

THE RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS OF THE LATER FICHTE AS A SOURCE OF ANARCHISM AND REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS

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The paper challenges common belief according to which Hegel is a key-figure in the development of ideas of anarchism and revolution in Russian political and sociological thought. The main claim of the paper is that in the case of many thinkers (especially Herzen and Bakunin) much more important factor was religious and philosophical ideas of late Fichte. A central idea of Fichte – who perceived his own philosophy as a comeback to the primary Christian thought – was potential unity of man and God. To achieve this unity and (in this way) perfection is – according to Fichte – the aim of every man. Bakunin followed this idea and claimed that every man is able to achieve perfection and establish interpersonal relationship without external power of state. This claim leads to rejection of state as an obstacle on the road to perfection and free, interpersonal relationships, which are in accordance with idea of anarchy. The author of paper proves that influence of Fichte is obvious even in the case of late works of Bakunin, in which he rejects any idealism, metaphysics and religion.

Key words: Johann Gottlieb Fichte, authentic christianity, Mikhail Bakunin, Russian anarchism

In searching for the philosophical sources of Russian Marxism, Bolshevism and the very theory of revolution itself contemporary historians of philosophy unanimously point to the philosophy of Hegel as being the main foundation of revolutionary ideas. This is, first and foremost, connected with the fact that Marxism drew extensively from Hegel's system, especially from its historical outlook. V.I. Lenin was hugely interested in Hegel's ideas ('Philosophical notebooks,' with the summary of certain fragments of 'The Science of Logic,' often considered to be one of Lenin's chief philosophical works), and this was to be an important factor defining the leading role enjoyed by Hegel amongst the sources of the Bolshevik teachings.

By a strange course, this high rating of Hegel as a thinker was to find its dissipation across the entirety of Russian philosophy, also along its religious course. Hegel was and still is, to a large degree, considered to be the most important Western thinker to impact on Russian philosophy of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Besides, historians of philosophy are well acquainted with the fact that the philosophy of Hegel was closely connected with the philosophy of other representatives of German idealism of the beginning of the nineteenth century – Kant, Fichte and Schelling. Their ideas arrived in

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Russia at the same time as those of Hegel. However, in accordance with the prevalent model of explanation, Russian thinkers, though initially fascinated with the clearly Romantic ideas of Fichte or the natural philosophical notions of Schelling, while growing 'mature' started to move towards Hegel's system, as one that seemed more consistent, logical and fruitful.

I consider the formulated stereotype to be deeply flawed, distorting our understanding of the development of Russian philosophy. It is not accurate even in reference to the development of revolutionary ideas in Russia. Certain important components of revolutionary ideology simply cannot be understood without recourse to Hegel, yet it is Fichte who was the most important German philosopher in Russia, one displaying the deepest and most effective impact on the majority of Russian thinkers. I shall demonstrate this in this paper on the example of one of the important components within the revolutionary current of Russian philosophy – the anarchist theories of Mikhail Bakunin.

However, I shall start with another example. If one is to look carefully at the main supporters of Hegel in Russian philosophy, then one can see that their 'Hegelianism' in no way disturbed their *personalist* outlook and their recognition of the metaphysical absoluteness of human personality. This is true even in the case of Boris Chicherin, the chief Russian Hegelian of the nineteenth century, but of far more interest is an exploration of the aforementioned combination in the views of A. Herzen. In the book *My past and thoughts* Herzen left a detailed description of his passion for Hegel's philosophy, which had gripped the representatives of the Stankevich circle and thinkers close to it. The high value that Herzen himself attributed to the philosophy of Hegel raises no doubts; nonetheless, if one analyses his views carefully then one can see that he 'corrected' Hegel a little with the support of the ideas drawn from the philosophy of Fichte, which enabled him to claim that in Hegel's philosophy, despite the widely held opinion, the significance of a separate personality is not reduced.

Herzen directs at Hegel a fair number of critical comments. 'Hegel is often inconsistent with his own principles,'¹ he was to ascertain in his work *Diletantism in Science*. He was even more critical in his approach to Schelling, considering Schelling's big bow in the direction of nature-philosophy (*Naturphilosophie*) to be mistaken. He does not say much about Fichte and all he does say is in a similar vein: Fichte was for him the *model philosopher*. In giving a general evaluation, in 'Letters on the study of nature,' of the history of new European philosophy, Herzen named at most a few thinkers who, in his opinion, had determined the entirety of its content. He writes: '...after Bruno philosophy has one great biography del gran Ebreo the teachings 'of the great Jew' (Spinoza), and he adds as a comment: 'Should one also include Leibniz and Fichte?'²

¹ Alexander Herzen, *Sobraniye sochineniy* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1954-1965), vol. III, p. 82.

