

AN ANALYSIS OF THE NATURE OF FREEDOM

IN DOSTOEVSKY'S THREE MAJOR NOVELS

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by

Ihita Kesarcodi, B.A.

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To My Parents

for their sympathy and encouragement

during my studies.

* * * * *

"The divine secret of happiness[is that] the individual triumphs by renunciation of his individuality".

(A. Gide "Dostoevsky")

* * *

«Человек 'двух бездн', смертного греха и животворящей красоты, он знает не только падения в пропасти, но и взлеты к сверкающим вершинам».

(L. Grossman «Достоевский»)

* * *

"It is in man that the real and the ideal merge".

(R.L. Jackson "Dostoevsky")

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AUTHOR: Ihita Kesarcodi, B.A. (University of London)

SUPERVISOR: Professor L.J. Shein

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SCOPE AND CONTENT: An analysis of the dialectic of freedom in three
of Dostoevsky's major novels.

The thesis contains a preface and five chapters. Chapter I attempts to define the several types of freedom, its dimensions and problems. Chapter II discusses the novel "Crime and Punishment" (1866) with particular reference to the possibility of total freedom. Chapter III deals with "The Devils", sometimes translated as "The Possessed" (1871), and Stavrogin's confrontation with the 'abyss beneath'. Chapter IV is concerned with Dostoevsky's last novel "The Brothers Karamazov" (1880), in which Father Zosima reveals the 'abyss above'. Chapter V is a summing-up and critique of Dostoevsky's ethic of freedom.

P R E F A C E

Dostoevsky, hailed as a prophet during his lifetime, lost his popularity soon after his death. It was not till his disciples, V. Solovyov and N. Berdyaev became famous in their own right that Dostoevsky's deep influence on his compatriots was recognized. Since the philosophy of Existentialism emerged, represented by Lev Shestov in Russia, and expounded so cogently in France by J.P. Sartre, Dostoevsky's ethic of freedom has become a vital point of discussion.

The purpose of this thesis is to show how Dostoevsky evolves his concept of freedom over a period of fourteen years through his three greatest works. Quotations are taken from F.M. Dostoevsky : Sobranie Sochineniy, Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Khudozhestvennoy Literatury, 1957-1958. The volume and page numbers are given in the footnotes. I shall use the conventional "Dostoevsky" in preference to the transliteration "Dostoevskiy".

* * * * *

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I) INTRODUCTION : THE NATURE OF FREEDOM

INTRODUCTION : CHAPTER I

As this thesis intends an analysis of Dostoevsky's dialectic of freedom with special reference to his three main novels "Crime and Punishment" (1866), "The Possessed" (1871) and "The Brothers Karamazov" (1880), it would be well in an introductory chapter to outline briefly firstly what 'freedom' has meant through the ages; then secondly to define general types of freedom; thirdly to set out its terms and dimensions; and finally point to problems related to its concept. We will try in the subsequent chapters to find Dostoevsky's place in this framework, and in the concluding chapter sum up where he has led us.

A dictionary definition of freedom may guide us initially, though we hope to arrive at a more pertinent one through our own examination: "Freedom is the quality or state of not being coerced or constrained by fate, necessity or circumstances in one's choices or actions; the absence of antecedent causal determination of human decisions".¹ The Greeks, Democritus and other Atomists held to a mechanistic system in which there was no room for freedom. The Stoics saw a clear causal chain determining all our actions, as Frank Thilly² says: "The Stoic conception of freedom is one of rational self-determination; free acts are those which are

1. Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Chief Editor: Philip Babcock Gove, (1961).

2. Ibid.

in conformity with a man's rational nature and, ultimately, with the rational nature of the universe". Later Socrates and Plato argued on the reality of freedom, and these arguments were continued by Christianity, says R. Nelson.³ In the 5th Century, a controversy arose between the followers of St. Augustine and those of Pelagius. St. Augustine had defined the concepts of libertas minor (i.e. human) and libertas major (i.e. divine). Pelagius, who considered his opponent a determinist, believed that freedom was contained in the original act of grace, whereas St. Augustine had no alternative but God. For Pelagius, man was responsible for his own acts - both for good and evil.

Thomas Aquinas reconciled this conflict of grace versus free-will in such a way that man could be autonomous in spite of divine foreknowledge. Unfortunately, the Reformation brought a return to an emphasis on God's will and grace, and it is against this that the modern epoch rebels. For Kant, Freedom, God and Immortality were the three primary suppositions, whereas Spinoza denied moral freedom. To turn to the most recent views of freedom, Sartre relates freedom and grace quite differently from his precursor, Kierkegaard. For the Christian, freedom is considered both as a gift and a burden. In the modern world, man has grown more aggressively independent, but likewise more isolated and insecure in his godless state.

There has been a great deal of discussion on types of freedom, but basically these number no more than three general categories.⁴ Firstly,

3. R. Nelson, "The Problem of Freedom in Dostoevsky and Berdyaev", (Chicago, 1955).

4. M.J. Adler, "The Idea of Freedom", (1958).

there is the type of freedom to which Hobbes, Hume, Rousseau and Locke, among others, adhered to. This is the freedom under circumstances, which we may classify as circumstantial freedom, best exemplified in a social or political sphere. It is what Bertrand Russell defines as "absence of obstacles to the realization of desires".⁵ Next there is what A.L. Whitehead calls "freedom beyond circumstance".⁶ The Stoics, and notably Cicero, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, favoured this type of freedom often termed acquired freedom due to its psychological connotation. This type of freedom ignores whether a man be slave or freeman, because his freedom is essentially in his moral and spiritual command over himself, frequently with the aid of God, as Father Zosima says: "With God's help I attain freedom of spirit and with it spiritual joy".⁷

Naturally, the opposition of these two freedom concepts provokes a controversy between, on the one hand, those who hold that a man is free when he has no obstacles to his desires, as F. Hayek claims: "Freedom from coercion [is] freedom from the arbitrary power of other men".⁸ And in the opposite camp stand those who believe that freedom lies in man himself - human virtue and wisdom, or divine grace - e.g. St. Augustine:

5. B. Russell, "Freedom: It's Meaning", p. 251, from "The Idea of Freedom", p. 86.

6. A.L. Whitehead, "Adventures of Ideas", p. 86, from op. cit. Adler, p. 84.

7. F.M. Dostoevsky, "The Brothers Karamazov", pp. 328-329, from op. cit. Adler, p. 88.

8. F. Hayek, "The Road to Serfdom", Ch. II, pp. 25-26, from op. cit. Adler, p. 90.

"The human will does not achieve grace through freedom, but rather freedom through grace."⁹

There exists a third type of freedom, different from the circumstantial (given) and psychological (acquired) freedoms. This is the ontological freedom, variously termed inherent, innate, or natural freedom. All men have the power of choice, and so all men, irrespective of external circumstances, have the freedom of that choice by the simple fact of being men. Thus for St. Augustine, all men were free to choose between good and evil. For Descartes, human will was dominant among a man's mental faculties, so for him "to will and to be free are the same thing".¹⁰ Referring back to our time, when man finds himself adrift in his own self, Sartre can say: "There is no difference between the being of a man and his being free".¹¹ In other words, the quality of a pour-soi (consciousness) is its freedom and no more, no less. Certain attributes raise man above animals in this latter category of freedom, namely human reason (defended by Aristotle and Aquinas) and intelligent creativity (supported by J. Dewey). These two attributes, not to mention human will, endows man with the power of choosing and choosing freely.

We must now elaborate on these three freedoms - circumstantial, acquired and natural - from the point of view of their content. Firstly, circumstantial freedom can be limited by one or more of the following

9. St. Augustine, "Admonition and Grace", Ch. VIII, Sect. 17, pp. 265-266 from op. cit. Adler, p. 91.

10. R. Descartes, "Objections and Replies", III, in "Philosophical Works", Vol. II, p. 75 from op. cit., Adler, p. 93.

11. J.P. Sartre, "Being and Nothingness", p. 25 from op. cit. Adler, p. 93.

obstacles: i) coercion or constraint usually by the physical media of prison and chains; ii) fear under duress; and iii) the absence of any alternatives to a prescribed mode of action. This type of freedom is very susceptible to external circumstances, and indeed, must be favoured directly by advantageous conditions - be they political or economic - to exist at all. However, it sometimes transpires that a man has to choose between political freedom and economic ease, and most often he will sacrifice his freedom for the sake of security, as Eric Fromm discusses in "Escape from Freedom". This is the purport of the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoevsky's "The Brothers Karamazov", in which the old Cardinal indicts Jesus Christ for allowing men to choose between freedom and bread, whereas, as he claims, he himself has given them bread as well as an illusion of freedom - and this illusion is vastly more palatable to the masses than the truth. Finally then, circumstantial freedom can be fostered in a favourable socio-cultural climate. Thus we realise that circumstantial freedom is closely related to the environment, and is a relative category.

Those who support the acquired type of freedom are divided into two camps. There are those who, like Plato, believe that man can transcend his environment and attain freedom purely by the exercise of his human qualities, e.g. virtue, wisdom and self-discipline. Man is the sole creator of this freedom, as he says: "Temperance . . . is the ordering or controlling of certain pleasures and desires."¹² On the

12. Plato, "Republic", Bk. IV, 430E-431B, from op. cit. Adler, p. 144.

other hand, the theologians and religious philosophers, who defend acquired freedom, look to divine grace and God's direct help in achieving self-mastery (i.e. freedom), so as to choose wisely between good and evil. St. Augustine, who was a firm believer in God's intervention in human affairs, affirmed that only the righteous were free: "No one is free to do right who has not been freed from sin".¹³ This is the message contained in Father Zosima's preaching: he negates Ivan Karamazov's "god-shattering" hubris to claim that God alone is absolutely free, and only in Him can man find freedom and peace.

Our third category of freedom, natural freedom, is the one that is the most difficult to define. This is the realm of ontology, and man is the defining agent. Hence the criteria for limiting this freedom are essentially human: reason (i.e. intelligence) will, creative power. Among those who support this freedom, there are those who give reason the dominant role, and others who enhance the value of the will. But for all these men, freedom is rooted in the quality of man, as Sartre says: "Freedom is total and infinite".¹⁴ Man (the *pour-soi*, consciousness) is his freedom, and thus he cannot escape it, just as he cannot live without breathing: "No limits to my freedom can be found except freedom itself, or, if you prefer, we are not free to cease being free".¹⁵

Now that we have briefly examined the content of our three freedoms, we may probe deeper into the implication that each of them contains. Here

13. St. Augustine, "Enchiridion", Ch. 9, Sect. 30, p. 395, from op. cit. Adler, p. 145.

14. J.P. Sartre, "Being and Nothingness", p. 531, from op. cit. Adler, p. 520.

15. J.P. Sartre, "Being and Nothingness", p. 439, from op. cit. Adler, p. 489.

we can define a "mode of self" and a "mode of possession".¹⁶ The mode of self of circumstantial freedom is 'self-realisation' (i.e. a conflict between man and his environment), and the mode of possession will be an individual's circumstantial ability to act as he wishes (this is the sphere of Raskolnikov, Peter Verkhovensky and Ivan). Next, 'self-perfection' is the mode of self of acquired freedom (i.e. a struggle within man to dominate his lesser self), and relating to this is the mode of possession, namely an individual's acquired ability to live as he ought (here we may quote Alyosha Karamazov and Father Zosima). Finally, natural freedom engenders the mode of self of 'self-determination', (i.e. there is here an absence of conflict or struggle, as man is his freedom), which corresponds to its mode of possession - i.e. the individual's natural ability to determine for himself what he wishes to do or to become (this is the realm of Existentialism, the philosophy of man as existence prior to essence).

Probing even further, we may construe that circumstantial freedom contains the special category of political liberty: it is the individual versus the law, the state, the norm. Dostoevsky's three novels, and primarily "Crime and Punishment", deal with this theme. Acquired freedom is acquired through an inner struggle, or to simplify it thus: human spirit (with or without divine assistance) versus the environment, the body, the world. Here again, a special category can be made - that of collective freedom as envisaged by Father Zosima's brother, Markel. As natural freedom, inherent and innate to man, has no threat - external or internal - a transcendent scapegoat has been chosen, namely God. Natural

16. M.J. Adler, "The Idea of Freedom", (1958).

freedom, then, is seen as the opposition of freedom (i.e. embodied in man) against imposed morality, taboos, superstition (i.e. God). Man is to be liberated for free choice (or rather choice, as 'unfree choice' is a non-sequitur), action and creative liberty. This is the essence of human freedom, purged of circumstance and dichotomy: "A man is free who has in himself the ability or power whereby he can make what he does his own action and what he achieves his own property".¹⁷

Now we may turn to the terms and dimensions of freedom, in the manner in which we have defined in the paragraph above. Here we must deal with two ideas - the meaning of freedom and the reality of freedom. Freedom, says Isaiah Berlin, has two faces, for it is both positive and negative: "Coercion implies the deliberate interference of other human beings within the area in which I wish to act".¹⁸ This statement reverts to the category of circumstantial freedom, in which concrete obstacles were presented to the fulfillment of desires. Hence, it devolves that the wider the area of non-interference, the wider is the area of one's freedom. But necessarily individual freedoms impinge on each other, and we are all circumscribed by social restrictions. Indeed, we read on in Berlin: "We cannot remain absolutely free, and must give up some of our liberty to preserve the rest [such as a semblance of equality and justice]".¹⁹

The negative side of freedom is the absence of interference from outside, i.e. 'freedom from', whereas its positive aspect implies that

17. M.J. Adler, "The Idea of Freedom", (1958), p. 614.

18. Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty", (1958), p. 7.

19. Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty", (1958), p. 11.

one is master of one's own acts, i.e. 'freedom to'. But Berlin hastens to add: "Freedom is not freedom to do what is irrational, or stupid, or bad".²⁰ This is a realistic approach to the concept of the freedom of the irrational act, exemplified in Dostoevsky's "Notes from the Underground", in which the 'paradoxalist' hero claims that the fact that two and two make four is the beginning of death.²¹

Freedom, therefore, cannot be unlimited, as other values exist and must be taken into account, e.g. equality, justice, happiness, security, the common weal. But it does have an intrinsic value in itself (as it does for the Existentialists) in that it necessitates choosing: "The necessity of choosing between absolute claims is then an inescapable characteristic of the human condition. This gives its value to freedom as Acton had conceived of it - as an end in itself, and not as a temporary need".²² The conclusive implication is that a negative freedom is a more humane ideal for man to seek after than a 'positive' self-mastery, which amounts to assertiveness, if indeed not to licence, since: "That we cannot have everything is a necessary, not a contingent, truth".²³

Berlin's definitions of positive and negative freedom are challenged by G.C. MacCallum in a pertinent article. He points out that the usual definition of negative freedom as 'freedom from' and positive freedom as 'freedom to' suggests that freedom could be either of two dyadic relations.

20. Op. cit., Berlin, p. 32.

21. F.M. Dostoevsky, "Notes from the Underground".

22. Op. cit., Berlin, p. 54.

23. Op. cit., Berlin, p. 55.

Nor do these definitions attempt to distinguish between two distinct concepts, for any freedom is both freedom from and freedom to. The resulting confusion of the two concepts has only one solution: "The corrective advised is to regard freedom as always one and the same triadic relation, but recognise that various contending parties disagree with each other in what they understand to be the ranges of the term variables".²⁴

Controversies have been built around (1) the nature of freedom; (2) the relationships between freedom and other social benefits (as we saw in Berlin); (3) the ranking of freedom among the latter and (4) the consequences of policies intended to attain freedom. Since freedom has become attached to other social considerations, the issue of what freedom is in itself has been clouded over, and this obscurity has benefitted none other more than the polemicist. MacCallum affirms that the concept of freedom is triadic rather than dyadic, namely it is the possession of an agent, from a deterrent, towards the fulfillment of a certain course of action. The absence of any one of these terms makes the statement of freedom invalid. He goes on to clarify the main differences between negative and positive freedoms:

(1) negative freedom holds that only the presence of something can render a person unfree; but positive freedom maintains that the absence of something may also negate freedom. In other words, the second freedom makes more demands of the environment.

(2) negative freedom claims that a person is free to do an

24. G.C. MacCallum, "Negative and Positive Freedom" from The Philosophical Review, July 1967, No. 419, Vol. LXXVI.

act A, if no arrangements made by other persons hinders him in doing A; positive freedom sets no such restrictions.

(3) negative freedom involves an agent that is a 'natural' person, whereas positive freedom identifies the agent in other wise. He concludes in a vein similar to that of Berlin: "Freedom is always and necessarily from restraint; thus in so far as the adherents of positive freedom speak of persons being made free by means of restraint, they cannot be talking about freedom".²⁵

Now that we realise that freedom is not a homogeneous concept, but is essentially tripartite, we may understand that its reality likewise is not contained among the absolutes. In the real world, human freedom is subject above all to the law (based on moral, ethical and social criteria), and most often personal freedom is eaten away, or rather hemmed in, by legal strictures. The law prescribes both on civil and criminal grounds: thus one is as guilty in the face of the law of spitting in public, as of murdering an old usurer, albeit the second crime is not a misdemeanour, but a full-blooded felony. Freedom before the law, in short, is a qualification of freedom, and consists of certain rights and privileges, which correspond exactly to related duties and responsibilities. The freedom of a citizen, in fact, is no longer freedom in the ontological sense. Whereas ontological freedom was common to all men, irrespective of class, age, sex or status, freedom before the law is susceptible to all these factors - even, in *extremis*, to class and status. Moreover, the law of the land varies from country, to country, and is thus subject to great variation. Therefore, the four freedoms -

25. op. cit., McCallum.

as identified by F.D. Roosevelt - of self expression [press/speech], of worship; freedom from want and from fear are all expressed by different statutes. Thus, in a democratic state, freedom of speech is far greater than within a communist régime. Marxism, in fact, makes a virtue of necessity, in the words of F. Engels: "Hegel was the first to state correctly the relation between freedom and necessity. To him freedom is the appreciation of necessity".²⁶ Marxism has often been called a topsy-turvy Hegelism, as it indeed accepts a pervasive, naturalistic determinism, which stops short of an 'absolute and fatalistic determinism by their [the Communists] conception that, while causes create the will of man, man's will in turn and of necessity becomes itself a creative cause'.²⁷ In this subtle casuistry, necessity is given the visage of freedom.

At this stage, we must also mention that the reality of freedom is dependent on the frequent opposition of formal freedom to psychological freedom. It is a fact that man, whatever circumstantial freedom he enjoys, is always a prey to his own self-enchainment. Hence his formal or given freedom is of no value to him since his acquired freedom is minimal or absent. Conversely, a man in prison, i.e. with a total loss of circumstantial freedom may transcend his captivity and achieve an inviolable psychological liberty. Thus, we deduce that the reality of freedom is subject to both legal (and, in a variant, political) and psychological fetters.

26. Engels quoted in "Marxist Ethics, Determinism and Freedom" by J. Somerville in "Philosophy and Phenomenological Research", Sept. 1967, No. 1, Vol. XXVIII.

27. op. cit., (My Italics).

Lastly, we must deal with some of the problems raised by the question of freedom, and these fall largely into three domains - philosophical, theological and psychological. Patricia Huby in her article²⁸ sums up how in history there were two main problems concerning freewill (1) freedom v. predestination - theological and (2) freedom v. determinism - philosophical. The second problem arises in the attempt to reconcile human freedom (a prerequisite for moral behaviour) and determinism. Aristotle was unaware of the problem, whereas the Epicureans and the Stoics were seriously interested in it. Indeed Epicurus himself is said to be the first to have discovered it. Aristotle reaffirms the libertarian viewpoint; he was definitely not a determinist. Epicurus began the controversy, and Chrysippus, the third head of the Stoics, took it up after him. Epicurus adopted the atomic theory of Democritus (who was a complete determinist) with one slight modification, namely the movement of the atoms. Like Aristotle, Epicurus believed in freewill, but was strongly impressed by determinism. Aristotle, influenced as he was by the teleological concept of causality, rejected the causal chain of cause and effect. For the latter, determinism was a total 'non-starter', whereas Epicurus and the Stoics attempted to reconcile freedom and determinism. Two consequences emerge from this philosophical controversy: (1) Plato and Aristotle could hold many 'modern' educational and psychological beliefs without being aware of the freewill problem, as they were ignorant of psychological determinism and (2) when at last the problem was formulated, philosophers everywhere grasped it as a natural topic of dis-

28. P. Huby, "The First Discovery of the Freewill Problem" from Philosophy, Oct. 1967, No. 162, Vol. XLII.

cussion. Modern philosophers on the whole tend to reject the idea of determinism and vindicate man's freedom, more or less total according to the personal tenets of each philosopher.

