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Culture at a Turning Point

Observations and Speculations

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Translated by A. Yarkho

My time will soon be over. I shall have to say good-bye and leave. I came to the Earth when the world was still peaceful. It was the time when people believed in the infinite future, when the Russian Empire was still flourishing. I had an active life: I worked a lot, I stood up against many things, I had friends and teachers, I passed through the circle of suffering beyond Dante's imagination, I wrote many books that were edited either in our country or at least in the West. Now I feel like looking around and trying to comprehend what has happened, what I participated in, what was it that people who were my kin perished for? What are we leaving to the future inhabitants of the Earth? I am well aware of living *at the turning point of culture*. But what can be said about that? And who will hear what we say?

☪ Ascent of Weltanschauung Primitivism ☪

LOOKING THROUGH literary sources of the end of the XIXth–beginning of the XXth century, we see fairly clearly that within the educated part of society there was ripening a feeling of spiritual poverty, boredom, and at the same time responsibility for the existing social injustice. In the present retrospective, we have a feeling that even then the possibility of all-embracing conflict—social, Weltanschauung, religious, and even military—was sensed.

Editors' note: Professor Nalimov died in Moscow on 19 January 1997. The present work is a selective, abridged version (with some stylistic changes) of a much longer work with the same title. We attempted to maintain the integrity of the original work by focusing upon spiritual, transpersonal, and theological themes but inevitably fell short of adequately portraying the vast sweep of Professor Nalimov's analysis of 20th century Russian cultural history. The complete work was originally published in Russian in the monthly periodical, Polis (No. 6, 1991; Nos. 1/2, 3, 4, 1992). Deletions from the original work are indicated by bracketed ellipses. The "abstract" above was actually a preface to the original work.

Nietzsche, in his posthumously published book (1968), declared it was time "to reevaluate values."¹ Some time later, there emerged a philosophical movement somewhat unexpected for Western culture—existentialism, opposing the then prevailing belief in the myth of scientific-technological progress. Later, such fresh trends as the dialectical theology of Protestantism, French personalism, and philosophical hermeneutics proved to be close to existentialism. Western culture also started to absorb spiritual teachings of the East. They laid the foundation for the theosophy of Yelena Blavatskaya. That, in its turn, gave birth to Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy oriented to nonorthodox Christian mysticism. Esoterism was slightly reopened.² In psychology, new, philosophically flavored trends emerged: Freudianism with its many ramifications, Jungian psychology, and much later, in the USA, a pragmatically oriented country, in the second half of the XXth century humanistic psychology appeared and later transpersonal psychology, both aimed at a nontraditional approach to human psychology.

In our country, at the turn of the century, the tension was felt especially acutely. The feeling of

anguish and depression can be found in the works of Chekhov, Kuprin, Leonid Andreyev, Alexander Blok. In the philosophical works of Lev Shestov, we come across statements of tragic doom about human existence which are opposed by the romantic rebellion of Gorky's characters. In our country there were numerous legal, half-legal, and clandestine parties, unions and federations,³ political terror, imprisonment, and hard labor penalties for those who fought for freedom. Intellectuals started to turn to occultism and mysticism, to refined symbolism, acmeism, abstractionism. Philosophy witnessed the advent of a "God-seeking" trend, partially expanding Orthodox dogmatism (Praise of the Name, creation of image of Sophia, recognition of the right to contradiction in theology); this "God-seeking" was somewhat rebellious (Rozanov, Solovyov, Bulgakov), and, when personified by Leo Tolstoy, was even challenging Orthodoxy. In the papers of Shestov and Berdyaev one can trace the origins of Russian existentialism (rooted in the works of Dostoyevsky).

Russia was taking the same road as the West. That was the road in search of the Universal principle of life. And it seemed to be able to solve all the sinister problems that were beginning to torture Western civilization. The road, however, proved to be futile. It could not avert the absurdity of World War I or its consequences: Bolshevism in our country, and Nazism in Germany—the country that seemed to be completely Christian and that had contributed much to the Western humanitarian outlook. Neither did the trend toward the search for the Universal principle of life become prominent enough in contemporary "postindustrial" society (sometimes also called "technotronic," "superindustrial" and "informational"). In the *Weltanschauung* aspect, positivism and neopositivism were replaced by postpositivism that retained in a more refined form the same mechanistic vision of the world, including physicalism and reductionism. [...]

☪ Social and Philosophical Insolvency of the Russian Institutional Religion ☪

[...]

IT WAS a great and bright joy to see a Christmas service on a TV screen and to hear a now-allowed appeal to restore temples that were only recently

brutally destroyed and profaned in the name of the seemingly great idea: creation of a new man. And still...

Still, we would wish to comprehend: what happened to the people of our country? The Holy Russia, as certain representatives of the intelligentsia used to call it in a high-flown manner. Where is it? What is the source of the national apostasy? Or perhaps the idea of Russian holiness was only a myth?

We seem to start to understand that any social system of intelligible⁴ flavor is able to develop without deadlocks only if it has a serious and flexible enough opposition also capable of changing in the process of the struggle.

Spirituality cannot be invented. We scoop it from the depths of our consciousness. It preserves the experience of the entire historical past. The important thing is that spirituality is never given to us as an ultimate formula. It should necessarily be reinterpreted in the light of contemporary problems. Here lies the essence and meaning of culture. If the interpretation succeeds, culture proceeds to develop; if it becomes dogmatized, culture perishes.

The tragedy of Russia can perhaps be explained by an absence of a sufficiently powerful religious reformer. Leo Tolstoy seems to have been ready to become one, but that was not to happen. A Russian Luther never appeared. Since the epoch of Joseph of Volotsk (victory over the Non-Acquisitive trend), the Russian Orthodox church became a state institution. Important spiritual opposition proved to be impossible.⁵

It is only natural that in our country there could not emerge anything similar to the Theology of Liberation that had been crystallized during the two recent decades in the framework of the Catholic confession (André-Vincent, 1987).⁶ The sources of this movement are in Latin America.

