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A Philosophical Critique of the Marxist Utopia Through Dostoevsky's Notes From Underground



Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Applied Philosophy and Ethics at Strathmore University

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Strathmore University

Nairobi, Kenya

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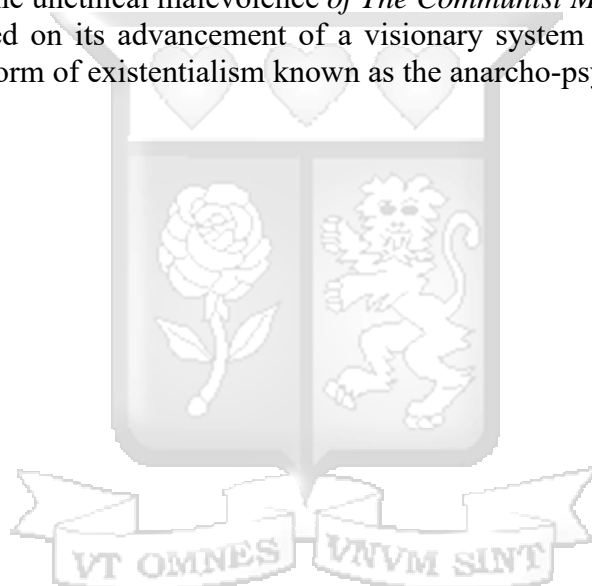
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Abstract

Going back to antiquity to the present, men have dreamed of an ideal state that provides the necessary conditions for the flourishing of universal happiness. From the biblical Garden of Eden to Xenophon's *Krypoaedia* and Plato's *Republic*, men have advanced the notion of the ideal state purposely designed to assure mankind eternal bliss. The 19th Century witnessed utopian narratives that sought to situate utopia within the course of history as the final act. The course of history would culminate in a utopian society. The construction of utopia entails the total subordination of society to human will. This refers to man's capacity to dominate his external environment and exert conscious rational control over his external environment. The realization of utopia will usher in the kingdom of freedom. The unity of mankind would be restored as human individual existence would be reconciled with human species essence. However, what started as the promise of collective earthly salvation degenerated into tyranny. The conscious striving to implement the perfect future edifice led to totalitarianism. Unrestricted freedom quickly transformed into unrestricted despotism. This research examines *The Communist Manifesto* in relation to Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*. The analysis aims to establish a correlation between Dostoevsky's ideas and the unethical malevolence of *The Communist Manifesto*. *The Manifesto's* utopian character is based on its advancement of a visionary system of social perfection. The analysis is based on the form of existentialism known as the anarcho-psychological tradition.



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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to God for His grace, strength, and guidance. And to my beloved family, for your unwavering love, endless support, and constant encouragement.



Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

1.1 Introduction

This research paper will seek to examine *The Communist Manifesto* in relation to Dostoevsky's work *Notes from Underground*. The focus of this chapter is to articulate the following, the background to the study, the problem definition, the research problem, the overall aim of the research, the research objectives, the research questions, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, the limitations of the study and the conclusion of the chapter.

1.2 Background to the study

The Communist Manifesto was written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in 1848. It was intended to provide the underlying theoretical foundation for the Communist League, the first Marxist political party (Cowling, 1998). *Notes from Underground* is a novel written by Fyodor Dostoevsky in 1864. Most literary critics consider it within the class of his finest short novels. (Kauffman, 1975).

Dostoevsky's work is widely considered to be of great prophetic significance. He provided a prophetic insight into what would characterize a society predicated upon utopian ideals (Kroeker & Ward, 2001). Thirty years before the emergence of Soviet Communism it is fascinating how Dostoevsky was able to predict the destiny of his native Russia. The twentieth century was a period defined by tyranny, terror, warfare and widespread alienation endured by human beings (Kengor, 2020). The global death toll in the twentieth century from Communism is estimated at 100 million. Dr Malia considers it the "most colossal case of political carnage in history" (Kengor, 2020, p. 15). Soviet scholar Robert Conquest estimates that Soviet governments were responsible for 61.9 million deaths from 1917 to 1987 (Kengor, 2020). According to Dostoevsky, such outcomes necessarily arise from the adoption of utopian ideals. However, it is important to note that there are other factors that enabled communism to easily take root in Russia. For example, Soviet Communism was a state oriented patriotic ideology reminiscent of Imperial Russian Rule. The Imperial rulers, the Tsars, typically ruled with a personality cult. Thus, it was an idea firmly engrained in the Russian psyche (Brandenberger & Dubrovsky, 1998). Soviet leaders would

subsequently adopt their own personality cults. As Stalin himself maintained “don’t forget that we are living in Russia, the land of the Tsars.... the Russian people like it when one person stands at the head of the state and the people need a Tsar” (Brandenberger & Dubrovsky, 1998, p. 873).

Historical events in the twentieth century reveal Dostoevsky’s prophetic capacity. This is particularly poignant when examining the destiny of his native Russia and its role in shaping the course of Western civilization (Kroeker & Ward, 2001). Dostoevsky embodied the spirit of the genuine prophet as described by Martin Buber. One who “speaks into the power of decision lying in the moment” (Buber, 1960, p. 160). The prophet is the one who stands between the immaterial realm of the gods and human beings. The genuine prophet stands with “one foot in the Kronos, the other in Kairos” (Kroeker & Ward, 2001, p. 3). The ear to eternity and mouth oriented towards the city. A position that entails a commitment towards a remembered vision and active engagement with present society. Dostoevsky’s unique insight into the negative ramifications of the modern historical consciousness is sufficient to regard him as a prophet. He explores the implications of a homogenous state predicated upon universal happiness. Freedom is juxtaposed with universal happiness. Freedom is seen as of paramount importance due to the implications of the schools of thought that are inclined towards universal happiness. As the Underground Man maintains, “shower upon him (man) every earthly blessing.... man would play some nasty trick” (Dostoevsky F. , 1996, p. 18). Dostoevsky is suggesting that universal happiness will not directly lead to fulfilment. This is because what man desires most is free choice. One such school of thought inclined towards universal happiness is Marxism (Kroeker & Ward, 2001). Considering Dostoevsky’s warnings, it is alarming that communism would emerge as “the great story of the twentieth century” (Courtois, et al., 1999, p. 7).

Dostoevsky’s work is situated within the anarcho-psychological tradition which is a form of existentialism. This is a school of thought that emerged in Europe between 1840 and 1890 (Carroll, 1974). This intellectual tradition offered a novel conception of human behaviour and social life, effectively challenging the predominant liberal-rationalist ideology of the time (Carroll, 1974). The most critical element of the anarcho psychological tradition relevant for this study is its rejection of the progress model advanced by *The Communist Manifesto*. *The Communist Manifesto* advances a theory of progress that conceives of history as a series of stages driven by class struggle and economic forces. As it maintains, “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of

class struggles” (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 31). *The Communist Manifesto* purposes to explicate the laws that dictate the course of each historical epoch whilst consequently revealing history’s interior structure and dynamic (Levine & Sober, 1985). As *The Communist Manifesto* asserts, “in every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which is built up” (Marx & Engels, 1970). The anarcho-psychological perspective rejects such a position on the grounds that it is incompatible with the fundamental ontological structure of human beings and culminates in psychological and spiritual degradation (Carroll, 1974). Previous studies have laid emphasis on the dystopian elements in Dostoevsky’s work. Notably how he stressed that the realization of a rational scientific utopia would lead to a dystopian society (Wanner, 1997). The methodology adopted in the study will be qualitative content analysis.

1.2.1 Fyodor Dostoevsky Introduction

Fyodor Dostoevsky was born on November 11th 1821, in Moscow. His Father was a retired military surgeon who treated charity cases and had his own practice. Dostoevsky maintained a lifelong attachment to religion, which began with the old-fashioned piety of his family. A sharp contrast to the fashionable skepticism of the Russian landed gentry. As a young man, he began to participate in the Petrashvsky Circle. A group of intellectuals who discussed utopian socialism. He was then arrested for his revolutionary activity and sentenced to four years of hard labour. His time in prison was particularly pertinent with regard to his intellectual formation. (The School of Life: Fyodor Dostoevsky, 2016). Whilst in Prison, he began to be suspicious of people with a revolutionary disposition. Take this excerpt from the Brothers Karamazov: “I knew one champion of freedom who told me himself that, when he was deprived of tobacco in prison, he was so wretched at the privation that he almost went and betrayed his cause for the sake of getting tobacco again! And such a man says, I am fighting for the cause of humanity” (Dostoevsky, 2002). Here, you have an individual who claims to be committed towards the revolutionary cause. However, he is prepared to give up his cause for the sake of tobacco. These were precisely the sort of characters Dostoevsky encountered in prison.

In addition, his time in prison exposed him to the human capacity for cruelty, violence and irrationality. He observed guards who enjoyed torture for its own sake and criminals who enjoyed murdering children. On the basis of his observations, he alluded to the impossibility of

the utopian assumption that individual depravity is a result of a corrupt social order and that if you fix society, you fix the human being (The School of Life: Fyodor Dostoevsky, 2016).

With regard to his intellectual formation, Dostoevsky was deeply influenced by the celebrated Russian poet Alexander Pushkin. Particularly Pushkin's unique ability to capture the defining essence of Russian ordinary life and Russia's distinct characteristics. Pushkin's portrayal of Russia's national identity and Messianic destiny was the framework from which Dostoevsky investigated revolutionary ideas imported from continental Europe. Pushkin was the product of the Russian aristocracy, the origins of which could be traced to the 10th century. Pushkin's art reflects a sense of security, stability and grace that is indicative of his 600-year-old lineage. On the contrary, Dostoevsky was affected by the revolutionary consciousness that had afflicted Europe following the French Revolution. Dostoevsky sought to situate Pushkin's themes and characters within a modern context, something of which Pushkin could not do given his roots in a past age. (Leatherbarrow, 1979).

1.2.2 Karl Marx Introduction

Karl Marx was born in 1818 in the Rhineland region of Prussia. Both his parents were of Jewish descent with distinguished rabbinical lineages. However, Marx's father converted to Christianity in order to advance his legal career. Marx studied law and philosophy at the Universities of Bonn and Berlin. His doctoral thesis focused on a comparison of the metaphysical theories of Democritus and Epicurus. Through his investigation of Romantic literature, Marx developed an interest in politics. His early writings reveal a conception of reality that is subject to constant change and of human beings as realizing themselves in the struggle for freedom. Marx's adult life was defined by periods of independent scholarship, political activity and relative financial insecurity. His political activity exiled him from his native Prussia, and as a result, he spent three successive periods of exile in France, Belgium and England (Wolff & Leopold, 2021).

Karl Marx is a significant figure in global history due to his influential theories on society, economics, and politics. His ideas, particularly those articulated in his seminal work *The Communist Manifesto*, have had a profound impact on the course of the 20th century and continue to shape debates about social justice and economic equality today (McLellan, 1973).