The theological problem of freedom versus grace/predestination has been much wrangled over, and in the Middle Ages was a source of bitter argument and dogmatisation. How far was man free? Did divine prescience determine human actions? How did God's grace (i.e. predestination) negate freedom? On all these questions, theology is close to philosophy, and many modern philosophers, e.g. Berdyaev and Shestov, have tried to marry the two disciplines, and with some success.

Philosopher N. Pike argues that if God exists, human action is not voluntary. Oddly enough, this present-day philosopher is reverting to a mediaeval tenet. Boethius himself came to reject the claim that if God is omniscient, no human action is voluntary. This claim is intuitively false, and Pike proceeds to develop his (i.e. Boethius') original position on determinism. He defines God, as having two attributes, namely omniscience and eternalness. He is perfect, in that "Omniscient beings hold no false beliefs".²⁹ The contention that God is infallible is a hypothetical necessity, but we require an absolute necessity, i.e. that an action be necessary, not merely contingent. In other words, there is no free choice, as said Leibniz in his "Théodicée".³⁰ For St. Augustine, God was omniscient of all things, but man sinned voluntarily,

29. N. Pike, "Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action", The Philosophical Review, 1965, Vol. LXXIV.

30. G.W. Leibniz, "Théodicée", Pt. 1, Sect. 37.

in other words, there was free choice for man.³¹ Pike continues his deterministic argument by saying: "I have inferred that if God exists, no human action is voluntary".³² However, as in human knowledge, truth is contingently conjoined to belief, he hastens to qualify his statement thus: "It would be a mistake to think that commitment to determinism is an unavoidable implication of the Christian concept of divine omniscience."³³ This determinism is strongly contested by J.T. Saunders, who contends that the existence of an omniscient God does not mean that man cannot act freely. For him, this is an absurd position: "One acts freely to the extent that one has it in one's power to refrain from so acting, and vice versa."³⁴ To this attack Pike replies, by picking up a subtle point, namely that "if God is essentially omniscient, He is not a person".³⁵ He acknowledges that his own assumptions (i.e. that God is a person, and that He is essentially omniscient) are inadequate, but wonders whether they are logically incompatible.

Human freedom is, therefore, not absolute, but contingent to the existence of God; at least for some philosophers. Other thinkers contest the very factuality of God, and thus free man into his own liberty, as for example Sartre and the Existentialists. M.M. Adams, in his article, argues that the existence of an omniscient and everlasting God is not a 'hard' fact, and thus Pike's deterministic theories on human activity

31. St. Augustine, "De Libero Arbitrio", Bk. 3.

32. op. cit., by Pike.

33. op. cit., by Pike.

34. J.T. Saunders, "Of God and Freedom", The Philosophical Review, 1966, Vol. LXXV.

35. N. Pike, "Of God and Freedom : A Rejoinder", op. cit.

appear to fail at the outset. Adam defines a 'hard' fact as a realised fact in the past; conversely a 'soft' fact is one that is as yet unactualised (Berdyayev makes the difference between his initial 'meonic' freedom, *libertas minor*, and rational freedom, *libertas major*, both merged in a final freedom which is God: 'meonic' from the Greek 'to me on' that which cannot be actualised, as against 'to ouk on' that which is realised).

To say that God is everlasting is to give Him a time location - i.e. He exists at all times; similarly, to say He is omniscient is to say that He is right and knows all. These are both analytical statements and so God cannot be both eternal and omniscient. Thus, if the very existence of God is put into question, the nature of human freedom cannot be dogmatised, as Adams concludes: "The claim that the existence of an essentially omniscient and everlasting God is inconsistent with the voluntary character of some human actions has yet to be made out".³⁶

At this point, the problem of evil must be mentioned. If there is no God, then man alone is responsible for the existence of evil. But if a perfect God (the words are a tautology, and serve only to point out a paradox) created an imperfect world, how can He be Love Consummate? The question has no rational answer, and theologians have opted for faith and revelation rather than reason and logic as e.g. K. Barth, for whom rational theology is sinful, as it puts reason above revelation. In their article,³⁷

36. M.M. Adams, "Is the Existence of God a 'Hard Fact'?", The Philosophical Review, Oct. 1967, No. 420, Vol. LXXVI.

37. E.H. Madden/P.H. Hare, "On the Difficulty of Evading the Problem of Evil", Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Sept. 1967, No. 1, Vol. XXVIII.

Madden and Hare distinguish between 'belief in God', a religious concept, and 'belief in the existence of God' as a scientific statement. Differently from Barth, P. Tillich rejects natural theology on existential grounds. He wants to demonstrate that Christianity is basically existential and voluntaristic, though not irrational. He recognises that gratuitous evil does exist in the world, and though his 'rational' theodicy is worth examination, he evades the real problem of the existence of evil.

Finally, we come to the psychological problems of human freedom, which tie in with what we said about God and evil. There are parallels to be drawn between Dostoevsky's theories of freedom and irrationality and the Existentialist credo. It is interesting that he is studied sometimes as a proto-Existentialist, as W. Kaufmann says: "I can see no reason for calling Dostoevsky an existentialist, but I do think that Part One of "Notes from Underground" is the best overture for existentialism ever written". The fact is that man psychologically is frightened of freedom, though he craves the satisfaction of his self-will (Dostoevsky makes a clear distinction between 'svoboda' and 'volya'): "[Man] is afraid of freedom, openness, and change and longs to be as solid as a thing". The difference between the en-soi (the state of an object-in-

38. W. Kaufmann, "Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre", (1956), p. 14.

39. op. cit., p. 44, Kaufmann.

the-world, say a table) and the *pour-soi* (the state of man, human consciousness) is that the latter can never objectify itself into a 'thing': it is total freedom to be a subject, and thus is its freedom. This unavoidable freedom, the need for activity, change and decision brings man "the dizziness of freedom" (Kierkegaard), the nausea of Antoine Roquentin in Sartre's "La Nausée". Man strives to make himself an object so as to avoid this vertigo: "[By] an escape from freedom he has abdicated his humanity".⁴⁰ This abdication is fruitless, however, and stupid as "Man stands alone in the universe, responsible for his condition, likely to remain in a lowly state, but free to reach above the stars".⁴¹ The human condition, then, is fraught with dread, nausea and angst, but these can be transcended by a form of authentic living, as Sartre affirms: "Life begins on the other side of despair".⁴² God, at least in the philosophy of Sartre, plays no rôle in human life, and in fact is a fetter that man must break to achieve the total sense of himself. But Sartre does acknowledge the use of ideals, and God can be one, as long as He is useful: "It is man's basic wish to fuse his openness and freedom with the impermeability of things, to achieve a state of being in which the *en-soi* and *pour-soi* are synthesized. This ideal, says Sartre, one can call God [in "L'Être et le néant"]".⁴³

Although there exist similarities in the doctrines of Dostoevsky and Sartre, the main differences between them are that (1) for Dostoevsky

40. op. cit., p. 44, Kaufmann.

41. op. cit., p. 47, Kaufmann.

42. op. cit., p. 46, Kaufmann.

43. op. cit., p. 47, Kaufmann.

God and freedom were linked positively, whereas for Sartre they are contradictory and (2) human irrationality for Dostoevsky was almost a metaphysic, whereas for Sartre (thanks to the theories of Freud) it is no more than a psychological fact of the human personality. For Dostoevsky, reason was the death-knell of freedom, as the Underground Man explains: "One's own free unfettered choice, one's own caprice, however wild it may be, one's own fancy worked up at times to frenzy -is that very "most advantageous advantage" which we have overlooked, which comes under no classification and against which all systems and theories are continually being shattered to atoms".⁴⁴ The existence of irrationality is a prerequisite for freedom; in other words, without the first, the second could not be: "Very often, and even most often, choice is utterly and stubbornly opposed to reason".⁴⁵

Man, then, is wedded to eternally choosing: his choice (of word, thought, and deed) makes him what he is; nor can one claim extenuating circumstances as an excuse, for, insists M. Grene, "It is still the choice within the situation, not the mere situation itself, that makes the man".⁴⁶ Man is an unfinished series of projects; he must create himself: "Man is what he makes himself", says Sartre.⁴⁷ Hence, there is no such thing as an absolute essence of a man, but only day-to-day, contingent existence:

44. F.M. Dostoevsky, "Notes from Underground", Sect. 7, from op. cit., Kaufmann, p. 71.

45. Ibid., Sect. 8, from op. cit., Kaufmann, p. 14.

46. M. Grene, "Dreadful Freedom", (1948), pp. 46-47.

47. op. cit., p. 50, Grene.

"So self and the world are continuously born together, in the self's free transcendence of its situation to form itself-in-relation-to-its-world - a transcendence always ready in process, yet always not yet accomplished . . . There is no essence of humanity but only actions of men - responsible acts, yet acts which are not yet what they aim to be".⁴⁸

So in what consists man's psychological resistance to his freedom? It is basically a feeling of dread, a "dread before emptiness - before annihilation - before nothing".⁴⁹ Man's fate lies in his own hands, and this uncharted responsibility is horrifying: "Man is condemned to be free", that is, continually to make himself other than he is, and deep dread accompanies the awareness of that destiny . . . It is characteristic of human freedom that it cannot bear, from day to day, to face the shattering awareness of its own reality".⁵⁰ So inevitably, man escapes into inauthentic living, a form of bad faith, relying on cliché, convention and casuistry. Hence, for the Existentialist, true life is the recognition and acceptance of our total freedom, and then working from there into human creation. Man's existence is inseparable from time and freedom.

Finally, we may turn to our topic - Dostoevsky's own particular concept of freedom. What we have said is to serve only as a background and frame for an examination of his works. Though not a trained philosopher, metaphysics, particularly on the question of freedom, are the lifeblood of Dostoevsky's novels, as N. Berdyaev says: "Freedom is the

48. op. cit., pp. 49-50, Grene.

49. op. cit., p. 52, Grene.

50. op. cit., p. 54, Grene.

kernel of his work and the key to the understanding of his philosophy".⁵¹ Dostoevsky would not deliver man from his responsibility (thus from suffering), corresponding to his human dignity as a free being.

There are two freedoms for Dostoevsky - initial and final (cf. St. Augustine) - and between them lies suffering. These two are (1) "freedom to choose the truth" and (2) "freedom in the truth".⁵² The essence of Christianity for Dostoevsky was that "the tragic principle of freedom is victor over the principle of compulsion".⁵³ Whereas, as we have seen, Greek thinkers looked to rational freedom; Christianity has given man irrational freedom, i.e. faith above reason. However, Dostoevsky was careful to distinguish between 'freedom' and 'self-will', for otherwise licence negates freedom: "If all things are allowable to man, then freedom becomes its own slave, and the man who is his own slave is lost".⁵⁴ Freedom embraces the irrational, and, therefore, the co-existence of good and evil. Irrational freedom is necessary to reconcile God and the factuality of evil - it is the supra-mundane fourth dimension. Dostoevsky's theodicy is man's justification: "God is, because evil is. And that means that God is because freedom is".⁵⁵ Nihilism was considered

51. N.A. Berdyaev, "Dostoevsky", (1934), p. 67.

52. op. cit., p. 69, Berdyaev.

53. op. cit., p. 71, Berdyaev.

54. op. cit., p. 76, Berdyaev.

55. op. cit., p. 87.

by Dostoevsky as atheism, and Nietzsche took up the problem of the atheistic superman after him.⁵⁶

For Dostoevsky, freedom was dynamic - hence his affinity with the Existentialists. But the problem of evil is paramount, as Camus explains: "In the presence of God there is less of a problem of freedom than a problem of evil".⁵⁷ If there is a God, evil is unexplainable; if there is no God, man is free to do and undo the evil: "The absurd enlightens me on this point : there is no future. Henceforth, this is the reason for my inner freedom".⁵⁸ The absurd is a source of revolt, passion and freedom. "Being aware of one's life, one's revolt, one's freedom, and to the maximum, is living, and to the maximum".⁵⁹

The problem essentially is whether freedom is compatible with God. For the Existentialists, it is not. For Kirillov in "The Possessed" God is the crisis of his freedom, as he says: "I am unhappy because I am obliged to assert my freedom".⁶⁰ Dostoevsky reverses the position, by assuming that there is immortality, ergo God, ergo virtue. Like the Existentialists, he makes a 'leap of faith', only he to God and they to the existence of the Other. Dostoevsky seeks an end to solipsism in the existence of God, and the Existentialists in the fact of the Other's existence.

56. T.G. Masaryk, "The Spirit of Russia", Vol. 2 (1919).

57. A. Camus, "Myth of Sisyphus", (1958), p. 56.

58. op. cit., p. 58, Camus.

59. op. cit., p. 63, Camus.

60. op. cit., p. 108, quoted in F.M. Dostoevsky, "The Possessed".

For Camus, death is the only certainty: "Outside of that single fatality of death, everything, joy or happiness, is liberty".⁶¹ After death, there is nothing, whereas for Dostoevsky it is merely the beginning in Berdyaev's words: "There are three possible answers to the question of world harmony, of paradise, of the final triumph of good. First: Harmony, paradise, life in the good, without freedom of choice, without world tragedy, without suffering, but also without creative work. Second: Harmony, paradise, life in the good, on the heights of earthly history, purchased at the price of innumerable sufferings and the tears of all human generations doomed to death and turned into a means for the happiness of those who are to come. Third: Harmony, paradise, life in the good, at which man will arrive through freedom and suffering, in an economy into which all who at any time lived and suffered enter, that is to say, in the Kingdom of God. Dostoevsky rejects the first two facile answers to the question of world harmony and paradise, and accepts only the third".⁶²

How far is Berdyaev right? Does Dostoevsky claim an absolute freedom for man? Where and how does God fit into his scheme, and how does he explain evil? We must turn now to the novels themselves for some of the answers.

61. op. cit., p. 117, Camus.

62. N.A. Berdyaev, "The Russian Idea" (1947), p. 123.

II) CRIME AND TOTAL FREEDOM

CHAPTER II

"Crime and Punishment" (1866) raises among other questions, the eternal problem of man and total freedom in the absence of a belief in God. Man's ontological freedom is different from his ethical freedom, in turn different from his legal liberty. What does one mean by freedom here? The Shorter Oxford Dictionary gives this definition among others: "The quality of being free from the control of fate or necessity; the power of self-determination".¹ This points to man's ontological, (i.e. natural or inherent) freedom which he possesses by virtue of being a man.

The fact that this freedom may be an absolute quality questions the existence of morality. Freedom can be total, only if there is absence of fear of retribution for committing evil. Thus, in a state of absolute freedom, the first premise is that there is no difference between good and evil, as these qualities are merged into one; and the second premise is then that there are no moral laws for governing man's conduct. Hence, the conclusion we arrive at is that there is no God to dispose of this world.

Raskolnikov starts with this conclusion, and attempts to set himself in the place of God, to step over the bounds of human society, based largely on moral laws. We must examine whether, and how far, he succeeds. He is impelled by two motives, the one psychological and the

1. F.G., Shorter Oxford Dictionary (1933).

other logical. Firstly, he has a painfully complex personality, which is overtaken more and more by megalomania: he dreams of being a Napoleon, a demonic «СИЛЬНАЯ ЛИЧНОСТЬ». He separates the 'herd' of ordinary people from those who wield power. Nietzsche was to expand on this idea in his theory of the superman, which in fascist Germany led to the political concept of "Deutschland über alles", and "Ein über alles". And so Raskolnikov hates and despises humanity in the mass, and hungers for power, and above all to prove to himself that he is one of nature's supermen. Secondly, he argues to himself that he is acting on the utilitarian principle of enlightened self-interest to save his mother from penury, and his sister Dunyasha from a loveless marriage, by killing a 'useless parasite', as Mochulsky says: «Раскольников соблазнился утилитарной моралью, выводящей всё поведение человека из принципа разумной пользы».²

Raskolnikov kills an old woman who is, in his own words, «никуда не угодна, никому не полезна» judging her by the purely inhuman, heartless logic of a rational intellectual. He sums up her value to society by materialistic standards. Dostoevsky gives us the whole psychological process of the thoughts leading up to Raskolnikov's crime, and the unpredictable aftermath. Will he be able to withstand the consequences, not so much external, but internal, of his act?

To begin with, however, we must realize that Raskolnikov's two motives are contradictory. For by his strange act, he has certainly not secured the happiness of his mother and sister; nor indeed did he murder to save them. His mother is quite lucid about his nature:

2. Mochulsky, K., "Dostoevsky: zhizn' i tvorchestvo" p. 226.

(1947),

«Вы думаете, его бы остановили тогда мои слезы, мои просьбы, моя болезнь, моя смерть, может быть, с тоски, наша нищета? Преспокойно бы перешагнул через все препятствия».³

Indeed, Raskolnikov acted for no-one else except himself to prove his will-power - as he blurts out in his confessional outburst to the young prostitute, Sonia Marmeladova: «Для себя убил, для себя одного... Смогу ли переступить или не смогу?... Тварь ли я дрожащая или право имею?»⁴ He wants to prove that he is free to act, that total freedom of choice exists.

Yet how can one reconcile reason (i.e. absence of irrationality) with freedom (which exists only if there is a choice between a rational and an irrational course of action)? As in Gide's "Les Caves du Vatican",⁵ in which Lafcadio is dazzled by the idea of the 'acte gratuit' (i.e. motiveless, irrational, act), so Raskolnikov tries by reasoning to justify a basically irrational act, using the ploy of a utilitarian argument. In the French novel, the hero realizes that he only wants to prove to himself that he can act 'irrationally'; whereas in "Crime and Punishment" Raskolnikov attempts to put a logical construction on his crazy act. So we must acknowledge that the latter fails on both counts on the concrete level; for neither does he prove anything definite to himself, nor does he

3. Dostoevsky, F.M., "Crime and Punishment", v. V, p. 224.

4. op. cit., p. 437.

5. Gide, A., "Les Caves du Vatican", (1924).

contribute to the welfare of his family. This is his failure in the sphere of matter.

Throughout the process of the crime, Raskolnikov bungles through in the most human manner: he is forced to take the axe not from the kitchen (as he had planned), but from the door-keeper's room; he forgets to close the door of the old woman's flat, while he is murdering her; he has to murder her sister, Lizaveta, who is an unwitting witness; he does not remember that he must steal enough to make it look like the work of a simple burglar. In effect, he is not free to act; he is largely activated by chance and fate, just as when he comes to know by accident that the old woman would be alone on that particular evening. He is no longer acting by his own free-will, nor even by reason; he is like an automaton, which once set in motion cannot stop: «Как-будто его кто-то вёл за руку и потянул за собой неотразимо, слепо, с неестественной силой, без возражений».⁶

Similarly, after the murder, he is incapable of logically arguing away his fears and doubts. To all appearances, luck has helped him in his far from perfect crime, and he has only to keep up a front until public interest has blown away. But he is strangely uneasy: «Неподозреваемые и неожиданные чувства мучают его сердце...»⁷ He cannot carry it through, and the truth, the invincible law of human nature, will wreak its own. Raskolnikov ends by being forced of his own volition to give himself up. The detective inspector has not a shred of evidence

6. Dostoevsky, F.M., "Crime and Punishment", v. V, p. 77.

7. op. cit., p. 288.

to go on, except for Raskolnikov's cyclothymic behaviour. Yet he knows that he has only to wait, and the truth will emerge of its own. In effect, Raskolnikov demands his own moral punishment.

Raskolnikov continues in deed the imaginary, verbal rebellion of the «ПОДПОЛЬНЫЙ ЧЕЛОВЕК», and lays the path for the despotism of the Grand Inquisitor in "The Brothers Karamazov". By his act, he has destroyed not merely a moral law, but the first assumption for belief in the world of the spirit. This ideology of strength leads naturally to a morality of violence, and we are indeed far away from the purely logical argument that preceded the act.

And secondly, Raskolnikov fails on the logical level: for even to want to prove himself to be a Napoleon indicates a lack of assurance that he is a «СИЛЬНАЯ ЛИЧНОСТЬ». Napoleon, according to Raskolnikov, would not argue about the rights or wrongs of an action; he would act directly. Thus, by his own standards of supermen, Raskolnikov has no right to take the law into his own hands. Like the rest of mankind, he is a 'louse'. This is his failure in the sphere of logic.

The realisation of his true mediocrity, his impotence against his own all too human nature, as with the «ПОДПОЛЬНЫЙ ЧЕЛОВЕК», makes him initially hate the goodness of Sonia. Thus, like a spoiled child who will assert himself and persist in a wrong-doing, even when he secretly recognizes that he is wrong, Raskolnikov hugs his deed to himself the closer: «Может, я ещё человек, а не вошь, и поторопился себя осудить» .⁸ If he recognizes that he is wrong, he lowers himself to the level of all humanity, and his ego will not brook this. There

8. op. cit., p. 439.

are two ways out of his dilemma for him: suicide or submission to human laws. He has not enough decision, perhaps too much human cowardice, to take the first course of action. Yet when he is sentenced to hard labour in Siberia, he still will not repent: «Совесть моя спокойна». ⁹

He cannot repent, as for him his theory is still valid. He does not allow himself to feel guilty. All he has proved is that he is weak, a member of the herd. But the theory still holds good: that total moral freedom does exist in the absence of God. Dostoevsky does not solve the question, and the implications are so disturbing that Raskolnikov had to be made to seem to repent. For this reason, Dostoevsky had to tack on the optimistic ending about Raskolnikov's resurrection, which for Mochulsky is a 'false conclusion'. «Совесть моя спокойна» means that Raskolnikov acknowledges that he is weak, that he has a social conscience, and that society has the right to punish him. But the possibility of supermen and total freedom still remains to be disproved, and Dostoevsky worried out the problem in his two subsequent great novels.

