Différences of *Doverie*

(Mis)trust and the Old Faith in the Russian Far East

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**Abstract**

This chapter interrogates a putative link between trust and faith through an ethnographic description of post-Soviet Old Belief, a tradition of disserter Russian Orthodox Christianity, in the cities of the Russian Far East. A return to the origin of the word in order to ‘catch sight of’ the phenomenon to which it points leads to the conclusion that trust (*do-verie*) is something ‘until’ or ‘before’ faith. Two very different congregations make up this community, and the word *doverie* means different things to these different groups. Rather than some stuff (‘trust’) that is lacking between them, each community seems disposed to grasp different sorts of relationships as trustworthy or not, reflecting their dissimilar and indeed conflicting perspectives on the last years of the Soviet Union, the collapse of socialism, the market, and economic ethics as they made their ways towards faith.

**Keywords:** Russian Orthodoxy, post-Soviet, phenomenology, spiritual division of labour, catholicity (*sobornost*), Protestant ethic, capitalism

**Introduction**

According to political scientists, the level of trust in Russia today is low compared to Western countries. In response to the Levada Center’s question about which statement best describes their level of *doverie* (‘social trust’), 75-80 percent of respondents stated that ‘one must not trust people, but rather it is necessary to be careful with them’. Such surveys suggest

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that *nedoverie* (‘lack of trust’) might explain why a Western-style market economy and ‘civil society’ have failed to take root in post-Soviet Russia. The lop-sided shape of these responses suggests the inverse of another survey question, to which the same percentage of Russians reputedly reply in the affirmative: ‘Do you have trust (*doverie*) in President Putin?’ Statistically, then, ‘trust/mistrust’ can be framed as the factor that both underlies the absence of democratic rule in Russia, as well as the failure of markets to function smoothly there.

There might be a problem, however, with this formulation of trust-*doverie* as lacking in one sphere and abundant in another: it suggests that the ‘trust’ in which President Putin is putatively held and that the ‘trust’ that is lacking in one’s consociates refers to the same thing. But does this ‘trust’ in the President and for one’s neighbours refer to the same objectively measurable stuff? There may be another way of framing this problem that does not treat trust-*doverie* as some kind of solid, weighty stuff when present, and as a lack or a void when absent. This approach would be to take ‘trust’ as a disposition that holds people and groups in tandem or in tension: as an attunement that, although often veiled, nonetheless exercises an omnipresent effect – and not always the effect of consensus that one usually ascribes to ‘trust’. Could there not be several modes of trust that might clash, compete, or exclude each other, so that, for example, a certain kind of trusting attitude toward the President might exclude the capacity to build a consensus or to engage in equitable economic exchanges with fellow citizens? This complexity would be doubly true if trust were a relational phenomenon that depended on something else. If both of these features were the case, then people’s ability to verbalize their trusting attitudes in response to an opinion poll might be an untrustworthy method of gauging ‘trust’.

There is indeed a very simple reason to suspect that, on the one hand, ‘trust’ might stay in the background and out of discursive elaboration if and when it works, and on the other, that it is relationally constituted. These two facets of trust – that it precedes, anticipates or delimits a threshold, and that it relates to and depends on something else (and so, taken together, forms the negative condition that grounds a positive possibility) – are suggested by the word itself. The phenomenon that trust touches upon and circumscribes, if we take the simple, formal indication of the word seriously, is *faith*. The Russian word for trust is *doverie*, which parsed literally means *do-* (‘before or until’) *vera* (‘faith’). The word itself, while not a panacea for our theoretical problem, might provide a clue as to how the different dispositions of trust might be contrastingly structured:
What counts, rather for us in reliance on the early meaning of the word and its changes, is to ‘catch sight of’ the realm pertaining to the matter in question into which the word speaks. What counts is to ponder that essential realm as the one in which the matter named through the word moves. (Heidegger 1977, 159)

Some Russian native speakers have told me that, when one considers its original meaning, *doverie* does indeed carry the connotations of anteriority that are implied by the prefix *do-.* In this context, unpacking some implications of the combinations and condensations of *doverie* might be a worthwhile exercise.

The archaeological excavation of language can help the anthropologist if it brings into view an under-investigated aspect of ethnographic reality and provokes such questions as: How do trust and faith relate in ordinary Russian life? Must one co-exist with the other, or do they sometimes interfere with each other? When trust is present is faith in the background, and when faith is foregrounded is trust taken for granted? When faith is explicit do the clashing trajectories of trust reveal themselves, which otherwise would be silently working behind the scenes? If the phenomenon of trust is essentially hard ‘to catch sight of’, then we might be aided in our search by focusing on somewhere faith is brought into the strongest relief and on someone for whom faith is a way of life. Do such people trust each other, and does trust underpin or undermine their faith or do they operate with different modalities of trust? What supervening political and economic conditions and orientations shape communities’ ability to trust? Such an ethnographic starting point requires us to treat trust not as some universal, objective cross-cultural binding material that can be infused into a social system for its lubrication (economic or otherwise), but instead allow us to discover the undetermined multiplicity of trust.

This chapter will interrogate this putative link between trust and faith through a description of post-Soviet Old Belief, a tradition of dissenter Russian Orthodox Christianity, in the cities of the Russian Far East (Primorskii Kray). By means of this ethnographic example, it will be seen how *doverie*, the Russian word that is usually (mis)translated as the (theologically loaded) equivalent of ‘trust’, points towards a non-representable other, outside of faith. It signifies the zero level and turning point at which faith begins for at least one group of Old Believers. *Doverie* thereby forms the negative possibility of this transformation, and is therefore not quite a religious phenomenon but a para-religious one, which subsists in that netherworld where religion and politics are as yet undifferentiated. Two modalities of
trust and its relationship to faith will be shown functioning within the same formal organization: the Far Eastern Diocese of the Old Believer Church.² Old Believers, zealots who broke from the Russian Orthodox Church in the mid-seventeenth century when Patriarch Nikon and Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich enforced changes in the Church’s rites, and who for three centuries have maintained a stance of staunch resistance to both State and Church as a way to preserve the Old Faith, are a byword in Russia for a group that binds trust and faith together. Some observers have even seen in the Old Believers an exemplification of an autochthonous ‘Russian Protestant ethic’ and a corresponding potential for economic development on the model of the Weberian thesis. It might therefore be illuminating to see how doverie works in one post-Soviet revival of this tradition. To borrow Alexander Gershenkron’s (1970) metaphor, the Old Believers provide us with the ‘Russian mirror’ in which to reflect Western economic and political theory’s unthought assumptions on the nature of trust.

Dizzying Doverie

Before entering the ethnography, however, it first necessary to pause on the nature of this word, doverie, so as to try to ‘catch sight of’ the different modes through which it arises in the subsequent description. For the purposes of this analysis, the word will be broken down into its component parts: the prefix do- and the stem vera. On first examination, trust’s connection with faith, which is spelled out in the word ‘doverie’ itself, is hard to pin down. The stem is unambiguously the Slavonic translation of the Biblical Greek word for faith, pistis. The prefix, however, is polysemic and can be translated in a variety of ways, depending on what syntactical value one gives to the prefix once the word has been parsed into its morphological components.

Do is a polysemic particle in Russian that has two subtle but quite different syntactical inflections. Firstly, do is an adverbial modifier that can mean ‘before’, in the sense of ‘previous to’, as in the antithesis to ‘after’ (posle); in its adverbial form, do provides an answer to the question ‘When?’ (kogda?). But secondly, do is also a preposition that indicates ‘until’, ‘till’, and ‘up to’, with the antithesis ‘since then’, ‘from then on’ (s); in its prepositional form, do answers the question ‘until which point/stage/time?’ (do takikh por/do kakoe stepeni/kakogo vremeni?) or, more simply, the English

² These Old Believers belonged to the priestly tradition of the ‘Belokrinitskaya Hierarchy’, which retains the Orthodox episcopate. See Rogers (2009).
‘How long?’. Prepositional do-‘until’ inscribes the temporal and spatial limit of an action. Unlike adverbial prefix do-‘before’, which merely posits an indefinite and imperfect earlier time, do-‘until’ pinpoints a change, a cleavage: a conversion. Do-‘until’ indicates an end (a goal), which necessarily implies a beginning: a (re-)birth.

However one interprets the prefix do- (an ambiguity that will hopefully give an interpretive key in the coming ethnography), such a morphology hints at a phenomenon that lives outside of and is anterior to faith. But while the semantics indicate something at the spatial and temporal threshold of faith, from the etymological point of view the word suggests the opposite. It does not imply that trust is before, prior to, or until faith. Instead, it seems as if an ancient stem has subsequently had one of a variety of prefixes attached to it (do-, pro-, u-), which suggests that first came the stem – vera – and then came its derivatives: do-verit’ (‘to trust’), pro-verit’ (‘to check’), u-verit’ (‘to convince’). This decomposition intimates that vera (‘faith’) came first, and then do-verie (‘trust’): faith before trust, not vice versa.

