

A Materialist Doctrine of Good and Evil: Stalin's Revision of Marxist Anthropology

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Abstract:

This article argues that Stalin makes a significant philosophical contribution to Marxist anthropology (the doctrine of human nature). He does so by challenging Russian Orthodox theological assumptions, as well as the Pelagian heritage of Marxist anthropology. Indeed, I situate the analysis in terms of the fifth century tensions between Pelagius and Augustine concerning human nature and its transformation. My argument has two parts. The first investigates the effort to identify a new human nature, particularly during the 'socialist offensive' of the 1930s. Stakhanovism, with its emulation, tempo and grit, provided the first glimpse of the new nature which both realised the latency of workers and peasants and marked a new departure. The second part analyses the necessary other side of this nature, with a focus on the purges, Red Terror and discovery a new and deeper level of evil within. While the first development may be seen as an elaboration of a Pelagian-cum-Orthodox approach to human nature, the second is an Augustinian irruption, in which the power of evil is evident. However, Stalin does not opt for one or the other position; instead, he seeks an intensified dialectical clash between both dimensions.

Keywords:

Stalin; human nature; Augustine; Pelagius; Russian Orthodoxy; Stakhanovism; purges; Red Terror; evil.

How does one begin to construct a Marxist theory of human nature that acknowledges the crucial role of evil? The burden of this chapter is to argue that none other than Joseph Stalin provides the outlines of such a theory and that it has distinctly theological overtones. The core of his contribution is what I designate as a dialectical tension between passion and purge, both of which were generated out of socialist enthusiasm. In other words, enthusiasm for the socialist project produced both passionate human endeavour for its success and the need to purge those not so driven. By passion I mean the extraordinary and widespread fervour for human construction of the socialist project, especially the massive process of industrialisation and collectivisation in the 1930s. By purge I refer to the systemic purges of that period, which the Bolsheviks themselves described in terms of the Red Terror but which I will read as an Augustinian irruption concerning the omnipresence of evil. This was not the only period of the tension between passion and purge, but it was the time when they were significantly intensified.

My analysis has two main parts, after setting these developments within a theological frame: the tensions between Augustine and Pelagius, in light of a Russian Orthodox context, concerning human nature and its transformation. The first part deals with the revolutionary passion

of the socialist offensive of the 1930s, focusing on the glimpse of a new human nature embodied in Stakhanovism and its attendant features of emulation, tempo and grit, as well as the claim that the Pelagian project of socialism had been achieved in the Soviet Union by the second half of the 1930s. The second part concerns the necessary other side of such enthusiasm, with the purges, Red Terror, demonstration trials and the painful awareness of evil within. Throughout and especially in the conclusion, I argue that the two sides should not be separated from one another: they are necessarily connected, for without one, the other would not have existed. All of this is central to a thorough recasting of Marxist understandings of human nature, with evil now playing a substantive role.

Before proceeding, a couple of preliminary matters require attention. First, the revision of anthropology does not appear as a well worked-out position in Stalin's written works, let alone in the works of other Marxist thinkers.¹ Instead, they were constructed through experience and practice, with theory following in response to such experiences, attempting to provide theoretical direction to further practices. Yet Stalin's statements remain in piecemeal form, focusing on specific issues such as collectivisation and Stakhanovism, the purges and Red Terror, external and internal threats. They are really fragments requiring further work in order to construct a more coherent position. This is my task.

Second, I assume not a dependence – historical or ontological – on theology but a translatability between radical politics and theology. By translation I mean a dialectical process, in which each term resists the process of translation so that one must continually reconsider the translation in question. Thus, each translation is a temporary affair, in which there are gains and losses of meaning, only to attempt the process once again. The upshot is that no one language may claim absolute or prior status; instead, I assume a more modest role for the languages of theology and radical politics in which each is aware of its own promise and limitation.²

Anthropology and Theology

I begin by framing the analysis in theological terms, for in the various theological traditions anthropology, or the doctrine of human nature, remains a core problem. In societies that were both shaped by and gave shape to Christianity, the issue of human nature turned on a crucial theological question: are human beings endowed with the ability to do at least some good or are human beings incapable of any good at

¹ My approach is therefore far from Terry Eagleton's resort (2005, 2010) to metaphysics, or indeed literature, to argue that evil is pointless nothingness.

² For a more complete elaboration of this method of engaging between radical politics and religion, see my 'Translating Politics and Religion' (Boer In press a).

all, relying wholly on God's grace? Or, seen from the perspective of evil and sin, is evil relatively limited, enabling some scope for good works, or evil is far more powerful, rendering any human effort futile? In the Latin speaking parts of Europe,³ the differing answers to these questions were established in the fifth century dispute between the Irish monk, Pelagius, and the African theologian, Augustine of the Hippo. The debates were enticingly intricate,⁴ but the names of Pelagius and Augustine have determined contrasting answers ever since: good works in light of the limitations of evil argued the former; grace in light of the pervasiveness of evil argued the latter. By contrast, the Greek speaking tradition sought a mediation between what it saw as two extremes. On the one hand, one cannot do anything to earn salvation, for it is a gift from God; on the other hand, the gift needs to be accepted by a person, which is where human action comes into play. It may also be refused, for God does not enforce salvation.

But why argue over these questions? They were seeking the transformation of a fallen nature, although the transformation was predicated on a paradox. An 'eternal' human nature exists, embodied in Christ (the new prelapsarian Adam), but, due to sin, very few known human beings have attained this eternal nature (the saints). That is, the eternal nature appears in only very few, while the vast majority do not measure up. The reality, therefore, is that human beings seek transformation into an as yet unachieved ideal nature. But how can we be so transformed? In the Latin tradition, the differences were sharper. For Pelagius, transformation could take place through the human discipline and cultivation, albeit with divine guidance and assistance. His own asceticism functioned as an indication of how a person might become more holy. For Augustine, the new human nature could be achieved only through God's grace, for human beings were simply unable to do so. In the Greek tradition, we once again find a mediation. God and human beings work together – *synergeia* – to the end that the entire human being, in terms of will and act, conform to the divine.⁵ The primary aim is deification (*theosis*), working with the deifying energy of grace and conforming to the divine plan, in which salvation is a negative moment that marks the need to deal with the reality of sin.

It may initially seem strange to mention the Latin debate between

³ I use the terms 'Latin speaking' and 'Greek speaking', since the terminology of 'West' and 'East' is highly problematic. Indeed, since Eastern Orthodoxy subscribes to Chalcedonian Christology, it too is a 'Western' form of Christianity.

⁴ Augustine 1992; Pelagius 1993; Rees 1998; Mann 2001; Wetzel 2001.

⁵ 'Certainly man was created by the will of God alone; but he cannot be deified [made Holy] by it alone. A single will for creation, but two for deification. A single will to raise up the image, but two to make the image into a likeness ... Thus we collaborate in the definitive abolition of death and in the cosmic transfiguration'. Lossky 1978, pp. 73, 86.

Augustine and Pelagius, for Stalin was raised within and studied at some length (1895-1899) the Russian Orthodox tradition. However, it will become apparent as my argument unfolds that he develops a unique counter-tradition that cannot be explained by mere dependence. He begins with a position that follows what may be called a dominant Pelagian Marxist approach to the transformation of human nature, albeit mediated through an Orthodox framework. This is the focus of the first section below. Later, he comes to the stark awareness of the persistence and reality of evil, which I argue is an Augustinian irruption into both the Marxist tradition and the Orthodox mediation of the extremes of the Latin theological tradition. The result is a distinctly new departure. He draws together Augustinian and Pelagian approaches, which was characteristic of the Orthodox position outlined above. But unlike that position with its *synergeia*, he exacerbates the tension between them in a dialectical intensification. In other words, his position was enabled by the Orthodox mediation, but the stark opposition could happen only by appropriating the Latin opposition, marked by the names of Augustine and Pelagius.⁶

The Marxist approach to human nature Stalin inherited has tended to fall on the Pelagian side, albeit mediated through the European Enlightenment's assertion of the inherent goodness of human beings.⁷ Or at least the proletariat and peasants are inherently decent people, who, once they have re-created history through their own hands, will be released from the oppression of their masters. Given such an opportunity, they willingly engage in the new forms of social organisation and economic production, since it is for the greater good. This understanding can be seen in Marx's image of throwing off the chain and plucking the living flower.⁸ Initially, Stalin too adhered to a more Pelagian position, particularly when he reflects on the nature of a future communist society. Thus, in an early piece from 1906-7, well before the realities and perils of power, he presents an ideal picture of future communist society in which the competition, chaos and crises of capitalist society have been abolished.⁹ No longer will there be classes, exploitation, wage-labour, private ownership of the means of production, profits and the state. More

⁶ In doing so, I counter two tendencies of studies on the 'New Soviet Man and Woman', which ignore the theological dimension and they glide lightly over Stalin's contribution. See Bauer 1952; Clark 1993; Bergman 1997; Attwood and Kelly 1998; Müller 1998; Gutkin 1999, pp. 107-30; Fitzpatrick 2000, pp. 75-9; Hoffmann 2002; Rosenthal 2002, pp. 233-422; Fritzsche and Hellbeck 2008. These studies variously mention the Enlightenment, a Nietzschean underlay, or Russian culture and intelligentsia from the nineteenth century (especially Chernyshevsky) through to Stalin, but barely touch theological matters.

⁷ Witness the debate between Luther and Erasmus in the fifteenth century on freedom of the will. While Luther propounds an Augustinian position, Erasmus asserts the humanist argument in favour of such freedom. Luther and Erasmus 1969.

⁸ Marx 1844a, p. 176; 1844b, pp. 379.