² Herzen, *Sobraniye sochineniy*, vol. III, p. 241.

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It is important to note that Russian thinkers were sharply critical of Fichte's early system, mainly of his highly subjective idealism, but they saw in his later teachings that Fichte himself had departed from subjective idealism and had created a religious-philosophical model of man, one based on the principle of the *identity* of man and God. Man, in the later Fichte, represents the whole and adequate earthly manifestation of God. This teaching has a highly normative character: man is still not God but he *should become God*. Thus, Fichte attracted Russian thinkers with the way he demonstrated the absolute significance of personality and presented it within the framework of a Christian worldview – i.e. the worldview of the true Christianity that he reinstated within his philosophy, setting it in opposition to false, orthodox, historical Christianity. Hegel was also perceived as the creator of an absolute 'scientific' system in which definitive knowledge of the world and man was offered and which could become the basis for the movement towards the realization of an ideal of a social order. Both of these strivings equally: the desire to prove the absolute significance of human personality and the desire to find absolute knowledge leading to the creation of 'paradise on Earth' are the most characteristic tendencies in Russian culture and this conditions the eternal significance of the two German philosophers for the history of Russian thought.

Nonetheless, the attitudes toward Fichte and Hegel were not the same. The idea of the absoluteness of personality and the idea of absolute knowledge leading to a social ideal were too different and could only be combined with difficulty. A deep understanding of personality and its internal contradictions leads to the awareness of the impossibility of its rational cognition, and in such a case a move towards an ideal, towards a 'paradise on Earth' appears extremely complex (although the ideal itself is not refuted). As a result, deep thinkers placed before such a philosophical choice more readily took the side of Fichte despite being fascinated by the words of Hegel and his 'absolute systematism' (S. Trubetskoy's term). The decisive move in the direction of Hegel was made only by the Russian followers of Karl Marx; as I have already mentioned, it was to be the Marxist history of philosophy, particularly during the Soviet epoch, that was to create the said stereotype of the indivisible supremacy of Hegel within Russian thought of the nineteenth century, which has created a most distorted picture of both Russian philosophy as a whole and its various representatives.

Especially graphic is this distortion in the evaluations that have arisen in reference to Mikhail Bakunin's philosophical position and his anarchic theory of society. Bakunin represents a typical example of the collision of vectors of influence, ones coming from Fichte and Hegel. Fichte was Bakunin's first 'philosophical love,' and we believe it remained with him for the whole of his life, contrary to the general opinion that he fairly quickly overcame his fascination with the ideas of Fichte and adopted the philosophy of Hegel as an ultimate basis for his views.

Bakunin's letters of the 1830s show that he was in that epoch simply consumed by Fichte's ideas, for he attempted to convince all of his friends of the necessity to study his

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works and to adopt the particular version of Christianity that Fichte had developed within his philosophy. 'I am man, and I will be God!³ – this was Bakunin's slogan at that time. He was to expand it in detail revealing his views in a letter to A.A. Beer of the 6th of August 1836, in which he refuted categorically traditional Christianity, the religion of the divine 'code' and 'duty'; which demanded from man a renunciation of his direct temporal thoughts and feelings for the sake of a greater immediacy in relation to God. Bakunin found the real God within himself, and this God could demand nothing that would contradict the unique, innermost thoughts and feelings of man. 'But no, there is a God, I have found him in myself. This God demands dignity from me, he desires for me to be free for he himself is free. He wants for me to develop eternally my moral and intellectual abilities; for every creature that does not think and does not feel is an animal and he is the enemy of animalism. Such is the true God'⁴.

In accordance with Christianity thus understood, man should strive to disclose the fullness of his earthly essence, and not surmount it thanks to some 'heavenly' essence. Within such a conception Jesus Christ is simply the first man who brought about such a disclosure of his essence and it was only in this sense that he became God: 'Jesus Christ is great and possible only as a true man; as God he is ridiculous and comical. He was born a man, like we; we should become God like him'⁵.