Raskolnikov's position is somewhere between the herd and supermen, for he can visualize total freedom, but is unable to grasp it. What is it then that brought him to his doom? It is not remorse, nor fear of Porfiry Petrovitch, nor repentance. If he could have controlled his high-strung nerves, there would have been no logical obstacle to his really being a superman. But what makes him just like other men, is that he does not accept responsibility for his act. A Napoleon would have acted, and then taken come what may. But Raskolnikov humanly blames fate:

9. op. cit., p. 567.

«Он, Раскольников, погиб так слепо, безнадежно, глухо и глупо, по какому-то приговору слепой судьбы».¹⁰

If man is incapable of acting without referring his success or failure to a constant such as God or destiny, then he is not acting in total freedom. Raskolnikov's rejection of his act is petty and human, but then, so is he.

Mochulsky argues that Raskolnikov has no worthy foe except fate. But surely is this not begging the question? He sees Raskolnikov as a half-superman: «(он) Погиб как трагический герой в борьбе со слепым Роком».¹¹ Thus, he interprets Raskolnikov's sudden realization of love for Sonia as a careful device used by Dostoevsky to conceal the bitter truth from his public, the truth that Raskolnikov's theory is still valid. Remorse and resurrection through love, therefore, would be impossible for him, and Dostoevsky dodges the unhappy reality by leaving only a vague promise in a «новая история». Mochulsky calls Raskolnikov's promised transformation a «благочестивая ложь».¹²

So what can we sum up about Raskolnikov? We have no evidence that Raskolnikov is a superman at the end of "Crime and Punishment". He has acted on personal reasons (to prove himself), tried to hide behind a rational argument, bungled the job, given himself up for no logical reason that he would recognize, and later failed to justify his act or accept responsibility, asserted his wrongdoing in an attempt to stave off his self-realization, and finally, dealt brutally with Sonia until he learns

10. op. cit., p. 566.

11. Mochulsky, K. "Dostoevsky: zhizn' i tvorchestvo" (1947), p. 255.

12. op. cit., p. 255.

to accept the truth about himself. In all, he has behaved like a man, even a rather stupid one. Nor has he managed to prove that there is total freedom, even if there is no belief in God. Only his theory remains to be disproved.

If total freedom were to exist, good and bad, reason and irrationality, free-will and predetermination would all mutually exclude one another. In this state of the "néant," the utter nihilism of life would lead the ordinary man to death or insanity. Man cannot bear the ideal of a total freedom, just as he cannot envisage infinity or eternity. Man is made up of variables, relativities, contradictions, and hence he is incapable of ever living in a world of constants, absolutes and uniformity. He can only hold in his mind an absolute as an ideal to guide his daily behaviour, but he cannot live with it. Even were he not to believe in God, man makes his own bonds, his own rules of conduct, for he cannot exist in a vacuum, as Mochulsky himself recognizes: «'Сильный человек' возжаждал освобождения от Бога - и достиг его; свобода его оказалась беспредельной. Но в беспредельности ждала его гибель» .¹³

Intellectual freedom by disbelieving in God, does not mean total freedom from human laws. Human nature entails that man is slave to some man-conceived force: demonism or fate.

Thus, for the Christian, there is no freedom except in Christ. The ideas of total freedom and the superman are myths created by man as a wry joke at the truth. He suspects that neither can exist, and that it is impossible and undesirable that either should exist. If man is to live

13. op. cit., p. 255.

among men, rules must be created and respected. Even Voltaire the cynic claimed that: "Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer".¹⁴ God is ultimately irreplaceable as an ideal, a deterrent or a guide.

"Crime and Punishment" raises four points of discussion: (1) human reason, (2) guilt (caused by evil), (3) suffering and (4) salvation, and we must study each in turn. Lev Shestov, for whom Dostoevsky was a «психологическая загадка»,¹⁵ divides the novelist's work into two periods from the time of "Poor Folk" to his exile and "Notes from the House of the Dead", and then from "Underground Notes" to the speech on Pushkin. Dostoevsky's exile transformed his deep beliefs, as Shestov says: «Достоевский говорил о перерождении своих убеждений»,¹⁶ and «Каторга Достоевского продолжалась не четыре года, а всю жизнь». ¹⁷ Before his exile, Dostoevsky was a political liberal, a follower of the French socialist Utopianists, Fourier and St. Simon. After his exile, he was more of a conservative, with a strong belief in Russia and her narod. His faith in man was changed from a political into a mystical one: man was seen as an irrational, antinomic and sensual being, but possessed of an instinct for God. From the writing of "Underground Notes", he rejects his earlier ideals, and now «любимая его тема - преступление и преступник». ¹⁸ The foe becomes his former associates in political

14. Voltaire, F, "Candide, ou l'optimisme", ed. René Pomeau, (Paris, 1963).

15. Shestov, Lev, "Dostoevsky i Nitshe", (1922), p. 28.

16. op. cit., p. 19.

17. op. cit., p. 61.

18. op. cit., p. 70.

activity - the allied-liberals, who were both atheists and socialists, virtually synonymous for Dostoevsky. Human reason and rationality, which formerly had made a perfectible world a possible theory, now were no longer sufficient, for how can man build a perfect world, when he himself is not infallible? Thus, from human reason, Dostoevsky turned to human nature, and to its deepest instincts, faith and a need for a transcendent being. All his later works are a negation of reason, and an affirmation of the spirit.

Much controversy exists about whether Dostoevsky's work is valid from the stylistic factor. M. Beebe points out that the ideological content is unified with the artistic structure: "Theme and technique overlap".¹⁹ There is a dualism of psychology and philosophy, in which the intellect is shown as evil, and the senses as good. The triple struggle of mind, body and spirit is embodied in Luzhin, Svidrigailov and Sonia. A motive is a driving force to an action, and Raskolnikov's three motives became also his reasons thus (1) to kill the old woman to get money - self-interest (Mind); (2) to test himself - lust (Body). Raskolnikov is more masochistic than sadistic. For example, the drunken girl who is pursued in the street by a 'gentleman' gives rise to the beaten horse in his dream, and this in turn to the murder; (3) to lacerate himself - masochism (Spirit). His passive will-to-suffering is stronger than his desire to make others suffer. Raskolnikov accepts his suffering as the common lot of all humanity, hence his passionate self-lowering in

19. Beebe, M., "The Three Motives of Raskolnikov", College English, (1955), Vol. 17.

front of Sonia, who has suffered greatly for the sake of her family.

Even when the reasons are exploded (money, self-interest) the motives remain. Suffering can be sensual or spiritual, and thus is connected with religion. God is shown to be greater than human reason, which to a Frenchman is patently absurd, as A. Gide exclaims: "Dostoevsky's heroes inherit the Kingdom of God only by the denial of mind and will and the surrender of personality".²⁰ Raskolnikov does not repent of his crime, because he does not accept his responsibility. It is only after eight months of exile that revelation comes to Raskolnikov through love and humility, «В остроге, на свободе» (in prison, in freedom).²¹ The contra is the will-to-suffering, as the pro is the acceptance of love. In man's salvation, human reason has a minimal rôle for Dostoevsky.

Secondly, the idea of rationality leads us to that of guilt and responsibility. As we have seen, Raskolnikov says: «СОВЕСТЬ МОЯ СПОКОЙНА», because for him his theory of the superman is still valid. He feels no guilt at the evil he has committed, for to him it is not evil. He only acknowledges that society has a right to punish him, for having failed, for having shown himself to be weak. Raskolnikov thinks only that he was the cause of the death of the old woman, but that he is not responsible for it.

20. Gide, A., "Dostoevsky", (1926), p. 98.

21. Dostoevsky, F.M., "Crime and Punishment", v. V, p. 567.

In a series of articles, two philosophers deal with the relation of causation and responsibility. J.D. Wild identifies causation and responsibility thus: "To be responsible for something is the same as to be its cause" or "Responsibility is to be identified with a certain type of causation which we may call, following Aristotle, internal causation".²² But even determinists would refuse to accept that one is responsible for compulsory action. Thus is determinism compatible with moral responsibility? Yes, in a causal situation. In other words, responsibility is more structured than causation, as Wild affirms: "Responsibility involves a "for-to structure", but causation involves nothing of the kind".²³

Professor Frankena makes a fine distinction à la Aristotle between the two categories: "If the causes of the act lie outside the agent, then it is forced upon him. If the causes are his own desires, which lie within him, then it is a voluntary act, and he is responsible for it".²⁴ This last statement opposes freedom and responsibility to compulsion, i.e. if one is free, one is also responsible: "Freedom and responsibility . . . belong to the richer and wider horizon of the life-world".²⁵ Hence, it is Raskolnikov's freedom that asserts his moral responsibility, his guilt for the evil he has committed. Statements of responsibility are normative or moral, and limit one's ontological freedom. In the responsible act, there are three moments: (1) the distance to evaluate - the root of human freedom, (2) the imagining of new possibilities and (3) relevant action.

22. Frankena, W.K./Wild, J.D., "On Responsibility", Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, June 1967, No. 4, Vol. XXVII, p. 90.

23. op. cit., p. 95.

24. op. cit., pp. 97-98.

25. op. cit., p. 100.

Raskolnikov lived through all three moments: his was a responsible, not merely a causal act, and eventually he comes to see what he has done.

Thirdly, guilt is the source of suffering, and thus we arrive at the crux of Dostoevsky's concept of freedom. Raskolnikov wants to be punished. In fact, he cannot plan a perfect crime, as this would defeat his real purpose. His physical surroundings suggest his "sense of internal corruption".²⁶ Similarly, Marmeladov chooses Katerina Ivanovna as wife - and the worst kind for him - as an instrument for self-laceration. This shows the inner affinity between Raskolnikov and Marmeladov: both call themselves beasts, both want to preserve their self-esteem through charity.

"To suffer passively"²⁷ is the crucial accusation: suffering should be actively entered upon. Raskolnikov has lost confidence in himself and feels that he cannot do a good deed. Svidrigailov and Raskolnikov both see the world as evil, but they want it proved to them that they are not lost to virtue. The latter rationalizes his acts; but this is false. He wants to hurt, but even more to be hurt, thus the isolation of self-violence. By not helping others in need (e.g. the drunken young girl in the street), Raskolnikov moves away from Marmeladov towards Svidrigailov. Razumikhin preserves the sense of dignity that Raskolnikov has lost. One must here note the significance of their names: Raskolnikov stands for schism and schizoid, and Razumikhin for reasonability and practicality. Svidrigailov embodies the agony, the self-destruction of the man who rationalizes his guilt and will not confess. Raskolnikov's dream tells him that he must

26. Snodgrass, W.D., "Crime for Punishment : the Tenor of Part One", Hudson Review, 1960, Vol. XIII.

27. op. cit..

choose between suicide and murder, and he clearly loses control over his actions: "He suddenly felt with all his being that he no longer possessed any freedom of reasoning or of will, and that everything was suddenly and irrevocably settled".²⁸

As we have seen, Raskolnikov rationalizes his need to prove himself by the ruse of self-interest. He invents the real motive, as he knows already that his mind will defeat him, hence the "only plausible purpose is a desire for punishment".²⁹ Hence he is always deeply aware that he is not a superman. What he does gain is as follows: (1) a cleansing of past wrongs and of his sense of guilt. He must "cleanse his view of himself and of his world".³⁰ (2) A proof that he is not negligible; (3) a device that will force him henceforward to obey his conscience. He hungers to obey, to be devoted to morality, but cannot find anything to bow down to, and (4) the attribute of a "loved and worthy child in a God-centred, family-style universe."³¹

Dostoevsky arrives at the paradoxical conclusion, that the criminal is the most eager for God, because he wills his own suffering (i.e. punishment). Raskolnikov does believe in God, says Snodgrass, and he longs for Him to declare Himself. By killing Alyona, and then Lizaveta (a compounding of his sin), he challenges God's vengeance. Svidrigailov shows him the next logical step in hubris - suicide, whereas Porfiry

28. Dostoevsky, F.H., "Crime and Punishment", op. cit., Snodgrass.

29. op. cit., Snodgrass.

30. op. cit.

31. op. cit.

Petrovitch and Sonia make Raskolnikov see what he has done to himself. This leads him to the police to give himself up. Simone Weil neatly sums up Raskolnikov's strange masochistic-sadistic tendencies when she says: "A hurtful act is the transference to others of the degradation which we bear in ourselves. That is why we are inclined to commit such acts as a way of deliverance".³²

Man is the third dimension between God and nature, says L. Vatai.³³ Suffering is the essence of human life, and man must not resist it, but willingly surrender his autonomy to God. Suffering is all-embracing: "It includes limit, fall, idea, passion, and tragedy."³⁴ Dostoevsky's works are the "religion of suffering".³⁵ Suffering is the way of stepping into life: "Suffering is metaphysics."³⁶ Free-will is man's dream, but freedom, due to its limits, is only an illusion. Crime puts an end to this illusion and also to life: "There is no way out of the freedom problem: therefore, there is no way out of suffering."³⁷ Suffering, then, is unavoidable: "Suffering is the basis of human life and the possibility of the future of human existence."³⁸

Lastly, Dostoevsky shows that suffering lies in the nature of man as a free and responsible being, and for him the Russian people above all

32. op. cit.

33. Vatai, L., "Man and His Tragic Life", (1954).

34. op. cit., p. 94.

35. op. cit., p. 95.

36. op. cit., p. 99.

37. op. cit., p. 103.

38. op. cit., p. 110.

others could accept pain and suffering."³⁹ In Christ, the human personality is completely free, for He conquered suffering and pain, and exposed the pattern of world harmony, so that we arrive at a position diametrically opposite to that of the Existentialists: "Christ can be found only by those who are not afraid of freedom [and vice versa]".⁴⁰

Hence, suffering is closely linked to the idea of purification. Dostoevsky welds together the precepts of Christian philosophy and Christian mysticism, when he advocates that man should abandon himself to God of his own free-will. As suffering leads to a moral purification, man must accept suffering as a part of life. If man asserts himself, he is doomed to failure. Human beings, says C.G. Strem,⁴¹ conflict with basic moral laws of human destiny. Humility is the first virtue (e.g. Sonia), and self-sacrifice is very important. Thus, those who suffer (e.g. the criminal) are closest to God, as Dmitri exclaims at his trial: "I want to suffer, and by suffering I shall be purified".⁴² Raskolnikov realizes that his premise was a false one - i.e. that he is not strong enough to create his own moral code. Only suffering can lead to redemption, a consequence of the Fall of man and original sin.

The belief in self-abasement is rooted in the Russian, and essentially in the Oriental, soul. Thus, crime leads to suffering, which in turn brings man to redemption. So how can man rise above his sin?

39. Dostoevsky, F.M., "Diary of an Author", No. 4, 1873, from N. Zernov, "Three Russian Prophets" (1944).

40. Zernov, N., "Three Russian Prophets" (1944), p. 108.

41. Strem, C.G., "The Moral World of Dostoevsky", Russian Review, July, 1957, Vol. XVI.

42. Dostoevsky, F.M., "The Brothers Karamazov".

Dostoevsky shows that the intellect, unsupported by faith, destroys man. Suffering alone can help man to salvation. Hence crime is a metaphysical act, rather than a political or legal one, as V. Woolf says: "The simplification [of vice and virtue] is only on the surface".⁴³ Dostoevsky's heroes and criminals are haunted by fears and doubts, hence their simplest acts attain symbolic significance: "The effect of this brooding and analysing mind is always to produce an atmosphere of doubt, of questioning, of pain, perhaps of despair".⁴⁴ E.H. Carr delves deeply into the ethical problem of this novel: "The theme of the book is the analysis of the motives of the murder and of its reactions on the murderer; and in this theme Dostoevsky embodies the whole problem of the relations of the ego to the surrounding world, of the individual to society, which is, in effect, the central problem of both ethics and metaphysics."⁴⁵ Does Raskolnikov fail, because he is weak, or because a spiritual essence in humanity makes him unable to be a superman? He is himself uncertain whether he has acted for himself or for humanity, but "The tragedy for Raskolnikov is the collapse of the principle on which he has acted."⁴⁶ Both Raskolnikov and Svidrigailov come to the same conclusion: The philosophy of the superman [Raskolnikov] and the rationalistic ethics

43. Woolf, V., "Granite and Rainbow", 1958, p. 127.

44. op. cit., p. 130.

45. Carr, E.H., "Dostoevsky", (1931), p. 191.

46. op. cit., p. 195.

of the utilitarian (Svidrigailov) and alike in pure hedonism."⁴⁷

Salvation, then, must be earned through tears and torment: "For the Russian, salvation must come not through action, but through suffering, and through suffering voluntarily accepted."⁴⁸ Hence it is not a gift of divine grace, so much as an existential salvation, as Carr says: "He (Dostoevsky) believed firmly that suffering was the necessary psychological condition of the forgiveness of sin."⁴⁹ This doctrine of suffering contains many factors - theological, literary and psychological: "Such are the elements - religious, romantic and masochistic - which went to make up the doctrine of suffering [of Dostoevsky]".⁵⁰ Love is the reverse of suffering, and it is this that saves Raskolnikov: «Через убийство старухи герой духовно умирает, через любовь Сони - воскресает... Жизнь кончилась с одной стороны, начинается с другой».⁵¹

Salvation is attained through free submission to God: eternal damnation is conjoined to determinism, hubris and lack of freedom: «Нет другой свободы, кроме свободы во Христе; неверующий во Христа подвластен Року».⁵² Thus, the dialectic of salvation is simple: crime → suffering → salvation (which is a free acceptance of pain) → freedom in Christ.

47. op. cit., p. 196.

48. op. cit., p. 200.

49. op. cit., p. 292.

50. op. cit., p. 292.

51. Mochulsky, K., "Dostoevsky: zhizn' i tvorchestvo", (1947), p. 235.

52. op. cit., p. 255.

Christ is the highest superlative for man: "There is nothing more beautiful, more profound, more lovable, more reasonable, more courageous and more perfect than Christ, yes, and I tell myself with jealous love, that there could be nothing. More than that, if anyone proved to me that Christ was not in the truth, and it really was a fact that the truth was not in Christ, I would rather be with Christ than with the truth."⁵³ It is interesting to note that both Tolstoy and Dostoevsky underwent a conversion about the age of fifty.

We can see from our analysis of "Crime and Punishment" that Dostoevsky is combining philosophy and literature. The problem of freedom involves the topic of human reason, guilt, suffering and salvation. But Dostoevsky also thought as an artist, and thus the philosophical ideas are embodied in men. The ideas are inseparable from the personality of the protagonists, as claims V.V. Zenkovsky: "In their destinies in the inner dialectic of their development, Dostoevsky traces the dialectic of some specific idea."⁵⁴ Dostoevsky concentrates on the philosophy of the human spirit, and, therefore, deals always with problems of anthropology, historiosophy, ethics and religion. His early socialism was a form of spiritual searching, the same "ethical immanentism"⁵⁵ which underlies all theories of progress (even Tolstoy's). It believes in the 'natural' goodness of man, in total happiness, and rejects the Kantian concept of the 'radical evil' of human nature - hence there is no original sin, and no need

53. Dostoevsky, F.M., letter to Mme. N.A. Fonvizina, 20th February, 1854, from op. cit. - Carr, p. 282.

54. Zenkovsky, V.V., "A History of Russian Philosophy" (1953), V.1, pp. 414-415.

55. op. cit.

for atonement and salvation through Christ, i.e. "Christian naturalism".⁵⁶

Dostoevsky had a religious nature, and in his own words was 'tormented' by the idea of God. He never doubted God's existence, but explored the implication of His existence for man: i.e. the controversy of theodicy. His interest in socialism was linked to his religious search, and he, therefore, rejected political liberalism, when he realized that its followers reviled Christ. This theme of the godless revolutionary, who transforms and distorts the nature of freedom in the name of the common weal, is expanded in "The Possessed". Dostoevsky's thought is concerned with antinomies, all of which are reconciled in the realm of religion. For him, Russia's strength lay in her Orthodoxy and even history had a religious meaning: "Man's freedom by divine intention is the basis of the historical dialectic." Dostoevsky indeed formulates the problem of culture within the religious consciousness itself. Just as Raskolnikov symbolizes the break with the religious consciousness, so Kirillov in "The Possessed" is the religious reformulation of this break in the ideology of manhood. Basically, Dostoevsky converted all the problems of the human condition - social, political and psychological - into religious ones, as we shall see in the next chapter dealing with his novel "Besy".