The Orthodoxy of today does not know either such socially oriented theologians as, for example, the French clerical reformer and philosopher Jacques Ellul (1987), a participant of the Resistance, or his compatriot, religious philosopher Jacques Maritain, who criticized contemporary culture from the viewpoint of Christian democracy (Galtseva, 1990).

World War I became the greatest event at the turn of the century. It was the war that directed into a new, infinitely tragic channel everything that had been accumulated by Western culture during many centuries.

Why did Christian Europe not stop this absurd war? In the name of what was it started? What could the potential winner hope to get? Was it not obvious beforehand that even with the contemporary level of technology the war would be long and unprecedentedly bloody? The two illusory victories, one over Russia, the other one over Germany, brought to the fighters human losses and mutilations. We know what the consequences were of these victories for the winners.

In the astral aspect, what dark powers from the distant past were brought to the surface of human consciousness during those years of bloodshed that involved millions of people?

Why was there no warning from Holy Russia? Leo Tolstoy came as the Herald of the forgotten in Christianity. He was endowed with an unusual power of the word: his voice, that sounded before the beginning of the war, should have been heard. But there were few who had ears. He was excommunicated.⁷

People often ask: could it have been possible for the Russian revolution to have never happened? The answer is simple: what happened could not have been otherwise. The situation was provocative: a feudal structure of social hierarchy rigorously opposed the course of history. But it could perhaps have turned otherwise if the Church grasped the situation in time and proposed its own, Christian, that is, predominantly nonviolent way. Recall that the great Russian poet Alexander Blok saw Christ leading the revolutionary twelve. However, the wind of violence blew everything away.

Much, much later, between two arrests and with a blacklist passport in my pocket, I entered a church and heard the prayer to Stalin's health. And though I had known about this before, I was shocked. I am well aware that such a prayer is formally licensed by the Bible itself.⁸ But how about people who were in prison, died in the camps, or awaited to be shot? Nobody prayed for them openly.

And if Russians had to pray for Stalin, Germans had to pray for Hitler.⁹ What is then the

essence of Christianity? [...] I am sure that Europe was deeply Christianized, but the European always remained a semantically multidimensional creature¹⁰ and the Christianized heart in our days becomes manifest not so much in everyday life as in peak situations. I would like to illustrate this by an example. My friend, a German pastor and a Protestant theologian, once told me about his strongest religious experience, which I will retell here:

During World War II he was in Russia as a soldier in the Nazi army. Once he was called by the commanding officer. He saw a Russian girl in rags, her eyes red with weeping. She was looking for a clergyman. Her mother had been killed; a funeral service had to be held. And the pastor went with her.

Thus, in front of death, the strife and bloody opposition was forgotten for the sake of Christianity.

However, in our seemingly deeply Christianized country, no sufficiently strong social opposition of a Christian type was formed. And it is not very difficult to explain why.

If we are ready to accept the semantic multidimensionality of personality (Nalimov, 1989a), we shall have to agree that the nature of our Ego is determined by a correlation among its different semantic components. In the past, the Church that was the prevailing source of influence over the spiritual life of society, especially of common people, never gave a contemporary interpretation of Christ's teaching. The evangelic message was solely interpreted within the context of the Judeo-Roman reality of the distant past. As a result, the Christian system of value concepts proved to be alienated (in the language of mathematics, orthogonal) from the system of value orientations of the present day. But in peak situations it could happen otherwise. For example, as in the above episode in the face of death, a transcultural event, in which the semantic structure of personality and its correlation links were radically restructured.

The tragedy of World War I consisted in the fact that death ceased to be a sacral event. It proved possible to kill—without any special reason, without punishment, and these murders were approved of and blessed by the Church. Murder became technologized. And here lies a special immoralizing significance of technology. The killer

does not see his victim any more, does not experience the sacral significance of his deed, and ceases, therefore, to experience the sacral nature of life. It is after this world madness that concentration camps sprang into being, as well as the idea of a just war—a war against one's own people being such.

I will illustrate what has been said above by an episode of World War II, told by a lieutenant-colonel of armored forces:

I am a professional officer. There were many deaths while I was in command. But there is one episode I cannot forget: it is always in me, in front of my eyes.

We are surrounded. I issue an order: leave the tanks, divide into pairs, find any arms and try to break out to our troops. Together with another soldier we climb up to the German trench. I am equipped with a Finnish dagger, he with a wrench. In the trench are two German soldiers. They do not see us, they are eating. I indicate one of them with my eyes to my comrade, and raise the dagger over the other one. He only had time to raise his hand with two outstretched fingers and to shout: "Zwei kinder." I hit him.

Thus, for this man, there was only one sacral, personally perceived murder in the whole war. The rest was impersonal, performed by technology. It is amazing that Heidegger, so passionately describing the effect of technology on culture, overlooked the fact that technology desacralized death—and life as well. I started to write this in the days when death was raging in the Gulf, and in Baltic republics; the blood of our countrymen was shed for no special reason, and later the same happened in Moscow. A soldier in a tank is no longer merely a man but a technological system. He loses his identity. That is why technology, especially military technology, is immoral.

In recent years, more than once, I asked Orthodox thinkers to explain to me what had happened to our Christian country and its people, "God-carrier" as it was called. The inevitable answer was "God's connivance."

This is certainly not an answer, but a refusal to discuss the subject. Its discussion seems to be beyond us. What is then possible to say about the future of the country, of the role of a spiritual element? Religion, on its own accord, alienates itself from contemporary problems and thus loses

its existential element. The once inseparable links between the spiritual element and human existence in the world is disappearing. In terms of Heidegger, religion ceases to be an existential.

Why?