It is not difficult to see that it is here that the most important theses of Fichte's work, *The Way towards the Blessed Life*, are most precisely reproduced. Fichte views human consciousness as a phenomenon which has the form of the existence of God, who on his own is above all that exists, meaning it is a non-existing God: '...consciousness, or we ourselves, is divine existence as such and is united absolutely with the divine existence.'⁶ God appears in every personality in all of his fullness: 'It is not that the divine essence divides itself on its own; it is placed in each and every «person», and possibly, if only the person liberates it is, a truly singular and immutable divine essence will manifest itself exactly as it is in its very self; only this essence appears in every 'man' in a countenance different and unique to him alone.'⁷ The individuality of single persons is absolutely valuable for they express the diverse aspects of the endless internal fullness of God, therefore a genuine (true) religion cannot demand from man a rejection of his own individual characteristics; quite the reverse, it bestows on him religious consecration: 'The striving to be something else than that which we were destined for, however grand and sublime this other would seem, is the height of amorality, just as is all the compulsion which we create for ourselves

³ Mikhail Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyeh sochineniya i pis'ma*, (Moscow: Mysl', 1987), p. 70.

⁴ Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyeh sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 66.

⁵ Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyeh sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 77.

⁶ Jochann Gottlieb Fichte, *Nastavleniya k blazhennoy zhizni*, trans. A.K. Sudakov, (Moscow: Kanon+, 1997), p. 57.

⁷ Fichte, *Nastavleniya k blazhennoy zhizni*, p. 126.

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in this, and all the unpleasantness which we endure and undergo because of this, the very core of the indignation against the divine order protecting us and the opposition of our will to the will of God⁸. These are Fichte's ideas that are subsequently and consequently expressed in Bakunin's philosophical views.

At a decisive moment in his philosophical development, Bakunin moved over towards Hegel's system and enthusiastically learnt from it. This turning point can be clearly seen in his letters. In May 1837 he wrote: 'Hegel has given me a completely new life. I am totally absorbed by him. I am increasingly aware that science is the true verse of my life, that it should be the fundamental principle for all of my acts.'⁹ The most notable manifestation of the temporary transfer of Bakunin from Fichte to Hegel is the change in the presentation of the relations between man and God. If earlier he was of the conviction that every human personality is one and the same with God, that it carries within itself God and summons up to reveal God in itself, then now, under the influence of Hegel, he understood God as an objective Spirit, which endlessly surpasses an individual personality, and into which human personality enters without failure, but does not definitively express all of its fullness. 'My friends, all people live in God, but God does not live in every man.'¹⁰ Bakunin now considered the main task of man to be not personal efforts at the manifestation of God within himself, but the participation (possibly insignificant and unnoticed in his personal characteristics) in the general work of mankind striving for absolute truth.

However, at the same time Bakunin continued to repeat the Christian thesis of Fichte's later religious teachings: Life is blessed¹¹ (once he directly referred to and cited the German philosopher¹²). One may state that Bakunin's evaluation of Fichte's philosophy as a phenomenon eminent and eternal was not shaken by his temporary fascination with Hegel's system. Communicating in a letter to A.A. Beer (the end of February – beginning of March 1840) that he had been reading about the life and works of Fichte, Bakunin states that Fichte is 'the genuine hero of the new times,' and admits that he had always liked him deeply' for his ability to gain his goal, and he ends with the express ascertainment: 'Yes I feel, with a deep sense of joy I feel that old, intense, inspired state of the spirit reviving in me, I am returning to my living source, I am again becoming myself.'¹³ One may conjecture that the words refer to the return to the views of Fichte following the short-lived fascination with the philosophy of Hegel.

This assumption is confirmed by another of Bakunin's letters, one written at the very

⁸ Fichte, *Nastavleniya k blazhennoy zhizni*, p. 128.

⁹ Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyeh sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 84.

¹⁰ Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyeh sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 91.

¹¹ Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyeh sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 88, 90, 91, 93, 96, 127, 128 and *passim*.

¹² Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyeh sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 85.

¹³ Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyeh sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 134.

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same time (13th of March) and addressed to his sisters, Aleksandra and Tatyana. Bakunin refers here to Fichte's thesis on God's embodiment in every man and he develops it in an original way in the direction that quite soon will blossom into his conception of anarchy as the best form of social system.