56. op. cit.

57. op. cit., p. 431.

CHAPTER III) RATIONALISM - THE ABYSS BENEATH

CHAPTER III

David Magarshack¹ said that "Besy" is best considered as a political melodrama, which statement implies that the novel is of a complex structure, in which each of its layers represents a different aspect of human life. On the political level, the novel is based on the Nechaev affair, which caused a great stir in 1870 and gave Dostoevsky the idea of the novel. Nechaev was the founder of a secret society, Narodnaya Rasprava, and murdered, with the help of three accomplices, the student Ivanov. Dostoevsky's brother-in-law. Snitkin, a student in Moscow, and press accounts provided the material for a plot. In his anger at this waste of a young life, Dostoevsky conceived a satire exposing the Nihilists and Westernisers. The main figure was to be a fanatic, an ascetic despot, who craves blind obedience to his orders: the character of Peter Verkhovensky was thus to be a caricature of a revolutionary, an antihero meant to discredit all his fellow revolutionaries. He is the philosopher of anarchy, on whom all Dostoevsky's hatred for revolutionary ideas was concentrated. But he soon found that his secondary characters came to eclipse the main ones, and he had to rewrite all that he had already produced: thus Stavrogin came to replace Verkhovensky as the new hero of the novel. Dostoevsky knew that he was committing himself as a writer, and possibly about to alienate a whole section of his reading public, but his indignation was too strong to be suppressed for personal gain. Thus, he was to some extent prepared for

1. D. Magarshack, "The Possessed" (1962), Introduction.

the storm of protest that greeted the publication in 1871 of "The Possessed".

We find, therefore, that there are two poles of activity in this novel: the political and the metaphysical, which are both necessary and interconnected. Of the two groups of characters, the first puts into practice and applies the theories of the other. Stavrogin is the ambiguous hero, who is dead to life and finally is seen not to be a true revolutionary; Verkhovensky is the political antihero, who is a prophecy for the type of Soviet Commissar who operated in the 1930's.

The political plot is the outer shell of the eternal metaphysical problems which Dostoevsky, as always, leaves unsolved. Verkhovensky and Shigalev push the theories of Stavrogin to the utmost limit and then want to enforce the conclusions on a socio-political basis; Kirillov enacts these ideas on a personal level. The action is separate from the thought, but each completes the other. "The Possessed", a fragment from the unwritten but projected "The Life of a Great Sinner", which was to be based on Stavrogin is a defence of the real Russia against the demonic pro-western intellectuals and revolutionaries, symbolised by 'the devils', taken aptly from the quotation from St. Luke's Gospel (Chapter 8, Verses 32-37). Dostoevsky is here expanding Raskolnikov's problem on a larger scale: for a nation that wants to violate the principles of social life in the name of liberty is as equally doomed to failure as the individual who covets licence, not because liberty does not exist, but because those concerned cannot grasp and use their liberty well. On a mathematical scheme, Dostoevsky shows that murder relates to the individual just as revolution relates to the masses. Like Raskolnikov, the revolutionaries claim superhuman dignity; in the event, they are all proved to be incapable

of utilising their unbounded liberty.

Dostoevsky demonstrates how a nation in revolt will only find a new slavery and ruin. The collective mania for freedom is even more destructive than a single mania. Defeat is the same, for people are not strong enough to win a victory over freedom. The ideas of total freedom and of God remain unsolved except in Dostoevsky's ethic. Dostoevsky, however, attacks the revolutionaries more violently than he does Raskolnikov. The latter found that he was not strong enough to grasp total freedom, but his theory of a Napoleon, in the absence of God, remains to be disproved. In "The Possessed", Stavrogin carries the idea of total freedom further, and gets nearer the mark - but being a Napoleon brings him no contentment, and he kills himself to end his inertia, which is all he can pit against "the abyss beneath" of reason. Similarly, all the revolutionaries fail because Dostoevsky clearly wants to show that the idea - let alone the possibility - of revolt is corrosive to society. Socialism and revolution are the natural offspring of atheism. So socialism for Dostoevsky becomes a religious problem, because man wants to replace God by the masses. Thus we see how closely linked in "The Possessed" are the political and meta-physical levels of human activity.

Dostoevsky saw socialism as the religion of man. For him, it emphasized material well-being, the earthly happiness of men and negated the possibility of divine recompense, and even of a divine Being. Dostoevsky, on the other hand, says that man needs more, else he will have recourse to suicide or insanity (if he has any conscience at all) as Stefan Trofimovitch says on his death-bed:

«Весь закон бытия человеческого лишь в том, чтобы человек всегда мог преклониться пред безмерно великим. Если лишить людей безмерно великого, то не станут они жить и умрут в отчаянии».²

Seeing God as a symbol of love, he exclaims:

«Если есть Бог, то и я бессмертен!»³

In the 1870's, figures as radical as Stavrogin, Kirillov, Shatov and Verkhovensky did not as yet exist, and only after 1905 did revolutionaries of the same ilk come into history; hence "The Possessed" is more of a prophecy than a documentary. For this reason, contemporaries understood the character of Verkhovensky as a mere caricature, and not as a true portrayal. Dostoevsky is really indicting the liberals of the 1840's, who did not realise the black implications of their airy sermons on freedom. For Dostoevsky, revolution is made both by thinkers who have no sense of responsibility and by the witless and grasping 'herd'. If he had lived till 1917, like other intellectuals he would most certainly have awaited a national resurrection after the defeat of 'the devils'. For all these reasons we can see that the novel is less important as a political work than for the metaphysical questions it raises and leaves us to work out for ourselves.

Stavrogin is the metaphysical centre of the novel, just as Verkhovensky is the fleeting political axis. His spiritual disciples are Kirillov and Shatov, whose destinies are strangely parallel. If

2. Dostoevsky, F.M., "The Possessed", v. VII, pp. 690-691.

3. op. cit., p. 690.

Stavrogin is the warlock, Verkhovensky is his familiar, his demonic creature. Stavrogin, unlike Raskolnikov, does not want to prove himself a «СИЛЬНАЯ ЛИЧНОСТЬ». He is totally free; he does not (at least in the version of the text Dostoevsky gave for final publication) believe in God. For him, it is a matter of common sense that God does not exist. He is further along the road, a complete superman, like Svidrigailov. He seeks nothing, he is the habitual negator with none of Raskolnikov's innate passion. He has not suffered for his convictions, and is literally bored to death. He is the «НОВЫЙ ЧЕЛОВЕК», the pivot of the story, who appears to do nothing, and whose past actions are retold by others. He is dry, apathetic, melancholic. He only longs for something to shatter his deathly calm, to arouse him, as do also the «ПОДПОЛЬНЫЙ ЧЕЛОВЕК» and Svidrigailov; this explains his duels, his rape of a little girl, who later hangs herself (a recurring theme also in "Crime and Punishment"), his marriage to the crippled Maria Timofeevna, his latterly interest in political struggle. He admits once that life bores him to the point of stupefaction; he is interested in nothing and is completely dead to the feeling of good and evil. We must note here that the unpublished chapter entitled "Stavrogin's Confession", published by the Soviet authorities after 1917, shows Stavrogin in a different light as we shall see later.

Like the Underground Man, Stavrogin enjoys vileness mainly for the sense it gives him of his own degradation. He juggles erotically with anger and delight to destroy his "disease of indifference". Perhaps only remorse over a great crime could save him, but he is complete master over his memories and feelings. For these reasons, he hates the revolutionaries,

because he envies them their unbounded and enthusiastic hopes, however misjudged, in the future of mankind.

For Stavrogin has no future. His strength is aimless, and his freedom is empty. In "The Possessed", as it stands, his unbelief is never shaken; but in the expurgated chapter (Chapter i, Part II) faith and unbelief, God and the devil struggle for a moment for possession of Stavrogin's mind while he is visiting Bishop Tikhon in his cell. Stavrogin is, in essence, a lie in all his beauty, strength and potential greatness. As Tikhon says, lies and ugliness can kill: Stavrogin's confession is 'inaesthetic', more funny than hateful, a source of lies; and his suicide is the final ugliness, the act of a fleeting 'mangod'. His defeat as a «СИЛЬНАЯ ЛИЧНОСТЬ» occurs on three planes: the fundamental (Liza), the aesthetic (himself) and the metaphysical (God). The agony of Stavrogin is that of the superman who knows that he is a superman, and would rather be like other men. He has good intentions which he manages to overcome, resulting in tragedy for someone: Gaganov, Matryosha, Maria, Shatov, Liza. In his total freedom (initial, according to Dostoevsky's criterion, and not final) he finds the yawning néant; and having found all (and nothing) he kills himself. The whole novel is written for the catastrophe which never comes for Stavrogin. He ends as he began, a man with the whole world and with the abyss of nothing. The three women around him reflect the tragedy of Stavrogin; Marya is suffering; Liza is resurrection; Dasha is a nurse to the moral cripple.

Verkhovensky as the centre of a group of petty revolutionaries - Lebiadkin, Liputin, Virginsky, Lyamshin, Erkel, Shigalev, Tolkatchenko - is a compound of Nechaev, and Speshnev, Dostoevsky's "Mephistopheles" from his Petrashevsky period (1848-1849) in St. Petersburg. He is almost a

figure of farce, a fiend in caricature, who is hated and feared even by his fellow revolutionaries. He has a diabolic conception of a world revolution: «Раскачка такая пойдёт, какой ещё мир не видел».⁴

He is the logical continuation of Raskolnikov's idea of total freedom and a step towards the Grand Inquisitor. The first wants absolute freedom, the second absolute equality, the third absolute power. Verkhovensky wants to put into practice Shigalev's ideas on total equality. But each of these absolutes negates the other, for there can be no freedom (or sense of brotherhood, as in the French revolutionary slogan) in a state of enforced equality. Shigalev leaps from the idea of freedom to that of despotism with no pause at equality: «Выходя из безграничной

свободы, я заключаю безграничным деспотизмом».⁵ Essentially, equality is for others and not for himself, just as George Orwell ironically stated in "Animal Farm": "All are equal, but some are more equal than others".⁶ Freedom and power are to be only his privileges, and no-one else's.

Verkhovensky wants to lower the standard of education, so as to eliminate the development of superior brains: «Цецерону отрезывается язык, Копернику выкалывают глаза, Шекспир побивается камнями, вот Шигалевщина!»⁷

Slaves should be equal among themselves - with the help of despotism. This is the total upheaval of normal tenets, involving the loss of personal dignity, initiative and responsibility. With the return to primitive codes, morality will be unnecessary, because the world will be beyond the concepts

4. op. cit., p. 441.

5. op. cit., pp. 421-22.

6. Orwell, G., "Animal Farm" (1945).

7. Dostoevsky, F.M., "The Possessed", v. VII, p. 437.

of 'good' and 'evil'. To rule over the slaves, there will be the new autocracy of a select minority, among whom Stavrogin is to be Ivan Tsarevitch. It is strange that Verkhovensky, for all his melodramatic evil, has a doglike devotion for Stavrogin. He is enslaved by his satanic beauty, his deathly lack of interest, his aristocratic aloofness: «Я люблю красоту. Я нигилист, но люблю красоту. Разве нигилисты красоту не любят? Они только идолов не любят, ну, а я люблю идола! Вы мой идол! Вы никого не оскорбляете, и вас все ненавидят; вы смотрите всем ровней».⁸

He himself feels the need for someone superior to himself, for love. For he is more than merely a small demon, for he too has a holy madness, the ecstasy of the "abyss beneath". He perceives and is enslaved by the beauty of destruction and chaos in Stavrogin, and is prepared to sacrifice the whole world for him. Without him, he is a worm: «Мне вы, вы надобны, без вас я нуль. Без вас я муха, идея в склянке, Колумб без Америки».⁹

This passion alone, besides the rational illogicality of his theories, condemns his whole social system. He chooses the lowest point of freedom by killing others, but really he enjoys the criminal act. In an attempt to weld together his cowardly revolutionaries, he picks on the sacrificial figure of Shatov.

Shatov is the revolutionary who has turned, the character built on the murdered Ivanov. He is lonely and exhausted, and is groping for a happiness which seems close at hand. However, he cannot leave the group. Like Dostoevsky, he believes in the more mysterious rules of life, in God:

8. op. cit., p. 438.

9. op. cit., p. 439.

«Цель всего движения народного...есть единственно лишь искание Бога...Бог есть синтетическая личность всего народа. Признак уничтожения народностей, когда боги начинают становиться общими. Когда они становятся общими, то умирают боги и вера в них вместе с самими народами». ¹⁰ For him, there is only one true God, and Russians are the only pure, childlike people. Shatov, like Dostoevsky (in their characters we see a close affinity) entrusted to Russians a messianic role which only they preserved, while other nations had lost it. But Shatov comes to God through love of the people, they are his objective: «У кого нет народа, у того нет и Бога!...Народ - это тело божие». ¹¹ Dostoevsky came to people only through God, a reverse process to Shatov's. The birth of a child (Stavrogin's) to his wife touches Shatov with the unquenchable faith and happiness for which he is groping, and of which he is deprived when he is murdered by Verkhovensky.

Unlike Verkhovensky, Kirillov chooses the highest point of freedom rather than the lowest (murder) by killing himself, to free man from the fear of death, and therefore from the necessity of inventing a God to mitigate this fear. He wants to prove that man is free: if a man can end his life by his own will, he is free, a God himself, a «человекобог»: «Если нет Бога, то я Бог...Человек только и делал, что выдумывал Бога, чтобы жить не убивая себя». ¹² As a passionate atheist, Kirillov believes that man has created God only to escape from the sense of the freedom that frightens him. To vindicate this freedom, the necessity for God

10. op. cit., p. 265.

11. op. cit., p. 266.

12. op. cit., pp. 641-642.

must be destroyed: «Свобода будет, когда будет всё равно, жить или не жить....Я убываю себя, чтобы показать непокорность и новую, страшную свободу мою....Я могу в главном пункте показать... новую, страшную свободу мою».¹³ This vindication of a freedom outside of God is where the Existentialists begin, as J.P. Sartre says: "Dostoevsky wrote: 'If God does not exist, then all things are lawful'. That is the starting point of Existentialism. For with the disappearance of God there also disappeared all possibility of finding values in an intelligible heaven. This world of abandoned man who cannot find anything to hold on to, neither within himself nor outside of himself, is the world of the Existentialist novel".¹⁴ Kirillov wants man to be free, and to recognize his freedom through his own example: «Это убью сам себя непременно, чтобы начать и доказать. Начну, и кончу, и дверь отворю. И спасу...».¹⁵

These last words show that, like Jesus Christ, Kirillov kills himself to save other men: "For the Christian, 'the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death'; for the superman, the last enemy to be overthrown is the fear of death".¹⁶ For he can recognize Christ without acknowledging God. This was Dostoevsky's problem also: whether to accept Christ with God or without God. Kirillov shoots himself to get out of the dilemma, just

13. op. cit., p. 644.

14. Quoted in p. 82 in "Fyodor Dostoevsky, Insight, Faith and Prophecy" by R. Fueloep-Miller (1950).

15. Dostoevsky, F.M., "The Possessed", v. VII, p. 643.

16. Carr, E.H., "Dostoevsky", (1931), p. 229.

as much as to prove his theory. He loves God with his spirit, but refuses Him with his mind: his heart cannot live without God, but his mind cannot live with the idea of Him. Thus, he kills himself to destroy both the idea of God, and because he cannot live without that idea: «Бог необходим, а потому должен быть (heart speaking), но я знаю, что Бога нет и не может быть (mind speaking) - нельзя с такими двумя мыслями жить...»¹⁷ On his suicide, Verkhovensky conveniently pins the murder of Shatov, thereby offering up two sacrifices to his idea of revolution.

Thus, on the spiritual level, we see that in these four characters, apart from their political activities, there are represented four stages of development: Shatov is the emotional believer with a belief in Russia's messianic Orthodoxy; Kirillov is an emotional atheist, one step from being a Christian (as Bishop Tikhon tells Stavrogin before reading his confession: «Совершенный атеист стоит на предпоследней верхней ступени до совершеннейшей веры(там перешагнет-ли её, нет-ли) а равнодушный никакой веры не имеет кроме дурного страха...»¹⁸

Verkhovensky is the calculating, machine-like, satanic atheist; and Stavrogin is the congenital, bored 'real' atheist. There is hope for the first two, some even for Verkhovensky if he could develop a passion for God, as he holds for Stavrogin. But there can be no hope for Stavrogin in the published version of "The Possessed".

17. Dostoevsky, F.M., "The Possessed", v. VII, quoted by K. Mochulsky in "Dostoevsky: zhizn' i tvorchestvo", (1947), p. 368.

18. Chapter 9, Part II - the expurgated chapter, p. 33,

Dostoevsky, like Sartre, hates the 'mauvaise foi' of the world's 'scoundrels' (les salots), the compromisers and herd-like worthies. Among his gallery of «СИЛЬНЫЕ ЛИЧНОСТИ» (strong men) Stavrogin is the strongest, a Nietzschean figure, a walking Antichrist. Dostoevsky's idea of the world tragedy, likens Mochulsky,¹⁹ draws him close to Goethe, with Stavrogin as Faustus, Verkhovensky as Mephistopheles, and Maria Timofeevna as Gretchen. She is the one who could save him spiritually (unlike Dasha who is only a nurse to Stavrogin) being both a symbol of the Virgin Mary and the Earth Mother. Speaking from passionate belief with the voice of Dostoevsky, she judges Stavrogin, and finds him a sham. He is no true-blood prince, only a 'pretender!' («самозванец».)

In the unpublished chapter, a new Stavrogin emerges. In it, we get his confession, which is nothing if not a craving for self-punishment, for the Cross (a 'burden'), for Bishop Tikhon's help. «Я веру в беса, верую канонически, в личного, а не в аллегория»²⁰ he says, and after Tikhon has perused his chronicle, he admits that he would be relieved by Tikhon's condonement. Tikhon, however, detects in the wild, impulsive 'inaesthetic' style, a purpose not in keeping with Stavrogin's avowed intent of self-punishment. He rejects it as not being a proof of repentance. But it remains a fact that this is the closest that Stavrogin ever comes to being moved towards a good deed. The novels "Atheism" and "The Life of a Great Sinner" were to be centred round the figure of Tikhon Zadonsky, who appears briefly in this important expurgated chapter.²⁰

19. Mochulsky, K., "Dostoevsky: zhizn' i tvorchestvo" (1947).

20. Chapter i, Part II, the expurgated chapter, p. 31 (translated by S.S. Koteliansky and V. Woolf, 1922).

Dostoevsky's idea was that every man's soul, if it remain true to itself, is Christian. If the chapter on Stavrogin's visit to Tikhon had been left in, Stavrogin might have been redeemed, but in that case there would have been an inconsistency in his character, perhaps also too facile a solution for Dostoevsky. Whether it was the publisher Katkov's intervention, or Dostoevsky's own action that led to the deletion of the passage, the omission preserves the integrality of Stavrogin's character. An echo of the possibility of redemption remains in the title page quotation from St. Luke, in which the cured sick man sits at the feet of Christ. Dostoevsky wanted to demonstrate his dream of 'universal harmony', and in all his three great novels he ends by showing the impossibility of solving metaphysical questions by reason alone - if man refuses God, then evil triumphs in a world which negates graces. In "The Possessed", Stavrogin, Verkhovensky, Shatov and Kirillov, for one reason or another, all come to grief in their political and spiritual conflicts.

If a superman can destroy the fear of death, then he will be the «человекобог» (mangod) who ousts the «богочеловек» (Godman, i.e. Christ, the Son of God). Dostoevsky's theme is that if atheism is rejected, man will be purified. His religious and philosophical ideas predominate here over the original political intent. Socialism for Dostoevsky was a religious problem, enacted by Stavrogin and Verkhovensky, who are doubles, and sons of Shigalev. Stavrogin is not quite at the point of total disbelief, for in the confession there is some doubt in his mind. He is reflected in Kirillov and Shatov, splintered into disbelief and belief: this shows the existence of the two in Stavrogin's mind. Stavrogin is challenging himself and God to intervene in his acts; essentially, he is looking for a burden. He

challenges reason, is not quite sure that he is totally free, though he acts as if he were. When he does not find a valid answer, he commits suicide. He is spiritually dead, incapable of love; and this is the true hell for Dostoevsky.

