THOMAS GARRIGUE MASARYK

The Spirit of Russia

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VOLUME THREE

LONDON: GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD

BY T. G. MASARYK

THE IDEALS OF HUMANITY AND HOW TO WORK
MODERN MAN AND RELIGION

BY KAREL CAPEK

MASARYK ON LIFE AND THOUGHT

THE SPIRIT OF RUSSIA

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1967

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PREFACE

VOLUME III of *The Spirit of Russia* by Thomas G. Masaryk has been brought to the point of publication as a result of the united efforts of a number of his devoted friends living in the United States.

The two daughters of Masaryk, Dr. Alice G. Masaryk and Mme. Olga Masaryk Revilliod, initiated the movement which now comes to completion in the English translation of this work from the pen of their beloved father. The Masaryk sisters founded in 1959 the MASARYK PUBLICATIONS TRUST for the primary purpose of collecting and arranging for publication any unpublished writings of members of the Masaryk family.

This volume is based on the most important manuscript of T. G. Masaryk not yet seen in print. It was written in 1912, the original text being in German. Masaryk intended it to be a conclusion to Volumes I and II of his classic work, entitled *Russia and Europe.* However, before the manuscript was completed or edited by the author, World War I had begun and Masaryk, himself in exile, became involved in his crusade for an independent Czechoslovakia. After the war was ended, as President of the new republic of Czechoslovakia, he had little time to give to the completion and editing of this manuscript. Later, some of his associates in the Czechoslovak government translated the original work from the German into Czech, making certain revisions and adding many footnotes.

The manuscript came into the hands of the MASARYK PUBLICATIONS TRUST through the Masaryk sisters who requested the Trust to consider the question of having it translated into English and prepared for publication.

Among the scholars pressing for the publication of the manuscript were the following: Professor Roman Jakobson of the Department of Slavic Language and Literature, Harvard University; Professor Otakar Odložilik, Department of History, University of Pennsylvania; Professor René Wellek, Professor of Comparative Literature, Yale University; Professor George Gibian, Professor of Russian Literature, Cornell University; Professor S. Harrison Thomson, Department of History, University of Colorado; Dr. Henry L. Roberts, Director Institute on East Central Europe, Columbia University; Dr. Richard M. Hunt,

Associate Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Harvard; Dr. George A. Kelly III, Harvard.

The scholars made comments which carried great weight with the members of the Masaryk Publications Trust. Professor René Wellek of Yale University wrote: "The book, of course, will be in some sense out of date, but surely its lack of reference to recent publications will be made up by the tremendous interest of the point of view and the learning brought to the subject by Thomas Masaryk."

Professor Jakobson of Harvard University wrote: "Masaryk was such a great man and thinker that however long is the span of time which separates us from this work, it must be made accessible to the cultural world. . . . The earlier the original and the translation of Masaryk's works can be published, the better. The greatness of Masaryk and the universal importance of the problem—Russia and the West—which Masaryk felt prophetically to be the pivotal question of our time, fully substantiates the necessity of this publication."

Professor Odložilik, who was one of the original trustees named by the Masaryk sisters, wrote: "The translation and editing of this manuscript should by all means be done, but it must be realised that it will place a most difficult task upon the men chosen to be editors. The text as we have it today is outdated both by political events in Russia and by the progress of scholarship. There is no reference to books produced after 1910 and there were many very important ones. Both the translator and the editor face a monumental task."

Professor Jakobson and Professor Odložilik made a recommendation for an editor which appealed to the Trustees and led eventually to the selection of Professor George Gibian of Cornell University for that post. To supplement the editorial work of Professor Gibian, Mr. Robert Bass of Brooklyn College was selected and given chief responsibility for the translation of the manuscript. This has proved to be a remarkable team; both Professor Gibian and Mr. Bass were born in Czechoslovakia, command the Czech, Russian and German languages and are fluent in English. Both are devotees of Masaryk, his ideals and principles.

As the Masaryk Publications Trust has no endowment, it was necessary to secure contributions from individuals and foundations to finance work on the manuscript preparatory to publication—the translating and editing together with the necessary typing. Especial note should be made of the generous support

given by Mr. John O. Crane and the Friendship Fund of New York, by Dr. Richard M. Hunt, Dr. George A. Kelly III of Cambridge, Mass., and Miss Mabel Gillespie of Pittsburgh, Pa. Invaluable assistance in the editorial work has been rendered by Professor Joseph Macek, Dr. Ladislav Radimsky and Professor Otakar Odložilik. Of great value has been the personal advice and assistance of Mr. John O. Crane of New York, and Dr. Jan Papenek, the last Ambassador to the United Nations from free Czechoslovakia. The legal advice of the firm of Kirkpatrick, Pomeroy, Lockhart and Johnson of Pittsburgh and of Mr. Charles Evan of New York has been most helpful. The "settlers," Dr. Alice Masaryk and Mme. Olga Masaryk Revilliod, have given to the Trustees and editors their constant moral support and of course the most intimate knowledge of their father's mind and thought.

The members of the Board of Trustees, although widely scattered geographically, have been most active and helpful making decisions so vital to the editors in their task of bringing the manuscript to the point of submission for publication.

In recognition of such service, their names are gratefully recorded here for enrolment in this finished work. They are:

Dr. Vaclav Hlavaty, professor of mathematics at Indiana University, recently President of the Czechoslovak Society of Arts & Sciences.

Dr. Svata Pirkova Jakobson, lecturer in Slavic languages and literature, Harvard University, *Secretary*.