1.2.3 Friedrich Engels Introduction

Friedrich Engels was the eldest child born to an industrial family in the Rhineland town of Barmen on November 28th 1820. Johann Casper Engels, Friedrich's great-grandfather, established himself as a successful entrepreneur in the manufacturing of lace and ribbon. The Engels family business was passed down the generations to Friedrich's father (1796-1860), also known as Friedrich. The young Engels sympathized with the writings of Young Germany. Young Germany was a literary romantic movement that sought to institute an intellectual revolution. The principal conflict in society was between the intellectually enlightened and the prejudiced. Specifically, dogmatic Christians. It soon became evident that Friedrich would not dutifully follow in his father's footsteps. He vehemently rejected his father's world and marked for himself a different career trajectory. In 1844, Engels visited Marx in Paris, who was renowned for his works that were sympathetic towards communism. The two men discovered that they had arrived independently at identical views and resolved to collaborate. Their collaboration had two principal components. The first was a systematic exposition of the fundamental tenants of communism. The second was the organization of an International Communist Movement (Carver, 2003).

The contribution of Friedrich Engels to the Communist movement is drawn from his work in shaping Marxist thought. Engels expressed key Marxist concepts in terms understandable to a popular audience. His works became foundational texts for the global Marxist movement. He actively worked towards disseminating key Marxian principles among Communist groups, thus cementing their theoretical foundation. Following Marx's death, Engels assumed the role of custodian of his legacy, editing and publishing unfinished works such as the second and third volumes of Capital (Carver, 2003).

1.2.4 Notes from Underground Introduction

Walter Kaufmann maintains that Part One of *Notes from Underground* can lay a claim to be “the best overture for existentialism ever written” (Kaufmann, 1975, p. 14). It can be conceived as a precursor to existentialist philosophy. It explores themes of alienation, absurdity and the conflict between societal norms and the individual's quest for meaning. The work introduces a novel conception of individuality unlike the Classical, Biblical and Romantic formulations. Individuality is defined by the fact that it is wretched and revolting yet still represents the highest good. The book can be considered an “inspired polemic against the whole tradition of social

philosophy from Plato and Aristotle through Hobbes and Locke to Bentham, Hegel and John Stuart Mill” (Kauffman, 1975, p. 13). Dostoevsky’s *Notes from Underground* was intended as a response to the utopian optimism in the Nikolay Chernyshevsky novel *What is to be done*, which influenced a long line of Russian radicals and revolutionaries. The book's protagonist, the Underground Man, mounts an unceasing rebellion against the nature of a society predicated upon philosophical rationalism. Dostoevsky explores the implications of utopian social engineering on individuality, which he believed to be a slippery slope culminating in a “dehumanizing anthill” (Wanner, 1997, p. 84).

Notes from Underground has left a significant mark on literature and philosophy. The popularisation of the anti-hero in literature can be attributed to the novel. The emergence of a new protagonist who does not conform to the traditional heroic archetype. A character defined by complex and morally ambiguous attributes, revealing the complexities of the human psyche. The book is also renowned for its psychological depth. Dostoevsky’s penetrating investigation of mental anguish and the complexities of the human psyche has left an indelible mark on psychology and psychiatry (Kauffman, 1975).

1.2.5 The Communist Manifesto Introduction

The Communist Manifesto stipulates that the trajectory of societal development is characterised by class struggle. Classes are primarily defined with reference to their relation to the means of production. Society consists of two classes. Namely, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The proletariat are the working class and do not own anything except for their labour. On the other hand, the bourgeoisie own the means of production, which they use to keep the proletariat in a state of subjugation. *The Communist Manifesto* calls for the proletariat to ascend to the position of ruling class, which would represent a victory for democracy (Marx & Engels 1970). The proletariat are conceived as the majority class; thus, a victory for them as a class would directly result in universal suffrage. Marx and Engels also call for the centralization of all instruments of production in the hands of the state and to enhance the capacity of the “total of productive forces as rapidly as possible” (Cowling, 1998, p. 4).

The impact of *The Communist Manifesto* on global history has been of great consequence. Its fundamental tenets have influenced political, economic and social dynamics worldwide. This is

evident through the rise of Communist states in the 20th Century. *The Communist Manifesto* supplied the underlying ideological foundation that enabled their establishment. At the height of Communism's influence, a significant portion of the world's population was under its dominion. *The Manifesto* has also exerted influence over anti-colonial movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America, which drew inspiration from its critique of imperialism and emphasis on self-determination and economic independence (Cowling, 1998).

1.2.6 The Russian Revolution Introduction

The Russian Revolution started in February 1917. It began with protests against food shortages and quickly escalated into a full-blown revolution. Bread shortages acted as an immediate catalyst, however, the underlying causes included frustration with the Tsarist regime and Russia's involvement in World War One. The revolution led to the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II and the establishment of a Provisional Government. The Provisional Government, comprised of liberal leaders drawn from various factions, faced numerous challenges. These included continued labour unrest and the ongoing war. The Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin, vehemently opposed the Provisional Government and were primarily inclined towards the establishment of a Socialist State. The October Revolution saw the Bolsheviks, under Lenin's stewardship, seize power from the Provisional Government. The Bolsheviks capitalized on the weakness of the Provisional Government and widespread public discontent to seize the winter palace and establish a one-party state (McMeekin, 2017).

The Russian Revolution was a pivotal event of great historical consequence, with widespread implications for Russia and the world. It marked the end of Tsarist autocracy, the rise of the Bolsheviks to power and the establishment of the first Communist state. The Revolution marked a significant departure from traditional forms of government and inspired Communist movements worldwide. It led to the spread of Communist ideology and the formation of Communist states in Eastern Europe, Asia and Latin America (McMeekin, 2017).

1.2.7 The Bolshevik Party Introduction

The Bolshevik party was a revolutionary Marxist political party. They were committed Marxists who sought to overthrow the Tsarist regime and establish a socialist state. In line with traditional Marxist dogma, the Bolsheviks maintained a firm belief in the centrality of class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. They viewed a proletariat-led revolution as necessary to overthrow the capitalist system. The Bolsheviks formulated the notion of the Vanguard Party. This consisted of a highly disciplined and centralized party of professional revolutionaries to lead the proletariat in the pursuit of the new order. The proletariat was deemed incapable of organically developing revolutionary class consciousness and needed to act under the stewardship of a revolutionary elite. Revolutionary class consciousness refers to awareness of exploitation. Lenin outlined this concept in his 1902 pamphlet “*What Is to Be Done*”, a foundational text in Bolshevik ideology (McMeekin, 2017).

1.3 Problem Statement

As mentioned in the background, the problem at hand is to what extent is it possible to establish a correlation between Dostoevsky’s ideas on the undesirability of social utopias and the unethical malevolence of *The Communist Manifesto*. In addition, through a comparison of *Notes from Underground* and *The Communist Manifesto*, is it possible to identify the underlying premises of such malevolence? Furthermore, on the basis of the Soviet catastrophe, can we systematise the correlation in order to construct a predictive narrative model for other utopian downfalls?

1.4 Overall Aim of the Research

The aim of this research is to examine the effects of utopia on the individual.

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To identify the unethical issues of the praxis of communism forecasted by Dostoevsky in *Notes from Underground*.
2. To assess if some of the forecasted unethical issues by Dostoevsky are included in *The Communist Manifesto*.
3. To examine if the ethical outcomes of the Russian Revolution are in direct correlation with Dostoevsky’s predictions.

1.6 Research Questions

The research questions this study has addressed are:

1. What are the unethical issues of the praxis of communism forecasted by Dostoevsky in *Notes from Underground*?
2. How do the forecasted unethical issues by Dostoevsky emerge in *The Communist Manifesto*?
3. In what ways are the ethical outcomes of the Russian Revolution in direct correlation with Dostoevsky's predictions?

1.7 Scope of the study

This study is limited to *Notes from Underground* as it outlines the ramifications of utopian social engineering. *The Communist Manifesto* was selected as it provided the underlying theoretical basis for Marxism as an ideology and the Russian Revolution. *Notes from Underground* is the most relevant of all Dostoevsky's works for this research undertaking. This is because it deals specifically with the implications of utopian social engineering through its profound exploration of individual psychology, the limitations of rationalism and the dangers of ideological conformity.

1.8 Significance of the study

This study is relevant as it seeks to obtain a predictive narrative model for the ethical-political failure of utopian ideologies. This is particularly pertinent as in the past there have been attempts to create visionary systems of social perfection. Upon seizing power in 1975, the Khmer Rouge regime decreed year zero in Cambodia. Year zero aimed to transform Cambodia into an agrarian utopia. Everything that existed prior to year zero was to be eradicated. It involved a complete reset of Cambodian society. To attain the agrarian utopia Pol Pot established rural collectives, subverted the traditional Cambodian social fabric, evacuated cities and abolished the family, religion and money. (Khmer Rouge: Cambodia's years of brutality, 2018). The various cases of the implementation of Communism in the twentieth century highlight the negative implications of ideologies that are not grounded upon the fundamental ontological constitution of human beings. Because of all the above, the study will be useful to policy makers, educators, government officials and the general populace, to be aware of ideologies, that promise something that implicitly denies their fundamental rights.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

The limitation is that the texts being used are translations as the original works were composed in German and Russian respectively. Thus, there may be issues regarding the application of certain terms in the way that the authors intended them to be applied. The translation of *The Communist Manifesto* used in this study is the 1888 version by Samuel Moore. This translation can be considered as credible as it was authorized, verified and supplied with footnotes by Friedrich Engels. Thus, it is a translation that accurately depicts the original vision of Marx and Engels. The version of *Notes from Underground* used was translated by Constance Garnett in 1918 and published in 1996 by Project Gutenberg. Constance Garnett is widely considered one of the most influential professional translators in history. Most English Editions of Russian literature in the 20th century were based on French translations. The value of Garnett's work is derived from the fact that she used the original Russian texts which maintained the distinctive original spirit of Russian literature, as well as she persistently sought to remain true to the author's desired meaning. (Language Connections, 2023).

1.10 Summary

This Chapter has provided a comprehensive introduction to the research topic, methodology and significance. It has outlined the research questions which sets the stage for a detailed comparative analysis of *Notes from Underground* and *The Communist Manifesto*.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter includes the empirical review of the literature and the theoretical framework that will be used in the study.

2.2 Theoretical Framework.

The research questions have been examined using the existentialist school of thought. Existentialism is particularly pertinent for a research undertaking that is primarily concerned with utopian social engineering. *The Communist Manifesto* is endowed with existential ramifications. It can be analysed using an existential framework. Three thematic areas in *The Manifesto* can be interpreted using existentialism.