Shatov has his own idea: Russia has her special God (cf. Cyril Theodosius), and so he comes to God through the people. This is an idea deep in Orthodoxy which aligns Dostoevsky's and Shatov's beliefs. Kirillov's conflict is between heart and mind. He too loves, and is prepared to admit that all is good, but he cannot conquer his mind. He feels a need for God, but cannot reconcile this need with reason. Thus, his suicide proves that he does not need God, and yet cannot live without that need. Verkhovensky is the classic example of a man who preaches freedom, but is not strong enough to bear it. Indeed, he needs someone before whom he can bow down. Nor does he really believe or want equality. He too needs an idol. Shigalev's idea that equality is only possible among slaves is logically valid, since one can never have equality and freedom at the same time.

We must now examine three points that are raised by this novel:

(1) the idea of the 'abyss beneath'; (2) atheism versus moral responsibility; (3) the loss of freedom through revolution. The 'abyss beneath' is Dostoevsky's way of naming the horror of disbelief. The expurgated section of Part II shows us Stavrogin visiting Bishop Tikhon in his cell, and their dialogue together, followed by Stavrogin's confession, sheds a different light on Stavrogin's character. Stavrogin asks Tikhon if the devil exists, and their next repiques are very important: "Devils certainly exist, but one's conception of them may be various (Tikhon) . . . "I do believe in the devil, I believe canonically, in a personal not allegorical,

devil (Stavrogin) . . . And can one believe in the devil without believing in God? (Stavrogin) . . . Oh, there are such people everywhere". (Tikhon).²¹ Stavrogin has a dark, demonic nature, and so it is easier for him to envisage the devil than God. Thus, his abyss is totally annihilating, and inescapable, being born of rationalism.

After reading the confession, Tikhon questions Stavrogin on the reasons that prompted him to write it. Was it, perhaps, a sign of remorse: "You were not ashamed of admitting your crime; why are you ashamed of repentance?"²² Stavrogin's crime is horrifying, but also ridiculous in its pointlessness. He avows that he had only one intent in writing the confession: "I want to forgive myself, and that is my object, my whole object".²³ Tikhon, however, sees through these apparent words of humility. He detects the lie, the need for a 'gesture' that provoked Stavrogin's action. That is why the confession is both 'inaesthetic' and laughable, as is his suicide at the end of the novel. In the introduction, V. Komarovich claims that Stavrogin was repentant: "Here Stavrogin's confession, however absurdly expressed, is a penance, i.e. the act of a live religious will".²⁴ If the chapter omitted by Katkov had been included in the novel, Stavrogin's suicide would be incomprehensible. Stavrogin was meant to be converted, but Dostoevsky realized that this would not respect the religious and artistic intentions of his work. No longer did he desire a facile solution as in "Crime and Punishment". Only an echo is left in the quotation from the

21. Koteliansky, S.S./Woolf, V., "Stavrogin's Confession" (1922), pp. 30-33.

22. op. cit., p. 72.

23. op. cit., p. 80.

24. op. cit., p. 131.

Gospels at the beginning of the novel.

Dostoevsky held that "sin . . . is not innate in, but accidental to man",²⁵ and so a "universal harmony" is always possible, albeit "the essence of the universe [is] clouded by sin".²⁶ In each of his novels, Dostoevsky posits this hosanna, and in each succeeding novel we see a more and more religious conception of the world, as being beyond grace, which is a divine gift. Thus, the optimism conveyed by Stavrogin's confession had to be quenched. In effect, Stavrogin's "abyss beneath" is insoluble without God's help, and no amount of strength, beauty or reason (particularly reason) can assist man. Hence, we can infer, says A. Dolinin, that it may have been hubris rather than humility that brought Stavrogin to Tikhon. In any case, the extra chapter adds richness and depth to the character study of Stavrogin, for we see that he is not totally unshakeable.²⁷

Secondly, the doctrine of sin applies a Christocentric judgement on human nature. This theme²⁸ ushers in the idea of atheism pitted against moral responsibility. Man is seen as a self-transcending spirit both by idealistic philosophy and Existentialism. Stavrogin's deliberate rejection of the good (leading to his guilt) and with repentance (leading to divine forgiveness) is seen as a rejection of moral responsibility, as Kierkegaard said: "Despair over sin is an attempt to maintain oneself by sinking still

25. op. cit., p. 125.

26. op. cit., p. 135/136.

27. Dolinin, A., "Ispoved' Stavrogina", *Literaturnaya Mysl'*, 1922, Vol. 1.

28. Ramsey, P., "God's Grace and Man's Guilt", Journal of Religion, January, 1951, Vol. XXXI.

deeper".²⁹ Stavrogin refuses the first level, and passes into the despair of unforgiveness. This is a "definite position directly in the face of the offer of God's compassion".³⁰ Thus, his strength turns to weakness : he cannot receive forgiveness, for he is too weak. By nature, he can face people's anger, but not their laughter. Hence, Stavrogin's atheism is a sign of his moral pusillanimity, and of lack of a creative freedom.

For Dostoevsky, freedom was negative if it turned against God, as Berdyaev echoes when he says that Christ is not only the Truth, but the truth about freedom. God alone can set limits to human freedom, as Kierkegaard said: "Without God, man is [not too weak but] too strong for himself".³¹ Atheism is a limitless exercise of freedom: "Freedom acts out of nothing to create a deed which before was not".³² But man is bound to finite freedom, and can achieve true freedom outside of himself only with external, i.e. divine help. Raskolnikov's self-willed act was the result of meonic (initial) freedom: Opto, ergo sum. Dostoevsky wants to destroy this type of freedom.

Human freedom is dynamic, limitless, and, at once, vacuous without God. This freedom emerges in three spheres (1) individually (2) socially and (3) universally. God gives this human freedom terms and meaning: "Without God there is nothing a man is bound not to do".³³ Firstly, in the

29. op. cit.

30. op. cit.

31. Ramsey, P., "No Morality without Immortality", Journal of Religion, April, 1956, Vol. XXXVI.

32. op. cit.

33. op. cit.

personal context finite freedom comes into conflict with its own existence, as with Kirillov: "Suicide is an inner logical consequence of vital atheism".³⁴ Kirillov wants to achieve a full freedom, which is impossible, for to deny God is to attempt to exalt oneself into a divinity. Secondly, in the social context, finite freedom comes into conflict with social life, as in the case of Verkhovensky and Shigalev. "Without God, freedom is boundless:",³⁵ i.e. boundless submission as well as boundless despotism. For all is permitted. Thirdly, in the universal context, without God there can be no moral responsibility. Hence, without a posited ideal such as God, man is against himself, against others, and against morality. This means that deicide ends in suicide. Man is a theonomous and religious creature, and his rejection of God leads to slavery and immorality. We will see later how Ivan, the atheist, is torn between rationality (atheism) and the surd (belief, morality).

Dostoevsky teaches therefore that suicide is the logical result of atheism, claims G.W. Thorn,³⁶ as Stepan Trofimovitch says: "God is necessary to me, if only because He is the only being whom one can love eternally".³⁷ Human nature is latently evil, but suffering and the power of love will regenerate him, as Father Zosima says: "Love a man even in his sin, for that is the semblance of Divine Love, and is the highest love on earth . . . Loving humility is marvellously strong, the strongest of all things, and

34. op. cit.

35. op. cit.

36. Thorn, G.W., "Dostoevsky as a Religious Teacher", Contemporary Review, 1915, Vol. CVIII.

37. Dostoevsky, F.M., "The Possessed", quoted by Thorn, (op. cit.).

there is nothing else like it".³⁸

Finally, Dostoevsky shows that atheism is the root of determinism, weakness and amorality, as C.I. Glicksberg says "If there is no God, then there are no moral obligations, and the end justifies the means".³⁹ Dostoevsky "is a religious novelist par excellence",⁴⁰ who shows that "to destroy without conscience [like Verkhovensky], to kill without remorse, one must first shatter all faith in God".⁴¹ For Stavrogin, while he believes in a personal devil, cannot believe in God. It is his mind that is too strong, his spirit too weak: "It is the intellect, a limited and decidedly inferior instrument, that is the enemy of God".⁴² Morality, the values of life are caught in a trap where there are no easy victories, no miracles : "It is impossible to believe in God, and it is impossible not to believe: that is the dialectic of doubt in which his characters are trapped".⁴³ Atheism, in fine, is the denial of freedom, not its vindication.

We come ultimately to the idea of the loss of freedom in revolution. For revolution, the classic form of self-assertion, is the quickest way to the abyss, as E.H. Carr explains: "The ethical theory which, individually, produced the crime of Raskolnikov, leads socially to revolution. The Raskolnikov of private life is the nihilist of politics . . . The ethical problem of "Crime and Punishment" becomes the ethico-political problem of

38. Dostoevsky, F.M., "The Brothers Karamozov", quoted by Thorn, op. cit.

39. Glicksberg, C.I., "Dostoevsky and the Problem of Religion", Bucknell Review, 1959, Vol. VIII.

40. op. cit.

41. op. cit.

42. op. cit.

43. op. cit.

"The Devils".⁴⁴ This novel, says R.A. Tsanoff,⁴⁵ has a theme parallel to Turgenev's "Fathers and Sons", but whereas Turgenev took an objective (and some critics consider ambiguous) view of the nihilists, Dostoevsky passionately condemned them from the outset. Peter Verkhovensky, the champion of freedom and equality (an absurd juxtaposition) in the name of the masses will enslave the masses. This spirit of destruction is demonic, and negates the Christian qualities of Russia just as Raskolnikov's murder negates human qualities. Dostoevsky was ever the defender of things Russian, a "spokesman of Russia's millions".⁴⁶

Modern man has become a prey to doubts, as Fueloep-Miller says: "The devil torments modern man by suspending him midway between belief and disbelief in God".⁴⁷ Dostoevsky found the solution to disbelief in the figure of Christ; in the words of Kierkegaard: "I know now that I have found God in Christ, and that He will help me to triumph over my doubts".⁴⁸ For both Dostoevsky and Kierkegaard revolted against modern rationalism. Loss of belief was equivalent to a loss of life, and revolution was the propagator of ruin. The Soviets have cleverly inverted Dostoevsky's ethic: for him revolution was death, for them, revolution is vital and so freedom becomes a myth, as in Lenin's words: "Freedom is a bourgeois prejudice".⁴⁹ Berdyaev has pointed out that Dostoevsky's

44. Carr, E.H., "Dostoevsky" (1931), p. 218.

45. Tsanoff, R.A., "From Darkness to Light : F. Dostoevsky", Rice Institute Pamphlet, Houston, 1917, No. 2, Vol. IV.

46. op. cit.

47. Fueloep-Miller, R., "Fyodor Dostoevsky - Insight, Faith and Prophecy", (1950), p. 44.

48. op. cit., quoted, p. 57.

49. op. cit., quoted p. 106.

Grand Inquisitor symbolizes communist socialism rather than theocratic Catholicism. Both communism and fascism - the offspring of revolutions and wars - deny the primacy of human individuality and political freedom (as against political 'equality'). God, and indeed, Christianity had to be destroyed so that man could flourish, perhaps better to say exist, under the new régimes. "Dictatorship and collectivity are prerequisites of one another, each produces the other out of itself".⁵⁰ For Dostoevsky, revolution went against its own principles: fighters for freedom ended up by becoming despots, and freedom remained as much a chimaera as ever. His dream was for the brotherhood of all men in a spiritual, not a political sense, as he says in «ДНЕВНИК ПИСАТЕЛЯ»:

"Our goal is a fellowship with full respect for national individuality, for the maintenance of complete liberty of men with the indication of what liberty comprises, i.e. loving communion guaranteed by deeds, by the living example by the factual need of brotherhood".⁵¹

Dostoevsky fought contemporary 'self-isolation' and 'withdrawal'.⁵² He considered Europe dead, a 'precious graveyard' in the words of Ivan Karamazov. For Dostoevsky believed that Russians had a destiny, but not apart from God: they must return to the soil, i.e. «ПОЧВЕННОСТЬ» .

50. op. cit., p. 119.

51. Zenkovsky, V.V., quoted by, in "Russian Thinkers and Europe", (1926) - "The Diary of an Author".

52. op. cit.

He thought of the narod as «Богоносец» (i.e. *God-bearing*) identifying the Russian people with Orthodoxy. Russia, not revolution, was to renew the world. In rejecting Christ, Europe is left with "an impotent and barren freedom".⁵³ Man can be free and irrational (and believing) or unfree and rational (and atheistic). Freedom produces problems in a naturalistic order of life, i.e. in a life outside of Christ and the fact that modern scientific ideology rejects God, Zenkovsky calls "fathomless amorality",⁵⁴ in agreement with Dostoevsky.

For Dostoevsky, socialism could not solve the problem, because it has destroyed the very foundations of morality in man. In his mind, catholicism and socialism were linked as common oppressors of human freedom - he even forecast a "Catholic socialism".⁵⁵ As we shall see in the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor, Dostoevsky unifies his thoughts on catholicism as being the scourge of mankind. According to him, Orthodoxy alone maintains freedom, while at the same time minimizing its discrepancies. He wanted an inner unity and synthesis of the Russian people, with a chiliastic idea in the cult of the soil. His love for Russia often submerged his panhumanism, to the extent that his creative power was limited. Thus, for him, Russia was supreme. Revolution, socialism, catholicism, democracy and, in general, all European imports, were noxious.

So we see how closely are linked for Dostoevsky metaphysical and political ideas: the "abyss beneath" is both the pit of disbelief and the horror of revolution. In all events, freedom is negated, for only in

53. op. cit.

54. op. cit.

55. op. cit.

God can man be free, thus encompassing all three categories of freedom - ontological, circumstantial and acquired. Man must not rebel against his environment, which develops a rare acquired freedom, and he must finally surrender his natural freedom to God. In this process, the Russians lead, as V. Ivanov says:

«Народ-богоносец - живой светильник Церкви и некий ангел». ⁵⁶

He claims that what Dostoevsky called «реализм в высшем смысле» is really «реалистический символизм». ⁵⁷

This realistic symbolism is seen best in Dostoevsky's last masterpiece "The Brothers Karamazov", in which the novelist embodies metaphysical problems in flesh and blood protagonists, finally denying that he was merely a psychologist:

«Меня зовут психологом: неправда, я лишь реалист в высшем смысле, т.-е. изображаю все глубины души человеческой». ⁵⁸

Here antinomial personalities personify philosophical questions, and we wonder if at last a solution is to be reached. K. Mochulsky said of Stavrogin: «Спасти его может только чудо». ⁵⁹

Does a miracle yet save Ivan Karamazov? How can man achieve final freedom? What is the panacea then for human salvation? Our analysis in the next chapter should show us where Dostoevsky leads us in his last novel, and what type of freedom man is able to achieve.

56. Ivanov, V., "Osnovnoy mif v romane 'Besy', Russkaya Mysl', " April, 1914, Vol. IV.

57. op. cit.

58. Dostoevsky, F.M., "Iz zapisnoy knizhki" from "Pis'ma i zametki", St. Petersburg, 1883, p. 373.

59. Mochulsky, K., "Dostoevsky: zhizn i tvorchestvo", (1947), p. 379.

IV) FAITH - THE ABYSS ABOVE

CHAPTER IV

Dostoevsky dealt with four different domains in his four great novels: crime/society in "Crime and Punishment"; religion in "The idiot"; politics in "The Possessed"; and metaphysics (i.e. the debate on the existence of God) in "The Brothers Karamazov". There is a logical development of themes, and certain affinities between the characters of Myshkin and Alyosha, Mitya and Rogozhin, Svidrigailov and Stavrogin, but each novel explores a new field. "The Brothers Karamazov" was intended as Part I of a trilogy dealing with sin, suffering and redemption. One common factor, however in all of Dostoevsky's writing is, according to Dobroliubov: «Это боль о человеке, который признает себя не в силах или...не в праве быть человеком настоящим, полным, самостоятельным, - человеком, ¹самим по себе». Every man must realize that he has a right to life and happiness.

The problem of God tormented Dostoevsky all his life, and this novel was meant to be his final word on the subject. It came to publication in 1880, after three years of intensive preparation and collecting of material. Dostoevsky was greatly helped by the young philosopher Vladimir Solovyov (1853-1900)

¹N. Dobroliubov "Zabitye Lyudi". (1861).

whose doctoral thesis "The Crisis of Western Philosophy" attacked European Positivism and forecast the advent of new metaphysics. The discussion with Dostoevsky helped the writer to formulate and to project artistically the philosophical ideas that had been scattered throughout all his works. For facts on Orthodox doctrine, he consulted Constantin Pobedonostsev, procurator of the Holy Synod, and visited the monastery of Optina Pustyn' near Moscow (Father Zosima is conceived as a mixture of its starets Ambrosius and the 18th century saint Tikhon Zadonsky). From the 1860's, Dostoevsky had been deeply attracted to the preachings of Bishop Tikhon, and the latter was to figure both in "The Possessed" (Part II, ch. 9) and in "The Brothers Karamazov", and in the projected but incomplete "The Life of a Great Sinner". Dostoevsky was also interested in N. F. Fedorov's theory of common action, and developed the idea into a spiritual cell for brotherhood. As the book was to be his crowning work, it was also the most arduous, and was completed only three months before his death. Yet it is not only a metaphysical dialogue; it was his intention to produce a work of art, thus it is the culmination of his whole life, both as an artist and as a thinker.

Dostoevsky uses hate between fathers and sons as the basic theme, and parricide is the principle act of the novel. The responsibility for the crime falls in varying degrees on Dmitri, Ivan and Smerdyakov. This relationship of hatred

is counterpoised by the spiritual affinity between Alyosha and Father Zosima.

Dostoevsky's humanism is evident, a protesting and impious humanism, opposing social utopias, in order to protect man from the cruelty of historical reality. Alyosha raises the figure of Christ to neutralize the hubris of Ivan's poem on the Grand Inquisitor. The ideal of beauty put forward by Father Zosima repudiates materialism, modern science, socialism and Darwin's theories.

Dostoevsky's achievement in this novel was both the philosophical content and the fullness of the Karamazov's characterisation. In "The Brothers Karamazov" he heightened and gave a concentrated generalisation of his former heroes. Each character is symbolised by a quality, e.g. sensuality (Fedor), egoism (Ivan), licentiousness (Mitya) purity (Alyosha), humility (Zosima), frivolity (Mme Khokhlakova), self-love (Katerina Ivanovna) and impetuosity towards both good and evil (Grushenka). Thus the characters can be said to be almost allegorical. There is an affinity between all the Karamazovs: for instance, Mitya is a mixture of unrestrained sensuality and honourable instincts; Ivan is a new Raskolnikov who embodies an abstract form of Karamazovshchina; Fedor, in Gorky's words, is an amorphous motley soul, simultaneously timorous and bold, and essentially malicious.

In one of the drafts, Ivan is made to say that he would

like to destroy completely the idea of God. This is the idea behind the creation of the Grand Inquisitor, who does not believe in God. In his drafts, Dostoevsky compares Ivan with Kirillov from "The Possessed". Ivan defends man against suffering, and so joins the Antichrist of the Grand Inquisitor, while Kirillov in defence of human reason replaces Godman (=Christ) by man-god, and in order to negate the idea of God, kills himself. Book VI, Part II, concerning Father Zosima was written as an answer to the Pro and Contra dialogue of Chapter V of Book V, Part II. Ivan's logical argumentation is opposed by the life and spiritual ideology of Father Zosima.

K. Mochulsky comments that the three brothers Dmitri, Ivan and Alyosha represent the three aspects of Dostoevsky's personality: Dmitri is the romantic; Ivan is the atheistic believer in socialist utopias; Alyosha is the spiritual realist. They have a spiritual unity, because Mitya embodies the emotions, Ivan reason and Alyosha the power of love. Ivan's two doubles are Smerdyakov and the devil. All of the four men are jointly responsible for the murder, even Alyosha's passiveness is in part guilty. The punishments too are parallel, for Dmitri is sent to Siberia; Ivan has a serious attack of brain-fever, and Alyosha undergoes a spiritual crisis. But there is a hope for them of purification and a new life, whereas Smerdyakov is denied all this through his logical end in suicide, for like Stavrogin he has proved to himself that everything is permissible.

Ivan is the essence of the intellect a «могила», а «загадка» for his brothers. Yet Father Zosima easily solves the mystery of Ivan. Zosima tells him that his thoughts are split between belief and unbelief, and that the unsolved question of God tortures him. Zosima foretells his fall and rebirth. Ivan's thirst for life expresses the earthy power of the Karamazovs, as he tells Alyosha:

«Жить хочется и я живу ~~хотя~~^{бы} и вопреки в логике». ²

This lust for life is in conflict with his cold, godless logic. He rejects with his brain what he loves with his heart--this is his dichotomy. He is proud of his mind and would rather reject the world created by God than his own rationality. He sees an irrational source of evil and suffering in the world, particularly the pain of children. If the world's harmony is based on such suffering, he says, it is not good enough. Ivan rejects God out of love for humanity and this fact lends support to his argument. As Christianity recognizes transgression and doomsday, Ivan rejects them as false and senseless. Rejecting original sin, he transfers the responsibility of evil in this world from man to God. And an evil God cannot be God; thus he creates the poem of the Grand Inquisitor to destroy the idea of redemption.