Every man should live through grace, truth, through the internal love of his life. Besides general religion, besides the general unity of man with God, everyone has in the deepest innermost recesses of his internal life a direct, personal attitude to God exclusive to him – an attitude which constructs *the genuine me* of man's *internal genius*. The genuine me can never contradict the content of the general Christian religion because just as the latter is the embodiment of God in the finite spirit, in man in general, so the true me is the embodiment of God in the individual peculiarity of each individual person. The genuine *I* is the *personality* of man, a personality that can never be sinful or false for it is the direct unity of man with God. And therefore the whole of man's life, all of his strivings should manifest themselves in his individualism filled with sin, and lies should disappear into the implementation of his living and eternal personality. The whole of his life is nothing other than a search for himself, for his own personal, human virtue and felicity [...].¹⁴

Here one comes into an indirect contact with the ideas of Hegel and Fichte in Bakunin's thought. When talking of 'universal religion' and the 'universal unity of man with God,' he most clearly has in mind the philosophy of Hegel but the whole sense of these deliberations lies in the admission of the inadequacies, the incompleteness of such a conception, which has to be supplemented by the idea of a direct personal relationship with God within the 'I'. In emphasising that the genuine manifestation of God in man is his unique *personality*, his *individual peculiarity* as a separate person, Bakunin clearly engages in an argument with the Hegelian understanding of religion and in an abrupt form reinstates the main premises of Fichte's teachings to his thinking. Here he understands the necessity for the supplementation of the idea of personality as a form of divine manifestation, the idea of the spiritual unity of personality, but now he conjectures this unity in accordance with the philosophy of Fichte as secondary in relation to personality and its activity in relation to the revelation of God in one: 'People's personalities should be completely independent and free. If within these independences there is instilled an all-penetrating and inseparable unity of a common tendency, of a common life, then they would sense it, and this sensation would be called love.'¹⁵

¹⁴ Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyе sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 135-136.

¹⁵ Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyе sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 135.

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These very philosophical ideas were to lead Bakunin to the conception of social organisation in the guise of anarchy. Highly characteristic is that the gradual transfer of social-political problems into the centre of Bakunin's interests in no way lessened the significance of the religious construct of his views. He understood democracy, as a universal form for the construction of society, as a religion, as the genuine Christianity of Fichte, showing that every man is potentially God and therefore people possess an equal significance in their striving to become God himself. In his work *The reaction in Germany* (1842) Bakunin writes:

...only when the 'democratic party' is convinced that democracy is not contained merely in opposition to the powers that be, some particular constitutional or political-economic transformation, but instead signifies the complete revolution of the whole world order and foretells something still unknown in history, a completely new life, and only when it has understood that democracy is a religion and by comprehending this it itself becomes religious, imbued with its own principles not only in thinking and in judgements but also in their actualization in real life, into the tininess of its manifestations, only then will a democratic party be able to conquer the world.¹⁶ This 'new life,' 'unknown in history,' which Bakunin sees as the aim of a genuine democracy is, obviously, the religiously consecrated life of people manifesting God within themselves. This way of thinking is no less clearly expressed in a much later article 'Communism' (1843), where Bakunin interprets 'genuine true communism' as a process of the 'implementation of a free and fraternal society, the implementation of God's Kingdom on earth,' and as the 'real temporal manifestation of what constitutes the divine essence of Christianity'.¹⁷

And, finally, the thesis (from a letter to his brother Pavel, 1845) which defines the very essence of Bakuninian anarchism: 'To liberate man – this is a solely legitimate and beneficial influence. The lot of all religious and philosophical dogmas! They present total illusion. Truth – this is not theory but a fact, life itself, these are the relations of free and independent people, this is the holy unity of love resulting from the mysterious and infinite depths of personal freedom'.¹⁸ Although here Bakunin is turning aside all 'religious and philosophical dogmas,' the content of this thesis can only be understood on the basis of Fichte's ideas about God as appearing within every man. And all the more so that in five years, in a letter to I. Skurzhevskii, Bakunin in a decisive manner confirms his devotion to earlier Fichtean ideas – Fichte's genuine Christianity and his practical activism- and unequivocally turns away and even mocks Hegel for his 'grasp of God by means of science' and 'empty abstractions':

¹⁶ Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyе sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 209.

¹⁷ Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyе sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 237.

¹⁸ Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyе sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 242-243.