- i. Sections that emphasized the role of economic and social structures in determining individual choices.
- ii. Sections that stress the necessity of collective action and the need for collective ownership of the means of production.
- iii. Sections that advance the notion of a utopian collective society where people are endowed with equal rights and responsibilities.

Furthermore, Existentialist philosophers specifically dealt with the philosophy of the enlightenment and its later variations in the form of Marxism and humanism. According to existentialism, the goals advanced by Marxism are unattainable (Olson, 1962). Jaspers maintained that the realization of utopian ideals would be prevented by the operation of “incalculable natural forces” (Jaspers, 1957, p. 72). The efforts of utopian social engineers will be thwarted by the unpredictable nature of human behaviour.

2.2.1 Existentialism

The term existentialism was first introduced by Marcel in 1943. The original application of the term was not intended to refer to a specific system or philosophical doctrine. The major contributors towards the school espouse a wide array of divergent views and do not provide a

singular unified system. Within its leading proponents one can find existentialists of a secular and religious orientation as well as philosophers who embrace a radical conception of freedom and those who reject it. However, it is still possible to identify key elements that characterise the movement (Aho, 2023).

The philosophical school that best represents Dostoevsky's work is existentialism as his ideas are considered a precursor to existentialism. Dostoevsky laid emphasis on human existence as a means to conceptualize the whole person in their full depth. He portrayed the individual as a concrete existing being endowed with the capacity to create themselves (Kauffman, 1975). Dostoevsky's focus on the individual and their subjective experience is consistent with the fundamental tenants of existentialism. Existentialism maintains that individuals engage in the process of self-creation through their own freedom. Existentialism vehemently rejects philosophies underpinned by hypertrophied rationalism and determinism (Olson, 1962). This is critical for this research undertaking as Marxism is such a philosophy. Such schools of thought attribute the primary determinants of human behaviour to external forces (Walicki, 1995). In the case of Marxism this is class struggle and economic forces (Marx & Engels, 1970). Thus, suggesting that human beings are not active agents in shaping their own lives. Existentialism maintains firm opposition to deterministic worldviews that view man merely as a mechanistic product of physical reality (Olson, 1962).

2.2.2 Anarcho-Psychological Tradition

The form of existentialism that Dostoevsky's work can be characterized as is the anarcho-psychological tradition. The Anarcho-Psychological school of thought is opposed to the notion that history follows a linear path towards perfection. This is in direct opposition to the enlightenment inspired utopian optimism that human reason and scientific advancement will ultimately lead to a better society. The progress model that underpins *The Manifesto* is predicated upon the notion that material happiness and economic growth are the primary indicators of development. The leading exponents of the Anarcho-Psychological tradition, namely Dostoevsky, Stirner and Nietzsche maintain that focusing solely on material well-being neglects the individuals psychological and existential needs which ultimately lead to a sense of alienation and a loss of meaning. The Anarcho- Psychological tradition questions the idea that there is an objective standard that constitutes progress. It maintains instead that true progress can only be achieved

through individual development and self-awareness. Dostoevsky, Stirner and Nietzsche critique all attempts to subject society to social engineering. They maintain that this creates the illusion that man can exert dominion over himself and his external environment. Human existence is defined by fundamental uncertainties and the idea that man can control himself and his external environment is simply a coping mechanism (Carroll, 1974).

2.2.3 Research Gap

There have been previous studies that have focused on Dostoevsky's foresight into the events that unfolded in the twentieth century. *In Remembering the end Dostoevsky as Prophet to Modernity* Kroeker and Ward focus on how utopian systems, geared towards universal happiness culminate in totalitarianism (Kroeker & Ward, 2001). They maintain that utopian systems often assume that a select few are endowed with the capacity to implement utopia and any means can be adopted to realize universal happiness. Scholarly critiques of *The Communist Manifesto* have focused on its determinism. Notably, how *The Manifesto* attributes historical change and social development solely the economic base of society (Hayek, 1955). The gap this this research has addressed lies in its application of the ideas articulated in *Notes from Underground* to *The Communist Manifesto*. The Underground Man harbours a novel conception of individuality distinct from the Classical, Biblical and Romantic formulations (Kauffman, 1975). The result is a critique of utopianism that is visceral and psychologically resonant. It is not merely a refutation of utopian ideals, but rather a raw emotional outburst against what the Underground Man perceives to be a dehumanizing vision.

2.3 Literature Review for Research Objective One

2.3.1 Utopia's Lead to a Modification of Human Nature

Dostoevsky explores if the establishment of the future utopian society will be desirable. The attainment of utopia will lead to a modification of human nature and will culminate in "good, free, happy human beings" (Kroeker & Ward, 2001, p. 71). People will do good out of necessity as opposed to out of free will. Kroeker asks if this can be said to constitute "genuine moral goodness" (Kroeker & Ward, 2001, p. 71). It can be argued that the implications of this conception of morality can be navigated if goodness is viewed as a mere form of niceness that can be attributed to social

adjustment as opposed to a good disposition that emanates from within the individual. This essentially constitutes a dialling down of human goodness, which would be consistent with the liberal tendency to construct “its edifice on reliable human desires” (Kroeker & Ward, 2001, p. 71). In line with this view, freedom is merely the absence of external constraints that curtail the realization of such desires. People will be forced to be free by an automatic mechanism. Namely, history (Kroeker & Ward, 2001). Thus, Dostoevsky foresaw that utopia would deprive man of his essential humanness.

2.3.2 Sacrificing the Needs of Those in the Present

Moreover, according to Dostoevsky, to attain utopia, the needs of those existing in the present must be sacrificed. A pertinent question to be asked with the utopian society established in the future is what is to happen to the individuals in the present, endowed with real existence who, out of circumstance, happened not to live at the right moment? Individuals who exist in the present act as mere catalysts to facilitate the happiness of others (Kroeker & Ward, 2001). The ultimate aim of the utopian society is the complete realization of man's essential humanity at a future point in history. Those who exist in the present are subordinate to this goal. They are to serve as the raw material for the happiness of others. Human beings are sacrificed in favour of a future collective vision. The research gap to be exploited here is the individual's response to being reduced to the status of an ant within an ant heap.

2.3.3 Utopian Societies are Geared Towards Materialism

Dostoevsky highlighted that utopian societies are oriented towards material satisfaction. The purpose of life is reduced to the fulfilment of material needs. He argues that man desires more than mere sustenance. To establish such a society, the utopian planners must recondition human nature. This is necessary for man not to value freedom. Universal happiness can only be achieved at the expense of freedom. Utopian optimism fails to recognize that material prosperity might come into conflict with freedom. A society akin to an anthill will arise. One that has sacrificed freedom in favour of a decent standard of living. The agonies of choice are traded for the contentment of certainty. The inhabitants of such a society have given up their essential humanness (Morson, 2021).

2.3.4 Utopias are Based on Hypertrophied Rationalism

Dostoevsky highlighted that utopias defined by hypertrophied rationalism are undesirable. He criticised the project of ordering a society solely by means of the intellect (Schoenl, 1980). This is because they lead to the irreparable loss of human personality. According to Wanner, utopian social engineering is a slippery slope that leads to insanity and destruction (1997). The underlying rational foundation of a utopian society is fundamentally opposed to the freedom that is characteristic of human beings. The form of life it offers will be terribly boring, as the expression of individual freedom will be confined by the dictates of rationality. A society predicated upon “scientific positivism and enlightened self-interest” leads to a dystopian society. (Wanner, 1997, p. 79). Such a society will prompt a revolt against the ramifications of philosophical materialism. Hypertrophied rationalism will inspire a desire for irrational freedom. The finality of the laws of nature will lead the individual on a quest to affirm their will at any cost. The laws that govern mathematics and the particular sciences are characterized by permanence. Man cannot alter them. Free will is not necessary in a positivist society. Our existence makes no difference to the facts. The adoption of scientific positivism marks the beginning of death. Man will be modelled according to what defines mathematical formulas. Namely, their abstract and determined nature (Wanner, 1997).

2.3.5 Utopia's Stifle the Pursuit of the Moral Ideal

According to Dostoevsky, the genesis of Western civilization can be attributed to a belief in immortality. Immortality developed into the notion of self-improvement. Immortality is attained through the impulse to self-improvement. It serves as both the source of civilization and the goal which the individual strives towards. This belief was eventually institutionalized in the form of religion. The state followed shortly after, and its primary function was to develop mechanisms to protect and develop the moral ideal. Civic ideals are drawn from the original religious myth. The state exists for the sake of the moral ideal. Namely, human freedom by Divine intention. Utopianism purposes to achieve universal order through the introduction of human intention into the historical process. This can only lead to disaster. The imposition of a faultless form of moral and social organization leads to the destruction of the quest towards self-improvement. The pursuit of the moral ideal is abandoned. Civic institutions are rendered superfluous without the impulse to self-improvement. There is nothing more for them to preserve. In a utopian society, the impulse to

self-improvement represents a threat to the status quo. Thus, it must be stifled. The impairment of the moral ideal corresponds to the decline of civilization (Simmons, 1972).

Utopianism represents an attempt to “replace freedom with strict planned obedience” (Simons, 1972, p. 334). Utopian social engineers embarked on a project to reformulate the traditional conception of religion in materialistic terms. The new moral system was intended to lead to materialistic prosperity and happiness. Utopianism aims to “create a common basis that will render all men happy and content” (Simons, 1972, p. 334). The new morality is expedient and leads to “easy government for the rulers” (Simmons, 1972 p. 334). To make all men happy, it is first necessary to create a materialistic value system. Man’s concept of success and happiness will be entirely dependent upon it. The traditional conception of good and evil will be altered in the quest to attain harmony. Utopianism purposes to utilize coercion in an attempt to establish what freedom has failed to do. Hunger, disease and sordid living conditions will be successfully eliminated. It will be a society where “every desire would be satisfied, every destructive instinct domesticated and every ambition coordinated” (Simons, 1972, p. 335). Society will be defined by order and precision. The creative and inspirational element within man will be stifled. Freedom and creativity will be subordinate to security and stability. The ultimate aim is to construct a predictable and unchanging society. This contradicts the nature of the human enterprise, which consists in being in a perpetual state of becoming. Man engages with the external world through creative acts. Society progresses by employing the “cumulative creative efforts” of the individuals who comprise it (Simons, 1972, p. 336). Rejecting creativity amounts to stifling the mechanics that enable the steady improvement of society. Perfection imposed from above can only be achieved at the expense of the destruction of individuality. Utopianism necessitates the reengineering of human nature. Man must be deprived of individuality and creativity. Thus, utopianism denies the possibility of progress by destroying the moral ideal that society is predicated upon (Simmons, 1972).

