering Russian wanderer” (скиталец), alienated from his ‘native soil’ - another cliche which feeds into the myth of Dostoevsky’s “soil” doctrine.

What this transposition of concepts shows is that unlike German philosophical discourse, the Russian discourse on intellectual and cultural history did not offer the same possibilities of abstraction, of abstract conceptualisation on a par with German phenomenology. In fact, phenomenology as a philosophical trend was unknown in Russia of the first half of the 19th century and appeared on the Russian intellectual scene only in the last quarter of the century, with the advent of Russian Modernism and the evolution of new philological sciences, represented by Russian Formalism as well as the Russian developmental psychology of Pavel Florensky and Lev Vygotsky. Thus in defining spirit, Hegel speaks of the function of alienation (Entfremdung) of spirit from itself on the path to “attaining” its concept (Begriff) while Dostoevsky analyses Pushkin's fictional characters (a substitute for the abstract actants of Hegel's metaphysics of history) in the context of the concept of “national spirit” (народный дух), which is not further defined on any level – historical or metaphysical – and relates alienation to a concrete sociological practice: the acquisition of a European education.

The phrase “alienated from the people and the soil” (отчужденный от народа, от почвы) represents a reductionist adaptation of Hegel's idea that the historical process requires a degree of alienation – in an encounter with an other - in order for a people to come into self-consciousness as spirit. To
Hegel, the encounter with an other and the genuine engagement with that other (not in war or conquest) marks the entry of a nation into the historical process and separates a mythological past from a proper historical past. (Take, for example, Hegel’s discussion of the Persians as “the first historical people” in this context.) Dostoevsky’s language is far below the level of abstraction and phenomenological analysis of Hegel’s discourse, resulting in the creation of mythemes and mythologemes which spread widely into the pedagogic process of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods.

Nevertheless, Dostoevsky recognises the “necessity” of the “historical types” of Aleko and Onegin to the historical moment - hence, they are also metaphors of a Russia in a phase of transition of “value”. Dostoevsky picks up on this “type” in his own novels, by constructing heroes who are “valueless” - like Stavrogin who is an “empty centre” or Myshkin and his female emanation Nastasya Filippovna, each one of them being “мечущийся” - “restless” or “pathological” and without a “grounding”. Thus, while being somewhat reductionist in his polemical assimilation of Hegel, Dostoevsky is creative and sophisticated in his fiction, where he constructs a new modern pathological subject – the answer to Hegel’s “world-historical individual” in “philosophical history”: - Goliadkin, Raskolnikov, Myshkin, the Karamazov brothers, Arkady Dolgoruky. Each one of these fictional characters is an anti-type as a modern subject of the unconscious, determined not by history but determining history through his will and passion, grounded in his ego drive for mastery and freedom. Thus in his fiction, Dostoevsky’s view of history is very close to Hegel’s philosophical conception of the historical process and the historical individual which Dostoevsky is the first to construct in all its depth and breadth in European aesthetics.

Dostoevsky as Slavophile

That Dostoevsky was familiar with Hegel’s typology of historical perspectives – original history, reflective history, philosophical history -, emerges from his categorization of the three types of Slavophilism he discerns in Russia of his time. He captures these thoughts in an article on Anna Karenina in Diary of a Writer for 1877, in which he also preempts the ideas he will later expound in his Pushkin Speech.

There is no doubt that Dostoevsky presented himself in his Diary of a Writer for 1880 as someone who gravitated towards the Slavophiles but without

12 Alvarado, 158.
wholly declaring himself to be part of the Slavophile “camp”. It is true also that Dostoevsky denigrated the “Europeanized” Russians of the Westrenizers’ camp and that he declaratively and provocatively negated the need for and the existence of a “European education” (“нет у нас европейского образования”, he declares boldly). This is in stark contrast to what he wrote in 1860 in his Notice to Vremia where his “soil” (почва) doctrine was grounded in a declared need to educate the common people before any other national task.13 But it is also possible to conclude that Dostoevsky operated with all these quasi-political terms – “Slavophiles” and “Westernizers” – as building blocks for a genealogy of his time, which he attempted to reproduce in polemical discourse as well as in his creative fiction. While his genealogy is successful as an aesthetic construct, in his novels, it is not so successful in his journalism where it comes across as reductionist and politically slanted towards the reactionary extremity of the spectrum of political ideas.