The old Cardinal of the legend out of "love" for humanity assumes the task of ruling people by hypocrisy and

²F. M. Dostoevsky, "The Brothers Karamozov", IX, 288.

falsehood. He is not a villain but an ascetic, a sage and a philosopher. He pretends to be Christ's disciple; thus he is a false-Christ, who denies the commandment to love God in order to "love" man. But godless love will turn to hate, and losing his faith in God, the Cardinal loses faith in man too. Man becomes a weak creature whose goal is bread, and an easy conscience. The Cardinal has taken away from man everything that made him human, i.e. his ontological freedom. The Legend is the crux of the controversy of freedom versus an easy happiness. This split in Ivan's consciousness provokes the vision of the devil, who incarnates the evil of Ivan's mind. Ivan opposes his «НАДРЫВ», i.e. bruised sense of justice to God in a universal revolt, says E. Wasiolek.³

Alyosha is the positive principle of the book, a "realist" and philanthropist ahead of his time, rather, a mystic. He is a stronger version of Prince Myshkin from "The Idiot". In a planned but never realised continuation of the novel, Alyosha was to feature as the sinner who is finally resurrected. Yet he too is full of the Karamazovian lust for life, which fact Father Zosima recognizes from the outset. In Alyosha, Dostoevsky wanted to show a new type of Christian spirit--the monastic servitude to society. He follows Father Zosima's last piece of advice to him, and goes out into the world. But

³E. Wasiolek, "Dostoevsky, the Major Fiction", (1964).

before he attains the final stage of resurrection, he lives through periods of ideological clashes with Ivan, doubts and temptations. Yet whereas Ivan arrives at a rejection of God, Alyosha ends with a vision of the Resurrection and Christian love for humanity, concluding on a poem to God's love and man's faith in Him. As the devil is Ivan's support, so Father Zosima guides Alyosha. In Zosima we see the embodiment of Dostoevsky's faith in the spiritual awareness of the Russian people and in their messianism.

The main fact of the novel is the choice Dostoevsky posed between the Grand Inquisitor and Christ, between desire for contentment and a terrible freedom, between hate and love. Dmitri is the man of passion with the same Karamazovian strength as his father, but with more awareness of the "abyss above". Ivan and his two doubles represent the "abyss beneath". Thus the novel is concerned both with seduction and with Christ. Between these two poles, the souls of all the characters are ranged in hierarchical order. The life of the three brothers unites the three strains of spiritual conflict in one personality: murderous thought (Ivan), destructive passion (Dmitri), passive connivance (Alyosha), culminating in crime (Smerdyakov, a caricature of Ivan). Ivan is the European, Dmitri represents the old Russian, and Alyosha the new hope.

The four brothers are the aspects of one man at different spiritual stages between beast and man.

In the spiritual arguments, Dmitri the ordinary man, is neutral; Ivan chooses the lower abyss (in answer to Fedor's question about God, he denies His existence), and Alyosha chooses the upper abyss (affirming Him). But Ivan's "no" perhaps is not categorical. Like Kirillov in "The Possessed" «чувством он любит Божий мир, хотя разумом и не принимает его».⁴

The religious theme of the novel is the struggle of faith with disbelief, or rather with refusal of faith. The hearts of people, as Dmitri perceives, are the battelfields of God and the devil: as in Dmitri's own soul, there is the freedom of choice: «Может быть, не убью, а может, убью».⁵

As we see from Stavrogin's "Confession", Stavrogin has the same attitude to Tikhon, as Ivan to Zosima in this novel. The logical arguments of Ivan are opposed by the religious concepts of Zosima: Euclidean reason denies, but

⁴F. M. Dostoevsky, "The Brothers Karamazov", IX, quoted by Modulsky, p. 507.

⁵Op. cit., Dostoevsky, IX, quoted by Modulsky, p. 496.

mystical revelation affirms. For Ivan, reason is the only important attribute of man. His philosophical mind is the peak of the development of intellect from Plato to Kant, a razor-sharp tool which only succeeds in torturing its owner. He would rather deny God's world than his own mind. His rationalist understanding finds no meaning in the world, because of the presence of evil and suffering. He is willing to accept God, but not His world. Why? Because he wants to make Him alone responsible for chaos, and "give back his entrance ticket", as Zosima clearly sees from the start: «(Вопрос о Боге) ещё не решён в его сердце и мучает его».⁶

Ivan does not deny God, but struggles with Him. Man is born innocent, and so a child's suffering is all the more unjustifiable. It is Christ's dying on the Cross to redeem all sinners that Ivan is forced to reject, and it is an enormous task. For Alyosha, this is revolt against God, and he confronts Ivan with just this point. The latter cleverly changes tactics at Alyosha's question, and from his logical arguments jumps into his legend of the Grand Inquisitor.

Ivan questions Voltaire's statement, about whether God should be invented if He does not exist. Did God make man, or man God, is the question that torments Ivan, but he does not

⁶F. M. Dostoevsky, "The Brothers Karamazov", IX, quoted by Mochulsky, p. 512.

really want an answer, as he knows already: the question is purely rhetorical. Perhaps this is because he can bear his own unbelief, but would find a negative answer from anyone else unbearable. He admits he wants to understand God like a geometrical theorem. As man can only grasp three physical dimensions, he is willing to accept God as a «вечная гармония». He suffers from his huge intellect, and admits wryly: «Ум подлец, а глупость пряма и честна».⁷

He accepts that Christ was God, but condemns His love for the earth as an impossible miracle. Why? Because every man suffers alone, and thus Christ's martyrdom is not a universal but a personal act. As an extreme example, Ivan takes the suffering of children «(которых) можно любить даже и вблизи».⁸

If man has invented the devil in his own image, then God is synonymous with the devil. Ivan logically cannot reconcile the existence of a "good" God with evil. He refuses to accept the existence of God, universal harmony, the knowledge of good and evil, if the price to be paid is a child's needless

⁷ Op. cit., Dostoevsky, IX, 296.

⁸ Op. cit., Dostoevsky, IX, 298.

suffering. For him, even one tear threatens the principle of good: «На нелепостях мир стоит».⁹

Ivan ultimately wants recompense now, and not in infinity: «Мне надо возмездие, иначе ведь я истреблю себя».¹⁰

If universal harmony is to be bought with a child's tears, how are these themselves going to be redeemed? If there exists this harmony, why is there a Hell? Ivan struggles with all these paradoxes within his mind. Christ's dying is not enough, and at all events did no good, as the Legend is meant to prove. The Legend is the ideological centre of the novel, the story of a «слабое сердце».

Christ according to the Legend appears in 16th century Seville, and creates miracles to which the Grand Inquisitor is witness. He is arrested, and later confronted in the dungeons. Christ is told categorically to go away, as He is not needed any more; for, the Pope has all that is necessary to guard the conscience of the people. Christ wanted by his own actions to liberate people. Now the people have laid this burdensome freedom at the feet of the Inquisitors. The irony is that the people still think they are free, but this emasculated freedom is not what Christ died for. The clergy

⁹Op. cit., Dostoevsky, IX, 305.

¹⁰Op. cit., Dostoevsky, IX, 306.

says the Cardinal have "conquered" freedom, so as to make the people happy.

When Christ was tempted in the wilderness by the devil three times, three times He refused. These are the very points on which the old Cardinal attacks Him; He refused (1) to turn stones into bread (miracle) (2) to throw himself off a high tower to test God's love (mystery) (3) to have power in Rome and over all the lands (authority). And the three secrets of controlling the conscience of the masses to make them "happy" are miracle, mystery and authority according to the Grand Inquisitor, in other words, the Antichrist or devil's disciple.

Christ wanted free love, but people do not desire this complete freedom of choice to believe and love: «Лучше пора-
11
ботите нас, но накормите нас».

The clergy have taken up the natural freedom of man, and lie in the name of Christ to make him happy. Men need something to bow down before, a common idol, and the old Cardinal has exploited this need for a spiritual crutch. He applauds the devil's action in tempting Christ: «Нет у человека заботы мучительнее, как найти того, кому бы передать поскорее тот дар
12
свободы, с которым это несчастное существо рождается».

¹¹ Op. cit., Dostoevsky, IX, 318.

¹² F. M. Dostoevsky, "The Brothers Karamazov", IX, 319.

To keep one's conscience at bay is almost more precious to man than earthly bread: «Тайна бытия человеческого не в том, чтобы только жить, а в том, для чего жить».¹³

But for man to have an idol and earthly bread is happiness indeed, and this is what the Cardinal tries to procure for him.

Because Christ did not want people to be enslaved by these three secrets, the Grand Inquisitor accuses Christ of asking too much from man. If He had respected man less, He would have loved him more. Men do not desire freedom of choice to love and believe, but covet only a lie so long as they are told it is the truth: «Мы давно уже не с тобой, а с ним, уже восемь веков».¹⁴

He and his colleagues have put the three gifts of the devil to good use. The Grand Inquisitor despises Christ's amateurish tactics, as a professional does a tyro's: if Christ had accepted the gifts, He would have given the people something to worship, He would have helped them to keep their conscience at peace, to unite everything in a "world harmony"--and this at least would have been more like the real thing.

The clergy now dominate with complete despotism,

¹³ Op. cit., Dostoevsky, IX, 320.

¹⁴ Op. cit., Dostoevsky, IX, 323.

whereas He would have ruled with kindness: every sin will be forgiven, if it is committed with their approval, private life must be conducted according to their orders. And after death, the people will find nothing, and the irony turns into a black joke. The old Cardinal rejects the synthesis made by man of the divine and human principles of freedom. Christ gave freedom of choice, which entails individual responsibility, which in turn subjects man to torments of conscience (remorse, temptation, hope): all this brings him suffering. Thus Christianity is a religion of suffering, the way Christ preached it, says the Grand Inquisitor. In the Roman Church, the Inquisitors made the choice for man. Religion according to them should soothe, should be easily followed by the masses, whereas Christianity is only for the spiritual aristocrats. The Grand Inquisitor wants to give a Euclidean organisation to the world, and this leads to his Shigalevian despotism.

The religion of earthly bread is comparable to the atheistic socialism as seen in "The Possessed." For Dostoevsky, the Roman Church would ultimately have fallen in with socialism and built a Tower of Babel on these «ХЛЕБЫ», on Antichrist. The Grand Inquisitor defends his treachery of Christ as "love" of the people just as Ivan does - but both are lying, the first consciously, the second unconsciously. Dostoevsky wanted to unmask Roman Catholicism and contemporary socialism. Just as men want miracles to captivate them, mysteries to enslave them, and authority to impose a worship on them (hence betraying their total freedom), so the Church betrays God to make men "happy" (thus cheating Christ's intent). The Roman Church is, in Ivan's portrayal, the last resort of atheism, by which God is vulgarized, commercialized, socialized, and effectively disarmed. For Dostoevsky, Rome was aiming at a Caesaristic empire. Here one must point out that any ecclesiastic system, based on hierarchical positions, in Orthodoxy too, can be

blamed as being "godless", for a ritualistic religion is separated from the spirit of God by its very ritual. True believers have usually personalised their God, and been called heretics by their own Church.

Dostoevsky's most vital intent in this last novel was to examine the meaning of freedom and power. The old Cardinal is shown as an ascetic, a seer, a quasi-philanthropic reformer, who has finally lost his faith in God. He is not antiChrist, but mock-Christ. Solovyov in «Три Разговора» had the same interpretation of the Grand Inquisitor; the latter stops loving God, so as to love man. But this very "love" turns to hatred, as Mochulsky says:

«Отрицая бессмертие души, он отвергает духовную природу
человека».¹⁵

Though

this is said about Ivan, it applies also to the old Cardinal. Absence of belief in God means absence of belief in man: «Если нет Бога и бессмертия души, то не может быть и любви к человечеству».¹⁶

In Ivan's article on the ecclesiastical courts, he says that mankind is hateful at close quarters (not so, children). Thus when he says: « Не хочу гармонии, из-за любви к человечеству не хочу»¹⁷ we find, a logical contradiction. This is because, his love for mankind is merely a rhetorical flourish: he only wants to put himself in God's place. Ivan, because of his exquisite intellect, cannot love people warmly and undemandingly like Alyosha. He can love man only in the abstract, at a distance.

¹⁵ K. Mochulsky, "Dostoevsky: Zhizn' i tvorchestvo" (1947), p. 510.

¹⁶ Dostoevsky's notes cf Mochulsky, p. 474.

¹⁷ F. M. Dostoevsky "The Brothers Karamazov", V. IX, p. 307.

Thus the old Cardinal's "love" for mankind is not real love: he pitied and tyrannizes over the masses as «МАЛОСИЛЬНЫ, ПОРОЧНЫ, НИЧТОЖНЫ И БУНТОВЩИКИ»,¹⁸ animals or slaves rather than men.' To build his «всеобщее счастье», he has to resort to tyranny, Shigalev's method «безграничного деспотизма»¹⁹. This opposes Zosima's idea that freedom is God's gift, as Mochulsky says: «Свобода есть акт веры»²⁰, and evil exists only because there is freedom. In Dostoevsky's scheme of the world, there is a clear dichotomy: freedom is God and love; power, self-will and hate are the devil. If any of the bad elements strays into the personality of the good man he is doomed. So all earthly pleasure is always foreshadowed by the threat of suffering. Only with God constantly in mind, can man be sure of a less ephemeral happiness.

If «всё позволено», as for Raskolnikov, there is no Hell, just as there is no God. Ivan's pure idea of murder leads to Smerdyakov's act, for as the latter says, if God does not exist, there is no such thing as being virtuous: virtue is meaningless. He confuses final freedom (only in God, for Dostoevsky) with initial freedom (or licence). Negating God, Ivan is faced with Smerdyakov, the ape, madness, the abyss beneath. The devil is himself, but a "stupid, trivial" self -- his lower self.

¹⁸Op. cit., Dostoevsky, V. IX, p. 318.

¹⁹F. M. Dostoevsky, "The Possessed", V. VII, p. 422.

²⁰Op. cit., Mochulsky, p. 511.

Ivan does not deny God, but the possibility of conceiving Him, for God is, by definition, not of this world. On the threshold of belief, he withdraws. Ivan wants to replace God, to do without Him, to be whole himself (heart and mind): «Я бы желал совершенно уничтожить идею Бога»²¹. That is why he refuses the faith that is almost at hand. Here again Dostoevsky's idea of nature's superman comes in. But unlike Stavrogin, Ivan is not at ease in his atheism. He is torn between God, and the devil. When he drives out the devil, it is himself, his own mind that he is unconsciously repudiating. Like Kirillov, he perceives inwardly the need for God, but takes the voluntary path to Hell, Love and faith struggle with reason and hate, and the outcome is left unsolved. Dmitri foretells Ivan's rise: «Иван всех превзойдёт. Ему жить, а не нам. Он выздоровеет»²². The outcome of the novel as a whole is more optimistic than the of "The Possessed," because Ivan himself, the declared atheist, is less radical at his most bitter than the inert Stavrogin.

For Dostoevsky, a Christian can only be free in God and love. A man who attempts total freedom on his own is doomed. Alyosha, contrary to Ivan, starts with love. He realizes that Ivan's poem is praise, and not censure of Christ (and so it is), and his Grand Inquisitor only a phantasy. Ivan attacks the Church, not Christ himself, defends true faith against the atheism of Catholicism. But with brotherly concern, Alyosha is concerned more with Ivan's health and state of mind: he fears that Ivan's spiritual unhealth will kill him surely. Just as Ivan wants to be healed by Alyosha's love, so Alyosha turns to Father Zosima for protection, as a fountain of goodness from which to replenish his own faith.

²¹Dostoevsky's notes, cf. Mochulsky, p. 482.

²²F. M. Dostoevsky "The Brothers Karamazov", V. X, p. 321.

Alyosha is a realist who believes: «В реалисте, вера не от чуда рождается, а чудо от веры» ²³. Both Alyosha and Zosima are men, not saints, both are motivated by love. Zosima has a joyous doctrine of love, believing that God loves man more than he can conceive; that He loves him in his sin and with his sin. If man loves, he belongs to God, as Love redeems, saves every thing. The effort matters more than the result: to admit one's faults and to love is enough. Conquest should be through love only: «Любите всё создание божие, а целое, и каждую песчинку» ²⁴. Love for mankind can only come through God.

Christ is the mystery of freedom: man believes not because but in spite of that mystery. Dostoevsky invites us to this faith which is incomprehensible and logically inadmissible: «Образ Христов храним, и воссияет как драгоценный алмаз всему миру» ²⁵. In this freedom, every man is an equal, and Zosima's precept is: «Помни особенно, что не можешь ничьим судиею быть» ²⁶. All men are brothers and mutually answerable, hence the concept of universal responsibility: «Воистину всякий пред всеми за всех и за всё виноват» ²⁷.

Alyosha tells Ivan to love life more than logic, and then he will understand. This is echoed by Father Zosima when he recalls the words of his brother Markel: «Жизнь есть рай, и все мы в раю, да не хотим знать того, а если бы захотели узнать, завтра же и стал бы на всём свете рай» ²⁸. Paradise is here and now, if every moment is lived to the full in love. But Ivan refuses to love the world,

²³ F. M. Dostoevsky "The Brothers Karamazov," V. IX, p. 35.

²⁴ Op. cit., Dostoevsky, V. IX, p. 399.

²⁵ Op. cit., Dostoevsky, V. IX, p. 396.

²⁶ Op. cit., Dostoevsky, V. IX, p. 401.

²⁷ Op. cit., Dostoevsky, V. IX, p. 361.

²⁸ Op. cit., Dostoevsky, V. IX, p. 361.

life, God before his own reason. In the figures of Alyosha and Ivan Christian love confronts godless reason.

For Father Zosima joy is as important as, and inseparable from, love: «Награды же никогда не ищи, ибо и без того уже великая тебе награда на сей земле: духовная радость твоя, которую лишь праведный

обретает». ²⁹ But this ideal joy is spiritual not fleshly: «[чтобы] человек находил свои радости лишь в подвигах просвещения и милосердия, а не в радостях жестоких как ныне». ³⁰

Zosima traces the soul's ascension to God: through (1) suffering (2) humility (3) universal responsibility (4) sympathy (5) joy (6) love and the zenith (7) ecstasy: «Люби повергаться на землю и лобызать её...Омочи землю слезами радости твоея и люби сии слезы твои» ³¹. Hell, as in all Dostoevsky's work, in the incapacity to love: «[ад есть] страдание о том, что нельзя уже более любить» ³². Zosima essentially embodies Dostoevsky's ecstatic awareness of the world.

Alyosha's ecstasy answers Ivan's doubts. Personal love is transformed into universal brotherhood, and the novel finishes on a triumphant confession of faith in resurrection, in Alyosha's words to the children:

«Непременно восстанем, непременно увидим» ³³. Thus we see how Dostoevsky opposes the contra of Ivan to the pro of Alyosha.

²⁹ F. M. Dostoevsky "The Brothers Karamazov," V. IX, p. 403.

³⁰ Op. cit., Dostoevsky, V. IX, p. 397.

³¹ Op. cit., Dostoevsky, V. IX, p. 403.

³² Op. cit., Dostoevsky, V., IX, p. 403.

³³ Op. cit., Dostoevsky, V. IX, p. 338.

The old Cardinal starts with "love" for mankind and ends with despotism, and the loss of freedom. Christ's silence justifies man as a free being: «Свободная личность человека раскрывается только во Христе; любовь к человечеству может быть только во Христе»³⁴ Christianity is the religion of spiritual freedom. Christ has no need to repudiate the Grand Inquisitor. His presence is enough, and His kiss proves that he can love even the Grand Inquisitor. This is Zosima's concept of Christianity. If Christ can love the old Cardinal who perverted His Word, then God exists and is good. Christ's action is the final answer to Ivan and the Grand Inquisitor.

Just as Raskolnikov's «Всё позволено» is re-enacted in Smerdyakov's murder, so Stavrogin's idea of self-destruction is complemented by Ivan's 'bes!'. In the same way that Stavrogin's personality is splintered into belief and disbelief so Ivan's dialogue with the devil splinters his personality into paradoxical statements: he refuses to say he accepts the devil, but to Alyosha he affirms his actual existence. Like Stavrogin, Ivan when he believes, does not believe that he believes, and when he does not believe, does not believe that he does not believe, as Mochulsky says: «Он верит, когда не верит, отрицая, утверждает».³⁵ For Smerdyakov, the natural atheist, who puts Ivan's ideas into practice, there is no hope: he kills himself «своею собственной волей и охотой»³⁶ as a final act of demonic self-will. But for Ivan, the tortured atheist there may be redemption if he allows his intellect

³⁴Op. cit., Mochulsky, p. 511.

³⁵Op. cit., Mochulsky, p. 512.