2.4 Literature Review for Research Objective Two

2.4.1 Manifesto’s Scientific Foundation

The Communist Manifesto is supposedly predicated on an underlying scientific foundation. This is taken as evidence of its alleged essential infallibility. *The Manifesto* attempts to apply the means

and methods of the scientific method to social dynamics. According to Hayek, this undermines the inherent dignity and autonomy of human beings (1955). In the scientific worldview, individuals are conceived as mere components of a larger social system. There is no distinction between the individual and any other variable in a scientific experiment. Hayek maintains that utopian social engineers are motivated to turn the world into an enormous machine (1955). This mentality translates to a denial of individual choice and self-direction. In addition, the scientific method transitions from observation to a desire for control. Science seeks to attain dominion over the external world. This is evidence of its Promethean ideological underpinnings prevalent since antiquity. The Promethean attitude seeks to “dominate and oblige nature to answer its secrets” (Hadot, 2006 p. 94). It is not sufficient to merely observe social phenomena through empirical investigation. Society and human beings must be subjected to conscious rational control. Within the natural sciences, there is no room for freedom of conscience. Once society is treated as within the sphere of influence of the natural sciences, freedom will disappear (Hayek, 1955).

2.4.2 Deterministic Elements in the Communist Manifesto

The Communist Manifesto advances the notion that individual consciousness is conditioned by material conditions and class relations (Ellwood, 1911). This could potentially translate into the suppression of individual freedom and agency. The individual is viewed primarily as a product of his social environment. Thus, undermining his capacity for independent thought and action. This form of determinism could be used as a means to legitimize curtailing individual freedom and the imposition of a collectivist ethos in the name of a historically determined social order (Walicki, 1995). Similarly, Markus refutes the notion that human personality can be attributed to a set of sociological determinations. Man does not simply register impressions from his external environment. He can select and appropriate. Human personality is formed in a continuous dialogue between man and the world, revolving around subjective activity and objective social reality. This is how man becomes a social being (Márkus, 1985).

Furthermore, individual freedom is threatened by the notion of historical necessity as outlined in *The Communist Manifesto*. Alleged historical necessity acts as an absolute mandate in the quest to realize progress. Historical necessity sanctions all violations of freedom as it removes all potential moral constraints. The arrival of communism is viewed as inevitable. This belief leads to the

adoption of a dangerous form of consequentialism whereby any action can be justified in the name of achieving a predestined outcome (Walicki, 1995).

2.4.3 The Manifesto's Materialist Foundation

The Communist Manifesto is predicated upon materialism. This is evident through its doctrine of historical materialism, which attributes societal development to economic forces. The emphasis on material conditions downplays the role of ideas, culture and individual agency in shaping history. As Hayek maintained, society cannot simply be attributed to material conditions. Societies are built upon shared concepts, beliefs, and values. These ideas, espoused by individuals, constitute the basis of social institutions, norms and interactions. In order to understand history, one must comprehend the prevalent ideas and beliefs of the time. This provides the underlying framework from which people conceptualize the world and make choices (Hayek, 1955).

2.4.4 Sacrificing the Needs of Those in the Present

The Manifesto stipulates that justice, rights and law are merely reflections of bourgeois interests. Justice, rights and law do not constitute objective and universal principles but are attributed to material conditions. The disregard of these principles overlooks the real suffering and injustices experienced under existing systems. Current suffering under present circumstances is justified on the grounds that it is a necessary step towards the pursuit of utopia. The price for progress can include suffering and bloodshed. Sismondi was unconvinced by the proposition to sacrifice current individuals for the betterment of the species. Once accepted, there is no guarantee that the process would cease to be necessary in the future. Future generations could also be sacrificed for the sake of future generations. Sismondi also rejected the notion of the necessity of sacrificing ordinary individuals for the sake of certain individuals, even if it is achieved for the sake of the higher development of the individuality of future human beings. All these ideals are contrary to the principle of ethical individualism. They effectively treat the individual as a means to an end as opposed to an end in itself. Such views amount to an extreme variant of collectivism. They entail the priority of the group and the readiness to sacrifice individuals for the sake of the group. They involve the “contemptuous neglect of privacy” (Walicki, 1995, p. 163) and stress that individual freedom can only be expressed within the context of community as communal beings. (Walicki, 1995).

2.5 Literature Review for Research Objective Three

2.5.1 Dictatorship of the Proletariat

According to Dostoevsky, a society predicated upon rationalism leads to tyranny (Dostoevsky, 1996). This is because man is dehumanized as he is conceived as a mere cog in a machine. The concept of historical necessity, as articulated in *The Communist Manifesto*, posits the inevitability of communism. Historical necessity provided the necessary justification to use all means available to achieve communism. Thus, it sanctioned all violations of freedom. This is evident through the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat as employed by the Bolsheviks.

Following the Bolshevik seizure of power, they ruled by means of the “iron fist of the dictatorship of the proletariat” (Courtois, et al., 1999, p. 53). This was a project to counter all counterrevolutionary elements. The dictatorship of the proletariat was defined by sustained violence by the proletariat directed towards the bourgeoisie. It was a form of rule that was heavily dependent upon military force. It would be a period characterised by “violent class struggle in unprecedentedly acute forms” (Gerson, 1976, p. 5). The Mission of the dictatorship of the proletariat is drawn from the necessity to curtail the rogue bourgeoisie. The dictatorship was predestined to culminate in a classless society. In such a society, there will be no exploitation, and thus it will be possible to speak of freedom (Gerson, 1976). The Bolsheviks actively encouraged the “revolutionary spontaneity of the masses” in an attempt to destroy the old order (Courtois, et al., 1999, p. 54). It was essentially a state-sanctioned class war underpinned by an open desire for revenge.

2.5.2 Court System

The Bolshevik reformation of the court system corroborates Dostoevsky’s perspective that utopias lead to a lust for power and control (Dostoevsky, 1996). Those entrusted with realizing the utopian dream are often overcome by a lust for power and control. This can lead to a propensity to suppress individual freedom as demonstrated by the Bolshevik reformation of the court system.

The court system was reformed to support the revolutionary cause. All laws that were perceived as contrary to the welfare of workers and peasants were abolished. Existing legislation was applied to be consistent with the underlying principles of revolutionary order. The courts, being predicated on such vague principles, ultimately culminated in a multitude of abuses. Revolutionary courts and

people's courts replaced the traditional court system. This ushered in a novel conception of justice. They were courts oriented towards eradication as opposed to judgment (Courtois et al., 1999). Defendants were deprived of the right to counsel. In some cases, the nature of the alleged crime was not disclosed. The Bolsheviks effectively ingrained terror into the legal system. The Bolshevik revolutionary justice system laid the foundation for the modern phenomenon of state terrorism. They adopted shifting standards of justice in order to adapt to the demands of current circumstances. The ultimate aim was the reconstruction of Russian society. The Council of People's Commissars was tasked with developing the rationale and structure of a state terrorist system to pursue this end (Cabri, 2011).

2.5.3 The Totalitarian Impulse

Dostoevsky maintained that utopias subordinate the individual to the collective in an attempt to establish conscious control over nature and society (Dostoevsky, 1996). The desire for total control manifested in the Bolshevik regime's attempt to regulate all aspects of economic and social life, often through brutal and coercive means. This can be demonstrated through the formation of the Cheka and the practice of subjecting the masses to widespread terror.

The Cheka, the official state secret police, was mandated to perform a multitude of repressive measures. These included the confiscation of goods, removal of ration cards, expulsion of individuals from their homes and publication of lists detailing enemies of the people. The Cheka was to operate independently of the law. It was granted a free hand. As Dzerzhinsky, the first leader of the Cheka, maintained, the Cheka was to follow the direction of life. In practice, the direction of life translated to subjecting the masses to revolutionary terror (Courtois et al., 1999).

The Bolshevik regime was defined by widespread terror. Trotsky, in his address to the Central Executive Committee of Soviets, called for mass terror. He maintained that the guillotine awaits all enemies of the revolution. Lenin echoed these sentiments as he called for revolutionary class justice. Russia was defined by violence in the aftermath of 1917. Three types of violence were particularly prevalent. Namely, urban violence, peasant violence and the modern violence of World War I. Urban violence was a reaction to capitalist relations characteristic of industrial society. The Bolsheviks channelled these frustrations, which led to the destruction of thousands of

large-scale agricultural properties and the slaughter of hundreds of major landowners (Courtois et al., 1999).

Terror would be the means to usher in the new order. According to Lenin, terror and violence were necessary in the quest to establish the Communist state. Thus, the Bolsheviks could not explicitly reject terror. The proletariat would have to resist their subjugation at the hands of the bourgeoisie through violence. The state would transform into a special repressive force oriented towards the active suppression of the Bourgeoisie (Gerson, 1976). Lenin highlighted the need for “open, mass systematic terror directed towards the Bourgeoisie and its agents (Lenin, 2014, p. 128). The Bolsheviks aimed to mobilize public support for the revolutionary cause through terror. Terror was a necessary component of the revolution. Terror acted as a form of midwife to usher in the new order. This analogy illustrates that in the eyes of the Bolsheviks, terror was primarily inclined towards rebirth and not destruction (Leggett, 1987).

2.5.4 Tyranny of Materialism

Furthermore, Dostoevsky predicted that abandoning the transcendent ideal in favour of a materialist one will lead to a society primarily inclined towards the pursuit of material comforts (Dostoevsky, 2002). This can be demonstrated through the Bolshevik policy of the forced requisitioning of food.

The Bolsheviks established a food commission to procure food by force. The Food Commission was mandated to “requisition the surpluses of the rich” (Courtois, et al., 1999, p. 56). Requisitioning, commandeering and pillaging became the order of the day, all in the name of revolution. Hundreds of individuals were tried daily for a multitude of so-called crimes. These included looting, speculation, hoarding and belonging to a hostile class. Acts of violence and revenge were rampant in addition to robberies and looting (Courtois et al., 1999).

The Bolsheviks deployed requisitioning detachments to forcefully requisition produce. The entire populace was mobilized in the search for food. The “hunt for food” was of primary importance to the Bolsheviks (Courtois, et al., 1999, p. 63). This was what motivated the establishment of the Extraordinary Commission for Food and Transport. This marked the first stage in the “dictatorship of food” that was to define the Bolshevik regime (Courtois, et al., 1999 p. 63). All surplus of food

was to be handed in. Failure to comply would result in execution. This policy was predicated on a misguided understanding of the nature of economic supply (Courtois et al., 1999).

The Bolsheviks were confronted with the problem of how to supply the army and cities with food. Networks of economic distribution had collapsed in the aftermath of the revolution. Most notably the railways. This rendered farmers devoid of any incentive to produce any of their goods. The Bolsheviks were faced with two choices. Attempt to reconstruct some semblance of a market economy or pursue additional economic constraints. They chose the latter as they retained a firm belief in the necessity to destroy the old order. The produce of smallholder farmers was now targeted. Smallholder farmers were declared to be at variance with the strategic objectives of the Bolsheviks. A civil war was declared in the name of the struggle for bread. The state maintained a claim over the peasantry's produce. And it was endowed with the means to claim it. This was part of the policy of war communism. The People's Commissariat of Food was granted extraordinary powers. All foodstuffs were to be requisitioned. A force of 24,000 men was deployed to support the cause. Members were primarily motivated by the promise of a fair wage and a "proportional share in the confiscated food" (Courtois et al., 1999).