Mrs. Ruth Crawford Mitchell, director of the "Survey of Prague" under auspices of the Y.W.C.A., 1919–1920. Director of the Nationality Rooms programme at the University of Pittsburgh. Long time friend of the Masaryk family, *Treasurer*.

Hon. John K. Tabor, Secretary of Commerce, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg, Pa. shares with his family a great interest in Czechoslovakia and the Masaryk family.

An especial word of thanks and appreciation goes to Professor George Gibian, Editor, and Mr. Robert Bass, Associate Editor, for the assiduous devotion which they have given to what has been truly described as "a monumental task"—the translating and editing of a lengthy and complicated manuscript. The secretaries who have finished the long work of typing the manuscript with rare skill have our deepest thanks.

To Sir Stanley Unwin we are grateful for the scholarly attention given to the manuscript of this book in advance of its publication.

* * *

The Chairman in the name of the Trust now relinquishes this labour of respect and affection for its great author. Serving at T. G. Masaryk's request with the Czechoslovak Legion in Russia and Siberia during World War I, as Chairman of American Relief for Czechoslovakia in World War II, and presently as Chairman of the American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees has instilled a mounting devotion to the unconquerable spirit of the Czechoslovak people.

KENNETH D. MILLER
Chairman
Masaryk Publications Trust

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INTRODUCTION BY GEORGE GIBIAN

THE third volume of Masaryk's *The Spirit of Russia*, offered here in published form for the first time, represents that part of a larger work which Masaryk declared to be his "main text." It had long been presumed either not to have been written at all, or to have been lost.

The original German edition of the first two volumes of what is known in its English translation as *The Spirit of Russia*, appeared in 1913 under the title *Russland und Europa. Studien über die geistige Strömungen in Russland. Erste Folge. Zur russischen Geschichte und Religionsphilosophie. Soziologische Skizzen*, issued by Eugen Diederichs Verlag, Jena. The Czech version began to appear in fascicles shortly before war broke out in 1914 and its publication was concluded after the end of hostilities. Volume I appeared in 1919, volume II, in two parts, in 1921 (Jan Laichter, Prague). The same publishing house issued a second edition in 1930, on the occasion of Masaryk's eightieth birthday. The first volume of this edition contained supplementary material supplied by Jan Slavik. The English version, translated from the German by Eden and Cedar Paul, was published in two volumes in 1919 by George Allen and Unwin, London. In 1955 it was reissued by the same house, with the inclusion of Jan Slavik's additions. In 1965, Eugen Diederichs, now located in Düsseldorf and Cologne, reissued the 1913 German edition, unaltered, under the title *Zur russischen Geschichte und Religionsphilosophie: Soziologische Skizzen.*

In the late 1870s, when writing his first major work—a study of the incidence of suicide and its social significance, published in 1881—Masaryk still appears to have been unacquainted with Dostoevsky but he came to know him shortly afterwards. As early as 1880 or 1881 Masaryk was urging Josef Penizek to translate Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* into Czech. Radlov, a Russian philosopher at Vienna, had introduced Masaryk to Russian literature and by the time Masaryk came to take up his

teaching duties at the university in Prague in 1882 he had acquired a knowledge of Russian literature such as few others in Prague could boast. Masaryk came to own a six-volume edition of Dostoevsky (published in Russia in 1885–6), which he read and annotated richly. In 1892 he published an essay on various aspects of Dostoevsky's thought in the periodical *Čas.* This article, prompted by Jaromir Hrubý's translation of Dostoevsky, ran to some thirty pages and is a series of general comments on the Russian writer. It is also a series of eulogies. Masaryk, in fact, attempted a little of everything in the essay: giving some general characterisations, praising Dostoevsky's art, sketching his main ideas, placing them in philosophical context and commenting on the major novels.

Masaryk's major concern here was to stimulate interest and to elicit admiration for the Russian writer in a most favourable and positive article. The following are some of his main points: "Dostoevsky is the most serious man imaginable. How could he fail to take life seriously when he had stood face-to-face with death? Who would not be serious, if not one who had suffered so much, had looked into the depths of man's soul, who could read in it the most secret flashes of ideas and feelings, who understood everything which we are often reluctant to understand?"

Masaryk cited Dostoevsky's preaching love of man for man with approval. A man who loves is not isolated; the isolation of one individual from other individuals is the source of all private and social evil. It is precisely this isolation, this individualism, which threatens modern society in particular. To isolate oneself—this for Dostoevsky is the opposite of love. "The point of departure for Dostoyevsky's whole philosophy is within his own self—his soul. From the certainty of his own being he derives certainty about God. Without providence he could not understand the course and order of the inner or outer world."

"Dostoevsky has no sense for a categorical imperative, yet nobody feels the reality and sanctity of moral principles in as lively a fashion as Dostoevsky." "He cannot understand even the highest authority as external: it must be internally consecrated." "One's own inner self—that lone and all-encompassing phrase is the sole object of Dostoevsky's philosophy." "Dostoevsky has much in common with the Slavophiles, but he is not a Slavophile of the ordinary kind found in the 70s and 80s." "Dostoevsky is completely Russian inasmuch as his love for people manifests itself in continual recognition of his own faults and in forgiving

others. It is that very recognition which leads to improvement."