The perplexity particular to the Russian language appears clearly in Emile Benveniste’s famous etymological excavation of trust. The great French historical linguist first tracked the Indo-European notions of faith and trust back to their common root, ‘*kred’ (from which Latin credo derives). This archaeology led him to posit credence-trust as the predecessor to credo-faith: he wrote that ‘[f]rom the beginning of the tradition the notion of “credence” (créance) expands into “faith” (croyance)’ (Benveniste 1969, 171). Yet, when one reads Benveniste’s analysis in Russian translation something strikes the reader as jarring: the statement that doverie ‘expands/enlarges’ into vera (ibid.). But how can a stem with a prefix (doverie) ‘expand’ into the stem (vera) itself? A glance at the words convinces us that, in Russian, the opposite is the case. This aporia between morphological semantics (do-verie as ‘trust before or until faith’) and etymology (first stem, then prefix + stem), by which the priority and anteriority of one term is collapsed and condensed into the other, might not be just some linguistic trompe l’oeil but may instead point towards something about the nature of ‘trust’.

Switching the focus from the prefix back to the stem, we are spun in yet more circles. Vera (‘faith’) is the translation of the New Testament pistis, a word the Russians received from Cyril and Methodius, the Tenth Century

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3 The French reads ‘La notion de “créance” se trouve élargie dès le commencement de la tradition eu celle de “croyance”’.
4 ‘Uzhe v samom nachale yazykovoi traditsii ponyatie “doverie” rashshiryayetsya do ponyatiya “vera”’ (Benveniste 1995, 124).
But as Malcolm Ruel showed in a classic article, the originary meaning of *pistis* is ‘trust’. Not only the Greek, but the original Hebrew term from which *pistis* is derived ‘was used of the reliability or trustworthiness of a servant, a witness, a messenger or a prophet’ (Ruel 1997, 38). We can see how theorists who insist on the close kinship of words and phenomena, such as Agamben, Derrida, and Heidegger, are liable to make us dizzy; for here a return to the origin of the word to ‘catch sight of’ the phenomenon to which it points leads one to conclude that trust (*do-verie*) is ‘until or before trust’. How can something be before or until itself? One might employ the tricks of the continental philosophical trade and turn the prepositions and adverbs into nouns and nominals so that, in this lexicon, trust is ‘the before’ of faith, or faith’s ‘until’ is trust.

Yet this hardly makes the phenomenon clearer. We might suspect from the quandaries above that trust-*doverie* shows something of that *je ne sais quoi* that Derrida called ‘différance’: the elision and obliteration of origin and ground in an endless cycle of deferral (Derrida 1978, 75). Trust-*doverie*’s descent into différance would be an unsurprising discovery since, in a thorough recent analysis of the related notion of faith-*pistis*, Teresa Morgan says that faith also betrays the motile semantic slipperiness that leads into infinite regressions of différance: ‘no one theory has attempted to locate trust, belief, their opposites and palliatives within a single model. A model, however, is to hand: that of différance or “deferral”, in the Derridan sense. However we trust, and depend on trust, our trust always depends on something else’ (Morgan 2015, 20).

These linguistic labyrinths might seem very abstract, but when the self-evidence of *doverie*-trust is breached in social life it can indeed seem to stand on thin air. One could take a famous literary example to make this groundlessness more concrete: Anna Karenina’s husband, Alexei Alexandrovich. When the naïve husband tries to dispel his own doubts about his attractive young wife’s fidelity, the groundless supposition of his trust is revealed: ‘Alexei Aleksandrovich considered that he ought to have trust [*doverie*]. Why he ought to have trust [*doverie*], that is, complete assurance that his young wife would always love him – he never asked himself, but he felt no distrust [*nedoverie*] because he had trust [*doverie*] and told himself that he had to have it’ (Tolstoy 2000, 142). 5 Tolstoy’s character gives us a further important insight into *doverie* and its risks: people trust others in the hope that by proffering the unbidden gift of trust, they will initiate a trusting relationship and will receive trust in return, though as Alexei Alexandrovich found out this gambit does not always work.

Trust can therefore be taken as a transactional and relational phenomenon. Indeed, Beveniste’s archaeology (Beveniste 1969, 177) showed that early Indo-Europeans understood trust as operating according to that maxim of Roman religion made so famous by Marcel Mauss’s analysis of the gift: ‘do ut des’ (‘I give so that you may give’) (Mauss 2002, 22). What if we understood the circular relation of trust and faith in this model as different stages in the formation of transactional relationships? Trust might then appear as the elementary initial wager risked in the hope that it would be picked up, received, and, in so doing, turn an other into a recipient, partner, and potential giver/truster, in whose reciprocal regard the initial act of trust would be reified as a trustworthy relation. This initial risky and evanescent gambit would stand within the temporal conditionality of an ‘until...’: until Anna Karenina killed Alexei Alexandrovich’s hope, he clutched onto the chance that his unfounded trust would be reflected in his wife’s good faith.

Until the moment trust is picked up and consummated, the first move stands in a condition of suspended animation during which it gestates and incubates in a fecund temporal fold. At a later date this embryonic trust can either blossom or shrivel, or be violently eradicated, depending on the soil in which it was planted. If we take trust-doverie as ‘until faith’ together with faith’s (vera) early etymology as trust, such that trust is ‘until itself’ so to speak, then the best approximation of what constitutes the abstract notion of something ‘until itself’ might be its gestation and incubation: the secret growth and pregnancy that moves towards birth. What was I ‘until myself’ if not my own potentiality-to-be that waited to be actualized? To adapt Walter Benjamin’s image, trust in this reckoning would be the dreambird that incubates the egg of faith (Benjamin 1991, 447). This notion of gifting trust will help make our analysis more anthropological than etymological once we turn to the ethnography.

Transactionally, then, trust-until-trust (do-verie) would be faith held in suspended animation, a photographic negative, as it were, taken and developed of faith’s potentiality to-be. Do-verie would then have the strange quality of anticipating its own outcome (faith) in order to performatively bring about that very outcome. Do-verie conceived as a play in an exchange would appear to be an other-directed hope and wish: it would stand in the middle between the subjective and objective viewpoints of the gift. Do-verie as until-trust would be the initial intention in the as-yet-pre-subjective/objective stage that subsists in media res before the two terms of the relation

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6 ‘The subjective truth of the gift [...] can only be realized in the counter-gift which consecrates it as such’ (Bourdieu 1990, 105).
are formed, in the conjunctive so-that of ‘I give so that you may give’. This is done so that you may become you and I become I for you; it is given so that you may become a giver to me, I may become your receiver; this trust is placed so that you may be trusted by me, I may become your trustee; this elementary pre-faith (trust) is shown, which, until and by the fact of your reciprocation, might reveal itself as faith well-placed, and thereby create a relational space where words and deeds match up: the ‘veridictive’ space of faith (Agamben 2011). Grammatical reversals like these might point a way out of the vicious Derridean circle and towards a concept of how do-verie works in social life: as two performances that provide the contexts for each other or as two co-produced terms, trust and faith exhibit that canny ability of persons, relations, and cultures in general to operate like a tank that ‘lays its own tracks’ (Wagner 1981, 42).

In her analysis of faith, Morgan cites the conclusion of an ‘Investment Game’ that has become a test case for the field of behavioural economics: ‘people tend to offer trust to those they do not know in the hope of creating it’ (Morgan 2015, 17) In other words, people trust to be trusted. But behavioural economics, like opinion polls, treats trust as a context-independent thing outside of time, whereas the following ethnography will show that the modalities of do-verie depend on the frames of enactment in which they are brought forth: the ‘When?’, the ‘How long?’, and the ‘Wherefore?’ – those questions that are flagged by the simple shape of the Russian word itself. Whether the literalness of do-verie is enacted as ‘before faith’ or as ‘until faith’ will illuminate how different structurations of trust and faith have provided these Old Believers with junctures of solidarity and fault-lines of fracture.

The Vladivostok ‘patriots’ versus the Bolshoi Kamen’ revivalists

In the mid-1990s, around 250 people, most in their thirties, converted to the Old Belief in the major urban areas of Southern Primorskii Kray (Russia’s Far Eastern Maritime province), specifically in the capital Vladivostok and the nearby ‘closed city’ where I conducted a year of fieldwork, Bolshoi Kamen’. From the beginning, there was a divide in the background and perspective

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7 Because of the strategically important Zvezda submarine factory it housed, Bolshoi Kamen’ was, until 2015, under the status of ZATO (Zakrytoe Administrativno-Territorial’noe Obrazovanie), which stands for Closed Administrative-Territorial Formation. Officially, ordinary Russian citizens had to have a special propiska (‘residence permanent’) to enter its environs.
of the two groups that led this revival. On the one hand, there was a group of conservative traditionalists influenced by the nationalist ideas that had emerged and flourished in Siberia during the 1980s. These ‘patriots’, who were based in Vladivostok, took up Old Belief primarily as a banner for restoring Slavic traditional culture and Russian national pride, as well as an organizational rubric with which to erect a stiff barrier between svoi (‘their own people’) and chuzoi (‘outside aliens’). Some of these ‘patriots’ claimed to have had Old Believer and Cossack ancestry, though all had a thoroughly Soviet upbringing: school, sports, army, work.