The decree of 11 June 1918 directed a committee comprised of poor peasants to collaborate with the food detachments to requisition all agricultural surpluses. Bolshevik power within the countryside was permeated by a faltering social and political conscience. The forced seizure of produce was motivated by an underlying sense of frustration and envy towards the rich. Devotion to the Bolshevik cause was driven primarily by a desire for self-advancement. As Courtois maintained, the countryside was permeated by the spirit of the Plebeian Revolution. The Bolsheviks harboured a deep sense of mistrust toward peasant society. This is reflected in their use of the poorest section of the peasantry. The social organization of the peasantry was not consistent with the traditional Marxist schema. It did not consist of warring classes but was a united front. Unity was even more pronounced when faced with hostile strangers from the city. Forced requisitions would prompt a large-scale peasant rebellion, which were characterised as Kulak rebellions (Courtois et al., 1999).

2.6 Critique of Literature

It is important to note that Dostoevsky made some predictions that did not come true. Most notably, concerning the destiny of his native Russia and its supposed mission of regenerating modern Western Civilization. He viewed the destiny of the Russian nation in eschatological terms. The Russian people had been anointed as the Christ-bearing nation. According to Dostoevsky, Russians were defined by universalism. They possessed the peculiar ability to absorb the cultural achievements of other nations. This rendered the Russian people a natural conciliatory force that would eventually establish a “harmonious Christian society on earth” (Maiorova & Martinsen, 2015, p. 6). Russia was endowed with the messianic mission to save mankind. Russians were destined to be the “mediators, pacifiers and rulers of mankind” (Kohn, 1945, p. 399). Russia did not simply represent a nation but rather a “world for itself” (Kohn, 1945, p. 399). This truth could only be understood by a loving intuition known as “sobornost”, which was peculiar to the Russian people (Kohn, 1945, p. 399). Dostoevsky envisioned a universal brotherhood of love that would be realized without coercion. What transpired was the imposition of total order and unlimited autocracy, which was accompanied by brutal force and the denial of individual liberty (Kohn, 1945).

Furthermore, Dostoevsky predicted the conquest of Constantinople, which did not happen. This would be a conquest not motivated by profit but to “represent the brotherhood and regeneration of man” (Kohn, 1945, p. 405). Dostoevsky also predicted a war between Russia and the West. He anticipated that this war would solve all great problems and save the world from the turmoil of future wars. The conflict with the West was spiritual. Thus, war would be necessary for the salvation and regeneration of Europe. A revived Eastern Christianity would replace Roman Catholicism. In addition, Dostoevsky predicted future Russian conquests in Asia that did not happen. What transpired was Russia would suffer humiliating losses at the hands of the Japanese. According to Dostoevsky, Russia would embark on a civilizing mission in Asia. Imperial conquests in Asia would lead to Russia acquiring a “new sense of power, dignity and creative joy” (Kohn, 1945, p. 409). Russia would then attain the material resources necessary to fulfil its world mission.

2.7 Summary

The notion of the historical process culminating in “good, free, happy human beings” has been examined (Kroecker & Ward, 2001 p. 71). Utopian societies aim to create human beings who will do good out of necessity. The research gap to be examined here is how the individual will respond to determinism. In addition, how can determinism be used to account for some of the unethical issues that emanate from Communism? The ultimate aim of a utopian system is to create a perfect future edifice. Can the nature of this goal be used to explain some of the unethical issues that would result from communism? Furthermore, utopianism primarily seeks to satisfy man’s material needs. What are the effects on the individual’s life if his purpose is reduced to material needs? Furthermore, if governance is restricted to this goal what could be some of the implications? Utopias are defined by hypertrophied rationalism. How will the individual respond to the “ironclad finality of positivism”? (Wanner, 1997). A utopian system represents the abandonment of the moral ideal in favour of a faultless form of moral and social organization. How does this transition affect the way society operates and what kind of society does it result in? The theoretical gap to be examined lies in the application of the unethical issues forecasted in *Notes from Underground* to *The Communist Manifesto*. The unique contribution of this research undertaking lies in its application of the ideas articulated in *Notes from Underground* to *The Communist Manifesto*. The unethical issues that resulted from the Bolshevik revolution have also been examined. The Bolshevik revolution was instigated and sustained through the “iron fist of the dictatorship of the proletariat” (Courtois et al., 1999). The Theoretical gap to be investigated is an examination of some of the concrete implications of the unethical issues forecasted in *Notes from Underground*. The Bolshevik Revolution is to be used as a basis to examine some of the negative implications of utopian social engineering that were forecasted in *Notes from Underground*.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will articulate the methodology used to examine *The Communist Manifesto* in relation to Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*.

3.2 Research Design

This study focuses on a philosophical critique of the Marxist Utopia through Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*. The texts analysed are *Notes from Underground* by Fyodor Dostoevsky and *the Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Qualitative content analysis is the method adopted in this research undertaking. Content analysis is a research technique that purposes to formulate "valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff, 2019, p. 24). Content analysis consists of the following conceptual components (Krippendorff, 2019).

- i. A research question that the researcher seeks to investigate.
- ii. A context within which the researcher will interpret the body of text.
- iii. An analytical construct that acts as a framework to operationalize the context.
- iv. Inferences that purport to answer the research questions.
- v. Validating evidence, which is the end towards which content analysis is oriented.

3.3 Research Quality

3.3.1 Validity

Validity refers to the accuracy of the researchers' findings were examined in relation to certain procedures. Researchers can adopt various methods to guarantee validity. These are known as validity strategies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

- i. The researcher has adopted triangulation techniques. This refers to formulating a coherent justification for themes on the basis of evidence from different sources. Alluding to themes from several data sources contributes significantly to the validity of the study.
- ii. The researcher has outlined information that is contrary to the themes. Reality reveals that people harbour different perspectives. Thus, a discussion of contrary information will contribute positively towards the credibility of this research undertaking.

In order to ensure objectivity, the researcher has demonstrated a commitment towards remaining impartial. The researcher has acknowledged any underlying preconceptions and operated in a manner free of any biases (Association For Qualitative Research, 2022).

3.3.2 Reliability

Reliability demands that research is characterised by the following elements. Namely, stability, reproducibility and accuracy (Weber, 1990).

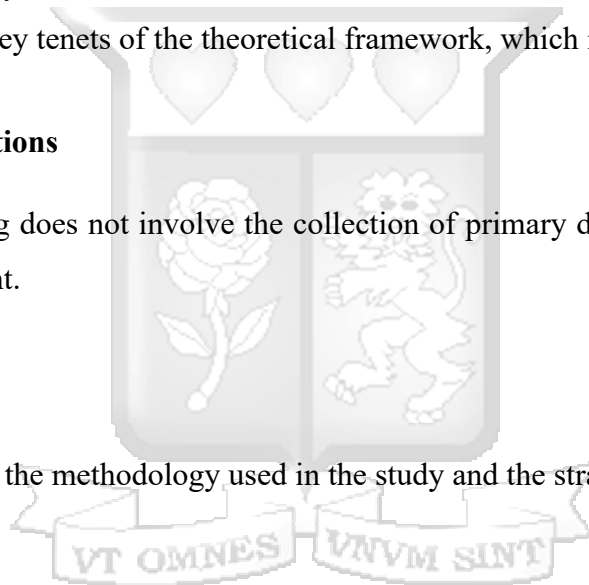
- i. The content classification adopted in this research undertaking is consistent to ensure stability and reproducibility.
- ii. To ensure accuracy, the classification of the text conforms to an underlying standard. It is informed by the key tenets of the theoretical framework, which is existentialism.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

This research undertaking does not involve the collection of primary data. Thus, clearance from NACOSTI was not sought.

3.7 Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodology used in the study and the strategies adopted to ensure validity and reliability.



Chapter 4: Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the philosophical tension between Fyodor Dostoevsky's portrayal of human nature, as expressed through the character of the Underground Man, and the ideological framework presented in Marx and Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*. Historical events that unfolded in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution are presented as concrete results of adopting utopian ideals. While *The Manifesto* views human behaviour as largely shaped by economic forces and class struggle, offering a deterministic perspective on history and society, Dostoevsky offers a radically different conception of the human condition. Through the *Underground Man*, he critiques the idea that human desires, motivations, and social structures can be reduced to economic or materialist terms. For Dostoevsky, the essence of humanity lies not in conforming to collective goals or predetermined historical laws but in the unpredictability, irrationality, and freedom of individual will. This chapter examines the core philosophical differences between the two, focusing on their contrasting views of free will, the nature of social evolution, the possibility of a utopian society, and the dangers of ideological determinism. By comparing Dostoevsky's existential critique with Marxist thought, we uncover a profound disagreement over what it means to be human and how society should be understood and organized. In the following subsections, research questions 1, 2 and 3 are answered.

4.2 Comparison of Notes from Underground and The Communist Manifesto

4.2.1 Denial of Individual Freedom

Dostoevsky predicted that utopian forms of social organization lead to the denial of individual freedom. The emphasis on a singular perfect vision creates the optimum conditions for the eventual degeneration into totalitarianism. The inherent belief in a singular truth can be exploited by a leader with totalitarian inclinations. Such a leader can lay claim to possess the ultimate understanding and the sole means to implement such a system. According to *The Underground Man*, utopian systems contain the necessary conditions that would enable the emergence of a leader defined by a "ignoble reactionary countenance" (Dostoevsky, 1996, p. 15). *The Underground Man* adds that this man would be "sure to find followers" as such is the nature of man. In this way, Dostoevsky

can be said to have provided insights into the modern totalitarian mind and its corresponding irrational will to power (Dostoevsky, 1996, p. 15).

The Manifesto is presented as containing a singular, perfect vision for humanity. In the Preface to the German edition of 1890, Marx and Engels affirm that *The Manifesto* “has become a historical document which we have no longer any right to alter” (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 15). Thus, *The Manifesto* is conceived as being of enduring historical consequence as it is not subject to alteration.

The enduring historical consequence of *The Manifesto* is drawn from its insights concerning the role of economic and social structures in determining the course of history and individual choices. *The Manifesto* advances the notion that the primary determinants of human behaviour are economic forces and class struggle. According to *The Manifesto*, social phenomena is ultimately dependent upon the economy. Economic phenomena form the basis of society, and all other human and social manifestations can be attributed to this base. The trajectory of social evolution ultimately depends upon economic factors within social life. Namely, methods of production, distribution and exchange. *The Manifesto* stipulates that “in every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange and the social organization necessarily following from it form the basis upon which it is built up” (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 13).