The answer seems to be simple. The Bible is versatile. And one of its aspects, generated by the outlook of the distant past, is penetrated by the idea of rigorous determinism, and, correspondingly, by the worship for power, any power. Civil obedience. Obedience to any violence performed in the name of power. Here are some relevant quotations:

Mth. 10.29–30. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. (An almost similar text can be found in Lk. 12.6,7.)

Rom. 13.1-5. Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:

For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

Numb. 15.32–36. And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man who gathered sticks upon the sabbath day.

And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation.

And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him.

And the LORD said unto Moses, the man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him without the camp.

And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the LORD commanded Moses.

We are well aware of the fact that these fragments extracted from the general context do not in any way determine the essence of Christianity. More-

over, they oppose the great sermon of love and mercy preached by Christ. However, the great teaching is interspersed with them; we have to recognize this fact. And these fragments allowed Christianity to merge with an essentially feudal state. The revolution against the senile empire turned into a rebellion against the Church. This is the tragedy of the Russian people. And we feel it is time to understand the sources of the tragedy.¹¹

Let us now analyze the above fragments from the philosophical viewpoint. God in them is anthropomorphic. He is prescribed to be the greatest ruler of the world. It was not man who was made in the image of God, but God who was made in the image of man aspiring to the supreme power. And this is only natural. This reflects the archaic features of our consciousness. In this way the great despotic powers of the past were constructed and glorified. In our country, an attempt was made to revive this archetype of the despotic past for the sake of universal happiness, propped up by the Mausoleum as a symbol of greatness of the supreme power on the earth. An attempt was made to control everything using new tools. But it proved impossible to “number all the hairs on the head,” and we understand now that it was impossible in principle. After Gödel’s theorem we cannot accept this statement even as a metaphor.

The phantom of the past proved to lack vitality in the present. We, people, carriers of the distant past in the depths of our consciousness, did change. We came to understand that in the Universe there is the undeterminable, the uncontrolled, the Ultimate, which can be called Chance, Freedom, or Spontaneity (Nalimov, 1989a). Only the awareness of freedom lets humans acquire the sense of dignity and personal responsibility for everything and in front of everybody. This is the ultimate, “terrible” freedom, as the great Russian poet Gumilev called it, but it is this freedom that has the supreme moment for every human being.

In the early years of Christianity, Dionysius the Aeropagite dared to outline in poetic texts what God revealed to us in the ultimate domains of consciousness.¹² Then he was no longer heard. Perhaps, he will be heard in our days, in the days of the awaited regeneration?

I did not wish to hurt anybody by my words. Indeed, I know there was resistance. There was

the tragic heroism of opposition that I, together with many others, experienced. But what happened should be comprehended and evaluated so that we can go further. And criticism here must be merciless.

✻ Power and Opposition to It ✻

[...]

Christianity of the New Testament was a transformation and removal of the principle of theocracy. Christ is described as a carrier of absolute plenitude of theocratic authority, as the one to whom “all power is given in heaven and in earth” (Mth. 28.18),¹³ as a tsar, high priest, and prophet in one person. But he enters Jerusalem riding not a battle horse but a peaceful donkey, and instead of arranging the Messianic rule over nations, he turns himself over to extreme humiliation and execution; his theocratic cloth remains secret and spiritual and is realized on the plane of a political fact in an inverse, negative way. (Averintsev, 1970, p. 200)

We would also like to remind the reader that in the books of Dostoyevsky, the Russian Christian philosopher, the principal subject was that of *violence* (for the sake of the seeming good) against the humanitarian moral ideal of the New Testament Christianity.¹⁴ No matter how different Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky were as thinkers, they eventually had to consider the same problem. It is now, after the experiment of more than 70 years, that we started to comprehend why this subject had been foreseen to be the main one in the tragic fate of Russia occupying the boundary position between Europe and Asia.

We cannot help citing here the remarkable words of Berdyaev (1990) on how Dostoyevsky interpreted “the freedom of spirit” as a religious subject:

In the prophetic *Legend of the Great Inquisitor* there is an insight of a genius concerning not only the authoritative Catholicism, but also authoritative communism and fascism, all totalitarian regimes. The same is true of the historical theocracies of the past. *The Legend of the Great Inquisitor* and many fragments in *The Devils* can be interpreted mainly as directed against Catholicism and revolutionary socialism. But actually the subject is much broader, and deeper. This is the subject of the

Caesar's kingdom and of the rejection of temptation by the kingdom of this world. All kingdoms of this world, all kingdoms of the Caesar, old monarchist kingdoms and new socialist and fascist kingdoms, are based on compulsion and denial of the freedom of spirit. Dostoyevsky is, as a matter of fact, a religious anarchist, and in this he is very Russian. The problem of socialism, the Russian question of the arrangement of the mankind in a new estate is a religious question, the question of God and immortality. The social topic remained religious in Russia even under atheistic consciousness. (p. 141)

Proceeding from our concepts of the multidimensional semantics of texts (Nalimov, 1989a), we can propose a model of behavior for a Christian. Wishing to realize one's attitude to the problems of power, a person brought up in the tradition of Christian culture forms within the mind a two-dimensional semantic structure reflecting the opposition of violence vs. nonviolence. The correlation between two moral principles allows making compromise decisions. It is proceeding from this sort of compromise that Western culture has been developing for twenty centuries. But in some severely intense situations of crisis, the probabilistic structure of moral-ethical evaluations changed radically. The components became orthogonalized.¹⁵ There emerged opposing political figures oriented, on the one hand, to absolute dictatorship, and, on the other hand, to the ideals of anarchism. Russia, a country with ancient Messianic orientation, had forebodings concerning the compulsive ways of establishing a new world order. That accounts for the passionate protest against the authorities of the early Russian revolutionary, M. Bakunin (a gentleman by origin), of the revolutionary anarchist prince, P. Kropotkin, of the count, Leo Tolstoy, of the existential philosopher, N. Berdyaev, of the poet, M. Voloshin, who took the fate of Russia very much to heart, and of F. Dostoyevsky discussed above. Today we can say that the words pronounced by Bakunin (1989b) 120 years ago proved to be prophetic:

They [Marxists] say that such a state yoke, a dictatorship is a necessary tool of passing to absolute freedom: anarchy, or freedom is a goal, while state, or dictatorship is a means. Thus, to liberate people they should first be enslaved.

