Many attempts have been made to trace Raskolnikov’s ideological antecedents and to show their roots in European and particularly Russian, polemics of the time. In an article published in *Encounter* in 1966, Joseph Frank describes how Raskolnikov’s preoccupations reflect Russian culture in the early and the mid-1860’s. He draws attention to the way in which Raskolnikov’s crime is planned on the basis of a utilitarian calculus and on an assumption about the primacy of reason over the non-rational, typical of the Russian intelligentsia of the period. He further points to the recent shift among the intelligentsia from utopian socialism to an “embittered elitism,” which stressed the right of a superior individual to act independently for the welfare of humanity. He sees reflected in *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* the transition from utopian socialism to nihilism and the “schism among the nihilists” about which Dostoevskii himself wrote. Professor Frank also draws parallels between the views of Pisarev and his group—their use of the utilitarian calculus and social Darwinism—and Raskolnikov’s ideological position. He traces the “Nietzschean” elements in Raskolnikov to Zaitsev. This analysis is presented to support Frank’s thesis that “His [Dostoevskii’s]... aim was to portray the inescapable contradictions in this radical ideology of Russian Nihilism. To do so, he adopted his usual procedure (in his mature work) of imagining its ‘strange, incomplete ideas’ put into practice by an idealistic young man whose character traits embody its various conflicting aspects.”

Now Dostoevsky knew very well that the emotional impulses inspiring the average Russian radical were generous and self-sacrificing. They were moved by love, sympathy, altruism, the desire to aid, heal and comfort suffering—whatever they might believe about the hard-headedness of their “rational egoism.” The underlying foundation of their moral nature was Christian and Russian (for Dostoevsky the two were the same), and in total disharmony with the superimposed Western ideas they had assimilated, and on whose basis they believed they were acting.

Other scholars have, of course, filled in other details about the origins of Raskolnikov’s ideas. References are made to the influence of Stirner, Napoleon III

3. Frank, p. 33.
4. Ibid.
and others. B. G. Reizov, in a recent article in Izvestiia AN SSSR traces the literary and ideological antecedents of Raskol'nikov back more than half a century. He finds analogues of Raskol'nikov's belief that crime may be justified in the interests of the welfare of mankind as a whole, or of a needy and suffering member of it, in Schiller's Karl Moor, Balzac's Rastignac, Bulwer-Lytton's Eugene Aram, Victor Hugo's Claude Gueux and Jean Valjean, and many others. In a similar way he traces the cult of the great man, the hero-figure, in the decades preceding Raskol'nikov.

But to judge from recent work in the Soviet Union, the most contentious aspect of Frank's argument is his view that the underlying foundation of the moral nature of Raskol'nikov's generation was Russian and Christian. Interest in this and related problems has been greatly stimulated of late among Soviet scholars by V. Ia. Kirpotin's provocative and scholarly study, Razocharovanie i krushenie Rodiona Raskol'nikova. Although he does not wish to deny Christian elements in Raskol'nikov's attitudes, his emphasis is quite different. He finds the origins of Raskol'nikov's sensitivity to the injustice of life in utopian socialism rather than in Russia's Christian traditions. Indeed, he lays some emphasis on the fact that Dostoevskii's ideas—and hence, with some modifications, Raskol'nikov's—about a future Golden Age and universal harmony, derive not from Orthodoxy, but from Christian utopian socialism, from George Sand, Considérant, Hugo, Belinskii and the Petrashevtsy. He would presumably want to say about Frank's article that he overlooks an important aspect of the psychology and ideological history of Raskol'nikov and the real-life nihilists: that their generosity, their self-sacrificing nature, love, sympathy, altruism, the desire to aid, heal and comfort suffering derive at least in part from the tradition of utopian socialism which, like the nihilism which succeeded it, had its roots in the culture of Western Europe rather than in that of Holy Russia.

Raskol'nikov, according to this argument, is a disillusioned utopian socialist. Kirpotin contends that there are clear indications in the novel of a residual utopian socialism which has still not taken leave of Raskol'nikov. Raskol'nikov “is unable to root out completely from his soul the convictions of former years; his scepticism is superimposed on a love and pity for others, which has been pushed aside from his consciousness, but not completely excluded... disillusionment could not force out of the conscious and subconscious regions of Raskol'nikov's mind the feelings, associations, thoughts, sympathies and antipathies which had their origins in the ideology of the democratic and revolutionary utopian socialist movement.”

Of course, this view has not been unanimously accepted by Soviet critics, but what evidence is there that Raskol'nikov had passed through such a phase in the last


7. Ibid., p. 389.

8. Kirpotin, note 5.

9. Ibid., pp. 119-120.

10. Ibid., p. 48.