Diary of a Writer for July-August 1877, Chapter Two

Dostoevsky had already expressed the two main ideas of his Pushkin Speech in Diary of a Writer for 1877, in response to the publication of the last two parts of Anna Karenina. These ideas were framed by the Serbo-Turkish War of 1876–77 to which a Russian general, Mikhail Chernyaev, led a battalion of Russia volunteers, which in the plot of Anna Karenina included Vronsky after Anna’s suicide.

Dostoevsky was not a literary critic (although he could have been one) – his analysis of Anna Karenina in Diary of a Writer for July-August for 1877, is disorganized, rambling, repetitive and says nothing relevant to Tolstoy’s novel from a literary-historical or theoretical point of view.

What Dostoevsky does in those several articles is rehearse his polemical stance on Russian history and the Russian spirit, in the context of the historical moment – the Russo-Turkish War (24 April 1877 – 3 March 1878). His polemic starts with an attack on Tolstoy’s opposition to the volunteer movement, expressed by Levin and Kitty’s father, the old Prince, in Anna Karenina. His attack on those who oppose helping the “brother Slavs” is couched in an affirmation of the Tsarist regime’s policy of helping the South Slavs rise against the Ottoman Empire. As is

well known, the coalition of Slavic peoples in the Balkans, led by Russia, won and
the Treaty of Berlin\textsuperscript{14} created new independent states – Serbia, Montenegro and
Romania. (Bulgaria did not become a sovereign state).

In these articles, Dostoevsky’s brand of Slavophilism is defined, albeit in var-
ious metaphoric expressions. Thus, he says that there are three “approaches” to
Slavophilism: one approach sees Slavophilism as (the championing or critique of) a backward people, with primitive customs (“квас и редька”– drinking kvas and eating radishes). Belinsky had this negative attitude to “Slavophilism”. The second approach consists of the aspiration to liberate and unite all Slavs “under Russia’s supreme principle”, a “principle “(начало) «which may not even be strictly political».\textsuperscript{15} The third approach to Slavophilism is identical with the second except that it also includes the belief that Russia can bring to the world, and to European civilization, her own “new, healthy word” (“свое новое, здоровое, и еще не слыханное миром слово”), never before heard in the world. To this third attitude to Slavophilism he counts himself.

These approaches to Slavophilism are easily recognizable as Hegel’s three atti-
tudes to the world historical process – namely, original history, reflective history and philosophical history. The third “approach to Slavophilism” is the equivalent to Hegel’s third perspective on universal history – the perspective of philosophical history. The fact that Dostoevsky speaks of a “Russian principle” under which the Slavs will unite and does not say, as expected, under the “Russian supreme leadership”, is also an echo from Hegel, in whose philosophy of history we read that world history is governed by the “Christian principle” and not Christianity. In fact, the word “principle” recurs often in Hegel’s writing whenever a historical force which is not defined in sociological or political terms is meant.

The fact that Dostoevsky does not define Slavophilism as a doctrine but as a “perspective” on the Russian people, the Russian nation and Russian culture - in other words, in direct imitation of Hegel’s three perspectives on history - makes it difficult to peg him as a Slavophile, especially since he never declares himself as one in so many words.

As a ‘believer’ in the “third attitude” to Slavophilism, Dostoevsky declares himself implicitly to “philosophical history”, which will realize itself for him in the “new healthy word” of the Russian people which will be Russia’s input into European civilization at this stage of the world-historical process. This “new word” will come from Russia to Europe through its literature, through \textit{Anna Karenina} in 1877 and through Pushkin before that. For Dostoevsky, \textit{Anna

\textsuperscript{14} Treaty of Berlin between Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, GB, Ireland, Italy and Russia with the Ottoman Empire.

\textsuperscript{15} PSS 25:195.
Karenina is a “fact” which shows that the “Russian spirit” (русский гений) displays signs of evolution, that it can be creative if it could engender such a “fact” – a “fact” of self-conscious awareness of Russian culture through a moment of philosophical history. He claims that with Pushkin, Russia consciously turned to its “people”: this is a phraseologem meaning that Pushkin’s works were the first to usher in a new period of Russian cultural production which seemed more authentic than at any time back to Peter the Great’s times, when Russia is thought to have been transformed into a modern European state. What Dostoevsky is also saying (against the outlines of Hegel’s philosophy of history) is that with Pushkin, the entry of Russian culture into the sphere of European discourses (via its literature) is testimony to the fact that Russia is capable of a normal historical development, in step with European civilization.