⁹ Stalin 1906-7a, pp. 336-40; 1906-7b, pp. 334-8.

positively, he speaks of 'free workers', 'collective labour', the collective ownership of raw materials and the means of production, socialist organisation and planning of production, satisfaction of the 'needs of society', and even the withering away of the state and political power.¹⁰ Above all, Stalin gives the impression that the masses of workers and peasants will, given the opportunity, willingly throw themselves into the new socialist society: 'it is obvious that free and comradely labour should result in an equally comradely, and complete, satisfaction of all needs in the future socialist society'.¹¹ The well-known slogan, 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs', is of course the clearest expression of this assumption.¹² All of this belongs to a dominant Marxist position,¹³ much closer to a Pelagian approach to human nature.¹⁴ An Orthodox note may be identified in the gradualist understanding of deification, but Stalin veers away from such a position by refusing to discuss any earlier ideal state, as one finds in the Orthodox position that true human nature existed before the Fall, only to become an anti-nature thereafter.

However, this text already introduces an intriguing twist: Stalin is less interested in an eternal human nature that will finally find its true manifestation in future communism. Instead, it requires a change in human nature:

As regards men's 'savage' sentiments and opinions, these are not as eternal as some people imagine; there was a time, under primitive communism, when man did not recognise private property; there came a time, the time of individualistic production, when private property dominated the hearts and minds of men; a new time is coming, the time of socialist production – will it be surprising if the hearts and minds of men become imbued with socialist strivings? Does not being determine the 'sentiments' and opinions of men?¹⁵

¹⁰ Stalin offers similar description in response to a question from the first labour delegation from the United States in 1927, adding the overcoming of the distinction between town and country, the flourishing of art and science, and the real freedom of the individual from concerns about daily bread and the powers that be. Stalin 1927a, pp. 139-40; 1927b, pp. 133-4.

¹¹ Stalin 1906-7a, p. 338; 1906-7b, p. 336.

¹² The slogan is usually attributed to the Paris commune of 1848, but it is actually a gloss on the biblical text from Acts 4:35: 'They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need'. The slogan appears often in Stalin's texts. Stalin 1906-7a, p. 338; 1906-7b, p. 336; 1927a, p. 140; 1927b, p. 134.

¹³ Stalin quotes from Marx and Engels to provide authoritative backing for his position. The quotations concern the withering away of the state and the slogan concerning abilities and needs. Marx 1847, p. 212; Engels 1884, p. 272; Marx 1891, p. 87.

¹⁴ And close to the Enlightenment heritage. Indeed, Stalin speaks of a 'socialist enlightenment', which is nothing less than the development of 'socialist consciousness'. Stalin 1906-7a, p. 339; 1906-7b, p. 338.

¹⁵ Stalin 1906-7a, p. 340; 1906-7b, p. 338.

To be sure, the approach is a little simplistic. The ‘hearts and minds’ of human beings change under different social conditions and modes of production, or what he calls ‘being’. Thus, under capitalism, private production and individualism becomes the dominant expression of human nature, but under communism these features will fall away in light of ‘socialist strivings’. Yet, the implications of this approach are immense: not only does Stalin evince a concern with the transformation of human nature also found in the Latin and Greek theological traditions, but he opens up the possibility that communism itself both produces and requires such a transformed nature. Precisely what the more Pelagian dimensions of this human nature might be, especially in terms of the extraordinary enthusiasm that drove the processes of industrialisation and collectivisation, is the focus of the next part of my argument.

A New Human Nature

These are new people [*liudi novye*], people of a special type.¹⁶

The context for the emergence of a new theory of human nature was the dual industrialisation and collectivisation drive, embodied in the two five-year plans from 1928 to 1937. The much studied details of this drive are not my direct concern here,¹⁷ except to note that they were generated out of the backwardness of Russian economics, the internal contradictions of the rapidly changing economic situation and the effort to construct socialism from scratch. The outcome was astonishing, with the Soviet Union emerging in a breathtakingly short period of time as an economic superpower, albeit at significant social cost. In many respects, this was the enactment and realisation of the unleashing of the forces of production under socialism.¹⁸

This situation was both enabled by and produced a profound bifurcation in economic and social life.¹⁹ Many, if not the majority, were those who enthusiastically embraced the production of a new life, even among the rural population,²⁰ but many were those who dragged their

16 Stalin 1935e, p. 90; 1935f, p. 79.

17 The most balanced works are by Davies et al and Tauger: Davies 1980-2003; Davies, Harrison, and Wheatcroft 1980-2003; Tauger 1991; 2001; 2005. A relief from the ritual denunciations of the failures of the program (Deutscher 1967, pp. 317-32; Davies 1997, pp. 23-58; Boobbyer 2000, pp. 29-64; Davies 2005; Gregory 2004) is Allen's arresting reinterpretation of the significant gains made (Allen 2003).

18 Stalin 1933a, pp. 169, 181; 1933b, pp. 167, 178-9; 1936a, pp. 153-6; 1936b, pp. 120-2.

19 For fascinating insights into the varying positions taken by people in everyday life, see the documents collected by Siegelbaum and Sokolov 2000. Foreign media of the time already reveals such a bifurcation, with some predicting imminent collapse of the Soviet economy and others appreciating the immense gains made. See Stalin 1933a, pp. 165-72, 218-19; 1933b, pp. 162-9, 214-15.

20 Siegelbaum 1988, p. 17; Scott 1989; Kuromiya 1990; Martens 1996, pp. 35-43; Thurston 1996, pp. 137-98; Buckley 1999, pp. 300-2; 2006, pp. 321-36; Tauger 2005, p. 66. Tauger argues (2005, p. 66) that ‘resistance was not the most common response, and that more peasants adapted to the new system

feet, with some actively resisting.²¹ So we find that employment exploded and unemployment disappeared (and with it unemployment insurance), a full range of social insurance and retirement pensions became universal, free health-care and education also became universal, cultural institutions from libraries to cinemas became relatively widespread, women found themselves released into the workforce (although not without contradictions and still carrying heavy domestic burdens), and the material standards of workers and farmers generally increased.²² The result was a decrease in infant mortality and an increase in the birth-rate, life expectancy increased by 20 years and the new generation was the first one with universal literacy. At the same time, the ground-shaking disruptions had their negative effects: rapid industrialisation produced myriad new contradictions and the massive shift in agricultural production led to unanticipated problems and new agricultural shortages in the early 1930s.²³ Those who opposed the process found themselves subject to purges, deportation and enforced labour. This is the context for the shifts in understanding human nature, first on the positive side and then the negative. In the next section I focus on the positive dimension, specifically in terms of the development of Stakhanovite enthusiasm.

The Passion of Stakhanovism

Indeed, Stakhanovism of the 1930s was not only the height of the passion and enthusiasm for the socialist project, but it was also a very Pelagian phenomenon.²⁴ In some respects, the movement may be seen as an effort to find a new form of extra-economic compulsion, particularly within a socialist framework. The problem of foot-dragging noted above, manifested in managers and workers blunting expectations by creatively recalibrating production quotas and expected work practices, led to a search for new ways of encouraging them to be part of the new

in ways that enabled it to function and solve crucial agricultural problems'. Retish (2008) shows how in the earlier period (1914-1922), the majority of peasants opted for the Bolsheviks and the effort to construct a new society.

21 Danilov, Manning, and Viola 1999-2004; Viola et al. 2005.

22 Kotkin 1997, pp. 20-1; Allen 2003. This was in the context of a massive shift by peasants to cities to work, which placed immense strains on, and thereby frequent time-lags in, the state's ability to provide such facilities: Siegelbaum 1988, p. 214-22. Stalin's assessments do not shirk such problems: Stalin 1930i, pp. 299-308; 1930j, pp. 290-300; 1933a, pp. 193-6; 1933b, pp. 190-3; 1934a, pp. 340-6; 1934b, pp. 333-9.

23 Stalin 1933a, pp. 220-9; 1933b, pp. 216-33.

24 Although the studies of Siegelbaum, Benvenuti and Buckley are mines of detail, they do not address philosophical issues concerning human nature: Siegelbaum 1988, pp. 210-46; Benvenuti 1988; Buckley 2006. Kaganovsky's intriguing study (2008) is saturated with cultural theory but ultimately assumes it was a 'cultural fantasy'. Less useful are the one-sided dismissals: Trotsky 1972, pp. 78-85, 123-8; Deutscher 1950, pp. 107-9, 113-14; Filtzer 1986; Fitzpatrick 1994a, p. 158; Davies 1997, pp. 31-4; Boobbyer 2000.

project.²⁵ Yet this is to depict Stakhanovism as primarily an initiative from above. Instead, it was a much more complex phenomenon, catching the government off-guard through the genuine expression of workers' aspirations but then leading to a whole new policy framework.²⁶ The result was the celebration of and encouragement to emulate the 'heroes of labour', modest and ordinary people who became models of a new type of human being. The names include, among many others, the coal miner Aleksei Stakhanov,²⁷ the automobile worker Aleksandr Busygin, the shoe maker Nikolai Smetanin, the textile workers Evdokiiia and Mariia Vinogradov, the railway train driver Petr Krivonos, the timber worker Vladimir Musinskii, the sailor and arctic explorer Ivan Papanin, the farmer Konstantin Borin, the sugar beet farmer Mariia Demchenko, and the tractor driver Pasha Angelina. A complex phenomenon it was, but my primary interest is in the outlines of the new person Stalin begins to see emerging, if not a new type of human nature characterised by the 'will to socialism', by 'passionate Bolshevik desire', by emulation as the 'communist method of building socialism', if not by Bolshevik 'tempo' and grit'.

The crucial text in which Stalin reflects on the theoretical implications of Stakhanovism is a speech given at the first all-union congress of Stakhanovites in the middle of the 1930s.²⁸ Here the theme of 'new people' emerges strongly. Stalin plies a double argument that threatens to become dialectical: the new techniques and conditions under socialism have enabled the Stakhanovites to achieve hitherto unexpected and extraordinary levels of work and productivity; the potential of such workers has been held back by previous and even current conditions, but now it has burst forth from the deep. Let me develop these points. In terms of the first, he argues that Stakhanovism had become possible in the process of shifting to a new mode of production beyond capitalism.²⁹ In this context, new and higher techniques have become available and productive forces have been unleashed, not merely in economic and agricultural production, but also in the creativity of culture. Socialism results, for Stalin, in the achievement of productivity, prosperity and

25 Siegelbaum 1988, pp. 38-9.

26 Thurston 1993, pp. 143-5.

27 The moment is marked by Stakhanov's feat on the night of 30-31 August, 1953, when he hewed 102 tonnes of coal in less than six hours, which was fourteen times his quota. Although Stakhanov was actually preceded by Nikita Ozotov's comparable achievement three years earlier (May 1932), the time was not yet ripe for a full movement (Siegelbaum 1988, pp. 54-71). See also Stakhanov's autobiography (1937).

