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UTOPIAN SOCIALISM IN RUSSIAN LITERATURE: 1840's-1860's

HELEN S. REEVE

Nineteenth-century Russian intellectuals felt themselves cut off from the uneducated masses and thought the gap could be bridged by some form of harmonious civilization. In Russia, a new liberalism spread after 1811-15, when young Russian officers returned from Germany and France, and culminated in the December, 1825, uprising. Less political, but much more numerous and influential, were the young philosophers who discovered the old Greek authors, Voltaire, and Hegel. Discussion groups, or “circles,” were formed: students of Moscow University and the “Blagorodyni universitetskij pansion” began to meet with S. Raich in 1823 to talk about Greek art; the “Arkhivnye junoshy” discussed problems of aesthetics and literature; the “Obshchestvo ljudomudrija” studied Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Oken, Goerres. As A. Koyé describes this group, to which the Venevitinov brothers, Odoevskij, Kireevskij, Rozhalin, Shevyrev, Koshelev, and Titov belonged, it was apolitical, opposed to despotism as an idea but rarely hostile to the government and never to the monarchy.1 Philosophy was expected to solve all problems.

Political and scientific theorizing was held suspect by the Russian conservatives. Professor Magnitskij at the University of Kazan warned his students that Voltaire, Bayle, and Kant were inspired by the devil and called Schelling “free-thinking and pernicious.” According to Herzen (Byloe i dumy), Pavlov in Moscow had talked about Schelling’s philosophy and had thus helped spread what the antiquarians thought of as a disease. And, as Edward Brown has pointed out, Moscow University “itself had been aiding in the dissemination of these [German romantic and idealist] ideas since 1804, when the German professor Bühl held the chair of philosophy.”2

Odoevsky’s faith that the limitations of empirical science had to, and could, be expanded by a kind of intuitive reason led to his effort to work out, for Russia, all of what he thought the practical implications of the new philosophy. Since nature has neither beginning nor

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1 A detailed description of these groups is given in A. Koyré, “La philosophie et le problème national en Russie au début de XIX siècle,” Bibliothèque de l’Institut Français de Leningrad, tome X (Paris, 1929).

2 Edward J. Brown, “Stankevič and Belinskij,” American Contributions to the Fourth International Congress of Slavists, Moscow, September 1958, p. 3. Professor Brown also points out (ibid., p. 2) that “indeed through the mediation largely of Stankevič and his circle the liberating ideas of European romanticism and western idealism became a fact of Russian intellectual history.”
end, man’s perfectibility, also, has no limits, and the possibilities for a person—implicit in its very essence (nachalo)—would be realized in its own independent historical development. For Ivan Kireevskij national consciousness, like individual consciousness, was a reflection of certain aspects of an absolute spirit. Later he moved easily to the analogous, Slavophile view that Russian national philosophy was an absolute philosophy. Kireevskij and Chaadaev both said that no civilization develops in isolation. And N. Nadezhhdin, turning the mirror around, complained that Russia’s isolation was the cause of its lack of development—of its lack even of a literary language.3

The Russian intelligentsia, as a “class,” had long felt it its duty to make Western ideas known in Russia. Given the intelligentsia’s general belief in the power of reason, as exemplified by a predilection for Hegel, and the fact of government censorship, one might expect that Utopian socialism would not have had an important influence on Russian thought. Yet it had, advancing a faith in rational principles of social organization (to hold good everywhere and at all times) and what was considered a scientific approach to art.

Utopian socialism, worked on the assumption that man is indefinitely perfectible and must, therefore, be constantly encouraged by means of education and social reform. Since, for the utopian socialist, all human activities were to be measured against a vision of a millenium in this world, literature, too, was to serve the creation of favorable environmental conditions. Questions of form and style yielded to a new interest in the social function of art, but just as the idea of art as function was neo-classic, so the predominating artistic style was a kind of eclectic neo-classic. The two merged oddly.

Belinskij, for example, said of a novel by Nekrasov:

Peterburgskie ugly by Mr. Nekrasov distinguishes itself by an unusual power of observation and an extraordinary mastery of presentation. It is a live picture of a special part of life which is not known to everybody, but nevertheless exists—a picture penetrated with thought.4

Belinskij characteristically acknowledges, but does not analyze, Nekrasov’s “mastery of presentation.”5 His main comments refer to

3 Only isolated figures dared to assert a view explicitly opposed to the government’s conservative “philosophy” based on revelation and faith. Professor Schad, for example, at Kharkov University, taught about natural right and human freedom. Professor Kunicyn lectured on similar topics at the Imperial College.

4 In Otechestvennye zapiski, 1845. “Peterburgskie ugly” is ch. V of Zhizn’ i pokhozhdenija Tikhona Trostnikova [1834-48], part I [see N. A. Nekrasov, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem (Moscow, 1950), vol. VI]. It was first published in 1845 in the almanac Fiziologija Peterburga, part I, and was sharply criticized by conservative magazines, especially by Severnaja pchela.

5 In 1836 Gogol complained about a complete lack of aesthetic considerations in contemporary literary criticism. See his “O dvizhenii zhurnal’noj literatury v 1834 i 1835 g.”
the author's "power of observation," to his knowledge of obscure social facts, and to his comprehension of these facts. It is important, Belinskij thought, that art establish a direct link with the objective world. As he wrote to Botkin in December, 1847, the main task of art is to raise questions, to make a moral impression on society even if devoid of poetry and creativity. His differentiation between the usefulness of tendentious art and the aesthetic evaluation of it is evident in his analysis of Herzen's novel Klo vinovat? He praised the book for its presentation of ideas but insisted that the reader was left dissatisfied because the work lacked real artistic value. He said that Herzen was preoccupied with the meaning of things rather than with the things or images of things themselves (with the idea of human dignity in this particular book), and that Herzen therefore failed to complete "a poetic picture." Belinskij called Herzen's novel a concatenation of biographies held together by the idea of social violation of human dignity and of the formative power of human environment.

