CHAPTER V

SOLZHENITSYN: MALCONTENT TO A MAN OF LETTERS

The erstwhile Soviet Union displacing religion, decentering the individual, and exalting Marxist ideology, had subjugated its people by transforming them into "ideological subjects". These subjects had learnt to perceive the "truth of power" but failed to discern the "power of truth". As "ideological subjects" they did not protest, and as meek subjects whose "voices" will never be heard, they were subsumed by the dominant "voice" of the Party. The Party has committed numberless political atrocities which have provoked several writers, artists and intellectuals to protest. Among them Solzhenitsyn occupies a monumental position. He has called for a rethinking of issues relating not only to Russian history but to the world at large. Thereby he has earned international recognition as well as criticism, playing totally diametrical roles as a "Malcontent" and a "Man of Letters".

Solzhenitsyn and the Ideological State Apparatus

A writer like Solzhenitsyn perceived the pervasive nature of ideology which was administered through the existing power structure in the Soviet Union. He viewed "ideology" as an "epidemic" (Letter to the Soviet Leaders 64), and this "universal, obligatory force-feeding with lies" was the "most
agonizing aspect of existence" (63). Given this staunch belief, he was one who never made compromises with any authority even when he was charged with treason. He, in fact, questioned the self-styled authority of the Party. Solzhenitsyn was becoming, to adopt Innokenty Volodin's dictum in The First Circle, "a great writer [who] is a second government" (415). Having taken up this position against the monological Soviet Regime, Solzhenitsyn was type-cast as a "Malcontent". Jonathan Dollimore in Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries (1984), describes a stock character on the stage, the "Jacobean Malcontent" as a prototype of the modern decentred subject, the bearer of a subjectivity which is not the antithesis of social process but its focus, in particular the focus of political, social and ideological contradiction. (50)

This definition perfectly fits our author. Solzhenitsyn's "malcontented" position rests on his uncompromising resolve to expose the Soviet governing system, even at the cost of censorship, banishment and exile. The Soviet system was thriving on Marxist dogmas. The early Marxists presupposed the existence of ideology and focussed on class conflicts. The post-Marxists looked into what constitutes ideology, in the process questioning what the early Marxists had ignored. They regarded ideology as being more than a mere concept.
Solzhenitsyn's critique of ideology shares more of the post-Marxist temperament, of course traversing certain stages. Though at the initial stages Solzhenitsyn's approach towards ideology seemed one dimensional, the inherent tension in his perception had implications for his later multi-dimensional view. In the Soviet Union, the state ideology had always functioned as a potential instrument of power over all walks of life. Solzhenitsyn has been a relentless critic of the state ideology functioning in the name of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism through power structures which have been institutionalized. Louis Althusser delineates such a process in his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)" (1969). He states that "all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects" (162). He clarifies it by observing that

... ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing ... . (Lenin and Philosophy 162-163)

Speaking of the Marxist theory of the state, Althusser points to the presence in it of "ideological state apparatuses" (136). He distinguishes two aspects within: ideological and repressive. Althusser prefers to maintain certain distinctions
between these two apparatuses. He recognizes the presence of one "(Repressive) State Apparatus" and a "plurality of Ideological State Apparatuses" (137). The "(Repressive) State Apparatus" or RSA deals with the "public domain", while the "Ideological State Apparatus" or ISA deals with the "private domain". The ISA subsumes within its purview religion, law, education, politics, trade, communications, and culture. Summing up his view that "every state Apparatus, whether Repressive or Ideological, 'functions' both by violence and by ideology . . ." (138), Louis Althusser nevertheless categorically states that the "(Repressive) State Apparatus functions massively and predominantly by repression (including physical repression), while functioning secondarily by ideology" (138). He says that the "Ideological State Apparatuses function massively and predominantly by ideology, but they also function secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic" (138).

In the Leninist, Stalinist and the later periods, the distinctions between the ISA and RSA were dissolved. The RSA had taken over the ISA in the name of Marxist ideological jargons, and this vitiating process, gaining momentum with the passage of time, has been largely instrumental in the inevitable collapse of the Soviet Union. Mass repression was adopted as the state method, which was justified on
ideological grounds. With the obliteration of the public-private distinctions, ideology was endowed with destructive potential.