Of the novels, Masaryk praises *The Brothers Karamazov* as the greatest, *The Idiot* as the next. He finds *Crime and Punishment* inferior in harmony and polish. *The Possessed* seems weakest to him artistically because, he says, Dostoevsky lacked sufficient knowledge of nihilist plots and preached too much. *Notes from the House of the Dead* are praised, as are other works. Above all, Masaryk lauds Dostoevsky's analysis of the human soul repeatedly and sets him up as a model of that great nineteenth-century Russian mental activity about which, he says, men in the West deplorably know nothing. "It is characteristic of the great Russian writers that in philosophy they all move in an ethical and social direction. Russian thinkers made the philosophy of Europe their own and carried it forward. In that great intellectual ferment generated by the dialogue between the philosophies of Belinsky, Hertzen, Chaadaev and other so-called Westernisers, and the national and Slavophile movement evident in the last works of Pushkin, Gogol, Kireevsky, Khomyakov and others, Dostoevsky—being closest to Kireevsky—seeks that reconciliation and unification of views in a higher unity which he sets forth as being his nation's task to realise. He has, indeed, taken a great step forward in this direction, for he is now becoming not only a teacher of the Russians but of the whole educated world. Mankind will be united in true happiness not by force but by ideas—that is the essence of Dostoevsky's own teaching."

Masaryk's article was published in 1892 while it had been in 1886 that deVoguë's book *Le Roman Russe* had appeared as a landmark in the beginnings of Western appreciation of Russian literature. Masaryk, however, took a more favourable view of Dostoevsky than deVoguë did. He was particularly devoid of the French writer's fear of Dostoevsky's intensity and alleged formlessness. Masaryk's is thus a remarkable early voice raised in admiration of Dostoevsky both within the Slavic and West European worlds.

By 1905 Masaryk had written several other articles on Russia but, as he said in the brief introduction to the 1913 German edition of the first two volumes of *The Spirit of Russia* (incorporated in the translator's foreword to the English version), the Russo-Japanese War and ensuing revolution of 1905 had stimulated public interest in matters Russian and accordingly acquaintances had suggested that he again write on the subject at greater length.

In consequence, he produced an article on the connection between Russian literature and the revolution, published in *Oesterreichische Rundschau*, and undertook to review books by Mackenzie Wallace, Kropotkin, Brueckener and others. Finally, he conceived the idea "of elucidating the nature of the Russian revolution, and of discussing the Russian problem as a whole through the study of Dostoevsky." The attempt, however, proved unsuccessful. While making it, Masaryk recalled:

> "I came to realise that it would be impossible to do justice to Dostoevsky without discussing his predecessors and successors, and that this would involve the consideration of the chief problems of the history of Russian literature, of the religious and philosophical thought of that country, indeed, of Russian literature in general. . . . Properly speaking, the entire study is devoted to Dostoevsky. . . . The first part, which I now publish (1913), contains an account of the philosophy of history and the philosophy of religion of Dostoevsky's predecessors and successors. . . .
>
> "The first half of the second portion will deal with Dostoevsky's philosophy of history and philosophy of religion (A Struggle for God—Dostoevsky and Nihilism); the second half will discuss the relationship of Dostoevsky to Russian literature since Pushkin and his relationship to European literature (Titanism or Humanism? From Pushkin to Gorky).
>
> "The work will afford proof that an analysis of Dostoevsky is a sound method of studying Russia, though some might doubt this at first. Certain experts have expressed such doubts orally, but I hope to show that I have been right in choosing Dostoevsky as my main text—and this although, or for the very reason that, I differ profoundly from Dostoevsky's outlook."

It is this second portion, which Masaryk himself called his "main text," which we are now offering in English translation and for the first time in published form in any language.

It is, of course, important to bear in mind that Masaryk was writing before World War I and the Revolutions of 1917. Consequently, whenever he refers to a Russian revolution he is naturally thinking of 1905. That so much of what he says is also applicable to 1917 and later years is evidence of his remarkable insight into the dynamics of Russian history.

* * *

The first two volumes of *The Spirit of Russia* were a landmark in the study of Russian intellectual history. Even now, half a century later, they are consistently recommended and used by students of Russia. Highly respected by scholars, they have few rivals.

Although Masaryk had announced that his study was intended to culminate in an analysis of Dostoevsky, and that the first two volumes were only the background which he needed to set down before embarking on his main task, few people knew or suspected that he had actually written such a continuation—and culmination—to his work. Most readers either paid no attention at all to his introductory remarks concerning his plan of work, or assumed that it was merely a matter of one of those unfulfilled hopes and resolves frequently voiced in the course of many scholars' and writers' careers. Masaryk, however, had actually written hundreds of pages, not only about Dostoevsky but also drafts of many additional chapters on other nineteenth-century Russian men of letters. He wrote in German and the text remained unfinished when Masaryk became President of Czechoslovakia in 1918. Preserved among his personal papers, however, the manuscript was later translated into Czech by Professor Jiří Horák.[1] After World War II the manuscript found its way to the United States where arrangements were made to translate the study into English.

* * *

The original text of about 600 pages is divided into some 35 sections or chapters. Twenty-two of these, or about one-half of the whole, are devoted to Dostoevsky, the others to Tolstoy, Turgenev and other writers. Some of the material is repetitious, and some passages, again, appear to be mere reading notes (synopses, summaries, etc.). The editors have, accordingly, consolidated in some places and abbreviated in others. On the whole, however, only a minor part of the manuscript has been omitted, the chief deletions being about Pushkin and Gogol which are largely plot summaries. Much of the discussion of Lermontov is also omitted, as are sections dealing with Western literature—specifically with Faust, Byron, Musset, Romanticism, Realism and Decadence. Much of this material Masaryk had already covered in a series of far more polished essays which are available

[1] See T. G. Masaryk, "Vynatky z III. casti dila 'Rusko a Evropa,' " *Nase Doba*, 1938, c. 4, p. 203.

in English translation under the title *Modern Man and Religion* (Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1938). Virtually the whole text of the discussion of Dostoevsky has been translated, with some rearrangement in the order and division of the material.