Accepting aesthetic criteria unquestioningly, Belinskij goes on to ask what art can do to advance the progress of humanity. Art, in his view, acquired new meaning not in terms of its own excellence, but in terms of new social requirements. This was an early formulation of the later socialist and Marxist view of art as a sort of public utility. In the 1840's and 1850's, however, greater emphasis was put on the power and efficaciousness of art's social program. Although Nekrasov focussed chiefly on certain controversial and theoretical questions, other writers attacked directly those whom they believed responsible for exiting social evils. The figure of an unprincipled and mercenary journalist in the fourth act of Koni's Peterburgskie zhilishcha (1840) is a deliberate satire of Bulgarin. Bulgarin had the theatre censor delete the fourth act, but Koni printed it in his own theatrical magazine Panteon. Belinskij, perceiving the social program of the play, celebrated the play, especially the fourth—"the most interesting"—act. Belinskij's attitude was the "new" one which saw literature as a valuable political weapon.

The critics of the 1840's insisted on a false similarity between art

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8 Belinskij would have agreed with Plekhanov that aesthetic experience is not cognitive but is, rather, a primarily spontaneous apprehension of the "aesthetic substance," but such experience was marginal to Belinskij's criticism.
and science. Belinskij and later critics, including the Soviets, tried to make art "scientific" not in an autonomous rationally coherent sense but in the utopian socialist sense of pointing out what was to be done. These critics never succeeded in establishing a link between art's cognitive function and its political mission.

The 1840's was the period of Ocy i deti and Zapiski okhotnika, the latter of which Belinskij praised for its realism and truthfulness despite what he thought a lack of artistic quality,9 in effect, its lack of a comprehensive or explicit formulation of a social program or evaluation as a definitive judgment of the social conditions it depicted. The specifically utopian socialist influence on the critics, in other words, is discernible in their general theory of society and art's place in it. Its extent is shown in the attitude that Mertvye dushi was naturalistic and that A Sportsman's Sketches was important for detailed physiological descriptions.

The "natural school" had two meanings both of which link it directly to the theories of Saint-Simon and Fourier. The first, as Belinskij wrote in his "Review of Russian Literature for 1847," was that nature was essentially good, that nature and man, who is its greatest subject, must be the eternal models for art, and that the artist must be true to his own nature (his talent, his fantasy). Naturalism imposed on Russian literature the demand that books describe actuality truthfully, that is, without adornment or distortion and, simultaneously, that they discover the excellence of the unspoiled nature of man.10

The second meaning, superimposed on this view of the photographic function of art, was the attitude that literature is an organic development that parallels the continuous social progress of a people. This interpretation is essentially historic, an attempt to distinguish patterns of consecutive literary trends and to overlook divergences. Such was Belinskij's intention: he thought Gogol's art was the beginning of the "natural school." A literary trend, or development, was for Belinskij, equivalent to progress.11 Progress, he believed, is, development out of and beyond one's own sources, an inner but transcendent connection, which is inherent in history, also. He hoped his yearly reviews of Russian literature would interest future historians—he evidently did not write for the ignorant public or misguided artists—as a record of the progress made by Russian literature from 1814 to 1847. He held the critic's job to be the analysis of outstanding works of art, since they alone were the determinants of the

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9 In his "Vzgljad na russkuju literaturu 1847 goda."
direction art took, as in, say, the development from the "rhetorical school" to the "natural school" in literature.

In other words, the very use of the term "naturalism" reflects the premises of the utopian socialists: that investigation of details of natural phenomena leads to a better understanding and, consequently, control, of the world's resources and insufficiencies; that correct knowledge of nature discloses a pattern of constant progression and directly contributes to human progress.

Based, as it was, on belief in the power of reason and in historical progress, this attitude, however, is hardly distinguishable from that of the Hegelian philosophers and students. Its emphasis on the artist's understanding of natural phenomena resembles Engels' concept of freedom as the comprehension of necessity. Furthermore, preoccupation with historical progress is actually a concern with causes (also found among present Soviet theoreticians) and represents the tacit admission that things cannot be known in themselves.

An over-simplified materialistic world view is at the base of all later attempts to find a correspondence between the world of art and the world of matter. Marx's historical dialectical materialism was taken by his followers as a source and justification for establishing a "scientific" method in art.\(^\text{12}\) Marx undoubtedly wanted to counteract any subjectivism still lingering on after Descartes' introduction into philosophy of the tradition of the primacy of thought, but Marx's views were, in part, limited by the static materialism of the seventeenth century and were of little help in solving the great problem of subject-object relationship, which preoccupied Belinskij. Chernyshevskij tried to solve this problem by saying that art was only an inadequate reflection of the objectivity and potentially existing beauty of the world.\(^\text{13}\) He shared with the early materialists the misconception that scientific data were independently existing entities, which are to be discovered by the entity "mind"\(^\text{14}\) and which are defined by their own predicates.

\(^\text{12}\) Marx himself believed that economic conditions are one of the determining influences on art, inasmuch as art is an intellectual process (see his Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy). However, he considered works of art to be unique, in no way comparable to other products of human labor (see K. Marx and F. Engels, Literature and Art [New York: International Pub., 1947], Engels' well-known letters to Harkness in 1888 and to Bloch in 1890, 1890, and M. Lifshits, The Philosophy of Art of Karl Marx [New York, 1938]). It is clear that Marx himself, in contradistinction to the utopian socialists and to almost all of his own followers, never intended to establish a "science" of art.