Furthermore, *The Manifesto* suggests human beings are not active agents in shaping the trajectory of their own lives, as it states, “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 31). Thus, individual lives are subject to the more significant conflict between social classes. In addition, individuals who constitute the two main social classes are merely passive participants swept along by historical trends. Such an analysis of social dynamics fails to account for the diverse motivations of individuals within each class, which points to the existence of a monolithic human personality.

The Manifesto stipulates that “the bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production and with them the whole relations of society” (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 34). Moreover, *The Manifesto* depicts the proletariat as the “special and essential product of modern industry,” once again suggesting that individuals are primarily shaped by their class position.

The Bolsheviks denied individual freedom through the suppression of dissent and opposition. They engaged in a campaign to suppress all views that were contrary to the standard Bolshevik doctrine. This was achieved through the manipulation of the democratic process. In the elections of November 1917, the Socialist Revolutionaries won the majority vote, securing just above 40 per cent of 41 million. The Bolsheviks came in second at 24 per cent. In response, the Bolsheviks postponed the convocation of Russia's Constituent Assembly pending the investigation of alleged electoral abuses. The Cheka was instructed to close off Taurida Palace to prevent the opposition from gathering. The Bolsheviks refused to acknowledge the results and, in an effort to reassert dominance, suppressed the Constituent Assembly (McMeekin, 2017).

The Bolshevik suppression of dissent frequently turned violent. This can be demonstrated through their actions following the Kronstadt rebellion. More than four thousand Kronstadt communists tore up their party cards in response to Bolshevik repression. On 8th March 1921, the Bolsheviks launched a military onslaught on Kronstadt. The result was 21,103 people were executed, and a further 6459 were sent to concentration camps (McMeekin, 2017).

4.2.2 Adoption of Social Engineering

Furthermore, Dostoevsky predicted that the use of social engineering to manipulate human behaviour will ultimately prove to be unsuccessful due to human nature. According to the *Underground Man*, human beings are defined by irrationality and sometimes act contrary to reason and their interests. Man demonstrates a proclivity towards “going against the laws of reason, against his own profit...against everything” (Dostoevsky, 1996, p. 14). As the *Underground Man* maintains, “what man wants is simply independent choice, whatever that independence may cost and wherever it may lead” (Dostoevsky, 1996, p. 16).

The Manifesto admits the possibility of conscious manipulation of human behaviour through social engineering. As *The Manifesto* states, “the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class” (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 55). This suggests that the ruling class has the requisite capacity to shape societal norms and beliefs. Thus, it significantly influences how people perceive and act within the world. In addition, *The Manifesto* critiques social structures, notably the family and the education system, because they are tools the bourgeois employ to influence and control

individuals. Thus, admitting the possibility of the conscious manipulation of human behaviour through social engineering.

The period of War Communism is a pertinent example of failed Bolshevik social engineering. This policy, directed towards supplying the cities and the Red Army, fundamentally disregarded the interests and motivations of the peasantry, who were the primary food producers. The practice of the forced requisitioning of grain directly led to a significant increase in the number of peasant uprisings (Walicki, 1995). Peasants became increasingly hostile to the coercive tactics employed by the Bolsheviks and responded by “slaughtering cattle, selling stocks and refusing to plant” (Livi-Bacci, 1993, p. 745). This highlights a fundamental discrepancy between the Bolshevik ideological framework and the natural human inclination towards a desire for self-preservation and economic security. The Bolsheviks were simply consumed with the implementation of their audacious social engineering project aimed at eliminating the market and directly controlling distribution (Walicki, 1995).

The excesses of War Communism led to widespread hunger. War Communism was essentially a policy of starving the peasantry at all costs. In 1920, 10 million tons of grain had been requisitioned. In the province of Samara, this resulted in 900,000 starving people. In the summer of 1922, 30 million people were starving. In addition, 5 million people died of hunger between 1921 and 1922 (Courtois et al., 1999).

4.2.3 Deterministic Nature of Utopian Societies

Dostoevsky predicted that the determinism characteristic of a utopian society leads to the denial of individual freedom. Dostoevsky adopted the image of the “Crystal Palace” as a means to critique the deterministic nature of the perfectly ordered utopian society. The Crystal Palace was an iron and glass structure built by Joseph Paxton for the 1851 Great Exhibition in London, Hyde Park. The Palace attracted great international attention and came to be viewed as a symbol of modernity. The Crystal Palace became the central image from which Dostoevsky mounted his critique of the utopian optimism prevalent in revolutionary and radical circles (Maiorova & Martinsen, 2015). Dostoevsky predicted that the construction of the Crystal Palace will directly stifle individuality. This is because it is defined by ironclad finality and leaves no room for spontaneity or the

possibility of transgression. As the Underground Man maintains, “I have rejected The Crystal Palace for the sole reason that one cannot put one’s tongue at it”(Dostoevsky, 1996, p. 22).

The Manifesto’s vision of a classless society is the necessary outcome of historical forces and deterministic economic laws. As *The Manifesto* states, “What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers; its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable” (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 46). Thus, the classless society is a direct consequence of predetermined laws.

Furthermore, according to The Underground Man, a direct consequence of ideologies predicated upon scientific materialism is the erosion of personal responsibility. These ideologies purport to accurately predict human behaviour, which is an unrealistic pursuit. The result is that “man will no longer be answerable for his actions, and his life will become terribly easy” (Dostoevsky, 1996, p. 70).

Moreover, Marx and Engels claim that *The Manifesto* has an underlying scientific foundation. In the Preface to the German edition of 1890, Engels described *The Manifesto* as the “greatest programmatic document of scientific socialism” (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 77). According to Marx and Engels, their articulation of scientific socialism is predicated on the underlying principles of the scientific method.

The Bolshevik application of Marxist principles underpinned by determinism led to the justification of ethical abuses. The belief in the historical necessity of communism led to an instrumental conception of morality. Achieving a classless society and abolishing the old order was the ultimate ideal. All actions that were consistent with this ideal were permissible. The pursuit of the ideal was incompatible with a commitment to a fixed set of moral rules since the justice of the cause effectively legitimized the use of all possible means. Morality was defined purely in instrumental terms. It served as a means to destroy the old order and to unite the working class in pursuit of a communist society. The proletarian struggle was to be ruthlessly violent, restricted only by the disciplined subordination to the dictates of the party. Morality was effectively abandoned in favour of revolutionary expediency (Walicki, 1995).

The historical necessity of communism justified the use of all means necessary to construct utopia. One such way was the use of forced labour. The Bolsheviks derived their labour force from what

they characterized as the socially dangerous elements of society. This consisted of police officers from the Tsarist regime, priests, nuns, manual artisans and shopkeepers. The state police then established an extensive network of labour camps to exploit their labour force. Forced labour proved to be successful as a means to achieve industrial targets. More than 40,000 prisoners constructed the Kem-Ukhla road, which facilitated a considerable amount of the wood production exported from the Arkhangel region. The great chemical plant of Berezniki in the Urals was constructed by 20,000 prisoners. From the end of 1928 to the summer of 1930, forced labour in the State Police camps tripled from 40,000 to 140,000. Prisoners were kept in deplorable conditions. Thousands died as a result of the cold, lack of food and the spread of disease. Prisoners were deprived of tools, provisions and shelter. As a result, “abandonment in deportation” became an increasingly common phenomenon (Courtois et al., 1999).

4.2.4 Pursuit of a Collective Society

Furthermore, Dostoevsky predicted that in collectivist utopian societies, individual desires will be subordinate to the collective good. He maintained that idealistic collectivist societies where people have equal rights and responsibilities, necessarily leads to a society akin to anthill. According to Dostoevsky, the individuals who inhabit this society will live life primarily preoccupied with the goal of maintaining the anthill. As the Underground Man maintained, “with the ant-heap the respectable race of ants began and with the ant heap they will end” (Dostoevsky, 1996, p. 77).

The Manifesto explicitly promotes a visionary system of social perfection whereby each individual has equal rights and responsibilities. As it states, “In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development for each is the free development for all” (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 50). Furthermore, this quote suggests that the abolition of class antagonisms and the establishment of a communist society will culminate in a profound transformation of human nature. A defining characteristic of the future inhabitants of the communist utopia is that they will be oriented towards the collective. Their primary motivation will be to act in accordance with a collective will as opposed to pursuing individualistic interests.

Furthermore, The Underground Man predicted that utopian systems will seek to regenerate man to pursue collective interests. As the Underground Man maintains, “You tell me again that an

enlightened and developed man, such, is short as the future man will be cannot consciously desire anything disadvantageous to himself”(Dostoevsky, 1996, p. 17). Thus, in the future utopian society man will be conditioned to pursue interests determined by the collective.

The Underground Man predicted that the predetermined template of human interests advocated for by the proponents of utopia would not be sufficient to reform man. According to the proponents of utopia, when man attains knowledge of his “real normal interests,” he would “immediately cease to do nasty things and at once become good and noble” (Dostoevsky, 1996, p. 14). According to the Underground Man, history suggests that man can know his best interests and still intentionally follow a different path.

The Manifesto promotes the idea that the human race is inclined towards the pursuit of a predetermined collective goal. Namely, to achieve a classless society defined by a lack of exploitation and oppression. *The Manifesto* calls for the emancipation of “society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class distinctions and class struggles” (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 13). The rational goal of humanity consists of man subjecting his natural environment and social forces to “conscious rational control”. The pursuit of this ideal is oriented towards the development of the human species as a whole despite the potential ramifications on individual well-being.

Moreover, *The Manifesto* makes an emphatic call for proletarian unity. As *The Manifesto* states, “working men of all Countries, unite” (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 22). This implies that individual differences are of less significance than the collective class identity. In addition, *The Manifesto* attempts to unify the entire working class under a singular identity. As it states, “Communists are distinguished from the other working-class parties as they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole” (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 47).

The Bolsheviks adopted a policy of agricultural collectivization. This involved organizing the peasantry into agricultural collectives. By March 1930, 58 percent of peasant households were successfully placed in collectives. Collectivization provided the framework that facilitated the forced requisitioning of grain. Repression and violence were the primary means of meeting procurement quotas. In 1932, grain procurement quotas were placed at the fantastic level of 29.5 million tons. Such a target could only be achieved through coercion as the Bolsheviks employed tactics that involved forcefully confiscating fodder and seeds (Livi-Bacci, 1993).

Forced collectivization of the countryside involved the mass deportation of the peasantry. Between 1930-1931 2 million peasants were deported. 6 million died of hunger, and hundreds of thousands died as a direct result of deportation. Entire families were deported to distant regions of the country. Peasants who resisted were deemed to represent counterrevolutionary elements. From 1st February to 15th March 1930, 26,000 people were arrested of which 650 were executed by the State Police (Courtois et al., 1999).