No additions have been made. Quotations and references have been checked and verified, wherever possible against the best modern texts and translated directly from the originals, rather than re-translated from Masaryk's German versions.

* * *

The publication of this third volume of *The Spirit of Russia* makes possible a reassessment of Masaryk's knowledge of and attitudes toward Russian literature and literary history and toward Dostoevsky in particular.[1] It is clear that throughout this work he is writing chiefly as a philosopher, historian and sociologist, rather than as a literary critic. His interests are not aesthetic but historical—analytical and moral. Since his earlier writings about Dostoevsky, his views of Russia in general and Dostoevsky in particular had undergone a considerable change. Now he took a more pessimistic view of Russia's problems, and his earlier enthusiasm for Dostoevsky and his solutions for the difficulties of his country has become qualified. We have before us a darker as well as a more mature analysis.

Wherever Masaryk touches on the social and political views of Russian authors, he reveals himself to be a most sensible and incisive critic. Very properly, he reproaches Dostoevsky for his inability to distinguish between individualism, anarchism, socialism and terrorism. Dostoevsky's failure to differentiate between

[1] See William B. Edgerton, "The Penetration of Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature into the Other Slavic Countries," *American Contributions to the Fifth International Congress of Slavists*, Sofia, Mouton and Co . The Hague, 1963, pp. 41–78, John Fizer, "Dostoyevsky's Czech Reputation," *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Fall, 1958, XVI, No. 3, pp. 211–21. The best summary of Masaryk's thought is Rene Wellek's "Masaryk's Philosophy," in *Essays on Czech Literature*, Mouton and Co.: The Hague, 1963, pp 62–70. The best discussions of his relationship to Dostoyevsky are Jiri Horak, *Masaryk a Dostojevskij, Z Dejin*, Prague, 1931, pp. 113–61; Professor Jiri Horak's edition of T. G. Masaryk, *Studie o F. M. Dostojevskem, Prameny k dejinam vzajemnych styku slovanskych*, Prague, 1932, I, 7–83; and D. Chizhevskij, "Masaryk i Dostoevsky," *Tsentral'naya Evropa*, Prague, 1931, No. 2, pp 87–92 There is also J. L. Hromadka's "Masaryk und Dostojewskij," *Festschrift. Th. G. Masaryk zum 80. Geburtstags*, Bonn, 1930, pp. 163–74, and Jaroslav Bidlo, *Masarykovy Studie Ruska*, pp. 161–75. See also the general assessment in George Gibian, "Masaryk on Dostoevsky," *Czechoslovakia Past and Present*, Miloslav Rechcigl Ed., Mouton and Co , The Hague, 1967.

various types of nihilism also draws Masaryk's fire. Dostoevsky's lack of political discrimination, his extremism, conservatism and apparently wilful disregard of differences between various liberal and revolutionary groups; his failure to learn from decades of the history of revolutionary movements and nihilistic activity of which he was an eye-witness—these too are the targets of Masaryk's unerring aim.

Here and elsewhere, Masaryk's greatest strength lies in his ability to identify some basic issues and to lay them bare to inspection. He is at his best when dealing with the opposites of his own virtues. Masaryk's demonstration of how Dostoevsky lacks an understanding of progress and evolution is, for instance, unexcelled in any later work about Dostoevsky.

Masaryk is strongest in the reasonable, cautious, unexaggerated, liberal-rationalist's task of criticism of what is unreasonable, extreme, overstated and overblown, in presenting a clearly defined, lucid critique of ill-defined and hazy notions and murky and misleading definitions.

This is perhaps the greatest paradox of Masaryk's treatment of Dostoevsky in the years immediately preceding World War I. From our point of view, with the hindsight of a half-century, Masaryk is very dated in several respects as an interpreter of Dostoevsky. There have been many outstanding critics and scholars since who have helped change our interpretation of Dostoevsky. Space does not allow for the mention here of a whole body of more recent critical literature, but merely by way of example one might note the Russian existentialist-religious-mystic school of Berdyaev and Ivanov and the Russian emigré writer Mochulsky who has written perhaps the best single-volume study of Dostoevsky; then, too, there have been Russian scholars in the biographical field, the formalist critics, Western writers like Gide, Hesse, Moravia, Blackmur, Rahv, Irving Howe, and the various psychological interpretations, usually derived from Freud's essay on parricide.

It is easy to find scattered places in Masaryk's study which make him appear rather literal-minded. Some of his observations are better read as practical counsel than as impressive literary comment. Nevertheless, one also finds something else. Masaryk has the knack of isolating important topics. His balancing virtue is that he finds the key issues and emerges with penetrating observations simply and briefly formulated. He examines the psychology of Dostoevsky's characters, draws sound conclusions about

Dostoevsky's relationship to Europe—his hatred for "half-Europe," for "half-Europeans," for "half-education." He finds the theme of crime to be crucial in Dostoevsky, as well as that of the lie. He also makes a number of excellent incidental observations. Sometimes he touches on a subject never treated by other critics and scholars. He may give it a few provocative, suggestive, stimulating sentences: he may deal with it in a long paragraph or in a page; and then, sometimes to one's disappointment, he simply drops it. Had he been able to devote himself to further work on this study, however, he doubtless would have revised as well as completed various sections of it.