The other wing of the revival, based in Bolshoi Kamen’, was led by a group of young pedagogues and kul’t rabotniki (‘culture workers’) who practiced an intensely orthopraxic form of Christianity that reflected their previous exposure to Hare Krishna spirituality. This group saw Old Belief as a vehicle for a world-historical project of spiritual conversion and restoration, and therefore eschewed the exclusive nationalist and nativist emphasis of their Vladivostok co-religionists. The Bolshoi Kamen’ revivalists invited people who, like themselves, had no family link to Old Belief, including non-Russians and marginal people such as ex-convicts, to convert to the religion and help them build a self-sufficient community.

Both of these wings or factions were originally evangelized in the late 1990s by the talismanic Father Valery, at that time the only priest serving the Old Believers between Lake Baikal and the Pacific. A man of fierce charisma who had defected from the Russian Orthodox Church, Valery had spent the 1980s passing through diverse centres of spirituality in his ‘search for the truth’. The priest supposedly had the ability to bring anyone to the faith, ‘from a banker to a street-sweeper’.8 In a few years, over 200 people were baptized into the Old Belief in Southern Primorskiy Kray, including 57 of Bolshoi Kamen’s young neophytes. Not only did Father Valery attract the young and idealistic to the Old Belief, but he also found a large and willing audience amongst Vladivostok’s many enthusiasts of Slavic culture – the neo-Slavophile crowd whose numbers had been swelling throughout Russia since the 1970s. He converted members of the Far Eastern branch of the nationalist organization Pamyat (Memorial), a

8  Valery’s spiritual wanderings had taken him to shamans’ tents in Karelia, the mosques of Samarkand and Bukhara, and even Shinto shrines in Japan. He finally served at the famous monastery, The Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius, where he was ordained an Orthodox priest and entrusted with the terraforming task of transforming the Russian Far East’s spiritual desert into an oasis of Orthodoxy. Back in Vladivostok, however, Father Valery’s search for the untainted source of Russian spiritual truth led him to doubt that the state Church had faithfully transmitted that source after the great Schism on the 17th century.
charity that had originally grown out of the Late-Soviet Slavophilic ‘village prose’ movement to advocate for the protection of Siberian ecology and historical monuments. But during the 1980s, Pamyat gained increasing notoriety by distributing a virulent narrative of Russian history that claimed a Jewish-Bolshevist-Masonic-Georgian conspiracy had been responsible for ‘the genocide of the Russian people’.  

Valery also recruited Alexander Frolov, who soon became the chairperson of the Vladivostok community: a position he occupied in alternation with his wife over the next decade. Frolov espoused the views of the right-wing ‘Russian National Unity’ Party (R.N.E., russkoje natsional’noe edinstvo), an organization that castigated ‘Western liberalism’ and its notions such as ‘quality of life’ – a standard that it claimed was inapplicable to the ‘Slavic soul’. But Valery’s much more liberally-inclined converts in Bolshoi Kamen’ disapproved of their spiritual Father and his disciples’ enthusiasm for conspiracy theories; they believed that he had gone too far beyond the canonical boundaries of Old Belief when he began to proselytize ‘neo-paganism’. They denounced both him and Frolov for distributing the teachings of Valery Emelyanov, Pamyat’s founder, the general content of which can be gleaned from one book’s title: Desionizatsiya (‘De-Zionization’). Father Valery started to preach his neo-pagan message instead of Orthodoxy, proclaiming that ‘we Russians for a millennium have been duped by the lying message of Kike-Christianity’ (zhido-khristiandstvo); instead, Valery insisted, Russians must return to ‘worshipping their veins!’ When Father Valery compromised himself through participation in a pagan fire-dancing festival and feast that was broadcast on local TV, his ambitious young adepts in Bolshoi Kamen’ – keen to use the Old Believer diocese as a Russia-wide vehicle to realize their own spiritual vision – took advantage of this public lapse to depose him and take charge of the revival themselves. Naturally, the ‘patriotic’ wing of the revival in Vladivostok led by Frolov (who also attended the Slavic pagan feast) thought that this ousting of their spiritual Father was an act of treachery. Henceforth the ‘patriots’ nursed a grievance against the young new priests who had masterminded this ‘coup’ – all of whom came from the Bolshoi Kamen’ revival. This cleavage between the ‘patriots’ and the Bolshoi Kamen’ activists was a fault-line that would periodically be the cause of eruptions in times of tension.

The Vladivostok community had one advantage in this battle for control over the Far Eastern Diocese: it was the richest in the region, thanks to its laity’s engagement with biznes. Frolov, for instance, owned a computer.

9 For the link between Pamyat and Russian village prose, see Parthé (1992, 92-98).
trading firm, while other parishioners were engaged in forms of more or less legitimate ‘commerce’ in the city. ‘Patriotic’ ideas seemed to particularly flourish amongst this class of small city-dwelling businesspeople and Orthodox laymen. The Vladivostok community tried to put the brakes on Bolshoi Kamen’s attempt to resurrect the Far Eastern Diocese and their Church-building scheme by selectively withdrawing financial support. Following a dispute in which the Far Eastern priests had broken off communion with the Moscow Metropolitan, the Vladivostok laity led by the Frolovs concluded that it was ‘impossible to trust such priests’ (nel’zya doveryat takim svyashchenikam’). They exhorted other Far Eastern laity not to trust the priests’ ‘brotherhood’ (ne doverai bratsvu!).

The Bolshoi Kamen’ community, led from its inception by a charismatic former Komsomol secretary who became, in the fullness of time, their Archpriest, was completely different from its Vladivostok counterpart in the history of its formation, the background of its parishioners, and its everyday operation. Whereas the kernel of the Vladivostok community brought together biznesmen ‘patriots’ with a closed group of Old Believers who formerly had worshipped without priests (known as bezpopovtsy ‘the priestless’), the Bolshoi Kamen’ obshchina (‘community’) came out of a late Soviet neformal’nyi (‘informal’ youth association) that in the first dawn of the post-Soviet period briefly morphed into a Hare Krishna commune, until finally crystallizing into its Old Believer avatar.10 Virtually none of the Bolshoi Kamen’ community members had been brought up as Christians; some even said that only as teenagers had they learned of the existence of such a religion by listening to foreign radio broadcasts. All of its members were, therefore, in some sense converts: for each person the turn towards Old Orthodoxy marked a break with their immediate, objective pasts.

The Bolshoi Kamen’ community took from its pre-history as an ‘informal’ youth group the desire to contribute to the betterment of society and the common good, especially through the education of young people. It opened the community up to certain sectors that might otherwise have been excluded from Orthodox enchurchment. Ex-prisoners, recently released from the Far East’s swelling jails, were invited to live at the community’s base in return for their obedient work and service. For these men, many of whom became deep and faithful Old Believers, the community was an asylum to

10 During perestroika there was an explosion of these neformal’nyi associations, so called because of their independence from the komsomol (Communist Youth). They briefly exerted an important influence on Russian politics, circa 1988-1990.
which they could escape, create a new life for themselves, and break from the previous associations that had led them into trouble.

The Church also provided a surrogate and alternative family for these men, most of whom had by choice or compulsion broken the links with their own kin. Indeed, the relationship between priest and flock was defined as one of parent to child: the confessant calls his confessor his *dukhovnyi otets* (‘spiritual Father’). The relationship between spiritual father and child was, moreover, a conduit of exchange: in return for his subordination, the spiritual child could offload his sins onto ‘the neck’ of his father who, in turn, would wager his moral person as a spiritual surety guaranteeing his flock’s sanctity. This mutual exchange of sacrifices (of sinful autonomy for hallowed heteronomy and hierarchy) was the sinew of this community’s Eucharistic body.

In the Bolshoi Kamen’ community, many of the ex-convicts adopted the separate status of *poslushnik* (‘obedient’): an ecclesiastical status well below that of a monk but that still carried some of the strictures of monkish life. This group of men lived in a semi-permanent status of spiritual debt-bondage to their father-confessors. This negative reciprocal relationship induced a certain functional stability in the Bolshoi Kamen’ community. The status of these ‘canonical penitents’ meant that the community had a localized and gathered ‘estate’ of workers who lived separately from the families of the priests in the ‘monastery’, and who managed to live a moderately dedicated Christian life, without holding the elevated spiritual status that comes from being a monk. These canonical penitents could take on the burden of otherwise sinful activity for the sake of the priesthood, thereby establishing a ‘spiritual division of labour’.

The Bolshoi Kamen’ community could also rely on the support of another Church ‘estate’ that had been created through the innovative restoration of an almost forgotten ancient Orthodox institution. Because not all of the people who would have wanted to convert to Old Belief were immediately able or willing to rupture the worldly links in which they had hitherto been entangled, the priests encouraged such aspirants to become catechumen in the Church, an ecclesiastical status occupied until baptism, when the initiate is catechized into the faith. These long-term adult catechumen

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11 Simon Kordonskii (2008) argues persuasively for treating post-Soviet Russia as a society composed of various titular ‘estates’ (status groups that possess different rights and duties): there are different *kinds* of people in Russia, not homogeneously abstract citizens equal before the law, but Duma Deputies, Soldiers, road-side Militia, Cossacks, Priests, paperless ex-convicts, etc.
could gradually convert to Old Belief by re-orienting their way of life over years so that, when they were eventually baptized, they could then uphold the strictures of being inside the faith.