\(^\text{13}\) Plekhanov pointed out the obvious inconsistency here: one cannot assert at the same time that reality is beautiful in itself and that only that is beautiful which corresponds to our conception of what ought to exist. (G. V. Plekhanov, "Esteticheskaja teorija N. G. Chernyshevskogo," Iskusstvo i literatura [Moscow, 1948]).

\(^\text{14}\) Contrast this conception of mind as an entity of cognition with James's view of mind as a function (William James, "Does 'Consciousness' Exist?" Essays in Radical Empiricism [New York, 1912]).
A different and interesting experiment in working out a scientific method in art was made at the end of the nineteenth century by Plekhanov and, later, by Friche. Plekhanov wanted to translate the idea of a given work of art from the language of art into the language of sociology—to find that which might be called the sociological equivalent of the given literary phenomenon.\textsuperscript{15}

He clearly distinguished such a theory of art from any theory of aesthetic experience. As he said, "the discovery of this equivalent by the critic does not free him from aesthetic evaluation of the work of art."\textsuperscript{16} For Plekhanov believed that aesthetic sensibility is innate and that evaluation is, in the end, independent of social good, although its character is definitely determined by existing social conditions.\textsuperscript{17} Methods of science should be adopted in observing the appearance of different rules and devices in art, in finding the connection between the changing concept of beauty and the historical changes in society, and in expressing these findings in abstract concepts. Friche, like Plekhanov, tried to establish a parallel between definite types of art and certain class formations, but he wanted to find a pattern of repetition in them. Such experiments dealt not with aesthetics but with a theory of art and social science, harking back to Belinskij's studies of literature in the 1840's.

In a letter to Ivanov in 1837, Belinskij explained that people had complete freedom to think but limited freedom to talk or to participate in public affairs; that the educated people were free to import books, which, however, could not be translated or published in Russia; that Russia's western boundary was not a limit to thinking but a fence against harmful political theories.\textsuperscript{18} From this letter one might expect that Russian censorship was primarily directed against books like Blanqui's \textit{L'Organisation du travail} (1839), which proposed creation of national workshops managed collectively by the workers under public ownership, or like Marx and Engels' \textit{Communist Manifesto}. Censorship, however, was not only not directed primarily against foreign works, but also it did not have a clear definition of what it considered harmful to the government and to the welfare of its people, to use political phraseology.\textsuperscript{19} Herzen's \textit{Kolokol} was

\textsuperscript{15} G. V. Plekhanov, "Predislavie k tre't'emu izdaniju sbornika 'Za dvadcat' let'," \textit{Iskusstvo i literatura} (Moscow, 1948), p. 207.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 212.

\textsuperscript{17} A brief summary of Plekhanov's aesthetics is given in "EstetikaRossii," \textit{Bol'shaja sovet'skaja Enciklopedija}, LXIV (Moscow, 1933), 669-75.

\textsuperscript{18} Richard Hare, \textit{Pioneers of Russian Social Thought} (London, 1951), p. 43.

\textsuperscript{19} For some good studies on tsarist censorship, see S. Skabychevskij, \textit{Ocherki po istorii russkoj cenzury} (Petersburg, 1898); I. Eisenstock, "Francuskie pisateli v ocenkah carkoi cenzury," \textit{Literaturnoe nasledstvo}, XXXIII-XXXIV (Moscow, 1939); L. Poljanskaja,
banned, but was freely smuggled into Russia; under Alexander II, Marx’s *Das Kapital* was published in Russian; Chernyshevskij was forbidden to mention Feuerbach’s name in his dissertation, but, while in prison, was allowed to write and to publish his novel *Chto delat’?* and Belinskij was allowed, in his “Review of Russian Literature for 1846,” to praise S. A. Maslov’s *Zhar i zhatva khleba*, a bitter attack on the hard lot of the peasants, but had to cut the following passage from the same article:

... [the writers] thinking that they depict life truthfully, as it actually is, represent, instead, truthfully only themselves, as they are, i.e., in the whole grandeur of their pretensions, limitations, mediocrity, triteness, and weak-mindedness.

Russian censorship at times appeared lenient and infinitely patient (displaying the same belief in reform as the utopian socialists did): Ivan Aksakov’s *Moskva*, in the 1850’s, within twenty-two months was rebuked nine times and banned three. Also, the censors were temperamental: censor Longinov, a one-time scholar, pornographic poet and liberal turned violent antisocialist, did not bother to delete passages from books which annoyed him—by mentioning Herzen, for example—but ordered the books immediately burned.

Even the writers themselves exercised “voluntary” censorship—“Aesopian” language—in order to keep their freedom of work. They had to avoid any anti-religious, anti-monarchical and anti-nationalistic views, and therefore, also all utopian socialist ideas. It would have been a hopeless enterprise to have tried to publish a Russian *Voyage en Icarie*. At best, the manuscript would have been burned, but, more likely, its author would have been jailed. Nevertheless, kinds of “voyages” were written in Russia, in fragments and under definite disguises, but, like any form of irony or prophecy, were comprehensible to those sufficiently sensitive or practiced in literary skills. The intensity of belief in the rightness of the idea and the appropriateness of the message persisted, despite whatever danger the government threatened. “Art, don’t you see, means prophecy. Works of art are the embodiments of presentiments,” as Trotsky later said.

“Arkhipnyi fond Glavnogo Upravlenija po delam pechati,” *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, XXII-XXIV (Moscow, 1935); V. I. Senevskii, “Materialy po istorii cenzury vRossii,” *Golos minushago*, 3-4 (Moscow, 1913); “Karl Marks i carskaja cenzura,” *Krasnyi arkhiw*, I (56) (Moscow, 1935); and works by Lemke, Engelhardt, and Arseniev.


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theory of the early nineteenth century: in combination, they reflect an utopian socialist origin.