28 Stalin 1935e; 1935f.

29 'The Stakhanov movement, as an expression of new and higher technical standards, is a model of that high productivity of labour which only Socialism can give, and which capitalism cannot give'. Stalin 1935e, pp. 90-1; 1935f, p. 80.

culture higher than capitalism. But it also means that workers are no longer exploited by capitalists, that they are now in charge and can undertake tasks in a new way. Free from the concerns of scraping enough together for their daily bread, workers and their labour are held in esteem, for they work for themselves, for their class and for their society. The result has been a rise in the material conditions of workers and farmers, which has in turn led to an increase in the population.³⁰ All of which means, as he famously put it, that 'life has become more joyous' (*zhit' stalo veselee*), a joyousness that is manifested in the productiveness of the 'heroes and heroines of labour'.³¹

Yet a question is left begging: what mode of production does Stalin have in mind? Is he suggesting that socialism is a distinct mode of production? Later he does indeed come close to such a position, appropriating elements from his descriptions of communism for the 'achieved socialism' of the post-constitution situation.³² However, in this text he argues that Stakhanovism is actually a glimpse of communist life, when workers will be raised to the level of engineers and technicians, if not outstripping them in terms of insight and capability: 'In this connection, the Stakhanov movement is significant for the fact that it contains the first beginnings – still feeble, it is true, but nevertheless the beginnings – of precisely such a rise in the cultural and technical level of the working class of our country'.³³ This role as harbinger of communism raises a contradiction in the very nature of Stakhanovism: it signals a mastery of technique, time and labour, which would in communism entail the subordination of labour to life. However, in the socialist phase, Stakhanovism means the intensification of labour and productivity. In other words, socialism calls on the masses to work according to their abilities but to receive according to their work. By contrast, communism means working according to ability and receiving not according to work performed but according to need. How to pass from one to the other and thereby overcome the contradiction? The key is the very productivity of the Stakhanovites. In the same way that the path to the withering away of the state requires an intensification of the state, so also does the intensified productivity of the Stakhanovites and thereby the subordination of life to labour open up the possibility of the subordination of labour to life. They mark the beginnings of the 'transition from Socialism to Communism'.³⁴

30 Stalin 1935g, p. 115; 1935h, pp. 95-6.

³¹ Stalin 1935e, p. 98; 1935f, p. 85.

³² I discuss the 'delay of communism' in another study.

³³ Stalin 1935e, p. 94; 1935f, p. 82. The glimpse included socialist plenty: living in new and spacious apartments, healthy food, cultural pursuits and an abundance of goods: Siegelbaum 1988, pp. 227–36.

³⁴ Stalin 1935e, p. 95; 1935f, p. 83; Marcuse 1958, p. 238.

The subjective dimension of Stakhanovism emerges from the midst of Stalin's deliberations over its objective conditions: now he stresses that it was not merely the conditions of a new mode of production – or at least the glimpses thereof – that enabled Stakhanovism, but also the release of pent-up ability. He deploys various images: a dam that has burst its containment; a match thrown that produces a conflagration enveloping the whole country in no time; a ripeness that produces a whole new harvest; a small wind that becomes a hurricane; above all, a spontaneous and vital force that arises from below and can no longer be contained. The overall sense is of an unstoppable elemental force, arising deep from within and embodied in the term *stikhiinyi* (noun: *stikhiinost'*). But the implication is that ordinary workers always had such abilities, even if they may not have realised this fact – a distinctly Orthodox note that reminds one of the doctrine that *theosis* is the realisation of a true human nature concealed and distorted by sin.³⁵ Once given the opportunity, they took up the initiative, learned the new techniques and deployed them creatively, thereby showing the world what they could really achieve. Of course, they needed the conditions, techniques and their mastery in order to do so, but workers had this potential within them. Stalin makes much of the continued restrictions to the full realisation of such potential, especially in the form of scientists, engineers and technicians – even under the early stages of socialism – who were still wedded to old ideas and outdated methods and argued that the achievements of Stakhanovism were not possible.³⁶ But now the Stakhanovites have become teachers of such technicians, amending their plans, producing new ones and impelling the technicians forward.³⁷ Here he uses the example of the speed of trains: the old-fashioned technicians said that trains could run at only 13-14 kilometres per hour, but the workers took matters into their own hands and showed that the trains could run at 18-19 kilometres per hour.³⁸ The amount may make us smile at what appears to be a small achievement, but such a response neglects to note that the percentage increase is 26-28 percent.

Underlying these reflections of Stakhanovism are two features, both of them tending towards a dialectical articulation, which runs against the Orthodox tradition's emphasis on mediation and harmony. The first

³⁵ Earlier he spoke of the 'the colossal reserves latent in the depths of our system, deep down in the working class and peasantry'. Stalin 1929c, p. 116; 1929d, p. 110.

³⁶ Stalin 1938a, pp. 330-1; 1938b, p. 251.

³⁷ Or as Siegelbaum puts it, Stakhanovism sought to abolish the distinction between managers' conceptualisations of tasks and workers' execution of them (1988, p. 12). At the same time, Stalin warns that new technical standards should not be set to the level of the Stakhanovites, since not everyone has their capability, indeed that they are but glimpses of the society to come: Stalin 1935e, pp. 105-6; 1935f, pp. 89-90; Siegelbaum 1988, pp. 88-98.

³⁸ Stalin 1935e, pp. 108-9; 1935f, p. 91.

concerns the Marxist staple of objective-subjective, which I have used to frame my presentation of Stalin's observations. In a more explicitly dialectical form, the tension may be stated as follows: the objective conditions and subjective intervention together produce Stakhanovism so much that the subjective intervention of Stakhanovism changes the nature of those objective conditions.³⁹ Or as he puts it, 'New people, new times – new technical standards'.⁴⁰ Second, and following on from the previous point, is what may be called a dialectic of latency. On the one hand, the potential of Stakhanovism has always existed in workers and peasants, awaiting the right moment for coming to light – or what Ernst Bloch calls the latency of utopia.⁴¹ The moment is of course socialism. On the other hand, the realisation of this latency produces the first glimpses of what has never been seen or experienced before. In terms of human nature, the potential for a new nature lies within the old, yet the new does not rely merely on the old but is a qualitatively different nature.

Around this main theoretical text cluster a number of others that identify further features of this new human nature – beyond the glimpse of the creativity and productiveness of Stakhanovism. Taken together, these features provide a sketch of what the new nature might be. Already in 1926, Stalin spoke of the 'will to build socialism'⁴² and by the 1930s he was speaking of a 'passionate Bolshevik desire', '*strastnoe bol'shevistskoe zhelanie*'.⁴³ This is what Losurdo calls the 'fedo furiosa',⁴⁴ the furious faith of the 'socialist offensive', which was recognised at the time as a revolution on its own terms. In his famous call to arms in the report to the sixteenth congress,⁴⁵ Stalin elaborates on the plan for rapid collectivisation that would dominate the 1930s. Here he deploys military terminology, speaking of the upsurge in the socialist offensive on all fronts after the temporary retreat and regrouping of forces during the NEP, of the need to consolidate new gains while being aware

³⁹ Such a formulation owes much to Lenin's re-engagement with Hegel at the outbreak of the First World War: Lenin 1914-16, p. 85-237; Boer 2013, pp. 103-27. Note also Krylova's effort (2003) to recover the flexibility of the category of 'class instinct' for the subjective side of the dialectic. This is a more fruitful approach than trying to identify a voluntarist, 'romantic-populist', revivalist, 'heroic', quasi-Romantic or 'charismatic' (in Weber's sense) element of Stalin's thought and practice: Clark 1995, pp. 15-23; Van Ree 2002, pp. 165-8; Priestland 2005, 2007, pp. 20, 37, 304-24; Fritzsche and Hellbeck 2008, p. 317.

⁴⁰ Stalin 1935e, p. 106, 1935f, p. 90.

⁴¹ Bloch 1985.

⁴² Stalin 1926a, p. 293, 1926b, p. 280.

⁴³ Stalin 1931a, p. 40, 1931b, p. 38.

⁴⁴ Losurdo 2008, pp. 137-43. Some secondary literature is often wary of recognising the central role of this passionate desire to construct socialism, suggesting it was misguided and 'utopian': Viola 1987; Fitzpatrick 2000, pp. 67-88; 1994b, pp. 272-9.

⁴⁵ Stalin 1930i; 1930j.

that breaches may be made in the front from time to time.⁴⁶ All of this would require 'exceptional effort and exertion of willpower', if not the 'tremendous enthusiasm' that would produce the 'ascending Bolshevik curve' of the furious decade of the 1930s.⁴⁷

Alongside the passionate and furious faith is another feature: emulation. For Stalin, 'emulation is the communist method of building socialism, on the basis of the maximum activity of the vast masses of the working people'. How so? It is nothing less than the 'ever with which the working class is destined to transform the entire economic and cultural life of the country on the basis of socialism'.⁴⁸ At a mundane level, emulation means the desire to follow the examples of 'colossal energy' set by 'heroes' and 'heroines' of labour such as the Stakhanovites.⁴⁹ As with Stakhanovism, emulation and the shock brigades arose in a complex dialectic of initiatives from below and from above, although it is quite clear that the initial impetus for the movement from ordinary workers surprised the government.⁵⁰ So 'shock brigades' were formed, often from the Young Communist League.⁵¹ In order to foster emulation and its related 'socialist competition', these shock brigades were sent into areas that required models of the new modes of work, of the use of new techniques and technical equipment in industry and agriculture, of the way collectivisation should work. At a deeper level, the sense was that these brigades would indicate the contours of the new human nature, so much so that it would encourage people to shed the fetters of the old nature and foster the emergence of the new nature in yet more workers and farmers.⁵² That it would emerge was based on the idea that

46 Stalin 1930i, pp. 315-16, 319-20; 1930j, pp. 306-7, 310-11.

47 Stalin 1930i, pp. 309, 360-1; 1930j, pp. 306-7, 310-11.

48 Stalin 1929c, p. 115; 1929d, p. 109.

49 Stalin 1933a, p. 218; 1933b, p. 213. In terms of temporal development, emulation precedes the emphasis on Stakhanovism, for it emerged at the turn of the 1930s. However, at a logical level, it functions as another feature of the human nature more fully revealed by Stakhanovism: Stalin 1935e, pp. 89-90; 1935f, p. 79.