As an intellectual Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn anticipated the post-Marxist stand (such as the one taken by Louis Althusser regarding ideology) as early as his first work. A non-fictional work like The Gulag Archipelago testifies to the drastic turn that the State Apparatus had taken. A single State Apparatus — the Leninist-Stalinist regime — functioned at the national level (which was neither "public" nor "private"), characterised by an appalling degree of repression. The monologic ideology behind this power structure could not be openly questioned. But Solzhenitsyn dares to question it. His works not only focus on the establishment of the power apparatus but unravel its working. Louis Althusser in an Appendix to his Lenin and Philosophy titled "A Letter on Art (In Reply to André Daspre)" (1966), significantly notes:

If Solzhenitsyn does "make us see" the "lived experience" ... of the "cult of personality" and its effects, in no way does he give us a knowledge of them: this knowledge is the conceptual knowledge of the complex mechanism which eventually produce the 'lived experience' that Solzhenitsyn's novel [The First Circle] discusses. (Lenin and Philosophy 205)
Solzhenitsyn: A Trajectory of his Literary Career

In "The Ikon and the Latrine Bucket: The World of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn" (1993), Anthony James observes that an understanding of Solzhenitsyn is important because his career illuminates not only the course of 20th century history and the ideologies which have helped to generate historical changes, but also the issues of moral integrity and artistic integrity and artistic decline. (16)

Solzhenitsyn's preoccupation with the Marxist ideology has met with much criticism. Much criticism too has been bandied about over his artistic integrity and his alleged "artistic decline". The first phase of Solzhenitsyn's career as an insider is generally viewed as productive of his best works, while the latter half is considered as marred by a decline in his art on account of a dogmatic and didactic tenor of thinking. Let us see how much justice is there in this allegation. Solzhenitsyn's overall perception has evolved from a microcosmic to a macrocosmic level, and the shift has necessarily entailed his taking stock of his hoard of ideas as an intellectual and this has been narrowly misrepresented as a decline in artistry. Solzhenitsyn is not only a novelist or an artist exclusively. He is equally a thinker. This accounts for the varying texture and form of his writings though the fact remains that his first three novels and his The Gulag
Archipelago have impressive literary merit. The earlier works of Solzhenitsyn (those written within Russia) were the result of a particular historical force. Stalinism and its manifestations were an exclusive target of Solzhenitsyn's scrutiny, though not the only one. Once expelled from Russia, Solzhenitsyn's concerns became more wide, variegated and to a large extent politically motivated. Now, Solzhenitsyn's attention was more on the wider implications of Communism in relation to issues like the Russian-American foreign policy, the projection of Russia and of Marxism by foreign powers especially the U.S, the emergence of China as a world power, the failure of Communism at the international level, the process of 'Americanization' and last but not the least, his concern for and insight into the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the possible means of rebuilding of the republic. In this shift, Solzhenitsyn's didacticism and uncompromising attitude do become more pronounced. Even so we recognize Solzhenitsyn's unwavering "moral and artistic integrity", to use Anthony James's words. It would not be an exaggeration to stress that Solzhenitsyn has not lost them to this day.

Paul Avrich in "Solzhenitsyn's Political Philosophy" (1974) notes that the "Tolstoyan ethical code, based on truth, honesty and the primacy of individual conscience, echoes through all of Solzhenitsyn's writings" (374). A writer with such a propensity generally meets with a lot of opposition,
especially in a Communist country like Russia. Peculiarly enough, Solzhenitsyn evoked mixed responses in the West also. The West welcomed Solzhenitsyn as an ally at his banishment from the Soviet in 1974, but deemed him as an adversary when he was remorseless in his criticism of its consumerist culture. His observations on the West formed the central focus of his Harvard speech of 1978. Even earlier in his Letter to the Soviet Leaders he had paid some attention to the subject. Martin Marty in "On Hearing Solzhenitsyn in Context" (1979), makes an interesting observation when he says, "the West has its occasional prophets" but "they are more used to the language of the critic than that of the seer" (579). It is but natural that Solzhenitsyn should function as a malcontent both in the West as well as in Russia. Inspite of this negative position imposed on him by his political predicament, Solzhenitsyn's banishment reveals more than what meets the eye.