Such an image of utopia, inverted as if seen from a distance through a single optical lens, as the preceding quotation suggested, when placed in a context of other, thematically similar images, forces the reader to form his own utopian and socialist vision. The following example, again from Nekrasov, shows what seems to be a Russian correspondence to the Fourierist phalanx: a large tenement house enclosing two court yards populated by all sorts of artisans, each proudly displaying his occupation by a sign hanging near his window. The bare outline suggests a phalanx, in which each member exercises the occupation of his choice—but the actual picture is one of a huge run-down building, housing a run-down, aimless society formed by chance and necessity out of ignorance and misery, without system, without a future, tied to the failures of the past:

The house whose court yard I entered was tremendously large, dilapidated, and untidy; I was struck by an unbearable odor and deafened by all sorts of shouting and pounding; the house was full of workmen who were working by open windows and singing. My eyes were struck by motley, fragmentary signs. . . . The device of explaining a text by pictures was invented much earlier than we think: it came into literature along with signs. But respect for historical truth compells me to say that on the sign of the midwife there was no sort of picture at all. Finally, in the corner window on the fourth floor, there stuck out a completely rouged figure of a woman of about thirty, which I at first also took for a sign; and perhaps I wasn't mistaken. . . . At the edges of the drain two pigs and a dog were puttering around, and four rag-men were singing loudly:

OK, lady, don't be angry,
Wash your mug and don't be lazy! 28

The importance of these passages becomes clearer when they are placed next to others which directly refer to the author's utopian socialist visions. These more outspoken expressions are also, of course, disguised: Nekrasov, for example, describes an ideal peasant community while actually theorizing about utopian socialism. The passage is an insertion in the middle of his novel Tonkij chelovek 29 that seems to have no bearing on the story itself. It confirms one's impression of the deliberately political nature of Nekrasov's writing.

The setting is a newly built village at which the two main characters of the novel interrupt their journey for half a day. Alexei

28 From "O Peterburgskikh uglakh i o pochtennykh postoiacakh, kotorye v nikh pomeshchajutsja," which is ch. V of Zhizn' i pokhozhdenija Tikhona Trostnikova [1843-48], Nekrasov, op. cit., VI, 104-05.

29 Tonkij chelovek, ego prikljuchenija i nabljudenija [1853-55], Nekrasov, op. cit., VI, 333-454.
Dementich Potanin administers the village. He is an old, small, thin, pale, uneducated man with very white, almost feminine hands—the marks, apparently, of wisdom and sensitivity—who, by “using only gentle words and good reason......[achieves] beneficial and wonderful results.”30 He is a materialist: justice, equality, and freedom for him are not abstract ideals but a set of man-made rules which acquire meaning and value only in their practical application, a natural result of man’s use of reason and of his understanding of his environment. As Potanin says:

Even a small child can manage our peasants who themselves are like small children: you have only to explain to them and make them understand; once they have understood, that’s all: they won’t act against their own advantage, and therefore they will be good.31

Given such a faith in the power of reason and in universal equality (“In my votchina all are alike,” Potanin says), all administration can be based on principles of self-discipline, freedom of thought and the full development of individual capacities: This faith in reason and in man as the uniquely rational animal is demonstrated by a respect for man’s independence and “natural rights.”

Most important is truth: when he [a peasant] sees that you demand justly—don’t you worry any more: some day, when the need comes, he will do what he himself doesn’t dream he ever can. I told them: it must be this way, boys! and roughly explained to them how it can’t be otherwise—and, before you turn around, it’s done.32

Potanin is an embodiment of the new man of the utopian socialist society appearing in the guise of long-established tradition. Though the book he is in was written about five years after the Communist Manifesto, he is completely unaware of Marx’s world. He is ignorant of “class consciousness” or of the power of the “means of production.” In Potanin’s words, the Russian peasants “are God-fearing people and respectful to others.”

A respect for the social importance of individuals and a faith in God is part of Fourier’s attitude, also. That is, he believed that his form of societal organization was a fulfillment of God’s plan, that people would develop in it as God intended. He, like Potanin in the book, never proposed an absolute social identity. Rather he, like Plato, wanted to establish a just society, which he thought could be established by an equal distribution of social wealth. The description of the Petersburg poor and of the beggars’ artel imply a precisely analogous organization for the realization of the idea of justice.

30 Nekrasov, op. cit., VI,376. 31 Ibid., p. 375. 32 Ibid.
That the organization of such a society implies reorganization of existing society is emphasized by occasional side-remarks Nekrasov makes, as in this description of a ball:

. . . Look at this tall elderly spinster. . . . She is in her twenty-seventh year; she has long ago outlived the established term of girlhood! . . . God knows who laid it down, probably men did—and that speaks badly of them; however, perhaps such is the law of nature. At any rate, even if we assume that this is really an evil, still it is impossible to eradicate it. It is necessary to change the whole order of the world. Try it, Madame Dudevant! You presented many examples of the disadvantages and injustice of the present order of things. Make a plan now and an estimate for changes. I think the capital will be lacking—human strength; and the architect himself, that is, you, surely will give up. As for me, I refuse to deny it. No matter how things stood, the situation of the elderly spinster was worthy of compassion. . . .

This advice of caution to George Sand (Aurore Dudevant) is actually approbation by a comrade in the same cause: one must remember that Nekrasov continued to criticize existing conditions, that what he states here is that an evil cannot be eradicated except by radical change of societal structure.