50 Stalin 1929c; 1929d; 1929e; 1929f; 1929g; 1929h; 1929i, p. 125-6; 1929j, pp. 119-20; 1933a, p. 189; 1933b, p. 186; 1951-52a, pp. 243-4; 1951-52b, p. 173; Siegelbaum 1988, pp. 66-7.

51 Siegelbaum 1988, pp. 40-53; Strauss 1997, pp. 136-71. Shock work (*udarnichestvo*) first appeared during the civil war, designating dangerous and difficult tasks, but by 1927-1928 it referred to brigades of workers who sought to exceed obligations and requirements. They would forgo lunch breaks, work double shifts, reset targets and deal with bottlenecks and dangerous situations. Once formalised, the danger was always there that shock brigadiers would try to game the system, especially when more than 40 percent of workers were designated as shock workers. Stalin comments extensively on these brigades, even expanding the idea to international communist movements: Stalin 1932a, p. 126; 1932b, p. 124; 1932c, p. 127; 1932d, p. 125; 1932e, p. 135; 1932f, p. 133; 1932g, p. 142; 1932h, p. 140; 1932i, p. 145; 1932j, p. 143; 1933a, pp. 187, 218; 1933b, pp. 184, 213; 1933c; 1933d; 1933e; 1933f; 1952a, p. 318; 1952b, pp. 227-8.

52 Stalin 1933c, pp. 246-51; 1933d, pp. 240-5; 1934a, p. 342; 1934b, p. 334.

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enthusiasm and the desire for emulation were very much part of that nature.⁵³ Stalin hints at such a dimension already in his observations at the sixteenth congress of 1930, where he speaks of the 'tremendous change' in the 'mentality of the masses', so much so that one may witness a 'radical revolution' in people's 'views of labour, for it transforms labour from a degrading and heavy burden, as it was considered before, into a matter of honour, a matter of glory, a matter of valour and heroism'.⁵⁴

A further feature is Bolshevik tempo, manifested by the shock brigades and the Stakhanovites. This tempo has a triple register, the first of which concerns the acceleration of industrial and agricultural production based on the mastery of technique and its creative application. Thus, 'labour enthusiasm and genuinely revolutionary activity' serve to promote a 'Bolshevik tempo of constructive work'.⁵⁵ The second register operates with a wider frame and sees the whole process – October Revolution, establishment of power, overthrow of capitalism, industrialisation and collectivisation – as a manifestation of such tempo. What remains is to raise such a tempo to yet another level, 'of which we dare not even dream at present'.⁵⁶ The final register concerns precisely that undreamed-of-level, which is the recalibration of time itself. These 'genuine Bolshevik tempos'⁵⁷ are not so much quantitative differences in the speed for production, let alone economic and social change, but qualitative. Through the creativity of workers, time itself has been reshaped so that time is not the master, but workers are masters of time. And with such mastery, the working day can be shortened to six if not five hours, in which time far greater productivity takes place while simultaneously leaving plenty of time for the physical, cultural and educational development of workers.⁵⁸

A passionate and furious faith, emulation and Bolshevik tempo – to these may be added 'Bolshevik grit' (*bol'shevistskoj vyderzhkoj*), which Stalin defines as the stubborn patience and determination to overcome failures and keep marching towards the goal. Such grit may have arisen from tough experience, from the threats and immense struggles with enemies, but it also part of the character of Bolsheviks, who are 'people

53 Stalin 1931m, pp. 61, 69-70; 1931n, pp. 59, 67-8.

54 Stalin 1930i, pp. 323-4; 1930j, pp. 314-15.

55 Stalin 1930g, p. 235; 1930h, p. 229; see also Stalin 1931m, p. 75; 1931n, p. 73; 1932g, p. 142; 1932h, p. 140.

56 Stalin 1931a, p. 44; 1931b, p. 42. Often this increased tempo is presented as vital for overtaking capitalism so as not to be humiliated once again: Stalin 1931a, pp. 40-1; 1931b, pp. 38-9.

57 Stalin 1931o, p. 84; 1931p, p. 82; see also Stalin 1931q, p. 85; 1931r, p. 83.

58 Stalin 1951-52a, p. 274; 1951-52b, p. 204.

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of a special cut' (*liudi osobogo pokroia*).⁵⁹ The outcome is that the more one's enemies rage, the more enthusiastic and passionate do Bolsheviks become for future struggles. Here the other side of this new human nature appears, for it involves struggle with innumerable foes both without and within. But this dimension is the topic of a later study.

By now the outlines of Stalin's vision of a new human nature should be clear, or at least the positive dimensions of this nature.⁶⁰ A significant role is granted to human endeavour, as may be expected from the Pelagian tenor of this vision. This Pelagianism or indeed humanism is revealed in the midst of concerns over technique, science and engineering. Such an emphasis notably appears in a series of addresses to farm workers, metal producers, shock brigades, tractor drivers, combine harvester operators, kolkhoz members and so on.⁶¹ These texts may speak of training more cadres to work the machines so as to produce more food and industrial products, with recognition and prizes for the highest producers, yet at their core is the concern to foster, encourage and care for the 'modest people',⁶² who have only recently made the extraordinarily rapid move to mechanised production and new social organisation. We may detect a concern for the deep social disruptions resulting from such processes, but at the heart of these deliberations is the issue of human nature. This focus on human beings, embodied in the slogan 'cadres decide everything' rather than 'technique decides everything',⁶³ signals a shift in emphasis during 1934-1935. Technique may still be important, but far more important is the human being who deploys the technique. (Looking forward, this shift provides the practical and theoretical for the Red Terror and thereby the doctrine of evil, for the Terror was very much concerned with cadres, with human beings in their new form.) As Fritzsche and Hellbeck put it, 'the New Man in the Soviet Union was to approximate the ideal of a total man, which involved the soul as well as the body', so much so that this human being 'was coming into being as an empirical reality'.⁶⁴ This being may be fostered by the new social and economic conditions, by the realisation of latency and indeed by the hard work of self-realisation or 'revealing oneself' (*proiavit'*

59 Stalin 1935a, pp. 72-4; 193b, pp. 59-60.

60 Clark 2011, pp. 213, 284.

61 Stalin 1933c; 1933d; 1934c; 1934d; 1935g; 1935h; 1935i; 1935j; 1935k; 1935l; 1937e; 1937f. These Stakhanovite texts are surrounded by numerous notes of greeting, appreciation and urging to greater effort, which were sent to all manner of industrial and agricultural projects in the 1930s. Only a sample can be cited here: Stalin 1931c; 1931d; 1931e; 1931f; 1931g; 1931h; 1931i; 1931j; 1931k; 1931l.

62 Stalin 1937e, p. 301; 1937f, p. 236; 1945a, p. 57; 1945b, p. 232.

63 Stalin 1935a, 76; 1935b, p. 61.

64 Fritzsche and Hellbeck 2008, pp. 305, 317.

litso and proiavit' sebia),⁶⁵ but he or she also needed to be nurtured and supported:

We must cherish every capable and intelligent worker, we must cherish and cultivate him. People must be cultivated as tenderly and carefully as a gardener cultivates a favourite fruit tree. We must train, help to grow, offer prospects, promote at the proper time, transfer to other work at the proper time when a man is not equal to his job, and not wait until he has finally come to grief.⁶⁶

Yet, this human being is not an abstract entity with an indeterminate identity. Stalin clearly speaks of women and men.⁶⁷ The Stakhanovites may have involved men such as Stakhanov himself, or Busygin and Smetanin, but they also included Maria Demchenko and her feats with sugar beet, Natal'ia Tereshkova in milking, as well as Pasha Angelina's organisation of the first all-female tractor brigade.⁶⁸ Time and again, Stalin discusses at some length (and at times with local people) the new Soviet woman, released from the restrictions of pre-revolutionary social and economic life and now involved in everyday working life, in the factories, collective farms and management of Soviet work.⁶⁹ Older traditions of Russian life may still influence the attitudes of some men, so much so that they laugh at the new women,⁷⁰ but Stalin reminds them of the crucial role of women in the socialist offensive, with an increasing number at the forefront of management and congresses. In an address to women collective farm shock workers in 1935, Stalin reflects on the extraordinary changes he has seen. He compares the women of old Russia, enslaved as they were to men at all stages of life, to the new emancipated and independent women of the collective farms who are in control of their own lives.⁷¹ These 'heroines of labour' represent a 'slice of

65 The most detailed study of these processes is by Kharkhordin 1999, pp. 164-278. Despite his awareness of the theological precedents, he sees the processes as imposed 'from above', a perspective that is prevalent in other studies of diaries in which individuals sought to remould themselves: Hellbeck 2000; 2002; Fritzsche and Hellbeck 2008, pp. 322-6. Neither this approach nor the 'resistance' literature entertains the possibility that common people sought to remake themselves from genuine, if somewhat ambivalent, enthusiasm for the cause. But see Kotkin 1997, pp. 225-30, 358.