Many of these catechumen, unlike the ex-prisoner poshlushniki or penitents, were actively engaged in the cut and thrust of work and biznes in the Russian Far East; they therefore had to negotiate situations that were difficult to reconcile with upholding a strict Christian morality. The status of catechumen suited their situation: while it gave them a temporal horizon for the deepening of their Church involvement, they could also continue their worldly engagements without incurring mortal sin – at least until baptism, an event which could be and often was indefinitely deferred. This estate, moreover, complemented the functional organization of the Church by providing it with the manpower to fulfil tasks and extend the Church’s influence beyond its numerically small congregation. Since they still had to complete their baptism (they were do-kreshenie) their inclusion depended upon their priest-mentor’s discretion and so, like the penitents, the catechumen were obliged by bonds of reciprocal dependence and hierarchical subordination.

Finally, the core of the Bolshoi Kamen’ community formed around a group of recently ordained priests and their extended families. These priests became Godparents and confessors to each other, so they were closely intertwined in the bonds of spiritual kinship. Some having six or seven children, these young families had originally envisioned a future as an endogamous unit on the model of the Old Believer diaspora, whereby their children would be educated away from mainstream Russian society and would eventually marry each other. A few of the priests’ families did intermarry: Father Konstantin’s sister was Father Sergei’s bride. But in practice, as this community developed over the first two post-Soviet decades, this plan of endogamous spiritual families proved to be unrealizable (the absence of women converts was a decisive hindrance). Nevertheless, these priests’ young families still provided a crowning image of an Orthodox ideal towards which the imperfect and fallen faithful who aspired to spiritual wholeness could strive and in which they could participate through their service to the community.

The extended Bolshoi Kamen’ parish-community with its spiritual division of labour can be construed as running a kind of generalized exchange (Levi-Strauss 1969): obedients-A gave sea cucumbers to laypersons-B, who gave a car to priest-C, who gave an inspirational sermon to catechumen-D, who in turn donated parts for the boat in which the obedients-A went diving for sea cucumbers, and so on. There was an exchange of sins and
services in a non-egalitarian relationship between the priest-father and his confessor-children, who were together already caught up in the unfinished business of the sin-for-service exchange. The immediate giver was construed merely as the intermediary through whom gifts were transferred from the anonymous donor who always stood at least one remove away: the generalized economy of God’s grace on earth – the Church. This incessant activity spun on the ongoing deferral of the ‘until’: the \textit{do-verie} in which this faith was imbricated.\textsuperscript{12}

The Vladivostok community, by contrast, was in a restricted exchange with their clergy, whom they reputedly treated like \textit{naemniki} (‘mercenaries’). They denounced the system of extended reciprocity by which the other community flourished with an ‘objectivist’ violence that ripped these transactions out of their living enactment (cf. Bourdieu 1990): Frolov dismissed these exchanges as \textit{brakon’erstvo} (‘poaching’) – a questionable judgment from a \textit{biznesmen} whose computers allegedly bore a somewhat dubious provenance.

\textbf{Fighting over the faith}

While the priest confessor-fathers formed the hierarchical apexes of the distributed community, this vertical imperative was balanced by the demotic principle that was embodied in the Orthodox sacrament of \textit{sobornost} (catholicity). Regular meetings, congresses, and synods were held, in which the different ‘estates’, including the laity, obedienti, and even catechumens could raise questions and make proposals about the governance of the Church. The Vladivostok parish often refused to send representatives to these events, which they described derogatorily as ‘\textit{dem-sobornost}’ (pleb-catholicity). They claimed that these meetings had a hidden agenda. Whenever such meetings were held in Vladivostok reasoned discussion quickly descended into accusations and backbiting. Father Konstantin and the other clergy who presided over these occasions struggled to keep in check a laity that regarded the priesthood not as their gentle shepherds but as employees who should fulfil their will.

The situation reached breaking point when the ‘patriotic’ laity started to interrupt the officiating priest during services to claim that he was

\textsuperscript{12} In practice, the exchanges did not function as mechanically as the structural model implies. Putting them in these terms merely helps to convey a difference in the spiritual economies of the respective communities.
performing the liturgy incorrectly. So torn by bitter feeling was this congregation that the entry of parishioners who supported the clergy into a church service would prompt the exit of the others who denounced them. The Vladivostok laity continually disagreed about the content and import of the faith, both with their clergy and each other. They quoted verses from the gospel to justify their truculence and accusations: ‘If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault [...] if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that “every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses”’ (Matt 18:15-16). This flurry of apostolic citations so undermined the priests’ tenuous authority that they forbade all mention of the gospel: the ‘gospel was for heretics’, so they ‘agreed not to discuss Christ’ but instead concentrated on ceremonies and singing “zhertva, penie” (ceremonies and singing) in an effort to build a consensus by means that bypassed the discussion of the faith.

When even this injunction failed to stem the barrage of abuse, Father Konstantin declared a spiritual state of emergency, called an “vneocherednoy” (extraordinary) session of the Church council (soviet), and instructed his congregants that since ‘love was gone, it was necessary to live by canon’ – that is, since all harmony between parishioners and priests had evaporated, it was necessary to rely upon a bedrock of strictly non-negotiable rules. That even this ground zero of linguistic interpretation (a rule shorn of all ambiguity) could yield oppositional viewpoints showed that the Diocese was caught in an unsurpassable discursive deadlock. Rules, Wittgenstein teaches us, in themselves provide no more of a ground outside of interpretation than any other kind of expression: ‘any interpretation [of the rule] still hangs in the air along with what interprets it, and cannot give it any support. Interpretations by themselves do not determine meaning’ (Wittgenstein 2010, PI 198 A). At these turbulent meetings, parishioners kept shouting ever more shrilly and banging their fists on tables: ‘On what basis [na kakom osnovanii], on what canonical basis do you make such claims?’ The fact that this ever-deeper search for a foundation to adjudicate their arguments merely took them further into an irreconcilable interpretive impasse laid bare the absence of a real pillar on which they could rely. No certainty would come from discussing the faith.

The constant disagreements had a more fundamental and insoluble nature than the subtleties of theology and canon upon which they gave endless exegesis. Language had become merely the rhetorical shell and epiphenomenon of a dispute whose roots extended subterraneanly into that miscellaneous hinterland of non-linguistic experience, the silent traces deposited in bodies and memories buried in things where forgotten histories
and obsolete politics play out their afterlife. Arguments over the minutiae of the faith became merely a dressing covering the fracture that lay in habits and trajectories that preceded both groups’ turns to Old Belief: that went back to conflicts 25 years before, when each had stood on different sides of the barricades during Russia’s aborted transition to democracy. One wit made a laconic but perspicacious comment on the source of the confessional conflict by reducing it to a political caricature. He said that it was: ‘General Lev Rokhlin and the brothers Rotkin versus Gaidar and Gusinskii’. In other words, it was right-wing, pro-Soviet, Slavophile supporters of a military junta against pro-democracy, liberal, and outward-looking economic modernizers. But it would be wrong to take from this half-joke the impression that this dispute was a political war fought by religious means: despite the wit’s bathetic reduction, each party earnestly thought that they were standing up for the Orthodox faith rather than adopting some crypto-political position.

The major practical symptom of this rift was that the wilful and contrary lay leaders such as Frolov refused to confess to the priests, and so broke off the elementary relationship between confessor and confessant and the spiritual reciprocity engendered thereby. Instead, they kept switching between different confessors, since unloading their sins onto their spiritual father would have been an act of capitulation and would have enjoined reciprocal obligations into the future. The priests spoke of these rebellious laity as “nevospitanyi” (delinquent, ill-mannered) schoolchildren. In turn, the Vladivostok laity ramped up the discourtesy and began to refuse elementary hospitality to their clergy: they declined to invite them to the table for a meal; and they withheld from bishop German his train-fare home to Khabarovsk – by asking for which, they alleged, he was behaving kak tsygan (‘like a gypsy’). This cessation of basic Christian commensality in effect sundered the Eucharistic body. The bishop declared that the community consisted of ‘bandits’; of their Church, he said: ‘this house is swept and empty’ (implying with this gospel citation that the community was

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13 The brothers Rotkin refers to the current leaders of the ultra-rightwing organization ‘Movement against Illegal Immigration’ and ‘National-Patriotic Front Pamyat’. General Lev Rokhlin was the military hero who took the Chechen capital, Grozny, in 1995 but refused to accept Russia’s highest military honour for his valour. He later became a political mover who reputedly wished to replace Boris Yeltsin’s regime with a military dictatorship, but was murdered before making an attempt to do so. Yegor Gaidar was the Russian economist, politician, and architect of ‘shock therapy’, the sudden withdrawal of state subsidies and release of price controls that overnight pushed millions of Russians into poverty. Vladimir Gusinskii is a Russian media tycoon, funder of Russia’s liberal opposition and a outspoken Kremlin critic.
Figure 10  ‘Patriotic’ chairperson of the Vladivostok Old Believers Aleksandr Frolov (left) with Episcop German (centre)

Figure 11  A s’ezd (‘congress’) of Far Eastern Old Believers in the mid-1990s held in Bolshoi Kamen’
governed by an unclean spirit). In the middle of the night, the bishop was strong-armed out of the Church premises.