Furthermore, the pursuit of a collectivist society entailed the regeneration of the human being. The individual was conceived as belonging to society and not to himself. The necessary outcome of the proletarian revolution was the genesis of the “new man”. The Soviet new man was seen to have successfully developed a “socialist attitude to public property and work” (Koutaissoff, 1953, p. 128). Soviet ideals were firmly ingrained into the individual psyche of the Soviet Man. Lenin recognized the importance of radically reforming man's behaviour and the underlying motivations for his activities. Children and young adults were subjected to political indoctrination. Children were organized into communes ruled by a general assembly. The communes featured a significant degree of militarization, such as the wearing of uniforms and standing at guard. Education was designed to impart Bolshevik ideals and mould the youth into a singular unified collective (Koutaissoff, 1953). Traditional schooling was combined with work. Work was either industrial or agricultural and purposed to elevate the material standard of living of those who performed it. Management of conflict was a communal responsibility. The expulsion was executed by unanimous decision. This was to deter potential offenders. The child communes were designed to subordinate individual interests to those of the community. Public opinion was the sole criterion to evaluate the rightness or wrongness of one's actions (Koutaissoff, 1953).

4.2.5 Human Fulfilment

Dostoevsky predicted that materialist utopian systems oriented towards achieving economic prosperity will not lead to fulfilment. As the Underground Man states, “Shower upon him every earthly blessing... man would play some nasty trick” (Dostoevsky, 1996, p. 18). What man desires most is free choice. The Underground Man maintains his opposition towards the idea of a collective pursuit of a rational goal. The Underground Man remains unconvinced that human desires can be fulfilled according to a predetermined formula. As he maintains, in a utopian society,

“new economic relations will be established, ready-made and worked out with mathematical exactitude so that every possible answer to it will be provided” (Dostoevsky, 1996, p. 15).

In addition, according to the Underground Man, the value of life lies in the journey and not the destination. Thus, Dostoevsky alluded to the conclusion that the realization of utopia will not lead to fulfilment. This is because man is a being who derives value from consistently engaging in creative pursuits. As the Underground Man states, “man is preeminently a creative animal, predestined to strive consciously for an object” (Dostoevsky, 1996, p. 19).

The Manifesto suggests that a classless society contains the optimum conditions to enable the maximum development of human potentiality and will ultimately lead to human fulfilment. Individual flourishing is inextricably linked to attaining the collectivist utopia. Thus, achieving utopia will directly lead to humanity attaining fulfilment. As *The Manifesto* states, “when, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character” (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 59). This suggests that the classless society is promoted as a transformative endpoint. Similarly, *The Manifesto* propagates the notion that the disappearance of class antagonisms by virtue of attaining a classless society will usher in a new era of international peace and cooperation. A classless society will lead to the end of exploitation at the international level. As *The Manifesto* stipulates, “In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will be put an end to” (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 55). Thus, hostility between nations will be a thing of the past.

Furthermore, according to The Underground Man, the pursuit of economic prosperity will not lead to fulfilment due to the complexities of man’s interior life. As he maintains, “man may consciously desire what is injurious to himself simply in order to have the right to desire for himself” (Dostoevsky, 1996, p. 17). This serves as evidence to suggest that man's motivations stem from an inner plurality in constant motion. Thus, the pursuit of economic prosperity will not lead to fulfilment.

The Bolsheviks operated with the assumption that achieving communism would lead to human fulfilment. The classless society was meant to lead to universal happiness. What transpired was that the classless society led to the emergence of a new elite class consisting of communist bureaucrats. As Djilas maintained, it comprised of “those who have special privileges and

economic preference because of the administrative monopoly they hold” (Djilas, 1957, p. 39). The new class drew its legitimacy from its utopian aspirations towards a communist society defined by a lack of exploitation. In this manner, it acted as the champion of working-class interests. However, working-class support was necessary to guarantee a normal flow of production and achieve industrial targets. Interest in the working class was due to ulterior motives. Namely, to increase industrial production and to subjugate what historically was the most rebellious section of society. The new class established a monopoly over the whole of society in the name of the working class. However, this was essentially a monopoly over the working class itself. The source of the new class’s power, privileges and ideology were drawn from the collective ownership of the means of production, the proceeds of which it administered and distributed in the name of the nation and society. Collective ownership was merely a disguise for the real ownership, which lay in the hands of the political bureaucracy. The new class occupied the privileged position of “administrators over society and as distributors of property” (Djilas, 1957, p. 55).

The material disparities between the Bolsheviks and the workers were significant. In 1935, the average annual workers’ pay was 1,800 rubles. Whilst the annual pay and cumulative allowances of a party official amounted to 45,000 rubles. The Bolsheviks expropriated wealth from the citizenry and the previous regime. In 1918 they launched the safe revision initiative, which aimed to seize the contents of private bank safe deposit boxes. In the first six months of 1918, 35,493 safes were revised in Moscow alone. This managed to yield half a ton of gold and silver, 700,000 rubles in gold platinum coin and nearly 600 million rubles worth of public and private bonds. The Bolsheviks established the Gokhran, the State Treasury for the preservation of valuables. By the end of November 1920, the estimated value of goods seized was 245 million dollars, the equivalent of 25 billion dollars today. The official state policy was “loot the looters”. However, much of the plunder that was seized was for personal gain (McMeekin, 2009).

In addition, the new class was not conscious of the fact that it was a class. Throughout history, feudal lords and private capitalists were, at the very minimum, aware that they belonged to a distinct social group. Members of the new class were not conscious of the fact that they belonged to the new ownership class. They perceived themselves as simply belonging to a group with prescribed ideas, aims, attitudes and roles. The corresponding special privileges were not

considered. This led Djilas to allude to the conclusion that “the new class is as exclusive as the aristocracy but without the refinement and proud chivalry” (Djilas, 1957, p. 60).

4.2.6 Ideological Character of The Manifesto

Moreover, Dostoevsky predicted that grand ideological deterministic narratives produce individuals who dwell solely in the intellectual realm. They are devoid of any connection to their fellow man. Since they have adopted an ideological prism through which to perceive reality, they are estranged from it. Commitment to ideology takes precedence over actual men. The Underground Man maintains that “a man affected by progress and European civilization is a man divorced from the soil and the natural elements” (Dostoevsky, 1996, p. 10). The Underground Man further highlights that individuals blinded by ideology only see what conforms to the narrative they have constructed for themselves. They are willing to disregard that which is evident for the sake of their own convictions. As the Underground Man maintains, “Man has such a predilection for systems and abstract deductions that he is ready to deny the evidence of his senses to justify his logic” (Dostoevsky F. , 1996, p. 14).

The ideological character of *The Manifesto* leads to a selective account of history divorced from reality; as *The Manifesto* states, “The history of all society is the history of class struggle” (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 13). This amounts to a gross oversimplification of history. Complex events are simplified to fit within the Communist ideological framework. All forms of human societal organization are simplified. As *The Manifesto* further states, “We find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank” (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 31).

The Bolsheviks interpreted reality within the Marxist ideological framework. The social reality was viewed in terms of progression towards the future communist society. All other empirical indicators were disregarded. Social phenomena that appeared to be at variance with classical Marxist dogma were dismissed as “small” and “partial” (Wilson Center, 1950, p. 6). The historical progression of society towards communism took precedence over “individual facts” taken in “isolation” (Wilson Center, 1950, p. 6). In addition, the Bolsheviks adopted an ideological stance to silence opposing views. Dissenting opinions were characterized as being of bourgeois origin. The content of these opinions was not even subjected to examination. However, their purported

social origin was established a priori. Furthermore, party loyalists would frequently resort to an ideological tautology to justify their position. The fact that socialism was a reality was used to justify its existence. This amounts to a justification of reality by invoking reality. A more reasonable approach would be to judge Bolshevism on account of its own performance as opposed to its own reality (Wilson Center, 1950).

Furthermore, the Bolshevik repression of the church was executed on ideological grounds. The communist position on religion, according to *The Manifesto*, is that religious consciousness has an underlying material foundation. Religion is simply a tool employed by the ruling class to maintain the status quo and subjugate the working class (Walicki, 1995). The Bolsheviks launched a campaign against the Orthodox Church. All Church relics were to be valued and expropriated. In addition, traditional feast days were to coincide with anti-religious carnivals. According to Church records, in 1922, 2691 priests, 1,962 monks and 3,447 nuns were killed. Large-scale show trials were organized in Moscow, Ivanovo, Smolensk and Petrograd. In Petrograd, 4 priests were sentenced to death, and 79 were transferred to labour camps. In Moscow, 148 priests were sentenced to forced labour, and six were immediately executed (Courtois et al., 1999).

4.3 Application of the Anarcho-Psychological Tradition to The Communist Manifesto

The Anarcho-Psychological tradition developed as a response to grand deterministic ideological narratives, including socialist ideals. Anarcho-psychology maintains the fundamental uniqueness of the individual psyche. Ideology functions as a means to subordinate the unique individual psyche to group norms and practices. Communism, as advanced by *The Manifesto*, is viewed as an ideology that suppresses the individual psyche in favour of abstract collective goals. This is because *The Manifesto* advocates for collective ownership, social equality and the subordination of individual interests to the common good. Anarcho-psychology rejects ideology on the grounds that it distorts the individual's natural inclinations and merges them within the collective (Carroll, 1974).

According to *The Manifesto*, History is defined by the progression towards a predetermined collective goal (Marx & Engels, 1970). Anarcho-psychology is opposed to this notion as it leaves the individual subordinate to an impersonal process. Namely, history (Olson, 1962). *The Manifesto* stipulates that the primary determinants of human behaviour are economic forces and class struggle

(Marx & Engels, 1970). Psychological characteristics are determined by economic relations. According to Anarcho-Psychology, such an analysis fails to account for the range and depth of the individual experience. Social structures are evidence of man's interior creative capacity, the depth of which cannot be captured by historical generalizations. Anarcho-psychology dictates that individuals are fundamentally free and defined by their choices. Freedom entails personal responsibility for one's own actions and the creation of one's meaning (Olson, 1962). By contrast, *The Manifesto*, with its emphasis on state control and collective decision-making, overrides individual preferences. It effectively stifles the individual's capacity for self-determining action. In addition, Anarcho-Psychology values authenticity. This involves being true to oneself and living by one's self-created values (Olson, 1962). However, *The Manifesto* provides a predetermined framework of beliefs and values which humanity is inclined towards. This ultimately leads to inauthenticity. Furthermore, according to Anarcho-Psychology, the adoption of ideological principles should be preceded by personal reflection and choice. *The Manifesto's* emphasis on collective class consciousness overshadows the individual's unique existence and points to a singular, monolithic human personality. Moreover, *The Manifesto* downplays some fundamental aspects of the human condition. The Anarcho-Psychological tradition dictates that the human experience is defined by frustration, insecurity and painful striving. The Manifesto's underlying material foundation can be viewed as an attempt to deny the essential features of being human (Olson, 1962).