66 Stalin 1934c, p. 48; 1934d, p. 49; see also Stalin 1935a, pp. 75-7; 1935b, pp. 61-2.

67 The key studies are by Goldman 1993, 2002, although she is less favourable to Stalin and does not deal with the philosophical question of the new woman. Few if any studies draw on the rich tradition of socialist feminism from within the Russian communists, preferring to see 'feminism' (a term regarded as bourgeois at the time) as a recent development: Ilić 1999, Chatterjee 2002.

68 Buckley 1999, p. 301; 2006, pp. 253-86.

69 Stalin 1935m, pp. 127-30. This text is not available in the Russian edition.

70 Stalin 1933c, p. 258; 1933d, p. 251.

71 Elsewhere, he deploys terms redolent with simultaneously theological and Marxist associations of a new and redeemed human nature. Here he speaks of throwing off the old fetters of exploitation and capitalism for the sake of the new life of collective socialism: Stalin 1933c, pp. 242-51; 1933d, pp. 236-45. Compare Mark 5:1-13; Luke 8:26-33; and Marx's use of similar images: Marx 1844a, pp.

the new life', of 'socialist life':

We had no such women before. Here am I, already 56 years of age, I have seen many things in my time, I have seen many labouring men and women. But never have I met such women. They are an absolutely new type of people [sovershenno novye liudi].⁷²

The theme of the new type of people, the new human being – woman and man – is clearly important for Stalin's thought.⁷³ Above all, the Stakhanovites provide the first glimpse of the as yet unseen and unknown Soviet man and woman, who arise in the spirit of Pelagius from their own efforts and thereby become exemplars for the whole of humanity. The excitement of this sense of the new may be seen in the representations of the period, in sculpture, art, film, literature, and propaganda.⁷⁴ Here we find the broad-shouldered and broad-hipped vigour of youthful working life: youth as a symbol of a new human nature and a new society; health and strength as signals of bodies honed by labour and able to perform hitherto unachievable feats; sheer height for the command of the heavens themselves. All of which was theorised by Gorky in his 'On the Old and New Man', where he observed that such a human being 'is young, not only biologically, but also historically'.⁷⁵ Gorky may have propounded such views in the 1930s, echoing themes that ran deep in Christian theology, but he was following in the footsteps of the Left Bolshevik and erstwhile Commissar for Enlightenment, Anatoly Lunacharsky, who adds a distinctly Orthodox theological point: he spoke of an ideal human nature to which we are still striving, an ideal represented by the gods of old.⁷⁶ My suggestion here is that Stalin too provides the theoretical outlines of a largely Pelagian view of a transformation of human nature, albeit with occasional Orthodox flourishes.

The Victory of Socialism and the Limits of Passion

The high point of the enthusiasm I have been examining above appears with the repeated claim in the mid-1930s that socialism – as distinct from communism – had indeed been achieved. The capitalist system, it was argued, had been overcome in industry and agriculture

175-6; 1844b, pp. 378-9.

72 Stalin 1935c, p. 85; 1935d, p. 76. All of this was captured in article 122 of the 1936 constitution: Stalin 1936c, article 122; 1936d, stat'ia 122.

73 Fitzpatrick examines some dimensions of this sense at a popular level, although she ultimately describes it as 'grossly misleading' (2000, p. 79).

74 Groys 1992, Kaganovsky 2008. In contrast to the mechanism of the early Soviet period, with its machine poets and Proletkult, the 1930s represented a turn to a more mature and holistic focus on the individual: Clark 1993, pp. 35-45; Plaggenborg 1998, pp. 35-45; Fritzsche and Hellbeck 2008, pp. 315-26.

75 Gor'kii 1932, p. 289.

76 Lunacharsky 1908, p. 95; 1981, pp. 45-58, 165, 245, 247.

so that the socialist system was the dominant if not sole system in operation, with the result of the improved material and cultural life of the people.⁷⁷ Earlier, I noted the ideal representations – in some of Stalin's earlier texts – of communist society, with free and collective labour, collective ownership of the means of production, socialist organisation and planning, satisfaction of needs and the withering away of the state. By the 1930s, we find that he begins to appropriate some of these features for socialism, especially collective labour, ownership of the means of production, a planned economy, equal distribution of produce, full employment and the absence of exploitation and class conflict.⁷⁸ But he is careful to maintain the distinction in a number of respects, of which one is important for my argument: socialism differs from communism on the question of needs and abilities. Under communism, the old slogan of 'from each according to ability and to each according to needs' may apply, but under socialism it is 'from each according to ability and to each according to work'.⁷⁹ The rewards for labour remain commensurate with the labour provided, which entails the principle of differentiation in the context of equality and thereby some gradations in pay scales in light of skills, experience and responsibility.⁸⁰

This qualification provides a glimpse of another feature of Stalin's approach to human nature: passionate enthusiasm has a more negative dimension. I have already hinted at this part of the new human nature, especially in terms of Stalin's considerations of the 'savage' sentiments of human beings, the need for Bolshevik grit in the face of opposition and the need for differentiation under socialism. But I would like to close with two clear instances where the negative dimension comes to the surface, to the point where it is inescapably tied to the positive.

On the 17th of January, 1930, Stalin wrote to Maxim Gorky. The letter was written at the outset of the first wave of accelerated collectivisation, which was itself a response to the extraordinary pace of industrialisation. Throughout the letter, Stalin addresses the positive and negative dimensions of the whole process, exploring ways to enhance the latter. When he comes to the question of young people, the understanding of the tension between positive and negative rises to another level. One should expect differentiation, writes Stalin, when the old relations in life are being broken down and new ones built, when 'the customary roads

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77 Stalin 1934a, p. 340; 1934b, p. 333; 1935a, p. 75; 1935b, p. 60; 1936a, pp. 157-63; 1936b, pp. 123-6; 1939a, pp. 372-97; 1939b, pp. 302-21.

78 Stalin 1930i, pp. 330-2; 1930j, pp. 321-2; 1934a, pp. 340-1; 1934b, pp. 333-4; 1933c; 1933d; 1936c, articles 1-12; 1936d, stat'ia 1-12.

79 Stalin 1936c, article 12; 1936d, stat'ia 12.

80 Stalin 1931m, pp. 57-62; 1931n, pp. 55-60; 1931s, pp. 120-1; 1931t, pp. 117-18; 1934a, pp. 361-4; 1934b, pp. 354-7.

and paths are being torn up and new, uncustomary ones laid', when those used to living in plenty are being disrupted in favour of those who were oppresses and downtrodden. In this situation, some will be enthusiastic, hardy, strong and with the character to appreciate the 'picture of the tremendous break-up of the old and the feverish building of the new as a picture of something which has to be and which is therefore desirable'. But some do not exhibit these characteristics, even among workers and peasants. Indeed, 'in such a "racking turmoil," we are bound to have people who are weary, overwrought, worn-out, despairing, dropping out of the ranks and, lastly, deserting to the camp of the enemy'. We may read this observation at a banal level, with some enthusiastically embracing the new and others falling by the wayside, if not a brutal description of the 'the unavoidable "overhead costs" of revolution'.⁸¹ But I suggest that a deeper dialectical point arises here: the passion for the new generates the falling away, the foot-dragging and even desertion to the enemy; but so also does the falling away produce yet more enthusiasm. The two are inseparably entwined.

The second emergence of the negative is with the famous piece from the same year, 'Dizzy with Success'.⁸² The basic point is obvious, which is not to let the enthusiasm for collectivisation overreach, not to become over-confident in light of success. One needs a little moderation, neither lagging nor running too far ahead (and thereby using coercion to achieve a uniform result), neither right nor left deviations. It may well be that the warning arose over concerns that too many people were showing signs of weariness and lagging, but I am interested in the nature of the enthusiasm in question. The argument reveals a slight recalibration of point in the letter to Gorky. There Stalin was concerned with the generation of the negative in terms of those who turn out not to have the toughness, strength and passion for the new; here the negative arises from an excess of enthusiasm. The words chosen by Stalin are telling: he speaks of the 'seamy side', intoxication, distortion, fever, vanity, conceit, belief in omnipotence, the singing of boastful songs, losing all sense of proportion and the capacity to understand reality, dashing headlong to the abyss.⁸³ In other words, the danger is not merely the dialectical other produced by enthusiasm, but also arises from within enthusiasm

⁸¹ Stalin 1930a, pp. 180-1; 1930b, pp. 173-4. On a similar note: 'The First Five-Year Plan had both sparked and accompanied an all-out push for industrialization and collectivization of agriculture, marked by unrealistic predictions and incredible confusion. It was an era when extremes became the norm; a period of the heroic and the horrendous, of industrial achievements amid terrible waste, miscalculation, and error; of hatred of the regime and dedication to the cause of building a socialist society'. Healy 1997, p. xi.

⁸² Stalin 1930c; 1930d. A number of subsequent statements make largely the same points: Stalin 1930e; 1930f; 1934a, pp. 384-5; 1934b, pp. 375-6; 1937c, pp. 284-5; 1937d, pp. 180-1.

⁸³ Stalin 1930c, p. 198; 1930d, p. 192; 1930e, pp. 208, 214, 217; 1930f, pp. 203, 208-9, 211-12; 1934a, pp. 384-5; 1934b, pp. 375-6.

itself. This is the first real suggestion of a rather different approach that will have profound ramifications for understanding human nature: the negative is not restricted to being an external, if necessary, other to the positive, but it appears internal to the very workings of the positive. With these signals, Stalin both draws upon the Orthodox theological preference for mediation, if not the tendency to see evil as related to the good (albeit in terms of deprivation), and yet strikes out on a unique path. In other words, he begins to bring together the 'foreign' opposition of Pelagian and Augustinian approaches, but now in terms of intensification. In all this, the Augustinian moment is truly an irruption, which challenges not only Orthodox dismissals of the Latin theologian, but also the Pelagian assumptions of Marxist anthropology.