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You are mistaken if you think I do not believe in God; but I have totally rejected any attempt to understand him by means of science and theory. There was a time when I exclusively involved myself in a single philosophy. In the course of several years running I had no other aim than science, my head was filled with the most empty of abstractions, [...] I thought only about the absolute and could not say a word without the most abstract of expressions: subject, object, the self-formation of ideas etc., and, for example, there was a moment of madness when it seemed to me that I understood something and knew; but returning to common sense and life itself I was finally to become convinced that life, love and action can only be comprehended by means of life, love and action themselves. [...] I seek God in people, in their freedom, and now I also seek God in revolution.¹⁹

Further on, in the selfsame letter, Bakunin writes: '... We all are in need of religion, in all the parties its shortage can be felt. Only a few people believe in what they are doing, the majority either act according to an abstract system, as if living life were merely an application of some wretched abstractions, and therefore they are so powerless, or guided by their own material interests.'²⁰ Here an 'abstract system' anticipated by Hegel's system, clearly opposes 'living life' – the key notion of Fichte's religious system, repeatedly used in his cycle of lectures *Characteristics of the present age* and *The way towards the blessed life*.

To understand the depth and logicity of Bakunin's subsequent negation of the state, traditional religion and all other forms of authoritarian rule over man, one must take into consideration the Fichtean foundation of his views; in any other instance they appear as straightforward nihilism. But Bakunin's views never had anything in common with nihilism; he possessed a deep positivist faith – a belief that each man had God within himself and was called upon during his life to reveal him (God) by means of his personality. For it was this uncompromising belief in the divine declaration of each of those living today that distanced Bakunin and his conception of anarchy from Hegel's philosophical and social theory. For Hegel history had a providential character and inevitably led to the 'Kingdom of Heaven on Earth,' but the 'guile of worldly reason' does not presuppose the possibility that *all people* find a place in it. Only individuals at any moment of time can rise out of their necessity to the needs of the objective Spirit, marching within history, and sharing with him the eternity and endlessness of the coming perfection. That is why in Hegel's philosophy of history the empirical manifestation of the divine Spirit is the *state*, which ensures at least an external control of the Spirit's claims over people while they continue to reside in imperfection.

¹⁹ Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyeh sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 247.

²⁰ Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiyeh sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 248.

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In the final variant of his socio-political teachings, Bakunin completely refutes the religious basis for the idea of personality and stands in opposition to any form of religion and religious philosophy. Nevertheless, in 1864, in a programme work *The international secret society for the liberation of humanity*, while he acknowledges relative significance of historical religions in revealing the inner essence not of God but of Humanity, he still points to the necessity of inventing a new religion by mankind:

...socialism should follow in the footsteps of all religions that proclaim faith in God, for socialism is, in religious terms, a belief in the fulfilment of man's vocation on earth. [...] The 'Great Revolution of 1789 and 1793' substituted the dogmas of the Nicaea Council with a mere three words: liberty, equality, fraternity – a fruitful symbol that encapsulated the whole future, the whole of the nobility and happiness of mankind! This new religion, the earthly religion of the human line, is in opposition to the heavenly religion of divinity! At the same time it is the implementation and the radical denial of the ideas of Christianity.²¹

This thesis about the 'implementation' of the ideas of Christianity in the form of Socialism is fully comprehensible only when seen within the context of Fichte's teachings, in which historical Christianity is denied and a true, genuine Christianity is proclaimed in the form of teachings about man's fulfilment of his divine destiny on earth, i.e. 'the Divine Heavenly Kingdom on Earth'.

Here Bakunin emphasises the distinction between his comprehension of the ideal of freedom, equality and brotherhood as the 'new religion,' and the understanding advanced by the French Enlightenment thinkers. He rejects Jean-Jacques Rousseau's view that 'the freedom of one limits the freedom of others,' for it was based on individualism, on the notion of the self-sufficiency of a separate, independent individual, establishing a social order in conjunction with other individuals in the act of 'social agreement.' Being a true follower of the great German philosophers, Bakunin opposes the schematic individualism of the representatives of the Enlightenment with the dialectical idea of the mutual conditionality of individual freedom and the spiritual unity of personalities. In this respect Bakunin is closer than ever to the Fichtean version of fixed dialectic: '*...freedom becomes true and total only in the integrated mutual unity of everyone in everyone else. There is no isolated freedom, freedom is by nature mutual and social. In order for me to be free, it is essential that my rights and my human essence be recognised, and their image, if one may formulate it so, be reflected in the mirror of the free consciousness of everyone else. I could be really free only amongst people who are as free as I am.*'²² Here Bakunin employs the notion of the mutual recognition of personalities, which is central in Fichte's conception of the

²¹ Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiye sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 265.