Our polemics has so far stopped at this contradiction. They assert that only dictatorship,

and it goes without saying, their dictatorship, is capable of creating freedom for the people; we answer that no dictatorship can have another goal than its own perpetuation and that it is only capable of producing and forming slavery of the people that bears it; freedom can be created only by freedom, i.e., by the rebellion of all people and free organization of working masses upwards. (p. 484)

In our opinion, having once seized it [the state], it [the people] must immediately destroy it as the eternal prison of folk masses; according to Marx's theory, people must not only leave it undestroyed but, on the contrary, must strengthen and consolidate it and in this form pass it on to complete disposal of their benefactors, guardians, and teachers—commanders of the communist party, in short, to Mr. Marx and his friends who will start to liberate it in their own manner. They will concentrate the power in a strong hand because the ignorant people require a careful guardianship; they will create a single state bank concentrating all the industrial, commercial, agricultural and even scientific production, and divide the people into two armies: industrial and agricultural, under the direct command of state engineers that will compose a new privileged scientific-political estate. (pp. 485-486)

But the experiment, bloody and painful, was still carried out. It went on more than 70 years. And everything happened exactly in the way it had been predicted. This is amazing. History knows few predictions that came true.

The unprecedented merging of the state and the ruling party took place. The state idea supported by 18 million party members penetrated all the pores of life. All aspects of the society: industry, agriculture, science, medicine, art, church, were bound by the same web.

And still, at a certain moment, the uncontrolled metastases of power started to develop. The first victim became the village. The country began to import grain. But the town, from legislative authorities to science, did not want to lag behind either. In the Academy of Sciences, its upper layer began to avoid creative activities, having turned its efforts to suppressing undesirable competing initiatives. In the army, side by side with the traditional authority of the officer corps, there emerged the destructive power of elder soldiers over the recruits. In the system of labor camps, the official authorities were complemented by the

power of the thieves' world, based on its own ideology, which later splashed out into the civil world. Perhaps that may also account for the loss of respect for work. All the people in everyday services started to feel they had power. In a shop, workshop, booking-office, clinic, or library one felt not like a customer, but as a miserable vassal addressing feudal lords of varying significance.

Having sensed they are allies, the rulers of the country started to reconstruct the economics in compliance with their local interests, not coinciding with the interests of the country as a whole. Such a process of self-destruction of power could not be foreseen even by Bakunin.

Metastases of power at last made the leaders of the party speak of *perestroika*. And it is only natural that suzerains of all ranks furiously resist it. We are watching an acute struggle between the democratic forces of the country and the nomenklatura, a new, unseen before, coagulation of power in its upper layers. That is a completely new phenomenon in the history of human society. Its study seems to have started at last (Voslensky, 1990). [...]

✻ Craving for Social Justice ✻

THE GOSPELS are full of mysteries. Much of what is said is vague or implicit. Much is beyond the horizon of the visible. Much may be interpreted in essentially different ways. The New Testament is not a program of action. It lacks a logically outlined dogma. It is a freely flowing sermon, and each can perceive it to the extent his/her consciousness is prepared to do so.

During the past twenty centuries, all heresies, all spiritual teachings, all revolutions turned out to be related to the Christian teaching, while, strictly speaking, there was no Christian teaching itself. There was no systematic, logically structured teaching, at least to the degree Buddhism was logically structured. Christ in his sermons did not teach but tried to awaken in man what could be awakened...Judas was also one of his disciples: this is how Christ's sermon was responded to within him. And later that was repeated many times in European history. We all can be witnesses to that. [...]

We cannot but agree that Christ was not a social-political revolutionary in the sense we under-

stand the term now. But it is also beyond doubt that His sermon stimulated all the subsequent movements, not only reformatory ones, but also social-political ones. This assertion cannot be proved rigorously, but can be easily grounded if we observe closely the history of the last two millennia. In the course of all this period, the original sermon has been reinterpreted. Sometimes the reinterpretation was so radical that the idea of nonviolence was transformed into its antithesis, the idea of boundless violence. Violence started to act in the name of the ideal that included nonviolence realized by love (or at least tolerance) towards one's enemies. Two millennia were necessary to decide who was right in the long run: Christ himself or his politically-minded disciple Judas. Here is the tragedy of European culture. The concluding experiment was carried out in our country, at the watershed between civilized Europe and nomadic Asia. At present, out of modesty (and paradigmatic cosiness) the West has replaced the evangelic lesson of "love thy enemy" by culturological "humanism" that proved to be opposed to the rigorousness of the so-called "class morality."

We would like to remind the reader of two prophetic statements:

Mth. 10.34. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword.

Mth. 26.52. Then said Jesus unto him. Put up again the sword into the place: for all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword.

On the one hand, a call to active, almost revolutionary rebellion; on the other hand, warning against any violence, even if violence is a means of defense. It was left up to us (at least, this is how I feel) to make decisions. The sermon was not a declaration but a free teaching that left the choice to the conscience of the listener. Each hears it the way he or she can. [...]

Will the problem of social justice and life without poverty be solved as before, proceeding from the Evangelic Message of the past, or will mankind wait for the new Revelation that could come from the depths of its spiritual experience? [...]

Wars penetrate all human history. It seems purposeless to examine their local, specific causes. There seems to be only one, a somewhat occult explanation. Wars were necessary to destroy the

old and to give birth to the new. In terms of Lev Gumilyov, they were necessary to actualize passionality on the national scale, without which history is unthinkable. Perhaps it was the original mother, the deity of Earth Gaia who prepared us to war? But the past did not act properly in the XXth century. The extreme, unprecedented advance of technology splashed the events beyond the familiar boundaries. Every war is a tragedy. But this one was a supertragedy fraught with a sinister form of tragedy.