A Materialist Doctrine of Evil

Dark are their aims, and dark is their path.⁸⁴

I turn to analyse this irruption in detail, or what I have earlier called the purge dimension of enthusiasm. It provides nothing less than the outlines of a materialist doctrine of evil, embodied above all in the Red Terror. The Terror, with its 'uprooting and smashing methods',⁸⁵ was as much a policy, enacted by the OGPU-NKVD, for protecting the revolution against counter-revolution as a practice that peaked at certain times, such as that following the assassination attempts on Lenin or Stalin's purges of the late 1930s. Here theory is born of practice and events, a nascent theory of the strength and power of evil. I mean not that the Red Terror alone is an evil,⁸⁶ but that the Terror entails an identification of and response to evil, and thereby a necessary other dimension of the new human being identified in the 1930s. In analysing the Red Terror, we face external and internal factors. The identification of external evil is the easier option, while the awful awareness of the internal nature of evil is an awareness gained with much pain. In what follows, I am concerned mostly the internal dynamics of evil, in both collective and individual senses.

On Terror

The first peak of the Red Terror followed the assassination attempts on Lenin and others in 1918. After the near fatal shooting of 30 August

⁸⁴ Stalin 1917c, p. 81; 1917d, p. 77.

⁸⁵ Stalin 1937a, p. 261; 1937b, p. 164.

⁸⁶ For some commentators the Red Terror functions as the epitome of the 'evil' of Stalinism, if not of communism per se: Volkogonov 1994; Figes 1998; Werth et al. 1999; Fitzpatrick 1994a, pp. 163-70; 2000, pp. 190-217; Harris 2000; Gellately 2007; Gregory 2009; Conquest 2015. In a forthcoming study, I analyse the dynamics of the extreme polarisation – veneration and demonization – over Stalin.

of that year,⁸⁷ Stalin suggested a systematic mass terror against the perpetrators of the assassination attempt, but also against opponents of the new government.⁸⁸ So the government directed Felix Dzerzhinsky, head of the Cheka, to commence what was officially called a Red Terror.⁸⁹ It matters little for my analysis as to how much Lenin and Stalin were directly involved, from arrests and imprisonment to the execution of the Romanov family, but what is important is the fact that it happened in response to an act of terror. That is, the Red Terror was initially a response to anti-revolutionary violence. It may be seen as a response to the concrete reality of evil, a rude awakening to how vicious and desperate the internal forces opposed to the revolution really were. The Pelagian view of the inherent ability of human beings to achieve good, or indeed the Orthodox theological assumption of the basic goodness of human beings,⁹⁰ came face to face with the deeply troubling and Augustinian realisation of human evil.

What of the oft-cited 'excesses' of the Red Terror, such as the summary executions of suspected saboteurs? One element here is the uncontrolled nature of revolutionary violence. It typically runs its own course, straying here and there in the euphoria of the moment. More significantly, a Red Terror may be seen as the belated outburst of deep patterns of working class and peasant anger at the long and brutal oppression by the former ruling classes, an oppression that makes the Red Terror pale by comparison. In Russia, the long history of capricious and vicious violence at the hands of the landlords, factory tyrants, Black Hundreds (recall the frequent pogroms), and tsarist troops were remembered. Now at last was an opportunity to settling old scores, since the workers and peasants were finally in control. The remarkable consistency, which appears beneath the constant recalibrations, of the categories of the 'disenfranchised' and 'alien elements' in dealing with the old class opponents gives abundant testimony to the reality of the

⁸⁷ After the bullets missed Lenin on 14 January, two found their mark on 30 August. One hit his arm and the other was embedded in his neck and spilled blood into a lung. They were fired by Fanya Kaplan, the Socialist-Revolutionary, and they left Lenin clinging to life. Even here, external forces seemed to have played a role, with the British agent, Robert Bruce Lockhart, engaged in inciting a plot to overthrow the Soviet government due to its efforts to seek a peace treaty with the Germans. See Cohen 1980.

⁸⁸ 'Having learned of the villainous attempt of the hirelings of the bourgeoisie on the life of Comrade Lenin, the world's greatest revolutionary and the tried and tested leader and teacher of the proletariat, the Military Council of the North Caucasian Military Area is answering this vile attempt at assassination by instituting open and systematic mass terror against the bourgeoisie and its agents': Stalin 1918a, p. 130; 1918b, p. 128.

⁸⁹ It was officially announced in an article called 'Appeal to the Working Class', in the 3 September 1918 issue of *Izvestiya*. A couple of days later the Cheka published the decree, 'On Red Terror'.

⁹⁰ Bouteneff 2008, p. 94.

changed class situation.⁹¹ Lenin's argument in *The State and Revolution*,⁹² that the dictatorship of the proletariat must smash the bourgeois dictatorship, had found ready acceptance and was enacted through the Red Terror.⁹³

On Purges

The greatest peak of the Red Terror was constituted by the purges and trials under Stalin in the 1930s. Here it is worth recalling that the term 'purge' is an ancient theological idea. 'Purge [ekkatharate] the old yeast, so that you may be a new batch', writes Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:7, using the metaphor of yeast and bread for the Christian life. The 'old yeast' of malice and evil should be replaced with the new yeast of Christ, for it leavens the whole dough (1 Cor. 5:6).⁹⁴ The verb, *ekkathairo* means cleansing, removing what is unclean. Crucially, the translation of the biblical passage in the Latin Vulgate is *expurgate* (*expurgare*), with a comparable sense (that at the same time opens up a slightly different semantic field) of cleansing, freeing or clearing away from unwanted matter, and then clearing oneself from blame. *Purgare* has a similar meaning, with the sense of cleansing from or ridding dirt and impurities. For the early Christians of these texts and afterwards, purging clearly related to body and soul of the believer. Christ was the physician who heals the soul, if not the body itself.⁹⁵ The impurities that arose from sin or the activities of the devil included as much physical ailments, deformities, pain and illness, just as mental difficulties signalled an afflicted soul. Thus, the resurrected body would be one that was whole and vigorous, freed from the deleterious effects of sin and where an equally whole and clean soul would be at peace. And it was God who purged one of sin so as to be purified and restored to God. But one could also participate, through redemptive pain (like Christ), ascetic practice, fasting, chastity and self-deprivation. Under the influence of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite (of the late fifth and early sixth centuries CE), purging became crucial to the stages in the Christian life: purification, illumination and union. It applied to individual life, hierarchies of angels and the church itself (catechumens, baptised and monks). As the Latin

⁹¹ This consistency shows up in the very efforts, in secondary scholarship, to decry such a development: Fitzpatrick 2000, pp. 115-38; 2005, pp. 91-101; Alexopoulos 2002.

⁹² Lenin 1917.

⁹³ By comparison, in China one of the most telling instances of counter-revolutionary brutality of the Guomindang before 1949 was the practice of shooting, without question, any woman found with natural feet and short hair. The assumption by the forces of Chang Kai-Shek was that any such woman was obviously a communist.

⁹⁴ In 2 Timothy 2:21 the reflexive appears (*ekkathare eauton*), cleanse yourself, now by analogy with a utensil.

⁹⁵ Moreira 2010, pp. 63-6.

and Greek traditions diverged, the theory and practice of purging took distinct paths in some respects (notably the Latin doctrine of purgatory) and overlapped, especially in terms to monasticism. Indeed, in Orthodox theology, monasticism became a core feature and the source of renewal.

As I begin to analyse Stalin's usage, let me note the official synodal Russian⁹⁶ translation of 1 Cor. 5:7, which uses *ochistite* (from *chistit'*) – to clean, clear and purge – for the Greek *ekkatharate*. The noun, *chistka* would be the main term used by the Bolsheviks. I am not of course claiming a direct and conscious lineage from the biblical text of 1 Cor. 5:7, but rather a terminological, cultural if not theological framework within which the terminology of purge was translatable across theological and Marxist political usage. This was already the case with Lassalle's famous slogan, cited often by Stalin and indeed Lenin: 'the party become strong by purging itself [*Partiia ukrepliaetsia tem, chto ochishchaet sebia*]'.⁹⁷ In Stalin's texts, a purge is a natural process of the Party. The term was applied to the regular screening of Party members, seeking to weed out the 'hangars-on, nonparticipants, drunken officials, and people with false identification papers, as well as ideological "enemies" or "aliens"'.⁹⁸ From early on, it was seen as a necessary and beneficent revolutionary process, 'purging [*ochishchenia*] the revolution of "unnecessary" elements', one that would continue with the Party when in power.⁹⁹ Over the following years, he came to depict purging in different ways, including the natural process of tidying up the party's membership, of a 'cleaning up' (*chistka*) and 'sifting' or 'filtering' (*filtrovki*) the cadres of the Red Army so as to ensure reliable Bolsheviks at its core, of theoretical re-education of aforesaid members, of strengthening the Party through struggle and getting rid of unstable and unreliable elements, of 'purging itself of dross' (*ochishchaet sebia ot skverny*), of reminding members that the Party exists and of ensuring quality rather than quantity so as not to become a 'colossus with feet of clay'.¹⁰⁰ On a more theological register, a purge

96 The synodal translation was first published in full in 1878, and would have been used by Stalin. Begun in 1813 under the auspices of the Russian Bible Society, it was eventually completed under the direction of the Most Holy Synod. As with most major Bible translations, its distinctive features influenced the Russian language and literature deeply. With some revisions, it remains the Bible used by a number of churches in Russia today, including the Russian Orthodox Church, Roman Catholics and Protestant Churches.

97 Stalin 1921a, p. 73; 1921b, p. 72.

98 Getty 1985, p. 38. Although Kharkhordin does not deal with Stalin in any extended way, his discussion of the theory and practice of purges in the strict sense has some useful insights, especially in terms of the need for unity and 'fusion' or 'cohesion' (*spaika*). See Kharkhordin 1999, pp. 133-42. It is important to note that trials, operations, arrests and terror were not designated purges. However, since scholarly usage has since included such matters under the label of 'purge', I do so here as well.