Some obvious but also disguised statements of utopian socialist visions are cloaked as dreams, and thus assume the role of fantasies that are not to be taken seriously (especially by the censor). For example, in Zaputannoe delo, a story by Saltykov-Shchedrin, the central person, Michulin, a poor son of a peasant, is trying unsuccessfully to get a job in the city. Half ironically, half seriously, he observes that only lack of resourcefulness keeps a man hungry in a rich country like Russia. Nostalgically, he remembers the simple, idyllic life in the country and notices in contrast that city-life requires impertinence and perseverance (he dreams of the city as wolves eating wolves). Living in the city, he sees the great power of

33 Makar Osipovich Sluchajni [1840], in Nekrasov, op. cit., V, 22-23.
34 George Sand may be called a comrade of the utopian socialists since she shared with them the worship of human nature and the ambition of liberating the individual from the limitations of moral (Fourier) and political (Saint-Simon) absolutism. For her the proletariat was spiritually and intellectually equal to the privileged classes. (For Nekrasov, the Russian worker had perseverance, instinct, and intelligence, and lacked only information [Tri strany sueta, Nekrasov, op. cit., VII, 32] ). She believed that, since virtue resides in human emotions, the noblest virtue is love (see her story Jacques, for example). Her stories and her theory were well-known in Russia. Belinskij remarked about her: "[George Sand] expresses everything that is beautiful, humane, and lofty." [In Mysli i zametki v russkoj literature, Sochinenija V. G. Belinskago, III, 506] Like Leroux, she was convinced that the masses are more spontaneous in their feelings and, therefore, closer to truth. For this reason she helped proletarian writers with advice and money. (See V. Karenin, "Zhorzh Sand i pisateli-proletarii," Mir Bozhi, July [1904], pp. 1-35.)
35 Zaputannoe delo [1848], in N. Shchedrin (M. E. Saltykov), Sobranie sochinenii (Moscow, 1951), II, 170-242.
money. He hears that a hundred rubles can change court verdicts.\textsuperscript{36} The poor, precisely because they are poor, have no rights at all.

Michulin resents the well-fed people crowding into the theater or sitting by the fireplace at home. The power of education seems to him no less important than the power of money. Although lack of education accounts for Michulin's miserable position and for his parents' ignorance, he absolves his parents of responsibility because they are not educated—a socialistic, as well as a Christian, thought. In a debate on education, he suggests that God-given free will is neither free nor powerful since man's development is dependent on the structure and movement of society as a whole.

Michulin's thoughts about education seem to be recapitulation of Fourier's theory of the phalanstère, of the benefits of communal work and study for proper development of all human capacities. Although believing that there was no need to change men's simple, rational nature, Fourier insisted that it had to be developed through an economic system based on agricultural rather than on industrial labor. A similar preference for "nature" is evident both in Michulin's idyllic picture of harmonious country life\textsuperscript{37} and in Belinskij's remarks about the inherent goodness of the "natural man."

Because Shchedrin, through Michulin, seems to have agreed with Saint-Simon that property relations, sustained by a social order, confer upon it its essential character, and because Shchedrin's story deals primarily with the structure of society, the title of the story—\textit{A Confusing Affair}—takes on specific significance. The elucidation of the confusion and a description of Shchedrin's socialist consciousness are contained in one central image, one of Michulin's dreams in which he sees himself as part of a column in a pyramid:

And really, all at once Ivan Samoilych found himself in space and time, in a country completely unknown to him, in a completely unknown epoch, surrounded by a thick and impenetrable fog. Peering into it more closely,

\textsuperscript{36} According to Hans Kohn (\textit{Making of the French Mind} [New York, 1955]) it was Saint-Simon who first asserted the importance of the force of money in the development of industry and science and, therefore, in the shaping of modern society. Saint-Simon replaced the concept of "liberalism"—an attitude of sentiment—by the concept of "industrialism"—an attitude based on material interest.

\textsuperscript{37} Before the peasant reform Shchedrin is known to have sympathized with \textit{narodnichestvo} and with Slavophilism and their practical programs of reform. His idealization of the masses runs through all his \textit{Novinnye rasskazy} (of which \textit{Zaputannoe delo} is one). In 1863, Shchedrin wrote in \textit{Sovremennik} (V, the article "Nasha obshchestvennaja zhizn" ') that the greatness of Russian history was due to the moral strength of the Russian people, a "moral strength... which begins nothing without a reason, which makes each of its enterprises fruitful, transforming them into flesh and blood;" this moral strength led to the peasant reform and will create others. Shchedrin's idealization of "narod" turned into a more practical and active attitude toward social questions, leading to satirization, for example, of the nobility for its inability to regard its servants as equally human as itself.
however, he noticed with astonishment that all of a sudden a numberless quantity of columns began to detach themselves from the fog and that these columns, fusing more and more into each other toward the top, became united finally in one common peak and formed a completely regular pyramid. But how astonished this poor mortal was to see, when approaching this strange building, that the columns forming it were not at all made of granite or some similar material, but were all composed of men just like himself, only of different colors and forms. . . .

As though on purpose, the pyramid, which until then had been showing him all its sides one after another, stopped suddenly. The poor man’s blood froze in his veins, his breath stopped, and he went dizzy when he saw at the very bottom of an unusually thick column an Ivan Samoilych exactly like himself, but in such a sad and peculiar situation that he didn’t want to believe his eyes. And really, the pile standing before him presented a curious sight: it was all composed of a numberless quantity of people, one set on top of another, so that the head of Ivan Samoilych was so disfigured by the weight pressing down on it that it even lost the signs of its human character. . . . In general, the whole figure of this strange, mythical Michulin expressed such mental pauperism, such moral poverty that the real Michulin who watched from afar felt closed in and frightened, and he tried with all his might to pull his suffering double out from under the oppressing weight. . . .

On another level, the dream is an obvious inversion of Saint-Simon’s vision of the future society formed like a pyramid: at its base, manual laborers; above them, merchants; then scientists, artists and, finally, courtiers, gentlemen and top administrators. The place of each man is determined by his talent, his work, and his wealth. The archetype is, of course, Plato’s Republic in which society guarantees fulfillment of a man’s needs and faculties through his social function.