While the Archpriest exhorted these suspicious parishioners to ‘trust in the power of the priesthood’, lay leaders responded that ‘to trust your priests is impossible’. It seemed as if the word doverie meant different things to these different groups: rather than some stuff (‘trust’) lacking between them, each community seemed disposed to consider different sorts of relationships as trustworthy or not. Pledges and assurances heaped on top of each other did nothing to bring these sides closer; their divergence was not simply a deficit or shortfall that could have been papered over with another legislated edict. This lack of doverie was not simply between the Bolshoi Kamen’ and Vladivostok communities, but to some degree also internally between the members of the Vladivostok community. Just as one side in the conflict could interpret a seemingly unambiguous Church canon to have the opposite import to the other’s interpretation, so the notion of trust seemed to hang in the air without a common ground. The difference between the Vladivostok and Bolshoi Kamen’ communities’ appreciation of doverie instead lay at the level of what Talal Asad calls ‘the lived grammar of devotion’ (Asad 2015).

Before-faith as fore-faith

But how could the lived syntax of faith be arrayed in such a way that these Christians’ respective apprehensions of doverie-trust interfered with each other at a fundamental level? If, as suggested at the beginning of this chapter, we treat trust not as a pre-existent object that is picked up by a corresponding linguistic reference to a state of affairs, but as a potentiality of becoming attuned to the different aspects of a situation, bringing into greater relief certain dimensions of relationships, and disclosing the multiple possibilities of people and things, then we might be able to pinpoint this fundamental fault-line. Treating trust as a certain disposition towards the world helps to flesh out the point that the conflict in the Diocese was not over some particular thing – since they picked anything and everything

14 The biblical reference is to the parable of ‘the return of the unclean spirit’ (Matt 12:44, Luke 11:25).
15 Asad used this pithy phrase when he delivered a paper at the American University of Beirut (25/92014) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k4a1idgUrBc. The phrase was omitted, however, from the version published in Critical Inquiry.
to disagree about – but instead came from how such content got refracted through pre-existing, non-discursive habits and tastes (‘lived grammar’).

Since these differences lay at the very level of embodied syntax, the constitution of the word do-verie and its import starts to reveal its significance. As mentioned before, the word doverie suggests that trust lies in or around the field of possibility that is connected to faith, especially its temporal ordering. If we look at the Vladivostok community, it is clear that their trust in Old Belief was elicited from things rooted in a deep and imagined past, in Slavic blood-and-soil traditions. Deviations from this primordial template provoked the default knee-jerk insinuations of Soviet suspicion, such as denunciations of priests as ‘agents provocateurs’. The ‘patriots’ also denounced the revivalists in terms of certain Soviet standards of normativity, cleanliness, and culture: they saw these neophytes’ conversion of a military compound into a Church not as an ingenuous use of infrastructural resources but as a ‘dirty barn’, while the barracks that were transformed into a monastery were framed not as a spiritual retreat but a bicharnya (‘homeless hovel’). Nor did the priests manage to satisfy these parishioners’ expectations of gendered patriarchy: they were ‘weak’, ‘not authoritative’, and podkabлучники (‘under their wives’ heels’).

In sum, the ‘patriots’ were attuned to seeing a person as trustworthy according to what that person had been ‘before faith’. While the Bolshoi Kamen’ Christians said that they believed wholeheartedly, after the credo, in edino kreshchenie vo ostavlenie grekhov (‘the one baptism for the remission of sins’), the Vladivostok ‘patriots’ thought that a person’s prior involvements still had a decisive influence on them, even after baptism. They admitted that this might not be a completely Christian message, but insisted that forgetting the past and being without memory was to cease to be a Russian at all. They quoted the Russian proverb kto staroe pomyanet – tomu glaz von, a kto zabudet – tomu oba von (‘he who reminds of the past will be deprived of an eye; he who forgets it – of both’). ‘Yes, perhaps it’s not a Christian sentiment’, remarked one layperson to justify this attitude, ‘but y’know all of us are far from living up to the name of Christians here, and after all it’s forbidden to be without memory and without ancestors (bespamyatnym i bezrodnym). In response to the question, ‘Do you not believe that baptism washes away sins?’ and her fellow Christians’ exhortation to let bygones be bygones, Laywoman Frolova commented that ‘when the past does not influence a person, then we do not remember it, but when that past shows an overwhelming influence in a moral-ethical arrangement (ustanovok), then we look for the root of that behaviour’. She more concretely specified the past in which she felt this moral-ethical aberrancy was rooted, identifying
a ‘residual reflex (ostatochnyi refleks) from these persons’ time spent in krishnaizm’ (Hare Krishna).

This view that the past has an decisive influence on one’s present persona was as applicable to these lay ‘patriots’ themselves as to the former Hare Krishna devotees whom they denounced in such terms. The laypeople in their forties and fifties betrayed a worldview indelibly shaped by certain Soviet ideas, especially a historicist conviction in the causal role of the past for determining the present and a related etiology of origins and sources. Using Soviet terminology, they called themselves korennyi (“rooted” or indigenous) Old Believers to distinguish themselves from what they considered imitative neophytes. They authenticated the genuineness of their ethno-confessional identity by reference to their putative origins rather than to any living Christian conduct. They deployed this nativist hermeneutic towards everything, and betrayed an almost Stalinist view that people’s (often hidden) origins caused their (usually secret and sinister) behaviour.16

In their diatribes against the revivalists, the Vladivostok laity particularly singled out the name-changes of the priests, especially that of the Archpriest, whose name prior to conversion was a constant source of rumour. The Vladivostok ‘patriots’ argued that this shape shifting covered up a hidden past that needed unveiling. In their eyes, the Archpriest had changed his suspiciously un-Russian sounding family surname to conceal his origins (origins that, like Vladimir Illych’s, could no doubt be traced a few generations back down the ‘mother’s line’ to reveal miscegenation, according to this hermeneutically suspicious a priori).17 As if to corroborate this closed logic with a final conclusive flourish and an incontrovertible axiom, Frolov added to his wife’s remarks: ‘After all, was Kaganovich a Russian?’18

From the outside, the Vladivostok lay ‘patriots’ considered the intertwining of the Bolshoi Kamen’ revivalists’ relations between confessor and confessant, Godfather and Godchild, to form the hard core of a coven of intrigue. They referred to this intertwined confessional unit with the term zaedinshchina, literally ‘all-for-one [one-for all]’ – a Soviet-era term for a group sworn together and united by a conspiratorial venture: ‘They are all so intertwined with each other as confessor and flock that they are probably concealing in the bowels of this spiritual zaedinshchina secrets that

16 See Ssorin-Chaikov (2003) for how origins were ‘othered’ through the gaze of the Stalinist Soviet state.
17 See Yurchak’s (2013) analysis of the eruption of discourses about Lenin’s corrupt ‘Semitic’ origins in 1990.
18 Lazar Kaganovich (1893-1991) was a Stalinist commissar of Jewish ancestry.
prevent them being priests. It was thought up from the beginning! Nothing unites people better than common crimes’. They also accused the priests with the typically Soviet denunciation of ‘careerism’ for their attempts to try to build up the diocesan structure. The Soviet-reared Vladivostok lay leaders seemed to have filtered into their faith the default attitude of Soviet suspicion, denatured only of its ideological content. This is a stance that Andreas Glaeser calls the ‘socialist categorical imperative’, in which every action should be tested against the question ‘Who benefits?’ – us or the (capitalist class) enemy? (Glaeser 2011, 108).

Such a fraught encounter freighted with mistrust implies not an absence and lack of trust, I argue, but the interposition of an intervening form of trust through which these relations between priest and poslushnik, these places such as the homemade churches, always already appeared to the Vladivostok laity as untrustworthy. Do-verie for them was a structuring structure that carved out the borders of their faith, in which some could commune and from which others would be excommunicated. They therefore took the lived grammar of do-verie as ‘before-faith’ in two senses. First, whether they trusted a person or not depended on who and what that person had been prior to their enchurchment (their profession, their background, their class/estate): this appraisal was independent of any transformation Christian conversion might have wrought in the person (the who of the faithful depended on the ‘when?’ – before – of trust). Second, they had do-verie in the more fundamental sense of a fore-faith, on the basis of which, like for the rest of us, the significance and intelligibility of the world is always disclosed by way of a set of pre-given structuring dispositions.

In phenomenology, ‘the fore’ is always-already-having-the-world-thus-and-so: the fact that one grows into a world that seems pre-interpreted to have significance. ‘The fore’ is that which lets people and the relations between them and things appear as trustworthy or not, which lets a tight-knit group appear to be a conspiratorial unit or a non-Russian surname seem Masonic-Jewish. ‘The fore’ is an inheritance by which the world is contoured in advance for the people who are brought up inside a culture – such as a Soviet civilization in which the determining power of origins was axiomatic.19 Husserl felicitously named this pre-delineation of reality so that the outline of the future is pencilled in and trustingly taken for

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19 ‘Coming into the world, one grows into a determinate tradition of speaking, seeing, interpreting. Being-in-the-world is an already-having-the-world-thus-and-so. This peculiar fact, that the world into which I enter, in which I awaken, is there for me in determinate interpretedness, I designate terminologically as the fore-having [vor-habe]’ (Heidegger 1962, 186).
granted before it arrives ‘Vorglaube’ (‘fore-faith’) (Husserl 2006, 117) – or, to calque the German into Russian, do-verie.