Solzhenitsyn perceives that Soviet history has been responsible for despotic leaders like Lenin and Stalin. The decline of Russia started with the 1914 war when Russia's involvement with Germany sapped her energy, pushing her to the verge of the 1917 Revolution. Solzhenitsyn's insight into this war shatters the heroic myth that shrouded Lenin. We see that Solzhenitsyn fixes him as one of the key figures instrumental in the creation of the gulag infested Soviet Union by handing
over the legacy to Stalin and his successors. It is indisputable that the "Repressive State Apparatus" which Louis Althusser speaks of, was inaugurated by Lenin, and by Stalin's period was the only State Apparatus in total power and control. Literature also came under the control of the RSA. The Union of Soviet Writers was its ideological apparatus that verified and satisfied itself that whatever was against the Regime never appeared in print. A new method of literary representation itself came into practice in the form of "Socialist realism". With Khrushchev a period of relaxation began when a work like Solzhenitsyn's One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich was allowed to be published. It was, of course, an equally politically motivated move. However severe restraints set in very soon. It looked as though the Soviet Union could never be free of such restraints. The reason for it may be an ideological conditioning where the notion of protest or rebellion is chimerical. Althusser would call it as "interpellation", whereby ordinary subjects are transformed into ideological subjects.

This "interpellation" as an ideological conditioning negates any individual thinking which can be dangerous to the empowering of Marxist thought and practice. It instils into individuals only herd-instinct which can be euphemistically phrased as collective thinking. Not only does Solzhenitsyn defy such a conditioning in satirising its vicious process, he
attempts to create an alternative consciousness. In Russia the collective has always had the upper hand over the individual—an inversion of capitalist society. Indoctrinated with Marxist ideology, the collective's inner freedom to think has been curbed. Morality and ethics have been consequently destroyed. For example, Rusanov, a bureaucrat, and Kostoglotov, an exile, clash on ideological grounds in Cancer Ward. Rusanov claims that whatever has been said of "moral perfection" has been declared by Lenin, Stalin and Gorky (138). Rusanov is an "ideological subject" who does not speculate. Kostoglotov chooses to differ: "No one on this earth says anything 'once and for all'. If they did, life would come to a stop and succeeding generations would have nothing to say" (139). This fierce love of liberty is vital to Solzhenitsyn. His dialogic thinking becomes clear if one approaches Solzhenitsyn's works, not as a mindless diatribe against Stalinism, but as a critical review of the history of Russia.

**Solzhenitsyn, Foucault, LaCapra and Historiography**

Dominick LaCapra in his *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language* (1983), discovers a crisis in the "conception and writing of history". A historian is no longer faced with choosing methods of historical approach, but has to think of raising the question of history in a critical way without "presupposing" a general concept of history in order to write a particular kind of history. LaCapra speaks of
a dialogic form of history, not only because it is placed between history and literature, or because the "voice" of the historian is influenced by the "language of his object", but because the critical history "relates the present to the past". It is in effect a new kind of historiography. Solzhenitsyn's dialogic perception of history is inspired by such a spirit.

In his Nobel Prize Speech he hopes that "Art can somewhat straighten the twisted paths of man's history" (15). His own art is a noble example of such an attempt. He does not view history as traditional historians do. History is usually an instrument of interpretation by way of revealing factual knowledge about the past. Solzhenitsyn shows that history itself has to be interpreted. Dominick LaCapra observes: "... a dialogue involves the interpreter's attempt to think further than what is at issue in a text or a past 'reality' and in the process the questioner is himself questioned by the 'other'" (32). Solzhenitsyn's interpretation constitutes such a "dialogue", whereby his own ideology has evolved. LaCapra talks about the "documentary" and "worklike" aspects of a text, which are in interaction, and should be examined in a critical historiography. The first mode is concerned with empirical reality while the latter is critical and transformative, for it deconstructs and reconstructs the given, in a sense repeating it but also bringing
into the world something that did not exist in that significant variation, alteration or transformation.

(30)

In Solzhenitsyn's works both modes interact. His works arise out of the Stalinist context in particular and the history of the Soviet Union in a broader perspective. Developed into a higher level, his works become a code. Solzhenitsyn "reconstructs" history through his dialogic perception. In his fiction he specifically uses the technique of "polyphony" where several "voices" contest on ideological grounds. We have to bear in mind Bakhtin's observation that "the thinking human consciousness and the dialogic sphere in which this consciousness exists, in all its depth and specificity, cannot be reached through a monologic artistic approach" (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics 276). The works of Solzhenitsyn have their relevance beyond their particular historical period. In his non-fictional works dialogism operates but more at the conceptual level. Hence one can see why his works are not just a tirade against Stalinism. They contribute towards the creation of a system of political ethics that can sustain the onslaught of life and reveal the capacity of the human spirit for transcending the sense of tragedy.
In *Rethinking Intellectual History* Dominick LaCapra argues that a corpus of a writer can be seen in one of three ways. There is a continuity among texts or a linear development. There is also a kind of discontinuity, where a change can be glimpsed or an "epistemological" break between periods may be noticed. Finally a "dialectical synthesis" takes place where a "later stage" raises the earlier stage to a "higher level". A corpus of a writer is unified either through "developmental unity", "two discrete unities" or a "higher unity" (55). Solzhenitsyn's works fall in the third category of a "higher unity". The final stage of a "dialectical synthesis" raises his earlier stage to a "higher level" of recognition. The "dialectical synthesis" is suggestive of his total assimilation and internalization of his dialogic relationship with the process of life itself.