²² Bakunin, *Izbrannyye filosofskiye sochineniya i pis'ma*, p. 273.

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state and law, and which most clearly differentiates this conception from the notion of the 'social agreement' advanced by the representatives of the Enlightenment.

Interestingly, the notion of *recognition* as a necessary condition of human existence, is also to be found in Hegel, but here it is a result of the clash of individuals (the collision of their desires directed towards the same things), their struggle not for life, but for death, ending in the division into masters and slaves (this idea was to constitute the crux in the interpretation of Hegel as found in the works of A. Kojève). The Hegelian concept of recognition turn out to be close to the Enlightenment idea of the mutual limitation of the external, 'aggressive' freedom of individuals (their desires to possess material things) with the help of 'social contract.' Fichte, though, has in mind something completely different. The external freedom of man is, in his view, secondary in relation to the internal freedom expressed within creative activity, while the internal freedom is not limited by the analogical freedom of another individual, but rather *is intensified* by it and is possible only *in coordination with the freedom of others*. Therefore, the act of recognition is in the philosophy of Fichte an act of love and an act of becoming familiar with one's self in another, i.e. 'God incarnate.' And this was to be the conception that Bakunin reproduced.

In his much later works expounding the concept of anarchism, Bakunin would persistently refute metaphysics, idealism and religion, and would claim that he stood on a materialist (yet realistic) position. But this cannot be taken to be anything more than a genuine self-delusion, even though Soviet historians of ideas adopted this 'materialist turning' on the part of Bakunin in good faith.²³ Bakunin's theory transformed itself only in its external form while in its philosophical fundamentals it was to remain unchanged, and it may be deemed comprehensible and plausible only within the general framework of Fichte's later religious teachings.

Bakunin's anarchism became not only a clear manifestation of the impact of Fichte on Russian philosophy, but it also took on the character of a *universal model* explaining the relations between personality (individual) and society, therefore, *it may be found, in various variants, in an array of thinkers*. With minor exceptions, one may divide all the eminent Russian thinkers of the nineteenth century into two large groups: those who based themselves on the philosophy of Hegel and as a result diminished the significance of human personality in relation to religion, the church and the state, and those who based themselves on Fichte and consequently admitted of the absolute priority of the individual (personality) in relation to the indicated institutions. The influence of Schelling needs to be seen as a contributing factor, one enriching the outlook of Russian thinkers but not one that changed the fundamental opposition. The very fact that the name of Fichte is encountered reasonably rarely in the philosophical works of the nineteenth century when compared to references to Hegel and Schelling may be explained purely in

²³ Vladimir Pustarnakov, 'Bakunin kak filosof', in *Bakunin: pro et contra*, (St. Petersburg: RKhGA, 2015), p. 697-698.

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terms of reasons of censorship; for Fichte had the firm reputation of being an 'atheist' and a 'revolutionary'. Nonetheless, Fichte's 'line' within Russian philosophy was to turn out to be far more fruitful and original than the lineage spawned by Hegel.

What is most unexpected is the presence of an anarchic conception within the views of F. Dostoevsky. By way of proof I shall submit a single fragment from the preparatory materials for the novel *The Devils*. Dostoevsky talks here about a society of perfect people, ones similar to Jesus Christ (i.e. revealing God in themselves) and therefore existing on the basis of completely different laws than those of contemporary imperfect mortals. 'Just imagine that all are Christs, - and would there be the present-day vacillation, bewilderment, pauperism? Whoever does not understand it will understand nothing of Christ and is no Christian. If people had not the slightest idea about the state and none whatsoever about sciences, then they would all be like Christs, and then, would there not indeed be immediately paradise on Earth?'²⁴ In the drafts for the novel *The Devils* the idea that if 'all were Christs' the world would be completely different than it is at present, appears several times.²⁵ We shall note that Dostoevsky is not even saying that people would be 'similar to Christ' but that they will in fact 'be Christs,' that is they will literally repeat Christ as man that God manifested himself in. In total accordance with the spirit of Bakunin's ideas, the passage from Dostoevsky quoted above shows that the future perfect people will have no need for a state to properly organise life. Dostoevsky portrays such an 'anarchic' society in more detail in the short story 'The Dream of a Funny Man.' And finally, one may recall the contents of Ivan Karamazov's article which is discussed by the participants of the meeting in the cell of the *starets* Zosima at the very beginning of the novel *The Brothers Karamazov*. Ivan conjectures in his piece that in the future, given the correct development of society, '[i]t is not the Church that should seek a concrete position within the State [...] but, on the contrary, every temporal state should become nothing other than a Church itself, and thereby should reject every purpose at odds with the Church and its aims.'²⁶ It hardly requires pointing out that within this context 'the Church' for Dostoevsky was not the historical, Christian Church (Orthodox or another denomination); here, just as in the passages quoted earlier, what is implied is a spiritual society of perfect people who have 'become Christs' and who consequently have no need of the state as an institution of coercion.