Masaryk approaches the subject of Russia as a man certain of the workings of evolution. Born in 1850, he was a liberal, rational man of the West, inclined to favour Anglo-Saxon virtues, in some respects and despite his platonist tendencies, even a man of the late eighteenth century—an enlightened Central European Benjamin Franklin, though also a philosopher. He sees what is wrong with Russia so very clearly and correctly! He is fascinated by Dostoevsky, who attacked many of the same abuses and wrongs in Russia which struck Masaryk so forcefully; he is fascinated—yet, at the same time, he cannot forget that Dostoevsky proposed different remedies and looks toward different goals.

Masaryk feels that enlightenment, evolution, progress, all lead man to a better, brighter future. If only a few simple rules were followed—if more attention were paid to education, for example, to hard work—the other difficulties would vanish. After World War I and II, however, after all that Hitler and the Nazis, Stalin and the communists have done in our century, one finds it difficult to accept Masaryk's facile assumptions about the self-sanctioning, upward-and-onward directed power of reason, education, schools and hard work. The perversity and evil which we have witnessed in the lives of hard-working, educated and apparently virtuous people have made too great an impression on us. (Characteristically, there is little reference in Masaryk to *Notes from the Underworld*. There, Dostoevsky's character even wants to claim that two and two is not four but five; he wants to assert himself, his freedom—in perverse and often cruel ways, and Masaryk chooses to pay little attention to that.)

This book is Masaryk's summary of his ideas on Russia's future. On the eve of World War I, a few short years before the October revolution, he is polemicising with Dostoevsky and other Russian authors about what Russia needs. What we have before us is a

tract for the Russian public—on the road to take and the road to avoid. Here a very pro-Western, Protestant, rather nineteenth-century thinker, liberal and rationalistic, who is at the same time similar to most Russians in being an unaesthetic, civic-minded reader of literature as subject-matter for social and moral analysis, emerging with a political, cultural and humane programme for Russia. In short, we have here Masaryk's programme for Russia's future—one which unfortunately remained unheeded by all sides.

* * *

It has been a privilege and a pleasure to be associated with the project of translating and editing Thomas G. Masaryk's unpublished volume of *The Spirit of Russia*. I am in great debt to Dr. Kenneth D. Miller, Chairman of the Masaryk Publications Trust; Mr. Robert Bass who translated the manuscript and helped to edit it; and Miss Virginia Van Wynen, who tracked down many elusive passages and references.

Ithaca, New York, U.S.A.

PART ONE

DOSTOEVSKY

THE SPIRIT OF RUSSIA

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

WHEN I first embarked on my study of Russian revolutionary movements in the nineteenth century, I planned to include a detailed analysis of Dostoevsky. Later, my plan of work changed, but I still devote what may appear to be a disproportionate amount of attention to Dostoevsky in particular and the literature of the period in general.

This seems to me an inescapable necessity since it is a cardinal feature of nineteenth-century Russian culture that literature assumes specifically sociological, philosophical and political significance. Under the pressure of absolutism, *belles lettres* remained the most unfettered political forum: it was, in a manner of speaking, the only Russian parliamentary institution. To an extent, of course, this is true of all nations and peoples, but it assumes greater significance in Russia since its literature is more outspokenly political. Elsewhere in Europe, literature has been preoccupied with art and aesthetics: it has fashioned a discipline of its own. In Russia, meanwhile, there is nothing to show that *belles lettres* ever acquired that kind of distinct discipline or identity. In Russia, it has remained part political action, part philosophy, part religion, as well as one of the fine arts.

All important writers of modern times are thinkers no less than they are poets. Hence, they are also characteristic interpreters of their age. This is certainly true of a Goethe, a Byron and many others and it is even more true of Russian writers since all of them were so obviously preoccupied with problems relating to the interpretation of their own times. Russian history in this

period, is, in fact, the history of its literature. Our knowledge of nineteenth-century Russia and its intellectual development derives from literature as much as it does from any other source.

It may be said, of course, that the poet tends to view his own times from too personal a point of view. Where, indeed, is the line of demarcation between truth and artistic invention? Is the poet not entirely too subjective? Are historians and sociologists not better guides? To me, at any rate, it appears that the historians are equally subjective. How else explain the fact that Russian and European historians alike have advanced mutually self-exclusive interpretations of Russian institutions on so many occasions?

I am well aware that it is no easy matter to interpret Dostoevsky and that there can be honest differences of opinion about what particular interpretation does truly reflect Dostoevsky's own thought. Dostoevsky was not only a novelist but also a literary critic and a journalist. He contributed to his brother's periodical and often addressed himself to questions of the day He even attempted to issue a magazine,[1] wholly written by. himself, as a means of bringing his own personality to bear directly on the contemporary Russian scene. His involvement was active and direct and he therefore did not seek the Olympian calm or "objectivity" of more conventional literary historians. He was a fighter and did not feel bound by the rules of the leading aesthetes of his day whose inclination it was to examine the past rather than the present. On the contrary, Dostoevsky was a philosopher dealing with the history of his own time, a politician, a partisan: foe to his enemies and friend to his friends. . . .

In my attempt to offer some insight into the inner life of this man whose very soul was aglow with love of his native Russia and who—intentionally and unintentionally—succeeded in painting a splendid and sweeping picture of the country in his time, I

[1] Beginning with January 1876, Dostoevsky published a one-man review entitled *A Writer's Diary*. It contained a mixture of articles, comments, and short stories. It appeared more or less regularly monthly in 1876, 1877, 1880, and in January 1881. Its circulation rose from about 2000 copies in 1876 to 8000 in 1881.

Earlier (1872 to 1874) Dostoevsky had published a regular feature entitled "A Writer's Diary" as part of the weekly newspaper *The Citizen* (*Grazhdanin*).