☪ The Enigma of the Russian Revolution ☪

I SAW THE rebellion, the days of the people's revolt, as a child. Red banners, red fillets, cockades on the service-caps covered with red—an ocean of red. The feeling of general enthusiasm, expectations of something new, unseen, unprecedented. Those who were eager to rush forward into the unknown were in their element. [...]

[I feel] that: (1) the world we inhabit, despite the rationalism of our culture, is prepared for the irrational riot—that should not be forgotten; (2) the millennium that passed after Russia was baptized did not make our people truly Christian—the bloody war could be waged even when its reasons were not comprehended; (3) the problem of national opposition is inherited from the imperial past, and this seems to be one of the most grave and serious heritages.

What happened later we know only to the extent we were allowed to know.

What now?

The country is gravely ill. The soil of our country is exhausted, its water and its air are polluted. The beauty has faded away.

The people have also exhausted their power. The gene pool itself has changed: the strongest and the bravest, the champions of freedom were exterminated.¹⁶ Among them, the families of unsubdued intellectuals, entrepreneurs (merchants), craftsmen (artisans and peasants). The link between the generations has been broken; the succession in traditions, customs, knowledge ceased to exist. Millions of people passed through the Gulag camps, among them the youth, who are most strongly affected by the environment. Many of them, after liberation, brought to the outside

the habits of the thieves' world, its values and mentality. No wonder delinquency expands, work no longer respected (in the camps, the labor was always forced; it became the synonym of compulsion). Labor began to be perceived as an activity humiliating people and propagated by the hostile State.

Corrective labor camps produced a subculture of thieves in form, and quasianarchic in meaning, which, although opposing the State violence, was set loose by the values of the State system. Violence punished itself. But the number of victims was too great.

The Earth is moaning: the remains of those who perished are not buried in compliance with the ancestral traditions but heaped in piles in unknown places. I do not know myself where I should go to give homage to the ashes of my parents, my brother, and my grandparents. Who hears the groans of the tortured that the astral space around the Earth is resounding with?

How many centuries have to pass to heal these wounds? We have to live in this atmosphere of the incessant groans and to reproduce again the friendly attitude of the Earth to humankind that has sinned so much.

Nowadays it is often asked: why was it necessary to shed so much blood, to kill so many victims, including people who were not actively opposing the regime? The answer is almost trivial: in order to be able to make such radical, unnatural transformations in such a short time, a mass sacrifice was needed that opened the way to unrestrained demonism. Against the background of these sacrifices, people accepted demonism almost with resignation. Until some moment. I cannot help recollecting the poem by the famous Russian poet, F. Tyutchev, written in August of 1863, that begins with the following lines:

A horrible dream is hanging over us,
A horrible, disgusting dream:
Covered with blood we are fighting the dead
Resurrected for the new burial...

In this passionate poem, every word is applicable to our situation.

In our days, the poem was continued by history. The miracle of "the new burial" came true. The process of revival of the new nation began. "Be brave, withhold, and overcome!" They have

overcome: unarmed people rose up against the tanks, and the tanks stopped. The sacrificial blood of the young people of this land proved to be stronger than the armed forces. The social-historical significance of the event, as well as the spiritual one, is obvious.

Here an explanation is due. People, or to be more accurate, the people of our country, form what can be called a *hyperpersonality*.¹⁷ Following Mindell (1989), it is possible to say that hyperpersonality has a somnolent state of consciousness. Otherwise said, this is our collective unconscious, lacking a developed form of language or logic, and therefore unable to reason independently, that is, it does not produce its own texts or formulate conceptions. But it possesses images which it can manipulate, creating new images out of old, yet without rejecting the old ones altogether; it has its own system of preferences, though undeveloped (if it is evaluated from the viewpoint of logic); it has its own notion of what is good and what is bad (even sinful) in human behavior. It has memory going back into the distant, prehuman past. It is also capable of evolving, affected by the environment. But, in contrast to the conscious, in the unconscious all the processes have a different time scale, as it proceeds as well from the distant past forgotten by our day-consciousness. The unconscious still lives in the world of archetypes.

The collective unconscious cannot act independently. It acts through people. Society can live a harmonious life and be obedient to the authorities only while there is concord between people's activities and the way they are responded to within the unconscious. There can be periods of stagnation, when society becomes senile and the unconscious remains dormant. That is always a sign of a tempest, which we have observed more than once in our history.¹⁸

There can also emerge a conflict between the activities of society and the state of its unconscious. Then the unconscious starts to look for the hero. Having made a mistake, it tries to replace it, and it is at this point that serious social conflicts burst out.

The accord was broken in 1917–1918, but the leaders of our country at that epoch did not understand it then, which brought about the tragedy. Strange as it may seem, the accord did exist

when the Father of the People [Stalin] ruled the country. The unconscious was deceived by the power of the idea, by its slogans. Then came a long calm before the storm, and now a dangerous and menacing conflict has been uncovered. Again the leaders of the country did not understand the profound opposition to the unconscious created by the artificially formed social structure. [...]

✿ Human Habitation in the Universe ✿

Man is always more than he knows of himself.
—Karl Jaspers (1932, p. 131)

BEFORE PASSING on to the conclusion, devoted to the criticism of culture, let us examine the variety of the worlds in which humans exist.

The concept of the potential multiplicity of physical worlds was first formulated in cosmogony. The physical world open to our sensual perception is determined by a rigid set of numerical values of dimensionless, fundamental constants.¹⁹ If we are ready to assume the existence of other sets of the constants, that would mean that we are ready to accept the existence of other physical worlds.