In understanding Solzhenitsyn's works we have to discard the monologic view of traditional historiography as a linear narrative and reckon with the discontinuities in the narrative. Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* shows how power has been misused by Lenin and Stalin. He sees the prison system as the "History" of our "Sewage Disposal System". However he considers his own imprisonment not as an "abyss" but the "most important turning point in [his] life" (*The Gulag* I: 87). Solzhenitsyn's impression of the Gulag appears
to be the opposite of that of Michel Foucault as stated in his "Power and Strategies". Foucault argues that

The Gulag should be analysed as a politico-economic operator in a socialist state. We must avoid all historicist reductionism. The Gulag is not a residue or a sequel of the past: it is a positive present. (Power/ Knowledge 136)

Foucault seems to be suspicious of historicising the Gulag prisons lest the perpetual nature of the threat of the ideology behind such a power apparatus is lost to us. In reality Solzhenitsyn's historical approach is also the result of a concern for the future danger. Hence the assertion in the final volume of The Gulag Archipelago: "The Archipelago was, the Archipelago remains, the Archipelago will stand forever" (505).

Marx, Solzhenitsyn and Ethics

Solzhenitsyn enquires into the cause, creation and establishment of the Gulag islands tracing it all back to Lenin and Marx. In his Letter to the Soviet Leaders he demands that Marxism be deprived of its state support because "Marxism ... astonishes one by the economic and mechanistic crudity of its attempts to explain the most subtle of creatures, the human being, and even more complex synthesis of millions of people, society" (57).
Solzhenitsyn's objection is chiefly to the movement's ignoring of the moral power of religion. Both Marx and Solzhenitsyn are humanists, but their concept of the individual has a shade of difference. Marx formulated theories about society, history, and mankind but was dismissive of religion. In his "Toward the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right" (1844), Karl Marx sees religion as "only the illusory sun, which revolves around man as long as he does not revolve around himself" (Selected Writings 64). He believes that "religion is the sign of the oppressed creature, the feeling of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless circumstances. It is the opium of the people" (Ibid).

In contrast Solzhenitsyn cannot think of divorcing the spiritual concerns from morality and ethics. He holds that "Communism is the kind of myth which both Russians and Ukrainians got a first hand taste of in the torture chambers of the Cheka from 1917 onward" (Rebuilding Russia 19). It is evident that Marxism has neglected the spiritual needs of an individual. Shulubin in Cancer Ward contends that "One should never direct people toward happiness" but "should direct them toward mutual affection" (447). He also believes that "Ideas of what happiness is have changed too much through the ages. No one should have the effrontery to plan it in advance" (447).
This is a direct challenge to the Marxist optimism that mankind can be made happy through economic means. Shulubin talks of a new kind of socialism called "ethical socialism". By "ethical" he means "values directed toward the mutual illumination of human souls" (383), for one "cannot build socialism on an abundance of material goods . . . nor can you have a socialism that's always drumming on about hatred, because social life cannot be built on hatred" (445). It is a jibe at Marx's class-conflict theory. Marx declared in *The Communist Manifesto* that "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles," and that "Freeman and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guild-master and journey man - in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another," and "carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight" which "each time ended either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or in the common ruin of the contending classes" (*Selected Writings* 222). The Revolution of 1917 itself had betrayed the first signs of the failure of Marxism. It did not create a classless society. The failure of the Revolution only led to the establishment of the Communist Regime. Solzhenitsyn's aversion to physical, bloody revolutions and his attempts at a "moral revolution" are totally opposed in spirit to the Marxist framework. Envisaging the development of Communism, Karl Marx in his *The Communist
Manifesto said, "When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of associated individuals, the public power will lose its political character." Marx went on to describe "political power" as "merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another". He proclaimed:

If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organize itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of productions, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class. (Selected Writings 237-238) (emphasis added)