³⁶F. M. Dostoevsky, "The Brothers Karamazov, " V. X, p. 239.

to be submerged by feelings and conscience. It is for him to find his own way.

Dostoevsky tried always to reconcile the irreconcilable, and succeeds to a great extent in this his last novel. For him the total spiritual experience was predominant, and externals were of minimal value. Dostoevsky was caught between the realms of phantasy and reality, the spirit and the flesh. In the artistic and spiritual confession expressed in the pro and contra arguments, he tried to remain as objective as possible, but his own passionate belief, his ethic reflected in Alyosha and Father Zosima, remains his final answer for happiness on earth. The barrier between Ivan and Zosima does not seem insurmountable.

Where Dostoevsky differs from Sartre is that for the former freedom is in God only, and for the latter it is outside of God. Sin leads to punishment (suffering), and repentance to redemption. Final freedom is inseparable from God. This novel may be examined from four aspects (1) the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor (2) the love of Christ as being the freedom of man (love → freedom) (3) initial freedom to be sacrificed to attain (4) final freedom which is in God alone.

Firstly many critics have dealt with Dostoevsky from the particular aspect of the Legend, and these are divided into those who agree with Dostoevsky's view of freedom, and those who disagree. Among the first, P. Rahv³⁷ is one of the most important. He sees Ivan as representing a general «мировоззрение», expressing an eschatological frame of mind typical of the Russian intelligentsia of the time. Freedom is regarded as a consummation of rebellion and happiness as a rejection of human freedom.

³⁷ P. Rahv "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor", Partisan Review, May-June 1954, Vol. XXI.

The Legend has two protagonists; the Grand Inquisitor, standing for historical reality, and Jesus Christ who represents freedom. Both are essentially Russian in nature, the cruel versus the meek. In the Grand Inquisitor, Dostoevsky is attacking the mixture of socialism and Catholicism, linked together by the authoritarian principle. This is what makes Dostoevsky's work a criticism of power as well as a metaphysical dialogue.

Merezhkovsky has called Dostoevsky a religious revolutionist, for the latter favoured a Utopian, latent, mystical anarchism. Dostoevsky feared that man would be weak enough to want an organised happiness. The concept of freedom held by Dostoevsky evolved through "Notes from the Underground" (1862) to "The Brothers Karamazov" (1880). Man is seen as irrational, and perfect societies are hence impossible, because they are based on human, i.e. irrational bases. But for the Grand Inquisitor perfect societies are possible because man does not want freedom, i.e. irrationality. The difference between the early and later concepts of freedom is clear. Ordinov from the early short story "The Landlady" is a psychologist who attacks reason. The Grand Inquisitor is a historian who exposes the myth of freedom. Ordinov can refuse Christ just as he refuses reason; this is pure anarchy of the mind. It is only later that Dostoevsky developed a new concept of freedom, based on Christian love and the man's self-surrender. Shigalev, as Rahv points out, believes that the extremes of freedom, and despotism are close, whereas Dostoevsky asserted that freedom of choice between good and evil is the very essence of man's humanity. Freedom, being linked thus to existence, is inseparable

from suffering. The Existentialists likewise hold that to grasp one's being in freedom is fraught with "angst" and pain. The difference is that for Dostoevsky the choice is moral and religious, whereas for the Existentialists it is a total choice of man's being. Dostoevsky's invitation to choose between Christ and the Grand Inquisitor is a stark one — there is no middle way.

R. Guardini has criticised the Legend on just this point. The Christianity of the "Legend" at bottom has no relationship with this middle level, and it is this which makes it unreal."³⁸ He claims that the Grand Inquisitor is right, because Dostoevsky's idea of Christ is too high for the average man. Indeed to deny gradation between good and evil is to reject the God of love, humility and reality. For Ivan, Christ stands for the surd . He offers final freedom, too difficult for men, who at best desire servitude or initial freedom. The Catholic Church opposes the religion of love and freedom in the truly Christian sense. Rahv claims that Christ as Dostoevsky portrayed Him is detached and egoistic. Ivan creates Him as such, because he himself is detached from the world, and detachment was a quasi-sin for Dostoevsky. Ivan rejects God's creation as irrational, non-Euclidean. He wants peace on earth now. He supports the Grand Inquisitor who wants to wrest the world from God and make it "perfect."

³⁸R. Guardini, "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor", Cross Currents, Sept. 1952, Vol. III.

Ivan believes in God to an extent, but he wants to take away His divine moral authority. Ivan and Smerdyakov have placed themselves beyond divine law, the former by his revolt, the latter by his satanism. Ivan acts like a superman, a Grand Inquisitor in his old objectivity, but like Raskolnikov he is weak and barren: "Vitality becomes corrupt when the heart is not linked to the spirit".³⁹ In effect the superman becomes a depersonalized creature. Ivan's desire to raise himself to a superhuman amorality comes to a head in his meetings with the devil. If salvation is through renunciation of the self, Ivan would rather die. Ivan's vindication of individuality is cosmic. Guardini confirms: "The 'Grand Inquisitor' is the story of Ivan and his family: the story of man, of the human family."⁴⁰

Christ gives liberty to man, responsibility for action. The idea of equality negates that of liberty, for the two cannot exist. For Ivan, people are only equal, but not free. Ivan, starting and finishing with intellect, rationalizes religion as a thing of the mind. If man is not made in the image of God, the devil is made in the image of man."⁴¹ Ivan paradoxically despises people emotionally, but glorifies man intellectually.

V. Rozanov attempts to see deeper into the Legend as a reflection of Dostoevsky's personal metaphysical struggles. He shows how in this chapter Dostoevsky play-acted his own inner drama:

« 'Легенда о Великом Инквизиторе'... отвечает на потребность улитворить этот хаос, уничтожить это смятение»⁴² In an epilogue, he amazingly puts

³⁹Op. cit., Guardini.

⁴⁰Op. cit., Guardini.

⁴¹C. A. Manning, "The Grand Inquisitor", American Theological Review, Jan. 1933, Vol. XV.

⁴²V. Rozanov, "Legenda o velikom inkvizitore F.M. Dostoevskogo" (1906), p. 225.

Dostoevsky below Gogol as a creative artist, but rates Dostoevsky's genius for metaphysics as huge.⁴³

Like Guardini, Camus sides with Ivan's concept of freedom from God against Dostoevsky's: "[Ivan] refutes Him in the name of a moral value."⁴⁴ Nothing can compensate for evil in the world. If evil is essential to divine creation, then creation is unacceptable."⁴⁵ Ivan is rebelling for the sake of all humanity and human dignity: «Лучше уж я останусь при неотомщенном страдании моём и неутолённом негодовании моём, хотя бы я был и неправ»⁴⁶. Ivan represents the refusal of salvation, because he feels real compassion for humanity: "Ivan rebels against a murderous God; but from the moment that he begins to rationalize his rebellion, he deduces the law of murder".⁴⁷ But this raises a practical problem, as Camus points out: "The question is: can one live in a state of rebellion? Ivan implies that one can live in a state of rebellion by pursuing it to the bitter end, i.e. as God and immortality do not exist, the new man is permitted to become God."⁴⁸ To accept crime and one's own law is to become God, and this is what the Grand Inquisitor is doing: "The Grand Inquisitors proudly refuse freedom and the bread of heaven and offer the bread of this earth without

⁴³V. Rozanov P. 225.

⁴⁴A. Camus, "The Rebel" (1954), p. 55.

⁴⁵Op. cit., p. 55.

⁴⁶F. M. Dostoevsky, "The Brothers Karamazov," V. IX, p. 308.

⁴⁷Op. cit., p. 58.

⁴⁸Op. cit., p. 58.

freedom."⁴⁹ This is a "noble" task, "humanitarian" in the true sense, as it liberates man from his freedom! Therefore, siding with mankind, Ivan ends with solitude.

D. H. Lawrence similarly sides with man against God: "[The Legend]...is a deadly, devastating summing up, unanswerable because borne out by the long experience of humanity. It is reality versus illusion, and the illusion was Jesus, while time itself retorts with the reality."⁵⁰ History has proved Jesus Christ's message inadequate, i.e. irrelevant to present situations: "The inadequacy of Jesus lies in the fact that Christianity is too difficult for men, the vast mass of men...Jesus loved mankind for what it ought to be, free and ~~limitless~~. The Grand Inquisitor loves it for what it is, with all its limitations."⁵¹ Man will always demand miracle, mystery and authority for by nature he is weak. For Lawrence, Ivan has made a restatement of man against the idea of his perfectibility - man, in other words, cannot choose between good and evil. It must be chosen for him from above. Therefore he is not meant to be free, responsible or perfectible.

Like Guardini and Lawrence, N. O. Lossky condemns the harshness of the message Dostoevsky preaches: «Христианская Церковь по существу Церковь всех, а не только необыкновенных людей, - Церковь повседневной жизни, а не только героических минут. Как и сам человек, она из средней области возносится в высоту и спускается в глубину. Христианство Легенды не имеет в основе никакого отношения к этой средней области и таким образом становится нереальным».⁵²

⁴⁹ Op. cit., p. 61 (*My Italics*).

⁵⁰ D. H. Lawrence "Selected Literary Criticism" (1955), p. 233.

⁵¹ Op. cit., Lawrence, p. 235 (*My Italics*).

⁵² N. O. Lossky, "Dostoevsky i ego Khristianskoe miroponimanie" (1953), pp. 361-362.

Thus we can see how time has changed the tenor in favour of the Grand Inquisitor. He is now the champion of man's freedom. To the Christian, Dostoevsky's concept of freedom seems too exacting; and for the Existentialist, it is overly arbitrary.

The role of Christ is very important in all of Dostoevsky's work. V. Ivanov shows how this emphasis on Christ is a quasi-Existentialist idea. Normally, one objectifies the Other into a thing, while remaining a subject oneself. This necessarily restricts the freedom of the Other. But by an act of will and faith (both important attributes for Dostoevsky) i.e. «проникновение» (a terminus technicus) the other Ego does not become one's object, but remains as subject. This is an inversion of the normal system of coordinates and welds together the concepts of freedom and faith. For only by faith, can one be free, and let the Other remain free. This is experienced in true love in the self-surrender, self-renunciation of love: "Es, ergo sum".⁵³ Furthermore will and faith are not only not incompatible, but are complementary, as Ivanov says: "Faith is a sign of the good health of the will."⁵⁴ A personal experience of the other Ego leads one to the assertion that man destroys himself without Christ. The alternative is that we arrive at a solipsistic nihilism: "Love can exist only in the world of reality, whereas hatred can blaze in a world of illusion."⁵⁵ Thus only through Christ, ie. love, can man be free in fullness.

⁵³V. Ivanov, "Freedom and the Tragic Life" (1957), p. 27.

⁵⁴Op. cit., p. 28.

⁵⁵Op. cit., p. 30-31 (*My Italics*).

Hence faith is shown as indispensable to the structure of the human personality: "Faith in God...guarantees the value of the personality."⁵⁶ The "yes" or "no" to God's existence thus equates to "to be or not to be?" Dostoevsky, divided between the empirical (transcendent) and the metaphysical (immanent) worlds, tried to reconcile Christ and human freedom in a mystical realism: "Dostoevsky's apologetics...are essentially dynamic and tragic."⁵⁷ Dostoevsky's sole guide is Christ. Man must give a reality to his freedom by an act of faith. Dostoevsky does not admit a premiseless philosophy. His dialectic is based on a fundamental premise given by the first and determining decision taken by man. For Dostoevsky, reasoning is concerned only with form; it is love that approaches the essence of humanity. Therefore empiric and divine realities are not opposed, but revealed in Jesus Christ. Alyosha is free in that he loves: "As a truly free man, he [Alyosha] is immune from the universal infirmity of his time -- that of self-love -- and is therefore at once invulnerable and incorruptible."⁵⁸ Love is holy and a founding principle of the Russian «душа»: "The acknowledgement of holiness as the highest value is the foundation of a people's philosophy of life, and the symbol of the people's longing for Holy Russia."⁵⁹ Jesus Christ is the essence of love and freedom, the twin poles of the human personality,

⁵⁶ Op. cit., p. 31.

⁵⁷ Op. cit., p. 110.

⁵⁸ Op. cit. p. 148.

⁵⁹ Op. cit., Ivanov, p. 163.

for Dostoevsky: "Even among the people dwelling together in mutual and daily intercourse, those alone can be essentially bound by Christ who realize Him as a Person: those alone are genuinely good who genuinely love Him. Only such a bond does not diminish the personality but strengthens it."⁶⁰

Dostoevsky, during all his artistic life, tried to give a concrete form to goodness, to create a great, positive, holy figure. For this reason, most of his heroes are characterised by movement and questing. The miracle of grace is when the Holy Spirit visits the human soul. It is Ivan who constructs this syllogism: «Если Бога нет, то всё позволено

но не всё позволено

следовательно, Бог есть» .⁶¹

In fact, without God, life is an impossibility. Faith is the ultimate criterion:

«Вера в Бога...есть последняя и основная интуиция нашего сознания, то непосредственное и объективно данное, с которого начинается и которым кончается всякая духовная жизнь».⁶²

Religion is the dual link of man to God, and God to man. This means that

for Dostoevsky goodness exists absolutely in the world: «Он [Dostoevsky] верит, что добро реально существует и как таковое, не зависит от че-

ловеческой мысли и воли».⁶³ The absolute of Freedom and goodness

can be obtained by man only with God's help, as Mochulsky says: «Свобода - божественный дар, драгоценнейшее достояние человека».⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Op. cit., p. 165-166.

⁶¹ L. A. Zander (1960), p. 24, "Тауна dobra".

⁶² Op. cit., Zander, p. 27.

⁶³ Op. cit., Zander, p. 30.

⁶⁴ K. Mochulsky, "Dostoevsky, Zhizn'i tvorchestvo: (1947) p. 511.

Freedom indeed, is an act of faith in Dostoevsky's ethic.

Thirdly, his final freedom is diametrically opposed to initial freedom. Initial freedom, *free-will*, leads to the abyss beneath. Self-assertion results in the destruction of the personality, whereas final freedom, i.e. the surrender of initial freedom to God, strengthens the human personality. God and immortality are therefore vital ideals in the life here and now as Dostoevsky recorded: "If a conviction of immortality is indispensable for human existence, this conviction is presumably the normal condition of mankind; and if this is so, then the immortality of the human soul is an indubitable fact."⁶⁵ Logic is not necessary to life, whereas faith is, for even Ivan claims: "I live, because I want to live, even in despite of logic."⁶⁶ Love, the corollary of faith, is the key to life: "It is only by loving life that we can attain any understanding of its meaning."⁶⁷ Alysoha represents the soul; Ivan the mind; and Dmitri the body says R. West.⁶⁸ Ivan's reliance on the intellect was for Dostoevsky utterly godless. For the latter, intelligence promoted atheism (and simultaneously the evils of industrialism) in the Russian people, essentially innocent and full of faith. He calls on the Russian God to save his people from the maw of progress. And it is just this plea to stave the march of time that M. Gorky attacked thirty year later: «Достоевский - гений, но это злой гений наш...»⁶⁹ For

⁶⁵F. M. Dostoevsky, "The Diary of an Author", quoted by E. H. Carr, p. 284.

⁶⁶F. M. Dostoevsky, "The Brothers Karamazov", quoted by E. H. Carr, p. 289.

⁶⁷E. H. Carr, "Dostoevsky" (1931), p. 289.

⁶⁸R. West, "Redemption and Dostoevsky", New Republic, June 5, 1915, Vol. II.

⁶⁹M. Gorky, "O Karamazovshchine", Russkoe Slovo (Sept. 22, 1913) in Sobranie Sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh, vol. 24 (Moscow, 1953).

Gorky, Dostoevsky's accent on salvation through suffering is an unhealthy, and demoralising one. This masochism was a decadent tendency, and irrelevant to the new progressive age. In another article,⁷⁰ he sees Dostoevsky's love of freedom as a simple licence from social and moral laws. This leads, he says, to savagery and barbarism; thus Dostoevsky is a harmful influence; Ivan Karamazov is even equated to Oblomov. This is a complete reversal of Dostoevsky's intent, and above all, of his concept of freedom, as not being licence.

Lastly, having dealt with the Legend, the rôle of Christ, and initial freedom, we arrive at an examination of final freedom. This final freedom can be attained by a total surrender to God. Not everyone is capable of this «акт веры»⁷¹; only the true mystic is. Dostoevsky was strongly attracted to Saint Tikhon Zadonsky, and in the original drafts of "The Life of a Great Sinner" and "The Brothers Karamazov" it is he who is portrayed, later replaced by the hermit, the Elder Zosima. However, some critics hold that Zosima is moulded on Amvrossy, the monk of Optina Pustyn.¹ Dostoevsky was led to religion and Orthodoxy after he rediscovered the inner life of the masses during his exile in Siberia. Just as Tikhon confronts the power of negation in Stavrogin so Zosima refutes the devastating logic of Ivan. The parallels between Tikhon and Zosima are that both preach the gospel of love as leading to God and final freedom, and hatred as being hell on earth. Prayer is seen as education. V. Rozanov adds that Tikhon is portrayed in both Zosima

⁷⁰M. Gorky, "Yeshcho o Karamazovshchine," Russkoe Slovo (Oct. 27, 1913), in Sobranie Sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh, vol. 24 (Moscow, 1953).

⁷¹Mochulsky, op.cit., p. 511.

and in Alyosha. But it is certain that Dostoevsky turned for his Existential religious philosophy, for its emphasis on freedom and responsibility to St. Tikhon, as N. Gorodetzsky says: "The person of Tikhon was identified in his mind with the best aspirations of the Russian people."⁷² St. Tikhon is a living reply to the anti-religious ideas of 18th century Russia. "The Brothers Karamazov" was to be an answer to atheism, particularly in the words of the dying Zosima.

Merezhkovsky sums up that all Dostoevsky's heroes are "God-tortured". The denial or affirmation of God is for Dostoevsky the source of all human passion and suffering. Without God, there would be no morality. "The natural, by itself, is prone to evil, it is only by inspiration and sanction of the supernatural that man can overcome his selfishness and cruelty and corruption."⁷³ Virtue and immortality are correlatives. For Dostoevsky, final freedom is submerged in God: "There is no freedom beyond [God]; there is nothing beyond."⁷⁴

Christ came with a promise of freedom incomprehensible to most men. But man must freely decide what is good, and act only with Christ's image before him. This is the true freedom, for Christ died to save man from the fetters of miracle, mystery and authority. Man's freedom is very dear to Him. This freedom, however, is fraught with suffering. And

⁷²N. Gorodetzsky, "Saint Tikhon Zadonsky-Inspirer of Dostoevsky" (1901), p. 184.

⁷³A. E. Baker, "Prophets for a Day of Judgement" (1944), p. 67.

⁷⁴Op. cit., Baker, p. 68.

only love can solve the riddle. The relationship between faith and final freedom is that: "Because God is Love, man is free, with an actual, real, ultimate freedom...God is Love; that means that man, His child, is created for freedom."⁷⁵ God does not want to force man to choose the good from the evil; it has to be man's own choice: "It must be our free choice or it is not good."⁷⁶ Thus man can be free only in God; if he tries to be free from God, he enslaves himself, and enters the "abyss beneath". That is Dostoevsky's final message in "The Brothers Karamazov", namely that man is free, but only in God. Final freedom can be achieved, but only in surrendering initial freedom. Thus man's ontological freedom, i.e. his freedom by virtue of being a man, is a divine gift and submerged in the Ultimate. In such a manner Dostoevsky, through these three novels, evolves his concept of freedom. Circumstantial and acquired freedoms are not metaphysical, and are therefore eclipsed by the notion of innate freedom, which is not so much innate to man, as inherited from God. Thus does Dostoevsky reconcile faith and freedom, free-will and divine prescience, suffering and salvation, or as A. E. Baker says: "God is King in His own world."⁷⁹ In the last chapter, we must draw our conclusions on where Dostoevsky's ethic of freedom leads us.

⁷⁵Op. cit., Baker, p. 81.

⁷⁶Op. cit., Baker, p. 81.

⁷⁷Op. cit., Baker, p. 82.

CHAPTER V) CONCLUSION: THE ETHIC OF FREEDOM

CHAPTER V

In our concluding chapter, we must try to sum up how far Dostoevsky succeeds in solving the metaphysical enigma he sets himself. We must firstly attempt a critique of Dostoevsky's inner struggle to resolve the pro and contra controversy. Secondly, we must trace Dostoevsky's evolution as a spiritual prophet, and lastly decide what legacy, if any, he has left for us.