The problem of the multiplicity of worlds can be discussed from different philosophical positions (assuming there is an observer), filling it with different contents. Assume that there is a specific, active observer, a demiurge capable not only of perceiving, but also of generating worlds nonphysical by nature.²⁰ What kind of worlds will they be?

(1) *The physical world*. It is open directly to our organs of perception only to a small degree. Modern equipment has considerably enlarged our interaction with this world. We have mastered it to a significantly greater extent than our forefathers. But the mastery by means of technology has unavoidably resulted in the alienation from the object mastered. Now we can acknowledge that in the distant past, man possessed magic: he could directly (without any physical effort) affect the physical world.²¹

(2) *The world of biosphere*. We inhabit it. It inhabits us. It also exists outside us. We, residents of modern cities, are alienated from this world much more than our forefathers who had lived in the pre-Christian epoch. We destroy this world

mercilessly and at the same time, by means of genetic engineering, we try to act as demiurges creating the animate world. Above we spoke of the Earth as a living creature with its own somnolent quasiconsciousness. The world of the Earth, once called Gaia, coexists with its biosphere and possesses it.

(3) *The world of dreams, fantasies, imagination.* Here humans act fully as demiurges. They discover this world inside themselves in the process of their creative activities. We are fully aware of the fact that people of modern culture are to a lesser degree conjugated with this world than former generations. We do not have time to look into ourselves. Everything hampers us: TV, radio, press, computers, general bustle and extreme intensity of life, and the absence of the habit "to look into oneself like into a mirror." There are people who have learned to meditate as before, but they are few.

(4) *The world of the collective unconscious of the nation.* We have already touched on this subject above. This is somnolent quasiconsciousness filled with images and sensations but lacking the ability to create texts independently. It stores the memory of the entire past that has not been lived out. And this imprinted past is not altogether safe. Under certain conditions it can turn into a volcano, erupting what has been lurking in the dark. That seems to have happened in Germany when Nazism appeared. This is perhaps the reason for ethnic clashes in our country of many states, in seemingly civilized Europe, and all over the world, when the hidden comes to the surface.

(5) *The world of meanings.* All meanings potentially exist in the universe (Nalimov, 1989a). Humans, with their demiurgical pride, create texts out of them, and they are not always verbal. In this way, cultures emerge, which are various versions of the world of meanings. Intellectual activities, including science, are a secondary process generated by the world of meanings. Culture is a shelter for humans. The human psyche was always vulnerable, and the spiritual aspect of culture always had a psychotherapeutic function. Culture as psychotherapy is indispensable for humans. Human ecology is a specifically oriented culturology.

(6) *The world of transpersonal existence.* People of yore felt connected with the transpersonal,

universal element. Trying to explain to one's self what one heard from inside, humans invented myths and legends. Wishing to make what they had heard more expressive, people resorted to mysteries, music, poetry, architecture. They recorded what they learned with symbols and archetypes. Something was for a long time concealed under the cover of esoterism. For a personality, the transpersonal was always the ultimate reality. Wishing to communicate the ultimate reality to culture, humans invented religion. Then they dared to resort to speculative philosophy as well. That happened in ancient Greece. In Western Christianity's past, an attempt was made to join together speculations and revelations (gnosticism, patristics, later scholastics). Then an impenetrable curtain covered the ultimate reality. Resort to meditation techniques is an attempt to draw the curtain up.

(7) *The world of social existence.* That seems to be a rather ephemeral reality. This is but an arena in which short-term dramas are played; more often than not, they are tragic and created by individuals in the process of interactions with other, more fundamental worlds of existence. In the long-run, scientific-technological progress is but one of such performances, perhaps one of the most tragic that humans ever experienced.

Cultures have come and gone. Each discovered its own way of interaction with each of the worlds of human existence. Each person in each culture discovered his or her own ways of living the multiplicity of the worlds. We have the impression that culture preserved its vital force until its people found the possibility of preserving integrity within the variety of existence.

This is how it was when the world was still young. [...]

✿ A Few Words on History ✿

FROM WHAT has been said above it follows that the title of this paper is justifiable. We are actually at the turning point of culture.

Our culture, on the one hand, gave birth to many unprecedented things, and on the other hand, narrowed down the framework of human existence, having switched humankind off from the multiplicity of the worlds within which it used to exist. We have to pay for everything, in par-

ticular, the unrestrained success in one domain brings about losses in another one. This is the price of one-sided evolution. The negligence of the potentially built-in reality made the future of existence dangerous. I repeat once more that we are witnessing culture at its turning point, and that means it has to change its course radically. It must become different.

It seems, however, that only a few are ready to discuss the problem of the future of culture in a broad formulation. The aspects of the topic commonly proposed for discussion are specific and sometimes extremely naive.

Let us examine some of these proposals critically:

(1) More rigorous measures are proposed to be taken to conserve nature. Indeed, this is necessary, even extremely so. However, we must be aware of the fact that the best we can do is to postpone the final catastrophe. We should bear in mind that the population of the Earth will keep growing and scientific-technological progress will keep expanding geographically.

(2) In the social aspect, there are still many people in our country who continue to say there was a sinister plot and horrible demoniacal leaders. All that looks extremely naive. The things that happened in our country had been prepared by the entire course of its historical development, by its inability to accept Western culture in a sufficiently complete way, at least to the extent that was done in North America or Australia. As to the twilight leaders, we would like to quote here the words by Mindell (1989): "Sociological theory calls role occupation 'person selection' and implies that if someone is not there to fill a role, society will create such a person...Fierce warriors appear because there are battles to be fought" (p. 87).²²

(3) Another proposal, this time a purely moral recipe, is universal repentance. If this action is interpreted in the common, primitive way (repentance to get rid of a sin), that seems to be hardly sufficient for overcoming the crisis.²³ If it is considered in the broad interpretation proposed by the German philosopher, Jaspers, it should be understood that it involves creation of a system of new values. That would be equal to generating a new culture whose outlines should by now have been seen.