99 Stalin 1917a, p. 38; 1917b, p. 36.

100 Stalin 1919a, p. 190; 1919b, p. 186; 1919c, pp. 195, 197; 1919d, pp. 191, 193; 1919e, pp. 211, 215,

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reminds people that a master exists, the Party, which 'can call them to account for all sins committed against it'. It is necessary that 'this master [*khozianinu*] go through the Party ranks with a broom every now and again'.¹⁰¹

Demonstration Trials

The trigger for the major demonstration trials¹⁰² of the 1930s was the assassination in December 1934 of Sergei Kirov, head of the Leningrad Party branch.¹⁰³ As with the assassination attempt on Lenin in 1918, this prompted the sense of an imminent coup and a vigorous response in seeking out the enemy within, resulting in the trial and execution of hundreds of thousands.¹⁰⁴ The Red Terror reached a climax between 1936 and 1938: the trial of Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre (the Sixteen), of the anti-Soviet Trotskyite Centre (the Seventeen), of the Anti-Soviet 'Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites' (the Twenty-One) and of the generals (most notably Marshall Tukhachevskii).¹⁰⁵ Eventually, many of the Old Bolsheviks were caught up in the purge, including Grigori Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev, Karl Radek, Nikolai Bukharin and Leon Trotsky. In the purge of the Red Army alone, 34,000 officers were arrested (although 11,500 were reinstated), including 476 senior commanders. However, I am less interested here in the public relations disaster that the trials became,¹⁰⁶ in the level of Stalin's involvement,¹⁰⁷ in the nature of the opposition bloc

230-1; 1919f, pp. 204, 208, 222-3; 1919g; 1919h; 1921a, p. 73; 1921b, p. 72; 1921c, pp. 100-1; 1921d, pp. 98-9; 1924a, pp. 239-40; 1924b, pp. 227-9; 1939a, pp. 400-1; 1939b, pp. 322-3.

101 Stalin 1924a, p. 240; 1924b, p. 229. This reference to a master undermines Kharkhordin's proposal (1999, pp. 154-61) that the connection between self-criticism and purge in the collective brought about an internal dynamic of purging that led to the Red Terror. Implicit in his analysis is the absence of an external arbiter, such as an independent legal system, but implicit here is the absence of a God.

102 Demonstration trials took place at all levels of the complex judiciary, the purpose of which was both judgement and education. See Kotkin 1997, pp. 256-7.

103 See the key document from the Central Executive Committee legitimating the Red Terror, from 1 December 1934 and a few hours after Kirov's murder, in Boobyer 2000, pp. 65-6.

104 I have no need to add to the interminable debate over the number of deaths, although Wheatcroft's and Nove's analyses are the most sober: Wheatcroft 1993; 1996; 1999; Nove 1993.

105 A number of collections of primary documents relating to the Red Terror are worth consulting: (USSR 1936; 1937; 1938; Getty and Naumov 1999; Boobyer 2000, pp. 65-82; Weinberg and Bernstein 2011, pp. 184-207).

106 Stalin 1939a, pp. 395-6; 1939b, pp. 319-20; Bliven 1938. It is worth noting that the trials deceived the High Command of Hitler's *Wehrmacht*, who, believing that the Red Army had been weakened by the military trials, anticipated that it would collapse and that Moscow would fall in short order. The military was far stronger than expected and, given the enmeshment of the army with the people, public morale and support of the government held strong. See Thurston 1996, pp. 199-226; Roberts 2006, pp. 15-19.

107 It was much less than has often been imputed. The most judicious assessments remain those by Getty 1993; Getty, Rittersporn, and Zemskov 1993.

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and Trotsky's involvement,¹⁰⁸ in the widespread debate they continue to generate, as scholars seek causes while (rarely) defending them or (mostly) condemning them in a way that curiously echoes some elements of Cold War propaganda.¹⁰⁹ Instead, I wish to focus on the way they reveal a more realistic (and arguably pessimistic) assessment of the propensity to evil.

Four theoretical features of the trials and purges stand out. First, there was the bifurcation between the vast number who enthusiastically supported the heady project of the 1930s and the many who found it was far too much. Whether or not the latter group had something to lose in the process, their reluctance, noncompliance, resistance and outright opposition did not stand them well. The Red Terror was not so much the 'hard line' in contrast to a 'soft line' of fostering Stakhanovism and affirmative action,¹¹⁰ but rather the necessary other dimension of one and same process.¹¹¹ Second, the Red Terror may be seen as the last moment of the dominance of a Pelagian-cum-Orthodox view of human nature, which had to be defended at all costs by eliminating those who revealed a starker, Augustinian perception. Wavering and oppositional elements – it was felt – had to be weeded out, as well as sections of the Red Army that may have been less than resolute during the soon-to-come struggle with Hitler's massed forces (for by far the main struggle and thereby locus of victory was on the Russian front). Evil had to be excised. Third, the Terror reveals an over-compensation for the lack of properly robust doctrine of evil in the Marxist tradition. In the sweeping nature of the trials and

108 Getty offers an insightful assessment of Trotsky's involvement through his son, Lev Sedov: Getty 1985, pp. 119–28. Getty concludes that a bloc did form, that Trotsky knew of it, and that the NKVD was aware of its development.

109 For instance, even the U.S. Ambassador to the USSR at the time, Joseph E. Davies, found the trials perfectly fair: Larina 1994; Martens 1996, p. 142. Debate over the purges and trials continues to produce an increasingly diverse range of assessments. As a sample, these include: repetitions of Cold War denunciations; counter-revolutionary thermidor; Stalin's childhood trauma; personal paranoia; political paranoia; routinisation of evil; methodical application of incalculable violence; detailed dictatorial control; chaos and disorder (which was counter-productive); intentionalism versus decisionism; a world of signs removed from the real world; a unique innovation by Stalin; elimination of political alternatives; diversion of dissent; response to economic problems; a species of revivalism; theatre; inquisition; production of 'official fear' in contrast to 'cosmic fear'; 'communist sacrifice' in which the party 'failure' is reinscribed on itself; and the usual *reductio ad Hitlerum*: Marcuse 1958, p. 112; Tucker 1965, 1990, p. 171; Deutscher 1967, pp. 375–6, 611; Trotsky 1972, pp. 86–114; Shernock 1984; Rittersporn 1986; De Jonge 1988; Argenbright 1991; Manning 1993b; Roberts 1995; 2006, pp. 17–18; Davies 1997, p. 113; Kotkin 1997, p. 327; Ihanus 1999; Žižek 1999; Lih 2002; Bauman 2004; Service 2004; Priestland 2007, pp. 304–93; Gerlach and Werth 2008; Conquest 2015. Many have been influenced implicitly by Khrushchev's 'secret speech' at the Twentieth Congress of Communist Party of the USSR in February 1956. See Furr 2011 Losurdo 2008.

110 This is Martin's distinction (2001), in relation to various policies surrounding the national question.

111 Stalin recognises as much in his observation, 'We must smash and cast aside the fourth rotten theory to the effect that the Stakhanov movement is the principal means for the liquidation of wrecking': Stalin 1937a, p. 266; 1937b, p. 168.

purges, along with the relocations of parts of the population who resisted Stalin's moves, we encounter the surprise and shock at the presence of evil and thereby a response that attempts to compensate for the overly benign heritage of Pelagian Marxism, if not of Russian Orthodox assumptions concerning human nature. Finally, in this very effort the power of Augustinian approach is revealed. Thus, the Red Terror marks the explicit recognition of the propensity to evil, which is now raised to a whole new level during the socialist offensive. Evil could not be excised so easily.

Evil Within

This awareness was all the more powerful since it was realised that the evil in question was just as much an internal reality, understood in both collective and individual senses. On a more clearly collective level, it is telling that the Red Terror of the 1930s was very much a public experience, and not the shady and covert program that it is so often depicted to have been.¹¹² It involved mass participation, in which people crowded the many demonstration trials, upheld a general belief in social justice, and believed the guilt of the accused – often leaders in the Party itself.¹¹³ Indeed, the level of participation in general may be seen in the remarkable volume of letters to government figures and to newspapers, letters that ran into the millions.¹¹⁴ So also with the 1937 elections to all levels of government, especially in the collectives, which entailed detailed self-criticism and often went on for days and weeks, running beyond Party expectations.¹¹⁵ Common workers and farmers enthusiastically denounced Party and economic officials suspected of – among a large range of potential crimes – sabotaging the economy, technicism, ideological doubt, efforts to undermine the government, or acting on behalf of a foreign enemy.¹¹⁶ Popular enthusiasm for the self-cleansing was very common indeed.¹¹⁷ It is de rigueur to decry such mass brutality, but this reaction misses both the fact that the majority of ordinary people did not fear arrest¹¹⁸ and the collective nature of the

112 Fitzpatrick 1994, pp. 168–9.

113 Thurston 1986; Rittersporn 1993; Fitzpatrick 1993; Davies 1997, p. 119; Kotkin 1997, p. 269; Chase 2005, p. 240.

114 Fitzpatrick 2000, pp. 115–38; 2005, pp. 155–81; Alexopoulos 2002.

115 Kharkhordin 1999, pp. 159–60; Priestland 2007, pp. 371–2.

116 Manning 1993a.

117 Stalin captures this situation in his comments from 1939: 'At the beginning of 1938 Rosengoltz, Rykov, Bukharin and other fiends were sentenced to be shot. After that, the elections to the Supreme Soviets of the Union Republics were held. In these elections 99.4 per cent of the total vote was cast for the Soviet power': Stalin 1939a, p. 396; 1939b, p. 320.

118 Thurston 1996, pp. 143–4.

old communist process of self-criticism. Here, the self-examination for failings in fostering the cause becomes a collective venture that seeks to strengthen the body through purging what is harmful. Yet purging threatens to become a never-ending process, not because one needs to find continual scapegoats for failure to achieve the goals of the cause, but because evil remains no matter how much one attempts to excise it.