A. Yarmolinsky is one who does not claim great philosophical depth or clarity for Dostoevsky as he says: "Dostoevsky's ideology is distinguished neither by logical coherence or originality."¹ He holds that religion rather than philosophy itself was Dostoevsky's forte, and his religious views coloured all his thoughts. He also holds that Dostoevsky did not undergo a spiritual change during his exile, though Dostoevsky himself recognized a transformation in his convictions. It was in Siberia that he came to know the common people and, through them, himself. Yarmolinsky condemns Dostoevsky as a "complacent, self-adulatory patriot."² It must be acknowledged that Dostoevsky has a definite *idée-fixe*, and this affects all he has to say, even in the sphere of social questions: "Love alone will solve all the perplexing social problems. Dostoevsky does not trouble to tell us how this will come about . . . to Dostoevsky, religion is above all a sanctioning and informing of morality."³ For Dostoevsky, everything flowed out of religion, as he records: "Moral ideas exist. They grow out of the religious feeling, but by logic alone they can never be justified."⁴

¹A. Yarmolinsky "Dostoevsky: a study in his ideology" (1921), p. 8.

²Op. cit. p. 27.

³Op. cit. p. 34.

⁴F.M. Dostoevsky "Biografia, pisma i zametki iz zapisnoy knizhki", St. Petersburg, 1883 quoted p. 34, Yarmolinsky.

God is indispensable to right living, as Yarmolinsky says:

"Dostoevsky goes as far as to declare that a belief in the immortality of the soul is the indispensable condition for right living, indeed, for existence itself."⁵ Hence Dostoevsky looked for social improvement not through institutions but through individual regeneration. Self-perfection comes only through Christ. This tenet negates the power of reason, willpower or the perfectibility of man through his own actions, i.e. the idea of progress, or organised systems. For this reason, both Catholicism and socialism spelt anathema to him: "Dostoevsky's religious ideal was the free spiritual union of mankind in Christ, as opposed to the enforced and godless mechanical combination of men in Catholicism and in the socialistic millennium."⁶ Dostoevsky saw in the narod "the great life-giving principle, the vessel of grace and the haven of salvation."⁷ Though, in his youth, he had condescended to the views of the intelligentsia, later he came to accept unconditionally the popular native outlook, the Slavophiles' dream of Russia. The people were a "living shrine",⁸ in which were identified purely Russian and universal attributes. The essentially Russian trait was seen as the one that reached all humanity: "The greatest of all the greatest future missions of which the Russians have already become aware is pan-service to humanity, not to Russia or Slavdom alone, but to all humanity."⁹ This was the Russian mission for Dostoevsky, i.e.

⁵Op. cit. p. 34.

⁶Op. cit. Yarmolinsky, p. 43.

⁷Op. cit. p. 44.

⁸Op. cit. p. 46.

⁹F.M. Dostoevsky "Diary," June 1876, v. 20, p. 193, quoted by Yarmolinsky, p. 58.

to unite all men in love and peace: "His religion was a yearning for the peace that passeth understanding."¹⁰

Dostoevsky's philosophizing is dynamic and dialectical. All his characters are philosophic, i.e. in quest of a philosophy, as J.L. Jarrett says: "Because Dostoevsky's novels are active, agonized philosophical struggles, they make for philosophy, the process of philosophy, the élan of philosophy, and not its ashes."¹¹ He is closer to Existentialists in that he holds that contingent existence is human reality. This undefined existing engenders dread, because the self is unformed, undetermined, contingent, free to choose itself, in Kierkegaard's words "this is the dizziness of freedom." Man hates this dread, and therefore this freedom (not licence) and to escape it, he often resorts to a totalitarian system. He even goes so far as to consider freedom an illusion, enters into a deterministic, mechanistic belief. Yet man does love his free-will: "What man wants is simply independent choice, whatever that independence may cost and wherever it may lead."¹² Where Dostoevsky differs from the Existentialists is that for him, man has an essence, and this is rooted in God alone.

So freedom (i.e. ontological freedom fraught with choosing and responsibility) is both precious and dreadful. Its negative qualities engender suffering, and it is linked to the absurdity of life: "Life is, man exists, we suffer."¹³ The rationalist looks in vain for an answer,

¹⁰ Op. cit. Yarmolinsky, p. 68.

¹¹ J. L. Jarrett "Dostoevsky Philosopher of Freedom, Love and Life," Review of Religion, November 1956, VXX.

¹² F.M. Dostoevsky "Notes from Underground", p. 145.

¹³ Op. cit. Jarrett.

and finds none. The believer finds the counter-part to suffering in joy. Life is unquenchable, and must be borne in all its aspects. To deny life in any way is to die prematurely. Dostoevsky essentially did not attack the rationalist for his reliance on the mind, but for his escape from life's reality through the intellect.

Dostoevsky's message is that man must be regenerated by suffering. Evil has no solution, but the betterment of society will come only through those who have known suffering, but who have not refused life. And the guideline for human moral behaviour must be an ideal that is accepted as given, ultimate and inexplicable, namely God. For Dostoevsky, the atheist is the nihilist. He had two precepts (1) to love God, i.e. to accept life as a whole and (2) to love one's neighbour, i.e. to commit one's total responsibility and involvement in mankind and "radical freedom"¹⁴ in a dedication to the freedom of all men. Hell is the inability to love; and paradise is to be able to accept total responsibility, i.e. to love. Life for Dostoevsky was fundamental and must be accepted. Love is a duty and a joy, and freedom is the essence of man's existence.

Dostoevsky manages to reconcile the precepts of Christian philosophy and Christian mysticism. For him, man should abandon himself to God of his own free will. As suffering in Dostoevsky's ethic leads to moral purification, man must accept suffering as a part of life. If man asserts himself, he is doomed to failure, because human beings in conflict with basic moral laws of human destiny always lose. Humility therefore is the first virtue (e.g. Sonia). Next, self-sacrifice is very important, for those who suffer are closest to God. Even Dmitri the sensualist, admits

¹⁴Op. cit. Jarrett.

that he wants to suffer, and that by suffering he will be purified.

Raskolnikov realizes that his premise was a false one, i.e. he cannot create his own moral code. Only suffering can lead to redemption. Crime leading to suffering brings salvation. Can man rise above his sin? Yes, with the help of God. Dostoevsky demonstrates that the intellect devoid of faith destroys man. There is a struggle between reason and a deeper logic (faith). Dostoevsky believed that the philosophy of the superman was the doom of Western civilization, and he shows how Raskolnikov, after the murder, feels isolated from humanity. As he is basically a moral person, Raskolnikov's conscience punishes him. His theory of the superman collapses, and he knows this subconsciously. But he still feels that the murder of a "louse" is not a wicked act. In fact, he does not accept responsibility for the act, until Sonia, when he is recovering from an illness in Siberia makes him understand the meaning of God and love. It is then that he becomes human again.

Stavrogin, unlike Raskolnikov, is born a superman, but he is bored with his own freedom. He forfeits salvation, by turning against God. Like Smerdyakov, he hangs himself to end a meaningless freedom just as Svirigailov kills himself since he "cannot be redeemed . . . because he is not suffering from his conscience."¹⁵ If man does not choose, he ends negatively. Kirillov wants to manifest his freedom by killing himself. Yet his suicide does not prove his free will, so much as the failure of his intellect; indeed he goes mad under Peter Verkhovensky's pressure.

Alyosha represents the triumph of the soul. Although Ivan's devil is in his mind, he fights and may win over eventually on the moral side.

¹⁵C.G. Strem "The Moral World of Dostoevsky", Russian Review, July 1957, Vol. XVI.

After his attack of brain fever, he may be resurrected. Dostoevsky's central theme is that civilized man is a moral being, and that each man is responsible for all men. The problem of the superman is a social one, and the crisis of the individual is that of society. Dostoevsky attacks materialism and a rationalistic civilisation by order to preserve the identity of man. For Dostoevsky, Russia alone had preserved her spiritual values and would have to resurrect the whole world. She had therefore, in Dostoevsky's view, a messianic rôle to play, as Strem clearly understands. "Thus, nationalism and religion mix in Dostoevsky's soul."¹⁶

Man basically has to choose between good and evil -- this is Kant's "categorical imperative." The claim to spiritual revival is valid today, for the struggle is eternal: "Every moral action on the part of the autonomous man is a creative act, for, in it, he recreates himself and his own freedom."¹⁷ Atheism is considered dangerous by Dostoevsky since: "It is clear that the apostate radical will be prepared, ultimately, to commit either suicide or murder."¹⁸ Atheism is likely to destroy man and society, in his eyes.

We must now deal with Dostoevsky's emergence as a prophet. Dostoevsky's work even in his lifetime earned him the reputation of a seer, as B. Vysheslavitsev says: «Мысль о смерти каждого делает (его) философом и мистиком».¹⁹ He preached strongly against Catholicism and

¹⁶ Op. cit. Strem.

¹⁷ Laszlo Vatai "Man and his Tragic Life," p. 14, quoted by N. Scott in "The Tragic Vision and Christian Faith", (1957) p. 193.

¹⁸ N. Scott "The Tragic Vision and Christian Faith" (1957) p. 198.

¹⁹ B. Vysheslavitsev "Sovremenny Zapiski, 1932-33, Vol. I-LI pp. 288-304 - "Dostoevsky o lyubvi i bessmertii."

socialism. After his travels in Europe (1865-71), Dostoevsky saw it as a "precious graveyard" in Ivan's words. He condemned Roman Catholicism, because for him it craved the concept of power, although seeming to reject it. The Roman Church in Dostoevsky's opinion meant to subjugate man in Christ's name. Dostoevsky saw it as a purely secular movement, materialistic and mundane. Casuistry and compromise were to reconcile conscience and need for authority. Catholicism was the Church of Reason and Matter, merging the interests of church and state, whereas in Orthodoxy the believer was considered a son, not a slave. Historical reality appeared to reinforce Dostoevsky's anti-Catholic attitude.

Dostoevsky, on the other hand, stressed the doctrine of the indwelling Godhood (divine immanence). He felt himself to be a teacher, a prophet of Orthodoxy and Russian messianism. He looked for the "divine spark" of real faith in the peasants, because they had not become westernized like the intellectuals. He believed that the Pope had supplanted God, and made impossible the direct communication of God and man. These ideas, meant to be expanded in "The Life a Great Sinner" were used instead in "The Brothers Karamazov." Dostoevsky sought always a mystical religion, in which fraternity, liberty and equality would be achieved and synthesized in Christ. He felt that Roman Catholicism had proclaimed that Christ was subject to the third temptation, i.e. an earthly kingdom, thus invoking the anti-Christ. The true Christ was sold in exchange for the world by the Roman Church.

Thus for him, socialism and atheism were a continuation of the Catholic idea. He believed in spiritual brotherhood, and abhorred Russian imperialism as much as Ultramontanism. He favoured a "universal all-humanitarian

fellowship."²⁰ The Grand Inquisitor represents "the slave of matter who yields to necessity; he represents Roman Catholic rationalism in materialistic form."²¹ Dostoevsky did not think it necessary to surrender freedom for salvation. In fact, ~~genuine~~ love and faith give rise to final freedom. Dostoevsky indicts the old Cardinal because he ~~loves~~ ^{loves} the invisible life (man and his freedom), but not the visible life of the Church. The Cardinal cannot love -- and that is his tragedy.

For Dostoevsky, God was the reason for everything: «В конечном итоге Бог есть причина всего, что делает человек».²² The sons of God must be free: «Только свободные существа, добровольно вступающие на путь единения с Богом, как живым идеалом совершенства, заслуживают имени сынов Божиих».²³

God is the source of good, i.e. freedom and love. But in freedom, good and evil coexist. God's prescience will not circumvent human freedom: «Это 'fiat' (предопределение) не превращает случайного (contingent) и свободного в необходимое»²⁴ God wants only that man be free to come to Him of his own accord.

Dostoevsky's idealism was prophetic: «Конкретный идеализм Достоевского в его собственном самосознании есть, другими словами, идеализм пророческий».²⁵

In Dostoevsky's scheme, freedom can only be the freedom of self-awareness,

²⁰G.A. Panichas "Fyodor Dostoevsky and Roman Catholicism", Greek Orthodox Theological Review, (1959).

²¹Op. cit. Panichas.

²²N.O. Lossky "Svoboda Voli", p. 131.

²³Op. cit. Lossky, p. 132.

²⁴A.Z. Shteinberg "Sistema svobody Dostoevskogo" (1923), p. 72.

²⁵Op. cit. p. 104.

i.e. in the Existential sense. Dostoevsky understood the problem as a free movement and dependent only on the self: «Сознание жизни есть в то же время избрание жизни, приятие её и её утверждение; оно — творческий волевой акт».²⁶

Freedom is inherent in the act of choosing, and contemporary man is aware of this project of his own choosing: «Современный человек знает, что дух его тройственен, что свобода и необходимость, что я и не-я в нём сплетены корнями, и что 'мир должен быть оправдан весь, чтоб можно было жить'».²⁷

Man must make himself and the world; he only can justify his existence. Dostoevsky posited the ideal of God as a reason for living; contemporary man sometimes finds the reasons outside of God. The three possibilities in Dostoevsky's scheme were (1) to sacrifice freedom to one's nature (suicide), (2) to sacrifice one's nature to freedom (murder), (3) to preserve both (attaining power). Ultimately, man's final freedom is arrived at only by his own control over his intellect, his deliberate surrender to faith. «Система Достоевского есть предсказание о том, что человек научится, наконец, властвовать над собой, что величайшая победа ещё впереди».²⁸

Dostoevsky's achievement is that he founded the dialectics of Christian Existentialism. The awareness of human existence was for him the only knowable factor. Man's real world is culture and not civilisation.

²⁶Op. cit.

²⁷Op. cit. Shteinberg, p. 108.

²⁸Op. cit. p. 109.

Whereas Greek philosophy analysed man as objective reality, the modern era introduced the self-assertion of the mind, and the subjective approach. Man tries now to know himself "in his own humanity."²⁹ Existential philosophy, and Dostoevsky may in some ways be called one of its precursors, posits man as the essential project for himself, his task, and Dostoevsky foresees this: "He (Dostoevsky) represents the greatest depth of man who tries to orient himself in the world."³⁰

One of the ways man can overcome finiteness is by transcending himself by his intellect. But he will surely break himself in the attempt. Reason can offer no solution, but only the living through of life with faith. When man revolts, instead of adjusting himself to the limits, he disintegrates in his own freedom, and in his tragic victory is his downfall: "Revolt meant the pride of self-assertion; faith is the humility of self-giving."³¹ But as a personal faith in eschatology demands a Revelation, Dostoevsky has to enter the realm of theology. "The belief in the other world, the future life, represents the only possibility for one to possess the fullness of life."³² Man is seen in a continuous state of progression to the Absolute: "Man's life is progressing from the unconscious, instinctive world towards the omnipotence of God."³³ In repentance, God is the motivating factor. All Dostoevsky's novels end in two ways: either in repentance, or

²⁹L. Vatai "Man and his Tragic Life" (1954), p. 6.

³⁰Op. cit. p. 8.

³¹Op. cit. p. 49.

³²Op. cit. p. 54.

³³Op. cit. Vatai, p. 128.

with the death of the autonomous man. Love is divine and can transcend death in that: "It is a movement outside of man, the possibility of hope."³⁴ Love is free from both life and death, and is ubiquitous and eternal, and man's final enigma will be resolved through love. Dostoevsky poses thus the dialectic of human freedom: initial freedom (thesis), suffering (antithesis), final freedom (synthesis) in God.

Dostoevsky saw sin as communal, and the greatest sin is the abnegation of freedom. Freedom can lead to destruction or salvation; there is no middle way. Dostoevsky was against the self-assured humanism which held that man could better himself by himself. For him, man was a divided antinomical being. Self-will could only end in destruction (first level). But man can be regenerated and reborn in Christ (second level). Salvation, implicit through suffering, would be reached in freedom and through love (third level). But this passage from freedom one to freedom three presupposes an eternal divinity, and Dostoevsky was deeply religious.

Guardini rejected Dostoevsky's Christ as false, as he wanted a "middle level of life", whereas Dostoevsky's Christ exacts absolute responsibility. Two problems are indicated here (1) the misuse of freedom and (2) freedom in modern life. The Christian gospel of redemption, freedom and fulfillment would still seem a valid answer in spite of the march of history.

Dostoevsky gave much to contemporary philosophy, and in Russia greatly influenced, writers, who subsequently developed his points, e.g. Solovyov (God-manhood), Berdyaev (freedom), and Shestov (the irrational).

³⁴
Op. cit. p. 142.

Yet, conflicting opinions are held even by those who were affected by him, for whereas Solovyov called Dostoevsky "the prophet of God",³⁵ Shestov claims that Dostoevsky foresaw nothing, and indeed was not a prophet. His political ideas were not original, but borrowed from the Slavophiles. For Shestov, Dostoevsky was not a mystic, but a rationalist. Furthermore, history, he claims, gives the lie to Dostoevsky's notion of Christian love. It is true that, Dostoevsky's influence was more pervasive than immediate. For Shestov, Kirillov is the soul of "Besy". Kirillov reincarnates the truth that must be recognised: «Явно, что истина есть некое живое существо, которое не стоит равнодушно и безразлично пред нам и пассивно ждёт, пока мы подойдём к нему и возьмём его».³⁶

True freedom exists, as the Underground Man claimed, but only in the belief of God.

Dostoevsky's novels show that man is not the creator of good and evil, but he is their battlefield. Personality in the highest manifestation of life. Therefore good and evil, external to man, also have a personal existence. Man's place is between God and Satan, and he is frighteningly free to choose either. Man's self-assertion confronts him with the dark irrationalities within him. But how can suffering be reconciled with the Christian belief in the God of love? Dostoevsky shows that suffering lies in the nature of man, in that he is a free and responsible being. Dostoevsky was not a pietist; he was concerned with the social implications of religion, and even called himself a Christian Socialist. St. John

³⁵ L. Shestov "Penultimate Words" (1916).

³⁶ L. Shestov (1929), p. 150. "Na vesakh Tova".

and he had the same approach to the mystery of man: "Christ was for him Truth, Beauty and Goodness revealing themselves to the world through perfect human personality."³⁷ In Christ, the human personality is completely free, and having conquered suffering and pain, exposes the pattern of world freedom: "Christ can be found only by those who are not afraid of freedom."³⁸ Dostoevsky was not a pessimist, for he strongly believed in the eventual triumph of goodness and truth on earth: evil will be conquered, man regenerated and death transcended, through man's surrender to God's love.

Dostoevsky realized the ambiguity of human nature, and of beauty; therefore he understood the tragic quality of the 'natural' freedom that leads man to crime. He was divided between a Christian naturalism and a lack of confidence in nature. His legacy to Existentialism is his ethical personalism. Dostoevsky's ethic is anthropocentric, in that both opposites of good and evil are present in man. Man's true essence is his freedom. For Dostoevsky, man's amorality is also his apotheosis. Psychological voluntarism merges here with irrationalism. Man wants to be free, to be himself. Berdyaev says that for Dostoevsky "the freedom of the Underground Man contains the seed of death."³⁹ Freedom without love is death, but freedom with love can exalt man.

Dostoevsky is closer to Rousseau's naturalism than to Kant's categorical morality. Only through crime (and suffering) does man turn to God. Man cannot do without God. "The impulses of freedom comprise

³⁷N. Zernov "Three Russian Prophets" (1944), p. 107.

³⁸Op. cit. p. 108.

³⁹

Berdyaev quoted in "A History of Russian Philosophy", Vol. 1 by V.V. Zenkovsky (1953), p. 421.

a dialectic of evil, but also a dialectic of good."⁴⁰

Dostoevsky's thought is basically ethical. His "ethical maximalism" devolves from his thoughts of the problems of good. In "Notes from the Underground", we already see a criticism of utilitarianism and rationalism. Ivan revolts against God because his ethical maximalism refuses a "future harmony" based on suffering. The Grand Inquisitor distorts the freedom revealed in Christ. Dostoevsky also repudiated "autonomism", in the defence of mystical ethics. Without a "living sense of God", man falls into cynicism or mongerhood. Love alone goes beyond reason and rationality.

Throughout, Dostoevsky's thought is concerned with antinomies and he reconciles them finally in the realm of religion. Russia's true strength is her Orthodoxy, for Dostoevsky. He even had a religious conception of history. "Man's freedom by divine intention is the basis of the historical dialectic."⁴¹ He defends the Christian doctrine of freedom. But the ideal will not necessarily be realized in history. Dostoevsky's utopianism neglects the mystery of Golgotha, in his conception of salvation.

Thus we have traced Dostoevsky's ideas on freedom through his three major novels.. Freedom is the most important theme in his work, and in various ways coordinated with crime, suffering, and atheism. His doctrine is that freedom is destructive unless man can impose form on it, and this form must be divine, or it is harmful. This teaching has left a mark on contemporary literature, particularly in Europe, and although some

⁴⁰Op. cit. Zenkovsky, p. 422-23.

⁴¹Op. cit. p. 431.

of the purely Dostoevskian elements have been rejected, much remains as a debt in the writings of authors like J. P. Sartre, A. Camus and A. Malraux, to the work of Dostoevsky.

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