(4) The dream of creating a new human. It goes back to the origins of Christianity, to the Divine

Message of the New Testament. And how many times it flashed with a new light in the history of Christianity, especially in its sacral manifestations! A bright star in this sky was the well-known novel of Bulwer-Lytton,²⁴ *The Coming Race* (1979). Marxist utopia had, as a matter of fact, the same dream of creating a new individual (new "human material") by radical change of all social relations. In German National Socialism, too, one of the goals was a creation of a new race. In the two latter cases it was realized by violence licensed by the state. [...]

A new culture without violence has to be created. But there still remains the question of what we should do today. [...]

☛ Our Position (instead of a conclusion) ☛

The coming future will be revealed to us not by the authoritative answer, but by the personal existence of man who lives through it. The purpose of the forecast aimed at awakening may be only this: to remind man of his own Self.

—Karl Jaspers (1932, p. 191)

BEING AT the turning point of culture, we have naturally to think of its radical modification. Culture must become different. It must become radically different, but at the same time lie on the same foundation of fundamental concepts that we inherited from the past, including the remotest past, not necessarily European. As a matter of fact, we are very rich, spiritually, materially, and technologically, but we cannot cope with our wealth. This is our problem.

How can this situation be changed? I do not know. Nobody knows. There is no ready-made recipe.²⁵ No new Utopias should be created—that will only revive authoritarianism and totalitarianism. What we need is a free search of new, non-forcible ways of transformation. And this search should attract the entire society, not separate groups or individuals.

This is how I see it:

(1) The problems of social (i.e., human) ecology must necessarily be formulated more profoundly and presented to society in multiple and comprehensible publications. This informational process must be permanent, as the rate of evolution of negative phenomena increases.

(2) None of us has a full mastery of entire culture. We only know it in a fragmentary way. We were taught in this way (with few exceptions) and we teach in the same way, in compliance with official curricula. Schools, colleges, and universities train specialists. What we should do, however, is to train intellectuals (who will become specialists when they start to work). If culture is distributed into different departments, it does not work. It cannot protect humankind, cannot fulfill its therapeutic task. Society as a whole is excommunicated from the true culture and satisfied with its substitute called "mass culture," which is a mere parody of the semantic universe created in the course of millennia. If culture acted integrally, our people would hardly succumb the tyranny of forced socialism, and Germans under the tyranny of National Socialism. I am well aware of the fact that many will perceive my words as a fantasy, void of any reality. Indeed, the difficulties are obvious: will science wish to participate in this venture, will there be adequate teachers, will it be possible to avoid vulgarization and nonprofessionalism?²⁶ However, there is no other way. We would like to emphasize this is not a program of salvation but the creation of a spiritual atmosphere that would facilitate the search for new ways of cultural development.

(3) I feel that science must liberate itself and society from what Ellul calls "the logic of technological system." It must acknowledge it does not any longer satisfy the former requirements of being scientific (Nalimov, 1989b). The rational and the irrational do not oppose but complement each other (Nalimov, 1991). If this is understood, we will be able to construct models of consciousness comparable with those of modern physics and cosmogony and will at last discover the connection between physical and semantic worlds (Nalimov, 1989a). We have to acknowledge that contemporary psychology, as well as philosophy, know almost nothing of human nature and of the nature of meanings into which humans are submerged. They are ignorant of that because our science still forbids the study of inner ("subjective") experience. But this experience is real. It is irreproducible by the wish of the experimenter, but it exists all the same. It is the experience of human existence in the world, the existential. And while we stubbornly ignore the study of human

beings, no wonder that culture supported by positivist science found itself fractured and at the turning point.

(4) Religion (practically in all its manifestations) became marginal in our life. It is petrified. It does not want to notice that people have changed. For some reason it does not understand that the great spiritual experience of the past should be reinterpreted in the light of the present-day problems. In the majority of its manifestations it refuses to comprehend the present-day realities; this is especially true of Russian Orthodoxy. It does not want to meet science halfway, as it does not understand that new fundamental ideas of *Weltanschauung* come most often from science, from such branches as mathematics, theoretical physics, biology. The idea of ecumenism remains not fully comprehended. The task is not to preside together at solemn conferences, but to recognize that the whole of past experience should be equally valuable. It is impossible any longer to insist that one of its forms has priority over another. The religion of the world must become integral, the way a human being is integral, no matter in what tradition he or she was brought up.²⁷ I believe that religion could help to restore the sacral feeling of existence and therefore open up a *nonforcible* way of interaction between the earth, nature, and people.

Now, at the break of culture, we call to seek the road to the Temple in its modern version. That must be the road to the lost Universal dwelling, to the ultimate reality of existence. Humankind must retrieve all its lost abodes in the multiplicity of the adjoining worlds. And then, we hope, the sinister clouds now closing over us will start to disperse.

Notes

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Jeanna A. Drogalina for her great help in the preparation of the text. Preparation of the present version was supported by a grant from the Russian Foundation of Studies in the Humanities.

1. Many relevant statements by Nietzsche can be found in my book (Nalimov, 1989a). Note only that as early as at the end of the previous century, he could see where power could lead if directed at the forcible inculcation of virtue (Nietzsche, 1968):

3.11 By which means does a virtue come to power?—By exactly the same means as a political party: the slandering, inculpation, undermining of virtues that oppose it and are already in power, by rebaptizing them, by systematic persecution and mockery. Therefore: through sheer *immorality*.

2. The brilliant book by E. Schure (1961) can be mentioned in this respect.

3. Among anarchists.

4. Intelligible—a philosophical term denoting an object that can only be grasped by mind.

5. The schism, one of the most outstanding events of Russian religious life, failed to acquire sufficient spiritual force to take the road of renewal, though we still remember the name of the great rebel priest Avvacum. The ramified and versatile sectarianism severely suppressed by the State also failed to affect significantly Russian spiritual life.