Shchedrin’s story is about “intricate matters,” or, to go a step further, about things which ought to be unravelled: the young man, Michulin, complains that he has no place in this world. The focal point is, as a minor character puts it, “that man be given a goal, that man see why he exists. . . . that is the main thing—everything else is a trifle!” The solution for Russia and for Michulin, judging by Michulin’s dream, is to re-invert the pyramid to make it like Saint-Simon’s pyramid where each man has his proper place. Other remarks support such interpetation. For example:

. . . you have to agree with me that the French, too, have their merits. . . . Among what people will you find so much selflessness?

Or the sketch of a secondary character:

Both friends [Aleksis and Beobakhter] equally stood up for suffering and oppressed humanity. . . . Aleksis . . . was ready to put his head on the block to prove that the time for destruction had passed and that now one must create, create, and create.41

How one creates the new society is scarcely clear; it is not even suggested. The story itself is a parable. Even so, it was too clear—for having written A Confusing Affair Shchedrin was banished to Viatka.

According to Lavretskij, A Confusing Affair was written by Shchedrin under the influence of conversations with the Petrashevcy and exhibits deep sympathy for the revolutionary attitude of the late 1840’s.42 Dobroljubov is said to have commended the author’s identification in this story with the poor.43 What both men said is, of course, applicable not only to this story but also to others by Shchedrin, to, say, Misha i Vania, a story about two little peasant-boy servants tortured and ridiculed by their mistress to such a point they commit suicide.44

The socialists who advocated a program of change and those who merely protested existing conditions had a common attitude to art. For example, from Shchedrin’s compassion for the poor as evidenced by his stories, one would have as much reason to side with Lavretskij’s and Dobroljubov’s interpretations as with those of Ovsianiko-Kulikovskij, Kranikhfeld, or Mikhailovskij, who stress an utopian socialist influence on Shchedrin.45 As Kranikhfeld wrote about the intertwining literary and social trends in the 1860’s and 1870’s:

Literary as well as social movements of the sixties and seventies were the work of the raznochince, a man issuing from the administrative milieu and therefore, for the time being, at peace with it and showing faith in it. . . . The raznochince, brought up to trust bureaucratic impartiality, and the utopist, with his deep faith in the forthcoming better days, strangely criss-crossed each other in their logic; they find their most outstanding representative in M. E. Saltykov.46

It is difficult to isolate a socialist theory from a work of mid-nineteenth century Russian literature not simply because of the different guises it had to assume,47 but also because the authors themselves

41 Ibid., p. 209. 42 Ibid., p. 488. 43 Ibid., pp. 488-89. 44 Ibid., pp. 80-90. 45 See Ovsianiko-Kulikovskij, Sobranie sochinenii (Petersburg, 1909-1911), VII, 300 and VIII, 2ff; V. P. Kranikhfeld, “M. E. Saltykov (N. Shchedrin),” Mir Bozhi, July (1904), ch. IX-XII; N. K. Mikhailovskij, “Shcherdin,” Sochinenija N. K. Mikhailovskago (Petersburg, 1897), V, 174ff. 46 In Mir Bozhi, July (1904), p. 241. 47 The authors themselves appear under different guises too: Nekrasov, for example, took the pseudonyms Perepel’skij, Pruzhynin, Bukhalov, Vikhrev, Borodavkin, Gribovnikov, and perhaps still others.
only partially adhered to any one political theory. The writers were seldom “party members,” never politically as systematic as their fellow journalists. Writers, of course, adopted certain political attitudes—Shchedrin, for example, in Misha and Vania, or Nekrasov in Osenniaja skuka (a story in which landowner Lasukov passes his time, maliciously and with great pleasure, pesterimg his serfs)—but chiefly to describe “the feeling of awakening human dignity in humiliated people,” as Mel’shin put it.48

In the 1830’s and 1840’s A. I. Herzen was much interested in utopian socialist theories, but he never accepted them completely and later turned to narodnichestvo. He used these theories in his effort to formulate his attitude toward the Russian people. He thought that the old world was, if not decaying, at least declining or ready to collapse; that every society did not necessarily go through a bourgeois stage (which he feared and despised); that Russia itself was strong enough to avoid just this. The theme of the disintegration of the old world dominates his writing of the 1850’s—S togo berega, Pis’ma iz Francii i Italii, Staryi mir i Rossija—as it does his early dramas, Licini (Licinius) and William Penn (written in Vladimir na Kliaz’me in 1838-39).

Herzen was attracted by Saint-Simon’s idea of freedom for women and by the utopian socialists’ prospect of a world of new relationships.49 This idea of the Phoenix-like resurrection of the new world from the debris of the old is the theme, one might say, of his two early dramas. It is not contained in particular images, like Potanin’s village or Michulin’s dream of a pyramidal society, but runs like a motif through the entire work. Licinius deals with the disintegration of the old Roman world and the rise of the proletariat that seeks new spiritual and social values. William Penn repeats the theme of a break between the two worlds, but what is promised in the beginning—the new socialist world of equality, love and brotherhood: America—becomes only a revised version of the old world with its old diseases of unequal wealth and power. Both plays dramatize Herzen’s idea—a utopian socialist idea—that a new society can, or will, arise from a disintegrating world. In Licinius, the Roman proletariat becomes the vanguard of a new humanity and cannot be restrained even by those patricians who realize that they themselves will be destroyed. In William Penn, Europe’s regeneration is projected as possible not by emigration but by socialist reconstruction.