We learn that violence has been legitimised when cast in a revolutionary form. But for Solzhenitsyn a very thin barrier separates force and violence, and when they cross limits, even a noble purpose is defeated. In Cancer Ward, Shulubin's "ethical socialism" is offered as a viable alternative to Marxism. Shulubin declares to Kostoglotov: "We have to show the world a society in which all relationships, fundamental principles and laws flow directly from ethics, and from them
alone" (446). He quotes Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900), a Russian religious thinker who believed that even an economy could be created on an ethical foundation. Shulubin's "ethical socialism" is not derived exclusively from Soloviev's teachings. It is an amalgam of Soloviev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Kropotkin and not the least, Solzhenitsyn's own perceptions. Solzhenitsyn's multifaceted ideology imbibes within itself humanistic tendencies basically Christian, liberal attitudes, and above all Slavophilism as set against Utilitarianism, Marxism, State Ideology and Stalinism. Although Solzhenitsyn's hope for a future has a tinge of romantic idealism, his ideas are not altogether impracticable. Solzhenitsyn affirms his detestation of politics but is very much in the centre of Russian politics. His distinguishing contribution is his amalgamation of politics with religion, ethical issues and morals. As a Man of Letters Solzhenitsyn's encyclopedic mind places him a notch above several artists in our time.

In Solzhenitsyn's world religion and spirituality are a panacea for man's problems. Marx also pondered the liberation of the individual from his alienated condition and visualized it in terms of the cherished material well-being. Marx states clearly that "Man can only live if he produces means of subsistence, but he can only produce these means if he holds the means of production, the material conditions for labour" (Selected Writings 509). On the other hand Solzhenitsyn has
all along pondered the spiritual liberation of mankind. He spoke of a Superior Spirit and raised a vital question whether it was right that "man's life and society's activities should be ruled by material expansion" and whether it was "permissible to promote such expansion to the detriment of our integral spiritual life" ("Harvard Address" 20).

Solzhenitsyn's affiliations have often been with the religious sentiments expressed by the Russian Orthodox Church. In Rebuilding Russia he speaks of the importance of the Church and directs that it free itself from the pressure of the State (47). Christianity is held up by Solzhenitsyn as "the only living spiritual force capable of undertaking the spiritual healing of Russia" (Letter to the Soviet Leaders 78). It can be legitimately claimed that Solzhenitsyn holds the legacy of Christian humanism. But it cannot be said that Solzhenitsyn's thoughts emanate solely from his Christian sensibility. That would be an unfairly monologic approach to this complex writer. Solzhenitsyn's spiritual communism is not founded on precepts or theories. Rather it is a result of his dialogic exchange with Russian history, his inevitable part in making it, his love for his homeland, his camp experiences, war and cancer, his love for humanity, his commitment to religion and ethics, and his prophetic vision of society. Solzhenitsyn's spiritual communism is moralistic and free of ideological undercurrents. It imbibes Christian values but is not
Christianity. It bears the influence of Slavophilism but is not Slavophile in its overall character. In *Cancer Ward* Kostoglotov assures Shulubin that he will live. Shulubin had earlier told Kostoglotov about the "indestructible . . . Universal spirit" (486). This spirit is a moving force of Solzhenitsyn's spiritual communism.

The State Apparatus thrives on dehumanization wrought by its penal system. Solzhenitsyn delineates this with authority because he himself is a victim of such a system, and even more because he has transcended to a higher level of a visionary, instead of being a mere survivor. The monologic and dialogic tension reflected in his works is seen in Solzhenitsyn himself. For example, consider Solzhenitsyn's attitude towards Soviet history or Russia herself. He fiercely advocates Russian cultural solidarity but he is against Russia being under State control. Often Solzhenitsyn functions as a critic of society but not of himself. There is an opposition between the conservative and the liberal intellectual strain in his thinking. The intellectual in Solzhenitsyn is capable of self-criticism but tends to take refuge under conservatism. On occasions the conservative in Solzhenitsyn speaks up for the traditional Russian values that the intellectual has imbibed. Yet we have to acknowledge that Solzhenitsyn sometimes fails to be self-critical.
Solzhenitsyn's comprehensive understanding of society, life and values has an undercurrent of ethical values. That would account for the dogmatism of the writings. He knew how power and authority were abused to crush millions of people. Solzhenitsyn's works, especially his three volumes of The Gulag Archipelago, are a tribute to those millions of lives lost in the Gulag camps. J.G. Garrard rightly observes in his "Art For Man's Sake" (1973) that Solzhenitsyn's works "have been correctly called a sort of social therapy, a recapturing of history for a generation that was almost destroyed under Stalin" (50). Solzhenitsyn's artistic integrity lies in the fact that his works are not mere denunciations but compel a reader to think from various levels. As a commentator and critic of culture and society, Solzhenitsyn's views are not restricted to Russia alone.