6. Here is one of the statements which characterizes this movement in a sufficiently complete way (André-Vincent, 1987):

Theology of liberation is brought down to reinterpretation of conflicts of social life. (p. 74)

One of the documents reads that “the sin” is interpreted as a “collective category” and the purpose of the church is then the discovery of this “sin.” (p. 76)

Some authors are ready to believe that was the beginning of the quest for humanitarian socialism.

7. I know from what people of an older generation told me how many of them, especially intellectuals, were pushed away from Orthodoxy after this excommunication. And it is amazing that now, recollecting thinkers of the Russian past, nobody speaks about Tolstoy as a passionate preacher of Christian nonviolence.

8. The Apostle Paul says in his *First Message to Timothy*:

2.1. I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;

2.2. For kings and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

2.3. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior.

9. This subject is discussed by J. Ellul (1987).

10. The multidimensional nature of personality is examined in detail in our book (Nalimov, 1989a).

11. We would like to note here that the atheism of the Russian intelligentsia seems to stem from its aversion to regard God as an all-powerful ruler who does not leave humans an inch of personal freedom. Here is the relevant quotation from M. Bakunin (1989a):

No offense meant to any semi-philosophers, and to all the so-called religious thinkers: *the existence of God necessarily presupposes renouncement of human reason and human justice; it signifies rejection of human freedom and inevitably results in slavery not only theoretical, but also practical.*

...God exists, therefore man is a slave.

Man is intelligent, just, free—therefore, there is no God. (p. 44)

We are sure, however, that these challenging words are directed not against God (Bakunin was a mason and thus could not be a vulgar atheist), but against religious servility. I do not know whether at that time the words of the apophatic theologian Dyonisius the Areopagite were known, words removing from God the humiliating functions of the limitless ruler.

12. The translation of the concluding chapter of the treatise by Dyonisius the Areopagite, “Mystic Theology,” is given in our book (Nalimov, 1989a).

13. The reference is corrected.

14. Related material can be found in a book by Kudryavtsev (1991).

15. In mathematical language, orthogonalization of two correlated values is described as a specifically chosen turn of coordinate axes and transfer of their center. If we proceed from the mathematical model of consciousness, it would be natural to include there this possibility as well.

16. Selective extermination of part of the gene pool seems to have occurred in history more than once as a tool of making the race homogeneous in a desirable direction. Remember that in medieval Christianity Jesuits organized extermination of witches, women closely connected with nature. This is how it is described by Metzner (1990):

Perhaps the deepest apologies of all are due from Christian churches toward women as a whole. Christianity’s exclusionary and oppressive attitude toward women, which culminated in the Inquisition’s extermination of perhaps as many as nine million witches, most of them pagan (i.e., country) women, trying to preserve ancient women’s knowledge of herbal healing, contraception, and midwifery, is a manifestation of a religiously sanctioned misogyny that has never even been officially acknowledged by Christianity, much less atoned for. This was a brutal, sustained insult and attack on all women and on the ancient Goddess, the “Mother

of All the Living," that must be seen in the historical context of five thousand years of the oppression and subordination of the feminine principle...In view of the connection between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature that has now been established by the eco-feminist movement, it is clear that there is a direct link between the domination of women, the persecution of witches, and the ecological destruction that we are now facing. Both are expressions of male violence and contempt toward the Goddess, women, and nature. (pp. 25-26)

17. The concept of hyperpersonality, that is, superpersonality personified not in one, but simultaneously in many physical bodies, is developed in our book (Nalimov, 1989a).

18. Recall the fascinating words from the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas (Robinson, 1981; Trofimova, 1989):

(10) Jesus said: I have cast fire upon the world, and behold, I guard it, until it is ablaze.

19. We briefly touched on this subject in our book (Nalimov, 1989a).

20. "Non-physical" means not determined by the physical constants and not limited by the four principal physical interactions.

21. Parapsychologists today try to demonstrate something of the sort but, it seems, with little success. True, but there are numerous statistically controlled experiments that demonstrate the possibility of a direct influence of an operator on a random numbers generator (Jahn & Dunne, 1987).

22. Here Mindell refers his readers to the article by Michael and Anderson (1986).

23. Here a delicate question arises: whether everybody should repent? Even those who tried in some way to oppose this regime and were repressed for that? Or perhaps only the initiators? But they are no more. Of those who remained, many were in office and fulfilled their civil duty, as it was instilled into them. The most harmful agents were not official executors of the horrible cause but their secret helpers—informers, often double-faced friends sharing our ideas who were at the same time provocateurs. It is on them that totalitarianism was founded. The first thing that should be done is to publish a list of these amoral agents of our history. That would have been instructive, that would have been a foundation for deep repentance and material for investigating the abyss of totalitarianism. I believe this form of the national corruption was even more serious and tragic than prisons, camps, and shootings.

24. Lord Bulwer-Lytton (1803–1873), a politician, a writer (his book *The Last Days of Pompeii* [1996] was widely popular not so long ago), and an occult philosopher.

25. Note that Heidegger, despite his critical attitude towards contemporary supertechnologized culture, does not propose a ready conception of the recipe type, as it would again be a "technological solution" (Seubold, 1986).

26. Our ideas on the creation of the Free University of the XXIst century can be found in a paper by Nalimov (1991).

27. We are often opposed on this point: how is it possible to be polyreligious? Indeed, this is not possible for a person with a one-dimensional mind. But we are becoming more and more multidimensional. Humankind evolves, it does not remain the same as it was once created, as many believe. In the West, I came across deeply spiritual people that were at the same time both Christian and Buddhist (or Zen-Buddhist). Remember that free-masonry (its serious branch) wished to develop ecumenism. For example, one of its founders in our country, N. I. Novikov, translated and published the *Bhagavad-Gita* in Moscow long ago in 1788 (three years after it was published in England). The idea of profound ecumenism penetrates the book of the poet-sufferer Daniil Andreyev (1991).

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Scientific Creativity
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