Quite consistent with the main theme of the two plays and with French utopian socialism is Herzen’s view, in William Penn, that

48 L. Mel’shin, N. A. Nekrasov (Kazan, 1922), p. 81.
49 A. I. Herzen, Byloe i dumy, ch. XII.
Christianity is a socially progressive religion. Unlike what the Roman and the English lords organized, as shoemaker Fox says, Christianity, William Penn the Quaker believes, is a religion of genuine, spiritual, human rebirth.\textsuperscript{50} Other ideas, taken from or related to utopian socialism Herzen later transferred to his theory of narodnichestvo. Despite his disappointment with the 1848 revolution and his subsequent disillusion in a "new" Europe, he continued to believe in the potentialities of the Russian people and in the strength of the peasant commune.\textsuperscript{51} Certain ideas in \textit{Who Is Guilty} (1859), for example, are indistinguishable from those proposed twenty years earlier in \textit{Licinius} and \textit{William Penn}: good intentions remain inconsequential because of unfavorable environment (this explains the doom of Bel’tov and Licinius); social forces grow by intrinsic power but are shaped and directed by history (the inevitable rise of the Roman proletariat); some social groups must necessarily perish in the class struggle for power (the enlightened Roman patricians and the apolitical Russian intelligentsia); external adversity cannot defeat, though it may restrict and weaken, spiritual nobility (shoemaker Fox and Ljubon’ka are noble characters despite their lack of education).

Herzen’s political attitude remained more or less constant, but after 1848 his political practice so changed that he actually opposed instituting universal suffrage.\textsuperscript{52} Like many others of his time, he became a political skeptic. He exemplifies, perhaps more clearly than either Shchedrin or Nekrasov, the nature of utopian socialist thinking in Russia. He never called himself a utopian socialist, but, with Saint-Simon, he believed in the rise of a new spiritual leadership and in the people’s increasing sense of liberty. Like Fourier, he envisioned a new type of agrarian and communal association (to be based on a firm sense of personal property and of personal profit) and was apprehensive of modern industrial development.\textsuperscript{53} His

\textsuperscript{50} In \textit{Licinius}, Christianity is regarded as a mystical, poetical and essentially Eastern religion—an idea alien to utopian socialism but easily explicable by other influences on Herzen. For example, it is known that Wittberg, a mystic and socialist, visited Herzen in Viatka in 1833-36. Wittberg probably suggested this mystical concept of Christianity. (On Wittberg’s influence on Herzen see Ivanov-Razumnik, A. I. \textit{Gercen} [Petersburg, 1920], p. 81.) At any rate, Christianity as mysticism never appeared again in Herzen’s work; what remained was the idea of Christian socialism.

\textsuperscript{51} See his articles in \textit{Poljarnaja zvezda} and \textit{Kolokol}.

\textsuperscript{52} Herzen’s letters from Paris, November 5-8, 1848, to Granovskij, Korsh, Ketcher, and Satin.

For an analysis of Herzen’s liberalism see V. I. Semeskiij’s introduction to his \textit{M. V. Butashevich-Petrashevskij i Petrashevsky} (Moscow, 1922), and Ivanov-Razumnik, A. I. \textit{Gercen} (Petersburg, 1920), pp. 7ff. For Herzen’s failure to deal with the requirements of modern industrial civilization—a point of similarity with Fourier—see R. Hare, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 272-73.

\textsuperscript{53} V. I. Semeskiij, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 13.
interests, like those of the utopian socialists, had more a social than a political character. He hoped that the people themselves would be given the opportunity to determine their rights (for example, the proletariat in Licinius). In his later writing, such as Letters from France and Italy (1850), Herzen moved close to Proudhon’s socialism by his insistent negation of established reality. There was something consciously utopian in Herzen’s maximalism, in his theoretical, not practical, activity. His utopian socialist thought did not lead to a particular political program. The socialism of Saint-Simon and Fourier, on the other hand, took on precise political forms. Unlike Owen, Fourier, or Cabet, Russian social thinkers like Herzen never engaged architects to draw up plans for multi-family housing. Still, their disillusionment and their disappointment with the effect of their theories is strangely similar to the disappointment of the French utopian socialists, who saw their ideal communities realized ironically in such forlorn structures as the North American Phalanx in Red Bank, New Jersey.

Western European utopian socialism was a reaction to uncontrolled industrialism in England, France, and Germany. It was an effort to reconstruct society so that the alienated individual would have a consistent social function. As Randall puts it, utopian socialism was a search for a Newtonian law of social gravitation from which all social phenomena could be deduced. The impotency of the movement is both masked and measured by its utopian character. Developed from the assumption that man is naturally good and rational, utopian socialism was a political theory presenting a coherent, or intellectual, social system and proposing social change. It was taken into Russia as a system. Petrashevskij, for example, was convinced that Fourier had definitely solved all questions about right social organization and that Fourier’s theory ought to be applied in Russia even under the conditions of serfdom. In other words, although utopian socialism represented an intention to deal pragmatically with a new historical situation, it actually was deductive and a priori, elaborating orderly systems from certain assumed premises.

55 R. Hare, op. cit., p. 220.
58 For Petrashevskij’s allegiance to French utopian socialism see T. A. Bogdanovich, Perevyj revolucionnyj kruzhok (Petersburg, 1917), pp. 16 ff.
The impotency of the movement may be measured by its insistence, like Rousseau’s, on ethical standards as satisfactory guides for social change. The utopian socialists believed that man was to be affected more by his own morality than by external laws or historical forces. They regarded political theory as the “science” of planning for the social organization of human activity rather than the science of redistributing available resources. They wanted reform, not revolution.

The progress of reform itself was much less definite or systematic in Russia than in Western Europe. Utopian socialism was well known among Russian writers—the dreams, the pictures of ideal communities, the “inverted” visions, the redefinitions of words in dictionaries. Even the censors were aware of it: Nekrasov’s The Story of Poor Klim was not published until 1931.