As a Man of Letters he is able to focus attention on temporal issues on a transcendental level, and is able to transform suffering into a blessing. In his interview with Georges Suffert published as "Solzhenitsyn in Zurich" (1976), Solzhenitsyn affirmed: "Camp life strips Communism bare in a drastic way. Their ideology disappears completely. First comes the fight for survival, then the discovery of life, then God" (12).
Michael Scammell in the 'preface' to his biography of Solzhenitsyn cites the diverse opinions on this writer: "Some have called him a saint, a prophet, a political visionary, a living literary classic. Others think him a megalomaniac, a monster of egotism and a literary mediocrity" (Solzhenitsyn 18). Solzhenitsyn's works have forced the Russian authorities to look back on history and such a reaction cannot be evoked by a "literary mediocrity". Georg Lukács perceptively remarks that "Solzhenitsyn's significance as a novelist rests above all on the fact that he gives clear and convincing compendia of the inhibiting after-effects of the Stalinist period" (Solzhenitsyn 79).

Stalinism or totalitarianism is no more a phenomenon peculiar to the Soviet Union. What Solzhenitsyn represents can apply to any society under oppression. In relating the specific to the universal, Solzhenitsyn reaches a higher level as an intellectual. In his "Truth and Power" Michel Foucault speaks of the "specific and universal intellectual". Earlier the writer used to be the "intellectual", but as every individual's activity became a basis for " politicisation", "the threshold of writing, as the sacralising mark of the intellectual has disappeared" (127). This has resulted in a "global process of politicisation of intellectuals" (127) (emphasis added). After the Second World War, the emergence of the "specific" intellectual is evident. It may be noted that
the writer as an intellectual has given way to the "absolute savant", the specific intellectual who has powers which can "either benefit or irrevocably destroy life" (129). Solzhenitsyn can also be seen as an intellectual in a transcendental way and his works attempt to constitute a "new politics of truth".

When Solzhenitsyn has played the role of an intellectual at the temporal level, his focus has been the immediate present. As a thinker he has been able to discern the central problem inherent in the existing political structure of his country. At the transcendental level, he looks towards the spiritual liberation of mankind at large. Michel Foucault in "Truth and Power" values power as a "productive network" (119) which permeates the "whole social body". He considers it not merely as a means of oppression but realizes its presence which reaches "beyond the limits of the state" (122). He states that

It's not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power . . . but of detecting the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time. (133)

Solzhenitsyn's works arise at critical junctures in his country's modern history and perform such a task envisaged by Foucault. Foucault also suggests that the "intellectual" is
not the "'bearer' of universal values but whose specificity is linked . . . to the general functioning of an apparatus of truth" (132). Solzhenitsyn as an intellectual recognizes the temporal socio-political and historical forces, and uses them as a solid ground from where he is able to reach a transhistorical level. But this is not universalism. In Foucault's view the role of an intellectual is one of ascertaining the possibility of constituting a new politics of truth . . . [and that] the problem is not changing people's consciousness . . . but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth. (133)

Solzhenitsyn attempts to create an awareness whereby the "political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth" is revealed, thus leading to openings which can allow the "possibility of constituting a new politics of truth". All this underscores the toughness of the role of a Man of Letters. Solzhenitsyn works without directly involving himself in politics. Ironically enough he is very much in the center of politics, especially since his return to Russia after its disintegration. Solzhenitsyn's art, though propelled by Russian and international politics, does not concern itself with mere politics. Though infused with a political content, it is replete with an aesthetic and spiritual sensibility.
Jonathan Dollimore in *Radical Tragedy* speaks of essential humanism as emerging from the Enlightenment. The shift from a "metaphysically derivative soul" to Robert Paul Wolf's "individual centres of consciousness", which are "self-determining, free and rational by nature", is based on essentialism which gives priority to the individual rather than society (250). The individual is characterised in terms of a pre-social essence, nature, or identity and on that basis s/he is invested with a quasi — spiritual autonomy. The individual becomes the origin and focus of meaning — an individuated essence which precedes and — in idealist philosophy — transcends history and society. (250)

The several "voices" that Solzhenitsyn represents in his fictional works, have an "individuated essence". For example, in the case of Shukhov (in *One Day*), it is his love of labour, his naive innocence, his zest for life and survival, and his sense of morals and moral justice that mark his "essence". One realizes that "even eight years as a convict hadn't turned him [Shukhov] into a jackal" but the "longer he spent at the camp the stronger he made himself" (142). Shukhov taking to his labour with joy, affirms his individuality and transcends his supposedly negated self. Solzhenitsyn's purpose is to create through discourse a "new subjectivity" which will serve as an alternative to the conditioned "subjectivity", constructed by
the State Apparatus. In One Day, for example, the subjectivity of prisoners has been governed by the authorities.