From 1861 to 1863 Dostoevsky edited the monthly review *Time* (*Vremya*), of which his brother Mikhail was business manager. In 1863 the magazine was stopped by the censor on account of an allegedly pro-Polish article by N. N. Strakhov. The government permitted Dostoevsky to publish a new review, *The Epoch* (*Epokha*) in 1864, but it failed by the end of the same year.

draw on his novels, diaries and body of journalistic work.[1] I view Russia as confronting us with a problem in the philosophy of history which has world-wide implications and I see in Dostoevsky a unique guide to the labyrinthine complexity of the issues which that problem raises. No other Russian has ever analysed the spirit of his people so well. No one, apart from Dostoevsky, has made the attempt to see the historical and social realities which confronted him as an expression of the Russian soul and to subject the dynamics of the Russian state and of Russia's national life to such rigorous psychological examination.

Dostoevsky, in short, appears to me as the greatest of Russian social philosophers. From him one is able to learn the most about nineteenth-century Russia. The proliferation of an excellent body of literature on many aspects of Russian life and institutions notwithstanding, it is still in Dostoevsky alone that we are able to perceive the Russia of his day as a really living whole.

[1] Masaryk used chiefly the following editions of Dostoevsky's works and books about him

(1) The six-volume edition of Dostoevsky from the years 1885–1886, in which *A Writer's Diary* is bound as vol V together with some literary and historical articles

(2) The sixth, "Jubilee," (twenty-five years since his death in 1881) edition of his collected work. This edition is remarkable chiefly because it contained some sketches for *The Possessed* which had previously not been published

(3) The German life of Dostoevsky, published in 1889 by N Hoffmann, *Th. M. Dostojevskij*.

(4) Vol. I of the 1883 edition of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenij F. M. Dostoevskogo*. This volume contains brief extracts from Dostoevsky's notebooks and some of his letters, as well as other biographical information, edited by Orest Miller.

In this edition of the English translation of the third volume of *The Spirit of Russia*, Masaryk's quotations from, and references to, Dostoevsky and other sources were checked, wherever possible, against the best Russian texts available today, and, if necessary, their accuracy corrected Where Masaryk referred to Dostoevsky's letters, relevant passages have been checked in Dolinin's four-volume edition, *Pis'ma*, Moscow, 1928 to 1959 Other references in footnotes were verified in the thirteen-volume edition of Dostoevsky's works, Moscow–Leningrad, 1926 to 1930, particularly where texts from *A Writer's Diary*, *Epoch*, *Time*, and Dostoevsky's articles were concerned (volumes 11, 12, and 13), since these are not available in the most easily accessible and most recent edition, the ten-volume *Sobranie Sochinenij*, Moscow, 1956–58, which contains Dostoevsky's "artistic works" only, and which has been used in most of the footnotes referring to Dostoevsky's fiction. The dates and other information given in footnotes make clear which edition was used in verifying quotations and references.

CHAPTER II

THE LIFE OF THE GREAT SINNER: ATHEISM, NIHILISM, AND *THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV*

(i) *Nihilism: An Anarchistic Form of Atheism*

NO sooner had Dostoevsky finished *The Idiot* in 1868 than he was confiding in his friend Maykov a plan for a "tremendous" new novel to be concerned with the very foundations of the author's own being. The work was originally to be called "Atheism."

"I have the central character," Dostoevsky wrote:[1] "A Russian of our own social background, middle-aged, not overly erudite but not entirely without education or standing. All of a sudden, in middle age, he loses his faith in God. Throughout his life he has done nothing but work; he has never thought of departing from the well-trodden path, till the age of 45 he does absolutely nothing that would call attention to himself. . . . Loss of faith produces a powerful effect on him. . . . He consorts with the new generation, with atheists, Slavs and Europeans, with superstitious Russians, ascetics, priests; in particular, he succumbs to the propaganda of a Polish Jesuit and then falls into the depths of flagellantism. At the very end, he discovers both Christ and the Russian earth, the Russian Christ and the Russian God." Dostoevsky adds: "I beg you to tell no one about this, but I must write this novel; even if I should die I will have expressed the very essence of my own being."

Two years later, when he was actually at work on *The Possessed*, Dostoevsky again reveals his plan to his friend Maykov. The work is to be entitled *The Life of a Great Sinner* and is eventually to comprise five large novels. "The key issue, to be taken up in each one of the parts, is the very one which has, consciously or un-

[1] Letter to A. N. Maykov of December 11/23, 1868, from Florence. Best text in F .M. Dostoevsky, *Pis'ma*, ed. A. S. Dolinin, Moscow, 1930, vol III, pp 150.

consciously, tortured me all my life: the question of God's existence. The hero, in the course of his life, becomes successively an atheist, a believer, a fanatic, a sectarian and, once again an atheist."[1]

In these two letters to his friend we have the whole of Dostoevsky as a man as well as his novels in a nutshell: especially so *The Brothers Karamazov* which proved to be the final outcome of these plans.

The book presents four brothers and the old man Karamazov; we are shown a collective phenomenon as well as a generation which displays a whole spectrum of romantic shades and gradations. We are shown the father who, in his appearance and way of life, reminds us of the perverse and demented Roman emperors; we have Dmitri, a blindly instinctive person, but also the philosophical Ivan who, in the face of the atheist's dilemma (either the Jesuitism of the Grand Inquisitor or suicide), wants to live to be at least thirty because he loves life more than he loves the purpose of life and who thus continues to live in defiance of logic. Alyosha, the clean, monastic novice, is conscious of being just as much of a Karamazov while Smerdyakov, as his name suggests, is supposed to be the basest of the species. After all, he is the illegitimate offspring born of intercourse with a feeble-minded woman, the product, therefore, of a perverted passion. Theism and atheism were always the central question for Dostoevsky—a question bearing upon the very being or non-being of man, the individual, the Russian people and humanity in general.