Utopian socialism was, of course, adopted as a political program by secret societies like the Petrashevskij circle. For such groups it was also an audacious social ideology. Apart from such secret and specifically political circles, utopian socialism functioned simply as a general critical attitude toward existing conditions and as a bond among those dissatisfied with them, as Gogol, for example, sarcastically suggests in his description of Tentetnikov in the second part of Dead Souls.

Utopian socialism in Russia was not refuted or replaced by a specific program. It simply died a natural death. It became weak, impractical, remote. In the West, inadequate as a political theory to deal with the complexity of economic problems, it was effectively replaced by various theories of communism and socialism or changed into a program such as that of the Fabians. In Russia, as a program of social reform, it lost all conviction and power following the disillusionment with the reforms of 1861. Socially active people looked for more programmatic work: they continued urging further reforms or proposed revolutionary and anarchic activity. But the activity was diffuse and the participants chiefly disunited. Political radicalism was reflected in literature in clearly topical writing. An obvious comparison suggests itself: Herzen’s novel Who Is Guilty? poses a rather philosophical question and implies a passive response to

59 In his Karmannyi slovar’ inostrannykh slov (1845) Petrashevskij argued against a constitution for Russia because he believed the essence of man to be his personality, not his property. See G. A. Kuklin, Petrashevcy (Geneva, 1904), pp. 6, 7.
60 The Petrashevcy differed greatly among themselves in their actual political plans, but agreed on the program of strengthening the old peasant community as a social unit and nucleus for future socialism.
61 N. V. Gogol, Mertvee dushi (New York, n. pub., 1944), II, 436.
historical activity; Chernyshevskij’s *What Is to Be Done?* offers a pro-
gram of action of political opposition to the existing government
and establishment of a society of “new” men.

The utopian socialist view of art as a reflection of knowledge and
progress and as an instrument for the education of man did not pre-
clude the view of art as an aesthetic experience. Rather, it intended,
by investing art with a new role—as by building beautiful phalanxes
—to create favorable environmental conditions for giving maximum
aesthetic pleasure. The radical spirit of the 1860’s and 1870’s, how-
ever, was too impatient to deal with such incommensurables as
aesthetic feeling. Art had to be redefined in terms of verifiable criteria.
Chernyshevskij, for example, identified beauty with life and called
art merely an inadequate reflection of objectively existing beauty
and goodness:

... From the definition that the beautiful is life itself, it follows that true
and great beauty is precisely that beauty which man finds in the real world
and not the beauty created by art.\(^6^2\)

Aesthetic criteria became indistinguishable from facts of the “real”
world.

Art as an aesthetic activity became marginal. The emphasis was
not on that experienced reality, so difficult to verify accurately,
which interested Fourier, but on that reality which was believed
to underlie and to guide invisibly the historic development of society
and which, according to Chernyshevskij, is intelligible. In other
words, Belinskij’s distinction between the usefulness of tendentious
art and the aesthetic evaluation of art was obscured by the conviction
that aesthetic criteria were meaningless apart from the social function
of art. Art came to be taken, as from the Soviet viewpoint, as an
affirmation of reality, not as negation. Since ultimate values of free-
dom were assumed, or decreed, to exist or to be going to exist, art
actually lost its cognitive function. It was taken as a complicated
device to describe the generalized essence of then present human life.

Chernyshevskij forced the standard of “reality” on art, but he
never defined reality. Tolstoy, later, in a theory unlike, but analogous
to, Plato’s, redefined art as an expression of man’s relation to God
and to his Christian brethren. For Tolstoy art’s main referent was
the narod.\(^6^3\) Dostoevsky had already emphasized the limitations of the
definition of man as a rational creature.\(^6^4\)

\(^6^2\) N. G. Chernyshevskij, *Esteticheskie otNoshenija iskusstva k dejstvitel’nosti*, A. N. Pypin
(ed.), 2nd ed. (St. Petersburg, 1865).

\(^6^3\) L. N. Tolstoy, *Chto takoe iskusstvo?* (Moscow, 1911), p. 218.

\(^6^4\) F. M. Dostoevsky, *Zapiski iz podpol’ja*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii F. M. Dostoevskago*
(St. Petersburg, 1905), III, 410.
Knowledge itself, Dostoevsky asserted, is not necessarily good and leads man nowhere:

... Well, you see: reason, gentlemen, is a good thing, without any doubt, but reason is only reason and satisfies only the rational abilities of man, while the will is a phenomenon of all life, that is, of the whole human life, with reason as well as scratching. And even though our life, in such instances, often appears shabby, still it is life, and not simply the taking of a square root.65

Dostoevsky's solution—the post-Siberian Dostoevsky's, of course—to existing misery and unhappiness could not involve a political program, like the utopian socialists' solution, like Chernyshevskij's or like the Marxists'. Dostoevsky exemplifies that radical reaction to the new social developments of the mid-nineteenth century which was a rejection of scientific mensuration of external phenomena and a reliance on self-analysis and introspective regeneration to reach a desired moral salvation. His views, like Tolstoy's, were made plausible by the failure of the utopian socialists' dream. Suppressed by the censorship, made to look absurd and ineffective by the half-hearted official reforms of 1861, the utopists' programs and visions were replaced by messages of salvation to come and by efforts at real revolution.

The utopian socialist movement in Russia was a synthesis of Christian tradition and of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century European theories of social change. It was reformist, gradualist, and educative. It was important in that period when the romantic conviction of the political efficaciousness of liberal reform still obtained, when men believed that men could be persuaded to choose their own improvement in this world. Its greatest limitation—its self-destructive defect—was just this faith.

65 Ibid., p. 334.