However, with the notion of “European civilization”, an obfuscation of the analytic of “Russia and Europe” comes into play. While criticizing European laws as “inhumane” and indicative of a “lack of organization” of “European civilization”, Dostoevsky also declares his love for “Europe”: for him, as a “dreaming” Slavophiles (another category or “type” not mentioned before) Europe is a “terrible” and “holy” thing (“страшная и святая вещь”\(^{16}\)), it is “a country of holy miracles” (“страна святых чудес”\(^{17}\)). He, this “dreaming Slavophile”, and those like him, “love” this Europe more than with a brotherly love, they honour and respect (чтим) the peoples who populate it, and all the great and beautiful accomplishments of these people\(^{18}\). He concludes with a peculiar formulation which is not quite right syntactically in the original Russian:

Нет, нам дорога эта страна – будущая мирная победа великого христианского духа, сохранившегося на Востоке...\(^{19}\)

«No, this country is dear to us – it is (the symbol or the locus of) the future victory of the great Christian spirit, kept alive in the East...”

This sentence with its ellipsis has to be seen in the context of Hegel’s pronouncement on the “principle of Christianity” in the world historical process. Hegel’s formulation of the “world-historical process” focuses on the primacy of the Germanic people and Christianity in which the consciousness of freedom first comes to fruition:

\(^{16}\) PSS 25: 197.
\(^{17}\) PSS 25: 197–8.
\(^{18}\) PSS 25: 198.
\(^{19}\) PSS 25: 198.
The Germanic nations, under the influence of Christianity, were the first to attain the consciousness that man as man is free, that it is the freedom of spirit which constitutes its essence.²⁰

[We are reminded here of the Underground Paradoxalist.]

Hegel then stresses that he does not mean Christianity in the literal sense as a church doctrine and organised system of religious beliefs, but as a “principle” of “self-consciousness”:

For example, we may note that slavery did not cease immediately on the reception of Christianity. (…) This application of the principle to the world, the thorough moulding and interpenetration of the world conditioned by it, is the lengthy process which history itself represents. ...the distinction here involved, between a principle as such and its application, i.e. between introduction and execution in the reality of spirit and life.²¹

It is important to note the contradictions in Dostoevsky's attitude towards Russian history in relation to Europe. While he explicitly stated that “Russia is Europe” in his 1860 Notice to Vremia, he also criticised European civilization, European capitalism (at a time when Russia was also capitalist) and even European socialism (when he was and remained a socialist in his aesthetics).

Conclusion

These contradictions in Dostoevsky’s attitude to Europe illustrate our thesis about the two Dostoevskys. What can we learn from these two Dostoevskys? We are suggesting that the present moment in Russian history can be seen through the same lens as Dostoevsky’s view of history - namely Hegel’s philosophy of history. Through this Hegelian lens we can conclude that like the two Dostoevskys, Russia continues to function in two gears:

One is as an empire which at different points in the “world-historical process” plunges the Russian people into an archaic historical formation called by Hegel “original history”, which relays history in mythological narratives; or Russia is pushed back into “reflective history”, in which histo-

²⁰ Alvarado, 17.
²¹ Alvarado, 17.
... is seen as having a dogmatic “mission” by a single ruler, a “big personality” (like Napoleon), which does not allow for a self-reflective awareness of one’s own position; hence the national spirit is not in self-consciousness.

The other gear is the one in which its intellectual elites of past and present function: these elites represent Russia’s self-conscious “Geist” which is heavily repressed and struggling to unite itself with the Russian “народ” or socius, who remains at a “tribal level” («родоплеменного уровня развития общества») of historical development (according to the Russian political scientist, Dmitry Oreshkin, Radio Svoboda).

It is this repressed elite who holds the key to Russia’s historical future as a European nation of the 21st century. While coming “late” into the “series of historical states”, according to Hegel’s model of the world-historical process, “forming and perpetuating the connection with Asia”22, Russia of Dostoevsky’s time was Europe. It was not “exclusive”, it shared its historical destiny with many other European countries, including the “Germanic world”, pace Hegel’s model. Dostoevsky was a European – in his own self-awareness (Notice to Vremia in 1860). The myth of “Russian exceptionalism” is an invention of the European imagination of the 20th century. According to the self-perception of Irina Prokhorova, editor of nlo, and a member of the contemporary Russian intellectual elite, Russia is not an “old country” in terms of the evolution of modern nation states; it is barely 300 years old, going back to Peter the Great. It entered intellectual modernity with Pushkin and Dostoevsky in the 19th century. It entered political modernity with the 1917 Revolution and Stalinism. But it never knew democracy and civic freedom. It never developed a civil society like its European neighbors. It never managed to embrace the freedom which Hegel saw as the cornerstone of philosophical history.

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22 Alvarado, 94.