The letter which sketches the plan for his major life work also discloses that Dostoevsky intended to prepare himself for the task by reading the entire Russian and European literature on atheism. As a result, Dostoevsky arrived at his conclusions not alone from the premises postulated by Feuerbach, Schopenhauer, Buechner, Belinsky, Herzen, Bakunin and their Russian disciples. He was quite as aware of the Fausts, Manfreds and Rollas[2] in European literature. The reader of Dostoevsky will, in fact, discover echoes of and references to the most diverse sources in world literature.

Now, to me the cardinal issue is to understand both the genesis of atheism and the process by which it is transformed into the

[1] Letter to A. N. Maykov of March 25/April 6, 1870, from Dresden. *Pis'ma*, ed. Dolinin, III, p. 263

[2] Masaryk lists here the leading philosophers who influenced Russian intellectuals in the direction of materialism and scepticism, as well as the heroes of the works of Goethe, Byron, and de Musset.

politics of revolution. The crucial point is, of course, that this is no academic matter. It has a direct bearing on living reality. In metaphysical terms, it seems to me that Dostoevsky is unable to tell us very much more than Kant and every other important theist, namely, that the world is, or at least appears to be, a teleological whole. Atheism, on the other hand, devolves from a realisation and conviction that the world is, at bottom, devoid of harmony. It is as simple as that. In a more formal sense, Dostoevsky may be said to espouse the teleological argument. In his theodicy he attempts to understand the existence of evil very much as Leibnitz and other optimists did. I say, "in his theodicy," because the works of Dostoevsky, especially *The Brothers Karamazov* and *The Idiot,* are a marvellous modern theodicy, which attempts a psychological and sociological analysis of atheism.

The Russian atheist is not the kind of man who simply manages to talk himself out of a belief in God and then goes on to enjoy a good meal and a bottle of wine, even though such types do exist in Russia and are portrayed in Dostoevsky. The Russian atheist becomes not a hedonist but a pessimist and his pessimism can be of two types: either he works himself into a titanic all-consuming anger, or he falls into literal and total despair. In either case, he does not confine his sentiments merely to the written word. The palliatives of conventional optimism have no effect on him whatever.

On this point, certainly, Belinsky had laid the groundwork for the analysis later offered by Dostoevsky. He had begun with a Hegelian belief in gradual evolution which had reconciled him with life and the world. Yet, once he had acquired a more intimate knowledge of that life, and Russian life in particular, Belinsky had done with theoretical optimism for good and all. Consider this passage for instance:

> "I am told: Develop all the treasures of thy spirit that thou mayest achieve free self-satisfaction for that spirit; weep to console thyself; mourn to bring thyself joy; strive towards perfection; mount towards the highest steps upon the staircase of development; and shouldst thou stumble—well, thou wilt fall! The devil take thee then, for thou wert fit for nothing better. . . . Most humble thanks, Egor Feodorovic Gegel [Hegel], I bow before your philosophic philistinism. I must dutifully assure you that if I should succeed in creeping up the developmental stairs to attain the topmost step I would en-

deavour, even there, to take into the reckoning all the victims of vital conditions and of history, all the victims of misfortune, of superstition, of the inquisition of Philip II, and so on—and in default would hurl myself headlong from the summit. I do not desire happiness in any other terms, and I must be tranquillised concerning the fate of every one of my blood brothers."[1]

Here, indeed, you have the main theme of Ivan Karamazov. And who can wonder that Dostoevsky was so much impressed by Belinsky just before his own personal catastrophe, the arrest in 1849. Let the reader turn to Book V of Part II[2] in *The Brothers Karamazov*. He will find there nothing less than the holy scripture of Russian atheism. Chapter IV in particular reveals its inner core and is entitled "Rebellion" by anything but chance. The Russian atheist quite literally does rebel against his God and carries that rebellion on *usque ad finem*.

The brothers Ivan and Alyosha—one the philosophical atheist, the other a religious theist—are discussing God in a tavern. (How very Russian!) Ivan is elaborating on Belinsky's thought. He is commenting on the harmony of the spheres and of the world by offering his believing brother the example of the General who orders a small boy torn to pieces by dogs before his mother's eyes because the child in throwing a stone had struck the General's favourite dog on its paw. In the account, Ivan himself is killing two birds with one stone. First, he is characterising the social "order" under serfdom (the incident he is relating pre-dates 1861) and then he confronts the optimist who always defends absolutely love of one's neighbour with a stark question. Can and will Alyosha also love this General? What about a cosmic harmony in which innocent, unknowing children undergo such inhuman suffering? What becomes of the teaching about forgiveness of sin? What, indeed, is one to do with the General? Shall one not shoot him to assuage one's sense of moral justice? "Speak, Alyosha!" he cries.

"Yes, shoot him," Alyosha whispered, while looking at his brother with a pale and crooked smile.

"Bravo!" shouts Ivan, almost triumphantly. "If even you say

[1] Letter by Belinsky to Botkin, 1841, previously quoted by Masaryk on pp. 359–60 of vol. I of *The Spirit of Russia*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1961.

[2] *The Brothers Karamazov*, Bk. V, Pt. II, Pro and Contra

so, well then. . . . And behold the strict monk! Behold that little demon in your heart, Alyosha Karamazov."[1]

Alyosha concedes the particular disharmony and a host of others but seeks consolation in the thought that the totality is, after all, still harmonious. He derives peace of soul particularly from Christian teaching on the forgiveness of sin and the dead Christ as redeemer. What matters to Alyosha is that Christ does belong to the whole, that He indeed exists and has the right to bestow forgiveness.