It is worth separating these two levels of interpretedness, for doing so allows us to catch a glimpse of the specificity of the Vladivostok laity’s trusting suspicion: it allows us to see how their fore-faith was structured as a ‘before-faith’. The trusting attitude and habitus that they carried as part of their everyday coping (their ‘fore-faith’) apprehended as trustworthy only those people and relations who passed the Soviet-style litmus test of demonstrably pure origins: those who ‘before faith’ were by Soviet standards ‘normal’, not Hare Krishna devotees or ex-cons. These laypersons’ fore-faith pre-structured the composition of the faithful in whom they could have trust – namely only those whom they would have trusted in their previous lives, ‘before faith’ – in spite of Christianity’s transformative message.

If, according to Husserl and Heidegger, everyone is born into a tradition of do-verie and inherits a fore-faith by which some persons are expected to be good while others appear suspect, the question arises whether this inherited structure can ever change. We have described one way of attuning this fundamental level that stretches between faith and trust: in the Vladivostok Christians’ fore-faith as before-faith. Next we will see how an authentic conversion to Old Orthodoxy could rearrange the living syntax of trust and faith into a very different order.

The lived grammar of Christian do-verie: ‘until-faith’

Nearly all of the male congregants of the Bolshoi Kamen’ community (those who held me in their confidence) told me that at some time they had reached a turning point when they finally, as they put it in the Russian phrase for Christian conversion, prishel k vere (‘came to/arrived at faith’). This arrival did not necessarily coincide with their baptism – some recalled being baptized as children when they had visited relatives in European Russia – but, like St. Augustine, it was only their subjective commitment as adults that gave this nominal Christian allegiance any significance. ‘Coming to faith’ was often described as a time when these men recognized that their lives had an immanent logic and goal. As a result of arriving at faith, things that had not previously made sense (events, character traits, habits) found their place and their purpose: they had been markers on this path to faith. This was a very different apperception of the past from the ‘native’, korennyi (‘rooted’) Old Believers, who considered their enchurchment in the Old Belief a return to their deeper, truer, purer
roots. For the converts, conversion instead took the form of a moment when the chaotic kaleidoscope of their own pasts rearranged itself into a coherent order.

One priest, for instance, recalled how, before converting, he had agonized over whether to move to Khabarovsk or to stay in Bolshoi Kamen’. Rather than list arguments **pro** and **contra** the move, he had started to recite these two city names silently over and over, meditating on the light palatalization of the latter and the harsh throaty expiration of the former, until he decided to stay in the liltingly labile Bolshoi Kamen’ – where, soon after, he met up with the Christians. He retrospectively interpreted this vacillation as an elementary and unconscious attempt at what John Chrysostom called a ‘prayer of the heart’. From the moment he came to faith, he realized that this was the meaning of his hesitant soliloquy; until that realization, he had merely trusted in something guiding him. One **poslushnik** similarly wondered why, long before hearing of Old Belief, he had never smoked and had always grown out his beard. Only retrospectively did he see that his following of these famous Old Believer habits divined and anticipated the outcome of his spiritual destiny. These Orthodox converts did not trace their pasts backwards toward the discovery of an origin (a salvage mission necessitated by the inexorably rushing movement away from true, untainted essences); instead, their biographies led up to the point at which all that preceded them was transfigured into and curated as an interim stage that led up to their arrival at faith.

How long did it take someone to reach the decisive moment that led to the door to faith? The length of the journey and the terrain traversed depended on each person’s destiny, the revivalists said. Did some of the priests regret having been Hare Krishna devotees? No, they insisted – because without that experience they would not have alighted onto the true ancient Orthodox faith in the first place, nor would they have been able to put up with the initial austerities of its spiritual discipline, to which the Vedic spirituality had already accustomed them. Did some **poslushniki** regret the years they had been locked up in the prison colony? Absolutely not – since the ex-cons agreed if they had not been imprisoned they ‘tochno ne prishel by!’ (‘certainly would never have come to the faith!’). During these necessary yet unconscious stages of their spiritual development, the wayfarers claimed that in their searching and erring they were nevertheless holding out for some as yet unknown goal: their spiritual careers partook of an ‘unfinished time’ (Asad 2015, 167). Once they had crossed the threshold into the language game of faith, these men retrospectively recast their final departure from and sacrifice of their old lives as the counter-gift that they
owed to God for the grace, which they had already received from Him but until now had failed to recognize: His trust in their salvation.

These Old Believer converts therefore looked sympathetically at the current batch of aspirants who had not yet arrived fully at faith and still had to make the leap over the threshold of trust into faith proper: the catechumen or the lapsed who were ‘still swimming’ in the world. The catechumen and penitents were struggling to balance their accounts because they were inadvertently in arrears to God, insisted their more stalwart brethren. But unlike the post-Soviet Far East’s first converts, who had struggled alone in ‘a spiritual wilderness’ and had needed to build up the ecclesia from nothing, at least these neophytes had a road marked out for them in advance to chart their progress towards faith. It was as if the stages of gestation and of giving birth to a new Christian had been hypostasized into several institutions by the Bolshoi Kamen’ community: as if ‘trust’ itself had been institutionalized as a grade in the Church that one held until “trust”, understood as the trusting stance of a convert’s do-verie (‘until-faith’), proper was achieved.

The gestation of faith in the shadowy rafters of the Church as instituted do-verie was given firm temporal and spatial coordinates. The catechumen were able to live with a temporally liminal status, metaphorically standing ‘at the door’ of the Church until they came to faith. The penitents could meanwhile indefinitely inhabit a delimited zone in the monastery, between ‘the world’ and that definite telos toward which they endeavoured: a whole and complete Christian life with a house, wife, and child. The Bolshoi Kamen’ community therefore had a structure similar to the Early Church: within it doverie-trust was not just a subjective burden borne by the aspirant, but was laid out in a series of pre-structured, objective positions and roles. Foucault has commented upon how what later became a battle inside one’s own subjectivity, was originally given externally embodied and socially marked determinations.20 In Bolshoi Kamen’, as in the Early Church, the subjective spiritual battle of trust (living until-faith) was crystallized into an objective apparatus for the benefit of the faithful through a series of partial inclusions, in which doverie provided a space ‘in the middle voice’ where trust could grow and be grown.

20 ‘[Fourth Century Church Father] Pacian, for example, says there are three orders of Christian. There are the catechumens, who are those, so to speak, at the door of Christianity and will enter it. There are the fully practicing Christians. And then there are the penitents. Penitents are an intermediate order between catechumens and fully practicing Christians, and it may well be that this order had gradations and that there were sub-orders within orders’ (Foucault 2014a, 196).
How were these Bolshoi Kamen' Christians parsing the ‘lived grammar of devotion’ differently from their Vladivostok counterparts? For them the *do-* of *do-verie* did not answer the question ‘When?’ or stand as a placeholder for the dispositions of trusting certitude accreted from experiences and identifications ‘before-faith’. Instead, in the syntax of their lived faith *do-* placed their action under the temporal condition of an ‘until’: trust was their response to the question that faith begs of all of its seekers, namely ‘How long?’ (‘How long till I arrive at faith, how long till my world is transformed by Christ?’). For these converts, according to this phenomenological-ethnographic analysis, to have trust was to embrace and to hold onto the *do-* of *do-verie*, the trusting until of faith: to hold onto the uncertainty of how long it will take until one reaches this perpetually deferred destination. This stance was elicited not only from the catechumen or penitents, but from *all* of the Christians who vigilantly ‘guarded their treasure’ of faith and tried never to take their gift for granted. In this devotional attitude, *do-verie* was to abandon the certainties rooted in a fixed and frozen past (the adverbial before of a before-faith); it was to live within a time-space that partook of an unfulfilled past and unfurling future (the prepositional ‘until’ of a trusting attitude). While these Russians kept slowly paddling in the direction of faith – in that indefinite interim they had trust: ‘Blessed are those who believed yet have not seen’ (John 20:29). *Do-verie* until-faith was the condition of those who were willing to hold out and risk themselves for the reward of faith, having not yet received the counter-gift that consecrates a possibly solipsistic and ignominious act, which is the possibility that haunts the gift of trust when it is given faithfully to the Other, above all to an invisible deity. Trust-*do-verie* therefore was endurance in the uncertain how-long of faith’s indefinite penumbra – *until*-faith.