4.4 Summary

The philosophical divide between Dostoevsky's existential view of human nature and the deterministic social framework presented in Marx and Engels' *The Communist Manifesto* highlights a fundamental disagreement over the nature of freedom, individuality, and social progress. Dostoevsky, through the Underground Man, rejects the notion that human behaviour can be reduced to economic forces or class struggle, emphasizing instead the complexity, irrationality, and unpredictability inherent in human desire. His critique of utopianism and collectivism stands in stark contrast to the Marxist vision of a classless society, where human fulfilment is seen as a product of economic transformation. While *The Manifesto* promises a rational, collective future driven by the forces of history, Dostoevsky argues that such a society would ultimately stifle individuality and creativity, reducing humans to mere cogs in a mechanized system. By

challenging the deterministic and reductionist worldview of Marxism, Dostoevsky affirms the centrality of personal freedom and the importance of individual agency, even in the face of suffering and irrationality. Ultimately, this chapter illustrates the enduring tension between the pursuit of a utopian, rational society and the existential reality of human freedom, with each perspective offering a distinct and competing vision of what it means to be truly human.



Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Statement of Research Questions

This section has addressed the three research questions of the study, which are:

1. What are the unethical issues of the praxis of communism forecasted by Dostoevsky in *Notes from Underground*?
2. How do the forecasted unethical issues by Dostoevsky emerge in *The Communist Manifesto*?
3. In what ways are the ethical outcomes of the Russian Revolution in direct correlation with Dostoevsky's predictions?

5.2 Statement of Key Findings

5.2.1 Key Findings of Research Objective One

Denial of Individual Freedom

Dostoevsky predicted the emergence of the modern totalitarian mind and its corresponding irrational will to power. A leader who consolidates his position by imposing intolerable burdens on the populace. In addition, Dostoevsky predicted that the manipulation of human behaviour through social engineering will be unsuccessful due to human nature. He maintains that man is pre-eminently a creative animal and values independent choice over everything.

Effects of Determinism on the Individual

Furthermore, Dostoevsky predicted that the determinism characteristic of utopian societies leads to the denial of freedom. Such societies are defined by fixed laws, mathematical certainty and pre-calculated outcomes. Thus, effectively stifling the creative spirit within man.

Subordination of the Individual to the Collective

In addition, Dostoevsky predicted that the pursuit of a collectivist utopia involves the subordination of the individual to the collective. According to Dostoevsky, individual interests are subordinate to a collective will in social utopias. Dostoevsky also predicted the project of the regeneration of man. This project was necessitated by the pursuit of a collectivist society. In such

a society, man will be subordinate to the collective, thus, man will have to be regenerated to pursue collective interests.

Lack of Fulfilment in Materialism

In addition, Dostoevsky predicted that utopian systems predicated upon materialism will not lead to fulfilment. Economic prosperity will not satisfy man as what he values most is free choice. Thus, achieving utopia will not automatically lead to human fulfilment. Man derives value from the journey and not the destination. Thus, the promotion of the classless society as a transformative endpoint does not account for man's fundamental ontological constitution. Dostoevsky predicted the emergence of revolutionary ideologues, consumed by ideology, who only see what conforms to their narrative.

5.2.2 Key Findings of Research Objective Two

Denial of Individual Freedom

Marx & Engels suggest that *The Manifesto* is a document of enduring historical consequence as it is not subject to alteration. Thus, it paves the way for the eventual manipulation by leaders with totalitarian inclinations.

The Manifesto explicitly denies individual freedom. It advances the notion that the primary determinants of human behaviour are historical forces and class struggle. According to *The Manifesto*, human beings are not active agents in shaping the trajectory of their own lives. They are merely passive participants swept along by historical trends.

Furthermore, *The Manifesto* admits the possibility of the conscious manipulation of human behaviour through social engineering. It affirms that the bourgeois is endowed with the requisite capacity to shape societal norms and beliefs. Social structures such as the family and the education system are simply tools employed by the bourgeois to influence and control individuals.

Effects of Determinism on the Individual

In addition, *The Manifesto* is underpinned by determinism. *The Manifesto's* vision of a classless society is the necessary outcome of historical forces and economic laws. The establishment of the classless society is ultimately attributed to pre-determined laws. Moreover, *The Manifesto* purports to have an underlying scientific foundation. Marx & Engels' articulation of scientific socialism is

intended to be consistent with the fundamental tenants of the scientific method. This is further evidence of its determinism.

Subordination of the Individual to the Collective

The Manifesto explicitly promotes a collectivist society, whereby each individual has equal rights and responsibilities. The establishment of the collectivist classless society will lead to a profound transformation in human nature. The future inhabitants of the classless society will be oriented towards the collective. *The Manifesto* promotes the idea that the human race is inclined towards the pursuit of a pre-determined collective goal. Namely, the realization of a classless society. *The Manifesto's* emphatic call for proletarian unity underscores its emphasis on collective class identity. *The Manifesto* also repeatedly attempts to unify the entire working class under a singular identity.

Lack of Fulfilment in Materialism

The Manifesto suggests that the classless society contains the optimum conditions to enable the maximum development of human potentiality and will ultimately lead to human fulfilment. The classless society will usher in a new era of international peace and cooperation. Exploitation at the international level will be ended. The ideological character of *The Manifesto* has contributed to its gross oversimplification of complex events. The totality of historical development is forced to fit within the Marxist ideological framework, which leads to a selective account of history.

5.2.3 Key Findings of Research Objective Three

Denial of Individual Freedom

The Bolshevik suppression of dissent and opposition is evidence in support of the notion that they denied individual freedom. They deliberately manipulated the democratic process. This is demonstrated through their actions following the elections of November 1917. Additionally, the 21,103 people that were executed and 6459 sent to concentration camps following the Kronstadt rebellion is further evidence demonstrating the Bolshevik denial of freedom. (McMeekin, 2017) The Bolsheviks attempted audacious social engineering projects that ultimately failed. Most notably, War Communism. The Bolsheviks sought to introduce an economic system defined by comprehensive scientific planning. This involved the elimination of commodity production and

the deliberate effort to consciously guide the economy according to a definite plan. The failure of War Communism illustrates the fundamental discrepancy between the aims of social engineering and natural human inclinations towards self-preservation and economic security. (Walicki, 1995). The excesses of War Communism resulted in the starvation of 30 million people and the deaths of 5 million (Courtois et al., 1999).

Effects of Determinism on the Individual

Furthermore, the Bolshevik application of Marxist principles underpinned by determinism led to the justification of ethical abuses. All actions in service of the realization of the classless society were moral. Thus, the Bolsheviks adopted an instrumental conception of morality (Walicki, 1995). This can be demonstrated through the use of forced labour to construct utopia. By 1930, the Bolsheviks detained 140,000 people in State Police Camps to serve as a labour force to achieve industrial targets and consequently realize utopian ambitions (Courtois et al., 1999).

Subordination of the Individual to the Collective

In their pursuit of a collectivist society, the Bolsheviks adopted a policy of agricultural collectivization. This entailed organizing the peasantry into agricultural collectives. Collectivization was enforced through coercive tactics such as the forced requisitioning of grain, seeds and fodder (Livi-Bacci, 1993). Forced collectivization resulted in 6 million deaths as well as hundreds of thousands of deaths due to deportation. In 1930, Peasant resistance to collectivization led to the arrests of 26,000 people and the execution of 650 (Courtois et al., 1999).

Lack of Fulfilment in Materialism

The Bolsheviks maintained a firm belief that achieving a classless society would lead to human fulfilment. However, it turned out that this was an unrealizable ideal. The classless society marked the emergence of a new elite class consisting of communist bureaucrats. The Bolsheviks themselves became the new class of owners (Djilas, 1957). The supposed classless society led to considerable material disparities between the workers and the communist bureaucrats. The average worker's annual salary was 1800 rubles. Whilst the pay of a party official was 45,000 rubles. The Bolsheviks benefitted significantly from expropriating wealth from the previous regime and the citizenry. By November 1920, the estimated value of goods seized was 245 million dollars. Indicating that much of the plunder was seized for personal gain (McMeekin, 2009).

Furthermore, the Bolsheviks viewed all reality in line with the Marxist ideological framework. They adopted an ideological stance to maintain the rest of the population in a state of subjugation. Dissenting opinions were characterized as being of bourgeois origin (Wilson Center, 1950). A pertinent example of this is the Bolshevik repression of the Church. Religious consciousness was deemed to be of Bourgeois origin. Consequently, 2691 priests, 1962 monks and 3447 nuns were executed. Large-scale show trials in Petrograd and Moscow led to 10 death sentences and 227 people being sent to State Police camps (Courtois et al., 1999).

5.3 Recommendations

Notes from Underground certainly contains profound insights that foreshadowed Bolshevism. (Wanner, 1997). The researcher recommends that to attain a more complete view of Dostoevsky's critique of utopianism, it would be prudent to examine more of his works. His other works elucidate certain malevolent aspects of social utopias that are not stressed in *Notes from Underground*. In addition, the outlook and ideas of *The Underground Man* must not be totally ascribed to Dostoevsky (Kauffman, 1975). *The Underground Man* maintains an attitude of ostentatious irrationalism as a defence against the determinism of social utopias. Thus, solely by reading *Notes from Underground*, one can allude to the conclusion that Dostoevsky was an apostle of madness and chaotic destruction for its own sake (Kauffman, 1975).



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Appendices

Appendix A: Similarity Report

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Appendix B: Ethical Clearance Release Letter



4th April 2025

Kelvin Muthomi
096483
kelvin.koome@strathmore.edu

Dear Kelvin,

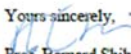
RE: A Philosophical Critique of the Marxist Utopia Through Dostoevsky's Notes from Underground

This is to inform you that the Office of Graduate Studies on 4th April 2025 received your acknowledgement of breach in ethical processes given that you have already collected/analysed data and proceeded to write your Dissertation/Thesis prior to obtaining Ethical clearance. Consequently, it was noted that The Strathmore University Institutional Scientific and Ethical Review Committee (SU-ISERC) cannot review your study since you have already collected data and written the Thesis. The scientific & ethical review/approval process is ONLY done before the commencement of any experiments, implementation or any collection of data (primary or secondary-including desktop review).

This is a letter for you to proceed with the next steps of your academic requirements.

Please be advised, that in future, all research proposals should be submitted to the SU-ISERC through the RHInnO Ethics platform: <https://strathmoreuniversity.rhinno.net/login>

Disclaimer: 1) This is not in any way an ethical approval letter. 2) Should there be any legal implications/actions emanating from the research in terms of any ethical violations, you will be personally liable.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Bernard Shibwabo
Director of Graduate Studies

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