**Material Subjectivity Vs Moral Subjectivity**

Solzhenitsyn's ultimate position in the pages of history is definitely that of a Man of Letters rather than merely a malcontent. The latter is an enforced subjectivity, one purposely concocted by the Soviet Regime to discredit any internal recognition of Solzhenitsyn's positive roles. The high point at which Solzhenitsyn functions as a Man of Letters is the culmination of a journey from partial subjectivity to a dialogic objectivity.

Solzhenitsyn's life in the concentration camps has given him the opportunity to ponder the fate of an individual caught in the State machinery. Without referring to any post-Marxist theory, Solzhenitsyn has spoken at length about the creation of the Russian subjectivity, which is conditioned by the ideological state apparatus. He demonstrates how subjectivity has been constructed in contemporary Soviet society all through this century. We are able to understand him better in terms drawn from Post-Marxists like Althusser and the Cultural Materialists like Dollimore. When Solzhenitsyn perceives the ideological conditioning that takes place, he feels the absence of a free subjectivity. He also notes that this subjectivity asserts itself in turn with
intrinsic worth which defies the temporal pressures. Such a spirit is incarnated in Ivan Denisovich Shukhov and others. Solzhenitsyn is able to sense the essentialist subjectivity in them. Essentialism is usually charged with neglecting temporal issues. But as an essentialist, Solzhenitsyn very much acknowledges the temporal factors, and beyond that he sees a transhistorical core of truth.

Hence in dealing with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's treatment of the problem of self and subjectivity we should see the dialogic interaction in his writing between the essentialist and post-Marxist models of thought. Jonathan Dollimore singles out "idealist philosophy" as marking the "domain of the spiritual as superior to, and the ultimate counter-image of, actual historical, social existence" (250). The conception of subjectivity emerging from the Renaissance, has seen subjectivity from a materialist perspective rather than from an essentialist humanist point of view. A writer like Solzhenitsyn would very much oppose the material construction of a subjectivity. Solzhenitsyn would also confront the anti-humanist stand that challenges the idea that 'man' possesses some given, unalterable essence which is what makes 'him' human, which is the source and essential determinant of 'his' culture and its priority over conditions of existence. (Dollimore 250)
The anti-humanist stand decenters man, refusing to believe in the "unalterable essence". An essentialist point of view reads vice versa. It centers on man and his innate values that makes him human. Solzhenitsyn's works attempt to counter the decentering of man meticulously carried out by the Soviet authorities, by placing the individual at the centre. Solzhenitsyn attempts to offer an alternate view of the individual as a thinking subject, not an "interpellated" one, to use Althusser's term. He presents a free subjective state through polyphony in his fiction. The polyphonic form gives scope for the presentation of several perspectives, thus many "voices". The autonomous status of each "voice" affords it a free existence, therefore a free subjectivity. For example, in *The First Circle*, Solzhenitsyn presents a variety of "voices", as embedded in characters. Each individual "voice" defies any attempt at ideological conditioning. The different kinds of protest have been delineated in an earlier chapter. Here, our primary concern is that Solzhenitsyn's use of polyphony enables him to present the several "voices" which reflect a free state of being, a new subjectivity. Hence the traditional novel form will not suit Solzhenitsyn's purpose. Although Solzhenitsyn speaks about the external existence of an individual, he is always more concerned about his "interior" life. He does not stop at the surface level of how an individual's life has been affected by the Soviet state. He
goes further into how an individual is disturbed internally. In *Cancer Ward* Oleg Kostoglotov confesses that throughout his life he "hated being a guinea pig" (32). Solzhenitsyn comments at one point that "a hard life improves the vision" (478).

As an essentialist Solzhenitsyn has his own standpoint regarding the Marxist's materialist conception of subjectivity. Marx in his preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* emphasizes that "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness" (*Selected Writings* 389). Solzhenitsyn's, on the other hand, is a spiritual conception of subjectivity, which in Colin Wilson's terms can be referred to as a "transcendent subjectivity" (qtd. in Dollimore 252). This idea of a "transcendent subjectivity" figures in Colin Wilson's "Beyond the Outsider" where he declares that "Religion must be the answer". Solzhenitsyn's spiritual communism or ethical socialism relies more on religion as its base than politics. We can here recall Denys Turner's observation on Marx as a "thorough-going atheist" who believed all "religious claims" as false and that he "rejected not only particular forms of theism but also any reference whatever to a transcendent reality" ("Religion: Illusions and liberations", *The Cambridge Companion to Marx* 322). Solzhenitsyn has been earlier viewed as a critical realist. Vladislav Krasnov in setting
Solzhenitsyn besides Dostoevsky sees Solzhenitsyn as a "spiritual realist" with a concern for a "higher reality" (202).

