No, I will not tell the Russian intelligent, “believe,” as do the preachers of the new Christianity; nor will I tell him, “love,” as does Tolstoi. What is the use of sermons which will, at best, convince people of the need for love and faith? Before they can love or believe, those who neither love nor believe must be renewed inwardly—but for this consciousness is almost powerless. The very fabric of a man’s spiritual essence must be regenerated; an organic process must take place in the sphere where spontaneous forces operate—in the will.

The one thing we can and must tell the Russian intelligent is: try to become a man. Once he becomes a man he will understand what he needs without our help: to love and to believe, and just how to do it.

For we are not men but cripples, all the Russian intelligentsia, however many of us there are. And ours is not even a deformity of growth, as is often the case—it is an accidental and unnatural deformity. We are cripples because our personality is split and we have lost the capacity for natural development, where consciousness grows as one with the will. Our consciousness, like a locomotive that has broken away from its train, uselessly rushes off on its own, leaving our sensual and volitional life far behind. Above all, we Russian intelligentsia are men who have literally lived outside of ourselves since youth, recognizing as the only worthy object of our interest and sympathy something outside our own personality; the people, society, or the state. Our public opinion is the most despotic
In the world, and for three quarters of a century now it has adhered stubbornly to the same overriding principle: thinking about one's own personality is egotistical and indecent; the only real man is the one who thinks about social concerns, is interested in society's problems, and works for the common good. The number of intelligentsy who put this program into practice was, of course, negligible, but everyone recognized the holiness of the banner. Even those who did nothing platonically agreed that this is the only activity that brings salvation, thereby freeing themselves completely from the need to do anything else. And so, while this principle did become the personal faith of those who really followed it, and thereby actually did redeem them, for the vast majority of intelligentsy it was a source of great depravity, justifying in their eyes the virtual absence of any idealistic action in their lives.

By now people have grown thoroughly accustomed to this state of affairs, and it never occurs to anyone that man cannot live perpetually from the outside, and that this is why we are subjectively ill and impotent in our actions. We either channelled all the activity of our consciousness outward, toward the external world, or we gave the impression of doing so—in any case we did not turn it inward and we all became cripples, with a deep schism between our real selves and our consciousness.

Clouds continue to whirl within us, and blind, halting, chaotic forces move us convulsively, while our consciousness, torn from its soil, blossoms fruitlessly, a barren flower. To be sure, there is some weak light even in our everyday lives—we could not exist without it—but it glimmers by itself, without our active supervision, and everything in our lives is there by mere chance. With each generation the Russian intelligent's sensual life changed, and new demands thrust themselves into it with elemental force. Needless to say, these became manifest at once and asserted themselves very forcefully. But the consciousness found it degrading to examine them, and all the labor for a truly creative, organic renewal of life took place purely spontaneously, beyond the control of consciousness, which merely registered the results retroactively. Hence everything that happened was inevitable, and what happened was that the Russian intelligent's life—personal, family and public—grew misshapen and inconsistent, while his consciousness was deprived of substance and force.

II

In the unfathomable complexity of the human spirit there are no separate compartments. There are no mechanical transitions from lower movements to higher, from feeling to desire, from sensory