In the trials collective and individual merge, although in order to see how this came about I would like to turn to Bukharin's confession, in the third and last trial of 1936-1938, to explicate what is implicit in Stalin's formulations. Like other confessions, Bukharin's indicates not so much cowering before the threat of coercion or even the result of such coercion (the common position of those who condemn the trials), but the fact that those charged owned the confessions. That is, even if they had not committed some of the acts confessed, they came to believe that they were true. The confession of Bukharin is the paradigm of this process. This central figure in the communist party, with senior roles – among others, member of the Politburo, secretary of the Comintern, chief editor of *Pravda* and author of major works – and for a while Stalin's closest ally, fell out due to his opposition to Stalin's move leftward, especially the push to undertake rapid collectivisation. His initial confession, the spectacular withdrawal, the reinterrogation, admission to the totality of the crimes but denial of knowledge of specific crimes, 34 letters to Stalin (written from prison) with their tearful protestations of loyalty and admission, the four books written, and then his conduct in the trial in which he subtly criticised the very confession he had made, even to the point of questioning the outdated role of the confession itself – all these illustrate the sheer impossibility of locating the dividing line between good and evil.¹¹⁹ Above all, Bukharin's last plea plays out all these contradictions in extraordinary detail. Once again he admits all his guilt in opposing the rapid push towards communism, even in plotting to overthrow the government, but then he turns around to question and deny individual charges, saying at times that he can neither deny nor confirm a charge own admission.¹²⁰ The most telling section is when he identifies within himself a 'peculiar duality of mind', even a 'dual psychology' that was caught in the contradiction between a degenerating counter-revolutionary tendency and what he calls a 'semi-paralysis of the will', a contradiction that was in turn generated by the 'objective grandeur of

119 The trial and Bukharin's behaviour has perplexed observers ever since. Apart from the dismissal of the confessions as coerced, some have suggested it was the last service of a true believer in the cause, that he used Aesopian language to turn the trial into a one of Stalin himself, that he subtly pointed to his innocence while ostensibly admitting guilt and that the charge was primarily political and ideological. These interpretations not so much misread the material, but they manifest at a formal level precisely the tension at the heart of a materialist doctrine of evil: Cohen 1980; Medvedev 1989, p. 367; Larina 1994; Service 2004; Koestler 2006; Priestland 2007, pp. 360-4.

120 USSR 1938, pp. 767-9.

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socialist construction'. He is nothing less than the Hegelian 'unhappy consciousness'.¹²¹ I suggest that this extraordinary text reveals a deep awareness of the impossibility of distinguishing between guilt and innocence, for we are all so in any given moment.¹²² So he concludes: 'The monstrousness of my crime is immeasurable especially in the new stage of struggle of the U.S.S.R. May this trial be the last severe lesson, and may the great might of the U.S.S.R become clear to all'.¹²³

In light of all this, Stalin's call to vigilance – precisely when it had waned in the context of the heady successes of the socialist offensive – is as much a watchfulness for the opponents who constantly arise as a vigilance of oneself in order to identify any such tendency within.¹²⁴ I mean not merely the political blindness, 'carelessness, complacency, self-satisfaction, excessive self-confidence, swelled-headedness and boastfulness', which are sins enough, but the possibility that an Old Bolshevik like himself may well become a 'wrecker'.¹²⁵ In this respect, it is worth noting that various terms – such as bourgeois, kulak, Menshevik and Trotskyite – seem to have made a transition in Stalin's thought to include dimensions of human nature. Commentators have from time to time stressed the flexibility of such terms, which could be applied to opponents who were neither aware of nor fit any objective criteria for such identity.¹²⁶ However, what they miss is that the terms

121 USSR 1938, pp. 776-7. Stalin's earlier observation on Bukharin is uncannily prescient: 'In general, Bukharin was in a repentant mood. That is natural: he has been sinning against the nationalities for years, denying the right to self-determination. It was high time for him to repent. But in repenting he went to the other extreme': Stalin 1923a, p. 271; 1923b, p. 266. See also Stalin's earlier criticisms of Bukharin, already back in 1917 and then when he 'out-lefted' Bukharin in the socialist offensive: Stalin 1917e, pp. 195-9; 1917f, pp. 182-6; 1929a, pp. 102-13; 1929b, pp. 96-107. Those familiar with Hegel may well be reminded of the famous section of the *Phenomenology* on 'Absolute Freedom and Terror' (1977, pp. 355-64). He was, of course, rather horrified by the Terror of the French Revolution, seeing it as the (momentary) effacement of the 'all distinctions and all continuance of distinctions' within the absolute freedom of abstract self-consciousness (361). No constituent parts, no mediation, no alienation, in which the general will is coterminous with an individual. Despite recoiling and eager to move on, Hegel glimpses in his own way the possibility that evil is a heartbeat away from the good: the absolute positive of freedom 'changes around to its negative nature' (361).

122 An echo of Bukharin's experience may be found in the complex policies of disenfranchisement (*lshentsy*), in which both people and officials were never quite sure that they were really able to distinguish and identify the enemy, for the enemy always seemed to elude their grasp. See Alexopoulos 2002, pp. 86-95.

123 USSR 1938, p. 779.

124 Stalin 1937a, pp. 255-9; 1937b, pp. 160-3. Fitzpatrick's comment, 'anyone could turn out to be an enemy', may be read – against her intentions – in such a way: Fitzpatrick 2000, p. 192. Similarly, her treatment of the double-lives of many individuals provides further evidence of this deeply internal process: Fitzpatrick 2005, pp. 114-52.

125 Stalin 1937a, p. 257; 1937b, p. 161. It may be possible to read the constant switches between repressive and anti-repressive positions in this light, rather than as mere indecision and wavering. See Getty 1985; 1993.

126 Getty 1985, p. 125; Viola 1993; Fitzpatrick 2000, pp. 191-2; 2014.

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themselves become part of the internal dynamic that I have been examining. Collectively, the point is easy to see, for Menshevik and Trotskyite especially are terms internal to the workings of the Party and socialism in a Russian situation. They arise from within and become points of extended struggle. But is it possible that they also apply to the individual within the collective? I suggest that they do, that each person, no matter how genuine a Bolshevik, may evince such traces. Bolshevik and Menshevik, Stalin and Trotsky, become two dimensions of the same person.¹²⁷ In these ciphers is embodied at yet another level the stark insights into Marxist anthropology.

Conclusion: The Necessary Conjunction of Good and Evil

No revolutionary measure can be guaranteed against having certain negative aspects.¹²⁸

I have argued that Stalin, especially in the context of the socialist offensive of the 1930s, came to develop the outlines of a new human nature in which evil loomed large. I framed this development in terms of a tension between Pelagian-cum-Orthodox and Augustinian views of human nature, with a distinct focus on transformation.¹²⁹ Initially, it may seem that Stalin moves from a common Marxist Pelagianism, in which human beings have the ability to transform themselves (collectively and individually), to a more Augustinian position, in which evil dominates and hobbles any project for improvement.¹³⁰ This Augustinianism emerges noticeably in the purges of the Red Terror.

However, it should be clear by now that an either-or hardly does justice to the complexity of the material. Instead, I would emphasise a bifurcation that runs through the extraordinary decade of the 1930s. This begins with the distinction between the many who were passionate for the socialist offensive, for the industrialisation and collectivisation drives, and the many who lagged behind, at times actively opposing the revolutionary push. Enthusiasm cuts both ways.¹³¹ It also appears in the

127 This metaphoric internalisation of class goes beyond the suggestion that class struggle ceased to be a central motif of the 1930s (itself contestable), in favour of rooting out cadres with bureaucratic and anti-communist tendencies. See Priestland 2007, pp. 324-9.

128 Stalin 1933a, p. 224; 1933b, p. 220.

129 The suggestion that Stalin's view, if not the official Bolshevik view, was 'Manichaean' hints at an awareness of this dynamic but ultimately misses the point. See Getty 1985, p. 1; Clark 2011, p. 213.

130 Deutscher (1967, p. 262) unhelpfully casts this opposition as one between revolutionary optimism and pessimism in relation to the working class, which he then attaches to Trotsky and Stalin.

131 The memoirs by Andreev-Khomiakov (1997) indicate very well the double nature of the process, for in his anti-communist effort to show up bitter experiences by many at the time it also reveals the sheer enthusiasm and significant achievements.

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dialectical intensification of class struggle, in which the 'moribund' and the 'doomed' would fight ever more ferociously the closer they sensed the socialist project might succeed.¹³² The purges of the Red Terror were then an effort to rid the collective and individual body of these elements. Yet, in the very process of doing so the Red Terror marks the stark realisation of the strength and reality of this evil – especially the fact that it was generated from within. All of which brings me to the conclusion that the constitutive feature of the socialist offensive of the 1930s was the necessary connection between passion and purge, between Stakhanovism and Red Terror, affirmative action and repression, the ciphers Stalinism and Trotskyism, good and evil. Both dimensions were crucial to the effort to construct socialism and especially for the new, transformed human nature that was felt to be emerging.¹³³ It was neither Pelagian nor Augustinian, but radically intensified forms of both at one and the same time.

I would like to close on a slightly different note: what did Stalin regard as the most important side of this new human nature? What was more important: Stakhanovism or the Red Terror, passion or purge, good or evil? On the one hand, he indicates that the dangers to the socialist project were primary, that vigilance was needed and the Red Terror vital.¹³⁴ In this situation, the GPU or Cheka was 'the terror of the bourgeoisie, the vigilant guardian of the revolution, the naked sword of the proletariat [*obnazhennym mechom proletariata*]'.¹³⁵ On the other hand, he points out: 'Measures of repression in the sphere of socialist construction are a necessary element of the offensive, but they are an auxiliary, not the chief element'. Instead, the chief element is the positive side of the socialist offensive, by which he means not only industry and collective farming, but also mobilising 'the masses around socialist construction'.¹³⁶ These two positions signal not so much Stalin's inability to decide, but rather the importance and necessity of both.

132 On the theology of class struggle, see Boer In press b.

133 Naiman (2002) hints at but does not develop the necessity of the connection between what he calls 'healing and terror' in the Soviet project.

134 Stalin 1937a, p. 246; 1937b, p. 154.

135 Stalin 1927c, p. 240; 1927d, p. 235.

136 Stalin 1930i, p. 318; 1930j, pp. 309-10.

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