**Solzhenitsyn As a Prophet**

His concern with a "higher reality" has cast Solzhenitsyn in the mould of a "master of Russian letters" with a prophetic vision and a messianic zeal, who predicted the collapse of Russia and who now believes in bringing about a "spiritual revival in Russia". With a broad vision of the condition of society, his times and the world, he inhabits a noman's land, a self-made world from where he proclaims his ideas with an unwavering confidence and single-minded purpose. Olivier Clement in *The Spirit of Solzhenitsyn* (1976) opines that "The meaning of Solzhenitsyn's destiny is to be found in the . . . interiorization of the energy of fire; its metamorphosis into prophetic energy through a voluntary descent into hell" (216).

Solzhenitsyn's integrity and resilience enable him to make his "descent" into an 'ascent' to a higher level of understanding, and forge from his own experiences the possibility of creating a "transcendent subject". Though culturally conditioned, he has the inner moral resilience to overcome his status as an "ideological subject". In "On Hearing Solzhenitsyn in Context" (1979) Martin Marty sees
Solzhenitsyn as a "visionary" and "literary genius" (579) and as a "prophet of wholeness" (578). Before we attempt to view Solzhenitsyn as a prophet, we have to make a clear distinction between 'prophecy' and 'prediction'. In the case of the former, a claim for absolute truth is inherent, and the insight into the future arises from a broad spectrum. In the latter the insight is short-ranged and a matter of empirical fact. Martin Marty raises the question of understanding the "language of prophecy" (579). In Solzhenitsyn's context it means speaking in the name of the "Supreme Complete entity" as expressed in his Harvard Speech. According to Max Weber, a genius or Messiah uses a different language. Like the prophets of Israel or Russia, Solzhenitsyn uses a language that "portends disaster", and like other prophets, he does not bother whether his language is "empirically certifiable" (Marty 579). Martin Marty observes that Solzhenitsyn expresses a "monistic hunger over against the split world; he must have everything whole. So do the prophets, who look for the realm of 'yasta' or well-being, shalom as perfect place" (579). According to Marty, prophets "deal in futures", see the world in a "basic misfit condition", use "holistic and totalising language" and are "lonely" (579). Solzhenitsyn is a "prophet of freedom" (580).

Solzhenitsyn's return to Russia has invoked the serious role of the writer as a prophet who wills a messianic mission.
The stature of a Messiah is an archetypal image. We have to link it with the viable role of a Man of Letters which brings into forum several issues. We see that Solzhenitsyn is a product of history. The man and his works are an index to the possibilities of a transcendence that alone can reset the scale of values in the contemporary world, and lead an individual to realize his inner "essence". J.L. Talmon in Political Messianism: The Romantic Phase rightly observes that it is no accident that every Messianic thinker sooner or later comes to grips with religion. Either it was an outright denial and condemnation of religion as the root cause of all evil . . . or a new religion usually purified Christianity . . . . (208)

Solzhenitsyn as a Messianic thinker believes in his capability to bring about a spiritual regeneration in Russia. Usually it is a people who expect a Messiah to arise from within their society, while prophets arise by themselves. In some discussions of Solzhenitsyn, both these terms have been often used. But in Russia, Solzhenitsyn's messianic role was not appreciated at any given time. Vladimir Solovyov and Elena Klepikova remind us of the truism that "No prophet is honoured in his own land; his fate is to be stoned, or sent into exile as Solzhenitsyn was" (68).

Yet, Solzhenitsyn has morally outlived his exile, and has now returned to a Russia which is in the process of
redefining herself. Solzhenitsyn dons the mantle of a Messiah and has openly declared that he will bring about a spiritual revival in Russia. From newspaper reports we learn that Solzhenitsyn's opinions on contemporary Russian political affairs are much sought after though we do not know whether they are valued or not. Solzhenitsyn's messianic voice is one among the several voices heard in Russia today. Whether his voice is going to be not only heard but honoured or muffled, is an open question the answer for which lies in the hands of the makers of contemporary Russian history. To be sure he is himself quite likely to be one of them.