The psychology of *(ne)*do-verie

But in what sense can these collective dynamics be labelled ‘trust’? It is true that the two modalities of trust-*do-verie* outlined above depart from how Russians in ordinary language usually speak of ‘trust’. Instead, we have traced two possibilities that were uncovered by stripping the word *doverie* of its everydayness to disclose its existential core. The formal indications of this word have guided a phenomenology of the divergent temporal enactments and communal framings that emerged with particular starkness during the schism in the Far East Old Believers Church, when divergent routes to and from Christian subjecthood and the Soviet past were revealed. The
two variants of *do-verie* described thus far are not, therefore, the cognitive, psychological, or intersubjective and dialogical meanings often ascribed to ‘trust’. In the same way that the indexical ‘I’, the subject of enunciation ‘I’, and the grammatical subject ‘I’ do not necessarily coincide with – and often diverge from – the psychological ‘I’ (i.e., the seat of psychological-cognitive identity), the abovementioned lived grammars of trust do not reside ‘inside’ any individual believer, nor can they be attributed to any single verbal statement made to the ethnographer. Instead, *do-verie* was enacted or disrupted through the ongoing practical process of Christian communal life. This analysis has been arrived at through reading the tacit interpretative frames that were made explicit during the schism. But this analytical emphasis should not ignore or obscure the importance of another modality of trust-*do-verie*, perhaps the word’s more taken-for-granted meaning: namely, the psychological certainty and confidence that one person has in another.

To make clearer the difference between the communal-ontological and personal-psychological structures of *doverie*, it is worth dwelling on an example from a recent field trip to Bolshoi Kamen’, when a deeply faithful believer questioned me about my writings about his community. I had not yet shown him my thesis and he thought I was being evasive about its contents. He said that, because of this barrier, *nedoverie* had entered our relationship. He told me that his *nedoverie* came from his uncertainty about whether he truly knew who I was. This pious young believer deployed a hermeneutic of depth that scanned for more reliable indicators of internal belief than mere religious observance. For him it was not enough that I participated in prayers, nor that I grew a beard and behaved, for all intents and purposes, no differently from the other worshippers in the community. Instead he insinuated that I was a ‘simulator’: someone who performed the rituals while hiding my true self behind the screen of ritual display. There was some suspicion that behind my amiable demeanour lay a quasi-spy who intended to expose the personal idiosyncrasies of his brethren to an unknown audience.

Christianity subjects its adherents to ‘truth procedures’, by which believers are compelled to publish and expose their internal states to each other or to their spiritual directors. The Christian thereby performs a ‘veridiction of the self’: an act that simultaneously both reveals and constitutes his or her ‘true’ self (Foucault 2014b, 125-199). The translation of these Christian practices of self-publication and self-exposure into Soviet techniques of monitoring and self-criticism have been described exhaustively in Oleg Kharkhordin’s (1999, 212) genealogical investigation.
of oblikenie. On the psychological level, my avoidance of complete self-publication (oblikenie) (i.e., showing all of my rough and unedited foreign-language thesis) constituted a cause for nedoverie. Once this nedoverie arose between this young man and me, he subjected me to regular tests and rituals of truth. When during a semi-competitive volleyball game, for instance, I fought over a point and (in his view) bent the rules, my gamesmanship evidenced that his nedoverie was justified and that deep down I was a duplicitous dissimulator: ‘we saw “the real” person during that rally!’

(Ne)doverie marked the community boundary for this sceptical Old Believer: ‘you can only trust Christians’, he insisted. Since trust was limited to Christians he had no ‘friends’ outside the community of the faithful, only znakomy (‘acquaintances’). But the young man was perhaps wise to be guarding about whom he trusted, for those who did were enrolled into an absolute and unequivocal relationship that expelled any vestige of doubt or disbelief. One of his most memorable remarks was: ‘If you trust someone, he’s always right’ (‘esli doveryaesh’ komu-to, on vsegda prav’). The last word, ‘right’ particularly resonated in this context since prav connotes pravoslavie (‘Orthodoxy’). A trusted person is an Orthodox person (who is an istinnyi (‘true’) Christian), and vice versa. Trusting someone was no small matter for this young man, for a trusted person became the measure by which the truth of the Orthodox community was authenticated: to the extent that an included person proved his trustworthiness, the community of faithful was proven right (Orthodox). In his slight wariness towards me, this young believer was trying to protect a truth régime within which trust, friendship, and Orthodoxy were bound together into an indissociable nexus. Trust for him was a principle of epistemological-psychological certainty that cancelled out the residual hermeneutic of suspicion that otherwise governed interactions with the rest of post-Soviet society. Trusted people were people you knew; they were knowable because they were Christians (whose insides are psychologically transparent), and by that very fact were true (Orthodox). The triadic relation of trust, psychological certainty, and religious truth formed the keystone of this young believer’s epistemology. But during the Church schism the ontological grounds of Orthodoxy themselves were shaken and undermined. These fault-lines revealed how the psychological certainty and intersubjective confidence on the basis of which Christians could unproblematically have trusting relationship with each other depended on even more basic enactments of do-verie: the dynamics of before-faith and until-faith described above.
Trust after faith: the Russian Protestant ethic

We have mapped out three living possibilities of doverie: ‘trust’ until-faith in Bolshoi Kamen; ‘trust’ before-faith in Vladivostok; and the psychology of one young believer's nedoverie. There was a final option suggested by our initial lexical analysis, one that left behind the semantic association of anteriority that doverie conveyed, but instead took its cue from the simple quasi-philological observation that the stem (vera) could not have logically preceded the stem + prefix combination (doverie) (as in the translated Benveniste's unconvincing ‘expansion’ [rashirenie] of doverie to vera). From this common-sense doubt we can deduce another possible formula: first faith (vera), then trust (do-verie). If the Vladivostok lay ‘patriots’ occupied a position in which their trust came before and not from their faith; and if trust formed for the Bolshoi Kamen’ revivalists the negative redoubt and threshold over which faith leapt into itself and, in so doing, consecrated trust from the perspective of its own completion – then the question remains whether there was any faction that exemplified the stance that faith precedes trust, that trust proceeds from faith: that generally moved in the direction from faith to trust.

In fact, both of these warring communities explicitly held the idea that trust would come from faith, not vice versa in the way that has been delineated thus far. This belief was one of the few things on which these two camps, so often at loggerheads, could both agree. Both groups continued to hope that the Old Belief would enable them to build trusting business relationships with others, in spite of the very limited gains that materialized in practice, only extending as far as certain embedded dispositions (such as the korennyi before-faith) checked the growth of a commonly shared trust. This was more of a discursively elaborated theory, rather than one that informed their practice.

Despite their deep political divergences, at the dawn of their unification in 1997 the Bolshoi Kamen’ and Vladivostok communities were able to draft a joint declaration on the potential for Old Belief to provide a bulwark and model for post-Soviet Russia's economic modernization. Their address to Governor Nazdratenko, published in the regional newspaper, proclaimed that Russians needed to draw upon their dormant repertoire of spiritual resources, their faith, if they wanted to learn to trust each other in economic transactions:

The successful political and economic modernization of any state depends first of all on a correct reckoning of traditions and the particularities of
national-historical experience [...] One would do well to remember that a market economy is effective only where the people have the cultural and psychological readiness for responsible and honest entrepreneurship. That’s why the principles of Orthodoxy and in the first place, Old Belief’s work ethic, have become a real issue for us, as it was a century ago.

In the first flush of the post-Soviet era, these Far Easterners’ spiritual-economic manifesto was influenced by Russian scholars who, themselves conscious of the Western formula that trust is the *sine qua non* of markets, postulated some possible Russian sources of ‘trust’ that might catalyse the virtuous circle of trusting autopoiesis that ignited Western capitalism. Such hypotheses began from Max Weber’s premise that the necessary threshold of trust that kick-started this cycle in the West was a by-product of Protestant Christianity. The Weberian link between such a religion and such an economic ethic seemed strikingly present in one Russian historical phenomenon: Old Belief.

The communities that originally crystallized out of the Great *raskol* (schism) of Russian Orthodoxy distinguished themselves by those puritanical virtues of cooperative industriousness and thrift – so much so that, by the eve of the Russian revolution, educated Russians began to see their own version of a ‘protestant ethic’ in the wealthy 19th century Old Believers. From the perspective of his post-Revolutionary Parisian exile, the Old Believer industrialist Vladimir Ryabushinskii (2010) compared the inworldly asceticism of Old Belief with that described by Weber for the Calvinists. Already in 1909, not long after *The Protestant Ethic* was published, Serge Bulgakov, clearly inspired by the German sociologist, wrote: ‘The research of Russian industry, in connection with the spiritual biographies and everyday conditions of the Russian pioneer-industrialists, would reveal the religious-ethical bases of the psychology of Russian industry. For example, the especially close link between Russian capitalism and Old Belief, to which belonged the representative of a whole bunch of giant Russian firms, is well known’ (Bulgakov 1993, 331).