Leo Tolstoy has already long ago been confidently ascribed to the 'anarchist' ranks due to his negative attitude towards the state and other social institutions as well as his advocacy of a morality of individual self-perfection. This point of view was to become especially popular thanks to the book by I. Il'in *On resisting evil by force*, where the author

²⁴ Fiodor Dostoevsky, *Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy*, vol. XI, (Leningrad: Nauka 1972-1990), p. 192-193.

²⁵ Dostoevsky, *Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy*, vol. XI, 193; cf. 106; p. 182.

²⁶ Dostoevsky, *Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy*, vol. XIV, p. 58.

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equated Tolstoy's anarchism to nihilism.²⁷ This, undoubtedly, is a huge distortion of the views of this great writer and thinker, although such an identification of the two ideas was to become commonplace in literature devoted to Russian anarchism. The reason for this is the same – the incomprehension of the deep philosophical bases of the anarchic model of society, its rootedness in Christianity, understood in its primordial sense as the teachings on the identity of man and God. The impact of Fichte on Tolstoy has not been investigated in depth so far but it is quite obvious that Tolstoy's religious teachings correspond to the religious views expounded by Fichte – both thinkers wanted to return to a primordial, undistorted Christianity, the centre of which was not the idea of the ineradicable nature of sinfulness (that is the imperfection) in man, but the idea of the possibility and necessity for his perfection in this earthly life. Already in his early youth (he was at the time only eighteen years old!) Tolstoy formulated a higher aim for life as resting: 'in consciously utilising one's abilities to strive for the development of all that exists.'²⁸ This goal – the perfecting of all that exists through one's own self – perfection – was to remain with him to the very end and evolve into religious teachings at the end of his life. In this sense, the rejection and negation of the state by Tolstoy is not 'nihilism' but a deep-rooted positive belief in the possibility and potential of everyone to become perfect. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the problem of the correlation between the ideas of Fichte and Hegel was to be finally clearly presented. Boris Vysheslavetsev wrote a special book devoted to the philosophy of Fichte; in it he carried out a straightforward comparison of the systems employed by Hegel and Fichte. Vysheslavetsev drew an unequivocal conclusion in relation to Fichte. He considered his ideas to be the anticipation of the most original philosophical concepts of the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, in particular the philosophical ideas of F. Nietzsche and H. Bergson.²⁹ Hegel was, according to Vysheslavetsev, to remain devoted to the stereotypes of new European rationalism, with all of its inadequacies, arousing criticism of the non-classicist thinkers of the second half of the nineteenth century. Vysheslavetsev's book, unfortunately, was not to change the flawed stereotypes in understanding the main components of Russian philosophy, but it did give the system arguments for a correct evaluation of Western influences; today we should finally recognise Fichte's influence on Russian philosophy to be one more significant than that of Hegel, Schelling, or even Kant.

²⁷ Ivan Il'in, *Sobraniye sochineniy*, (Moscow: Russkaya Kniga, 1993-1999), vol. V, p. 103-107.

²⁸ Leo Tolstoy, *Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy*, vol. 46, *Dnevniky 1847–1854*, (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya Literatura, 1937), p. 30.

²⁹ Boris Vysheslavetsev, *Etika Fikhte. Osnovy prava i npravstvennosti v sisteme transtsendental'noy filosofii*, (Moscow: Pechatnya A. Snegirevoy, 1914), p. 87, 390-428.