This distinguished line of Russian thought was revised and updated in the post-Soviet era with Danila Raskov’s *Ekonomicheskie Instituty Staroobryadchestva* (*The Economical Institutions of Old Belief*) (2012). Raskov claimed that, with its focus on Old Testament teachings and in its relationship to monetary interest, a theologically derived ethic of trust could be found within this Russian religious tradition. This ethic had an affinity with the pre-modern, personalistic and reputation-based capitalism, whose brief moment of florescence in the Russian metallurgical and textiles industries
of the later 19th century was rapidly eclipsed by the influx of foreign capital and technological innovations – which, in turn, heralded the monopolistic and increasingly impersonal capitalism of the early 20th century. Raskov averred, however, that Old Belief definitely ‘foreshadowed an alternative path of economic modernization’ (Raskov 2012, 266), even though historical events took another course. This and related theories came to the attention of and were promoted by political organizations such as the Gaidar Forum (named in honour of the implementer of ‘shock therapy’). At such events, Raskov has characterized the Old Believer as a species of ‘homo credens’: trusting man.21 In these arenas, the historical exemplar of pre-revolutionary Old Belief has been highlighted to expose the lack of theological foundations of trust in contemporary Russia, with the implicit corollary that an instrumentalization of Orthodox ideology might be good for business today. Both the Far Eastern revivalists and the ‘patriots’ espoused similar theories as those issuing from Russia’s metropolitan intellectual elite during the 1990s.

At that time (the 1990s), the Weberian premise that a bedrock of faith was the missing ingredient in Russia’s aborted ‘transition’ to a market economy became a given amongst outside commentators, who yearned to explain away the failure of liberalization to magic up markets and ‘civil society’ from the ruins of Soviet civilization. Francis Fukuyama’s book Trust: the Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity (which was swiftly (mis)translated into Russian as Doverie) claimed that ‘if the institutions of democracy and capitalism are to work properly, they must coexist with certain pre-modern cultural habits […] which are based in habit rather than in rational calculation’. For Fukuyama, ‘trust’ is an ‘expectation’ that accordingly ‘comes out of’ (1995, 11) and is ‘based on’ (20) the cultural habits that take the form of implicit answers to ‘deep “value” questions like the nature of God’ – answers such as ‘the view that pork is unclean or that cows are sacred’ (34). Here, trust comes from shared faith: modern forms of economic exchange have been grafted onto religious-cultural roots. Fukuyama cites Weber’s example of an American for whom trust in business transactions relies on a background of shared religious belonging: ‘If I saw a farmer or a businessman not belonging to any Church at all, I wouldn’t give him fifty cents. Why pay me, if he doesn’t believe in anything?’ (Weber, quoted in Fukuyama 1995, 46).

A Vladivostok layman once expressed the same sentiment that faith should be taken as a surety for contract. When asked whether his copious beard might inspire mistrust in his business partner, he answered, ‘How can someone mistrust me, a believer, for whom it is forbidden to steal, to cheat and to lie?’ In practice, however, this layman’s statement resounded with a certain irony: his security firm was suspected of all sorts of dodgy deals. From the perspective of a century’s hindsight of the troubles that the Old Belief-as-protestant-ethic has had in practically realizing itself, Fukuyama’s thesis appears to miss something crucial. While a tacit bedrock (‘a culture’) will partly over-determine and pre-empt how transactions will be perceived by actors (what Husserl called their ‘fore-faith’), Fukuyama perhaps misled himself and his Russian readership by taking too uncritically the Weberian assumption that culture and religion are basically the same, that the religious-cultural basis of a society will be the indestructible substrate on which its modern institutions stand. For some post-Soviet adults of the 1990s, the tacit filter of ‘fore-faith’ by which they apprehended the world-as-already-thus-and-so was a late Soviet habitus. Fukuyama’s theory was applied to a group of people whose accreted ethical habit, the culture-value-faith complex that evinces trust, resided not in the embodied and animated answers to questions about the nature of God, but on who is our friend and whom do we perceive as our enemy (Lenin’s who-whom distinction); on a monological hermeneutic that projects every ambiguity as a threat (Stalinist suspicion); on the eventual advent of the svetlee budushchee (‘bright future’) (Young Pioneers propaganda); and other tenets of their Late Soviet upbringing. For this cohort, especially the provincial intelligentsia, it seemed also that the revolutions of 1991-1993 were their lives’ defining, subjectivating ‘events’ (Humphrey 2008). It appears that no matter who one became after these events – including a faithful Christian – it was impossible to fully erase the indelible impression left by the side of the barricade on which one stood during this decisive conflict.

The culturalist angle, which sought a Russian protestant ethic to bracket businesses with ‘religious adjectives’, in practice produced a closed and suspicious community in Vladivostok.22 In the Russian Far East, shared faith could not be the background against which trust could flourish because theological doctrine, points of service, and liturgy became sites for continual disagreement, and for playing out the embedded value conflicts

that stemmed from deeper, insoluble political cleavages (right-wing and left-wing, nationalist and cosmopolitan, ethno-racialist versus universalist).

While the Far Easterners admitted that they were far from living up to the ideal of the Old Belief (‘we are far from the name of Christians here’), perhaps their botched experiment in building a ‘Russian Protestant ethic’ from scratch shines a somewhat negative light on the Weberian premise that religious values underpin economic success. Instead, one is drawn to Alexander Gerschenkron’s counter-argument to the notion that certain theologically based ethics could explain the economic success of Old Believers, or Calvinists and Puritans for that matter. Gerschenkron argued that Old Believers’ status as a persecuted minority probably provided ‘sufficient impulse’ (Gerschenkron 1970, 45) for any of the appurtenances of the capitalist spirit that the movement developed. But the corollary he drew from this conclusion was not that those persecuted minorities who become the best traders (those entrepreneurial ‘Mercurian peoples’ such as the Jews and Parsis (Slezkine 2004)) formed the cultural kernel out of which capitalism grew. Instead, the economist’s point was basically a negative one: that Weber’s link between religious adherence and economic success is doubtful; that the ‘trust’ that lubricates economic exchanges rarely comes from shared religious belonging by itself. He affirms instead Sir William Petty’s opinion that ‘trade is not fixed by any species of religion as such but rather...to the heterodox of the whole’ (quoted in Gerschenkron 1970, 46) and commends Schumpeter’s basic view ‘that entrepreneurs are likely to spring forth from all layers and segments of society’ – not only the religious ones (47).23

In Russia this search for the religious roots of economic modernization can yield amazingly contradictory results. For instance, Aleksandr Pyzhkov has shown in a recent book that the Old Belief contained in embryo not the kernel of capitalism, as Raskov asserts, but the shoots of Stalinism. In Korni Stalinskogo Bolshevizma (Roots of Stalinist Bolshevism), Pyzhkov relates how a large number of Stalin’s closest associates hailed from Old Believer backgrounds. These included Kalinin, Bulganin, Ezhov, and Voroshilov, as well as Molotov and Malenkov, who formed an ‘Old Believer party’ (Pyzhkov 2015, 346), which resisted Krushchev’s thaw after Stalin’s death. Pyzhkov’s book is not crackpot history: he details these Stalinist modernizers’ bezpopovtsy (priestless Old Believer) links. One should also add that Boris Yeltsin came from the well-known Old Believer village of Butka in the Urals. Pyzhkov is not claiming that these Communists were Old Believers in any self-conscious or pious sense, but rather that they inherited a sectarian worldview and partisan ideology from this ancestry that underpinned their party factionalism. In such discussions the understanding of Old Belief as a tradition starts to lose its historical meaning and coherence, becoming unmoored from prayer, from its heroic martyrs and its stance against religious despotism, and instead becoming merely an byword for bigotry. Such histories shows the limitation of the less subtle forms of ‘civilizational’ thinking that reduce all the complexity of Weber’s ideas to the bare notion of secularization. Nevertheless, it would
But here we come up against the limit of applying to Russia the Weberian, Schumpeterian, or whichever variant of the idea that there is some cross-cultural substance, which is picked out conveniently by the English word ‘trust’, and that holds together and embeds commerce and contract the world over. This ethnography has shown how at least one Russian religious community (Bolshoi Kamen’) had a limited system of exchange that was embedded in do-verie, but that this was closer to a Maussian gift exchange and was carried out between this world and the next, not as trade for profit. We saw instead that the Far Easterners’ more ambitious aim to revive the religion in order to regenerate the moral economy of golden age Old Belief proved unrealizable. This plan perhaps failed because the prevailing post-Soviet climate of violent and corrupt capitalism militated against it; an alternative explanation would be that religious value-ideas and the forms of do-verie convoked therefrom were not the main reason for 19th century Old Believers’ economic success in the first place.

From our combined linguistic and ethnographic analysis we might conclude that when Western economists talk about ‘trust’ and Russians talk about doverie they are talking across each other. It is not therefore surprising that, like when dealing with the other recent exotic implantation into Russia (biznes), when Russians come up against the (in)différance of doverie to translation they make recourse to the loan translation trast (calqued ‘trust’), which is perhaps a more faithful title for Fukuyama’s book. The religion-economy link evoked by the English word ‘trust’ and enshrined in the inscription on the back of a dollar bill (‘in God we trust’) does not fully translate into Russian. Whereas King James and Luther bequeathed to the West translations that had it ‘trust in the Lord’, by some Derridean destiny Russia’s Slavonic scripture exhorted the faithful “to upovat’ in God’ (‘have hope’) (Romans 15:12; 2 Cor:1; John 5:45; Psalm 36).

Bibliography


be interesting to know how this book was received by Frolov and the ‘patriots’, whose ‘rooted’ style of thinking finds some echo in Pyzhkov’s approach. How would their epistemic of origins stand up to scrutiny if they took not Kaganovich, but Ezhov and Malenkov as their paradigms?