But it is precisely this Christian teaching that Ivan turns on with his "Euclidian," positivist and utilitarian reasoning! He sees nothing but discord and the recognition of it somehow fills him with malicious joy. What use, he asks, is punishment in the afterlife and what meaning can forgiveness have if so many have already endured the most frightful of tortures? Clearly, it is impossible to cause all that suffering to be undone.

> "I don't want harmony, I don't want it out of love of mankind. I prefer to stay with unavenged suffering. I would rather have my own unavenged suffering continue, with my unassuaged bitterness, even if I should, perhaps, prove wrong. They have set too high a price on harmony; the price being asked just for admission is just too high for us. So I hurry to return my admission ticket. If I am an honourable man, I must return my ticket as soon as possible. Alyosha, I am not refusing to accept God, I am just most respectfully returning to him the ticket."
>
> "That," Alyosha says in a low voice and with bowed head, "is rebellion!"[2]

Here indeed is the essence of Russian nihilistic atheism. It is not merely an academic doctrine: it is one's very own fate in life. It has nothing whatever to do with an attitude of mere indifference. It is not positivist agnosticism but rather a kind of embittered scepticism which revels in the laceration of the soul. The Russian atheist carries out his Promethean revolt in full consciousness. He literally bristles with hatred, is saturated in revenge and falls into despair with real passion. The Russian atheist is hardly the product of a general and vague awareness of cosmic disharmony: his points of departure are the actual Russian world and the past

[1] *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 305 of vol. IX, Moscow, 1958 ed.
[2] *Ibid*, pp. 307–308.

history of Russia. Thus, the Russian atheist is essentially an ethical and social being rather than a metaphysical one. He is, quite forthrightly, preoccupied with the ethical aspect of religion.

The immediate consequence of his own position for any Russian atheist must be the apotheosis of his own ego. Indeed, that is precisely what Stirner[1] and other German radical subjectivists had taught. Still, the Russian atheist is neither a subjectivist nor an idealist who supposes that the external world exists only in his own imagination and as an expression of his own will. On the contrary, the world exists all too evidently; it does exist in all its social worthlessness. That is why a merely conceptual negation of God will not lead very far: God must be literally dethroned. Above all, it is essential to eradicate the Christian deity, the God-man and to put in his place the Man-god who will be able to bring order out of chaos.

Thus, the Russian Man-god craves neatness and a new world order. The old ethical and social precepts are useless to him. The nihilistic superman recognises no ethical truths, rejects all moral codes: nothing at all can be denied him. This Pauline assertion is repeated constantly in *The Brothers Karamazov:* if there is no God and no immortality (identical concepts for Dostoevsky) then, too, there is nothing immoral, there are no ethical commands and prohibitions. Everything is permitted.

Freedom, equality, brotherhood: these signify liberty and power for Dostoevsky's superman. Raskolnikov and the hero of *The Raw Youth* dream of becoming Napoleons and Rothschilds. Both were entirely unto themselves and quite unique. By analogy, the nihilist who has read his Stirner also craves the same sense of uniqueness and even if he never does achieve the position of a Napoleon or Rothschild, the "idea" becomes sufficient unto itself. His intense and passionate desire is enough to place him outside and above society:

> "I was seized by the idea of conceiving an average person of no special gifts, standing before the world and saying with a smile: 'You, Galileos, Copernicuses, Charlemagnes, Napoleons; you, Pushkins and Shakespeares, Field-Marshals, and Chamberlains of the royal courts: look at me, untalented and illegitimate,

[1] Max Stirner (1806–56), a German materialistic philosopher, deriving from Hegel and Feuerbach a theory of "practical egoism"

yet I stand above you because you have subordinated yourselves to me!' "[1]

Ivan's philosophy is thus easily understood: in a disordered world he feels that to love one's neighbour becomes quite meaningless. The all-powerful and almighty superman can act without the least restraint even if this should entail the most extreme measures. He is lord of life and death. He may kill as well as perish by his own hand.

In the final analysis, therefore, atheism can only lead either to murder or to suicide. This is the theme of *Crime and Punishment* and it reappears in each of Dostoevsky's subsequent books.[2]

The right to commit either murder or suicide is, of course, a total negation of Russia: it is a denial of its history and culture, of the nation and the fatherland and above all of its religion. The meaning of Russian life and civilisation, the individual Russian as well as the immense whole, the Czar himself, intoxicated by the thought that his realm is the sixth continent of the world, all of these and a millennium of history are reduced to nonsense.

Thus, the radical nihilist is led inexorably by his antipathy toward Russian civilisation to a hatred of his fatherland, its history and people to hatred of himself. Russian history and civilisation, millions upon millions of Russians—and he himself among them—signify nothing and have no meaning.

For Dostoevsky himself, it is precisely religion which imparts meaning to life, whether it is that of an individual, a whole people, or of all mankind. The meaning and substance of Russian civilisation devolves from faith: a deep and pervasive faith, the real and solely Russian Orthodox faith. Hence, to him, the negation or denial of Russia can only mean the rejection of the Russian faith.

"He who has no nation, has no God." That is the concise and pragmatic way in which he sees the close connection between patriotism and theism and conversely, between atheism and revolution. In *The Possessed*, atheism, nihilism, and revolution are treated as synonyms by Dostoevsky.

Moreover, the negation of Russia by the nihilist clearly means the acceptance of Europe. Russia is nothing, Europe everything, and if not literally everything then certainly a good deal or at least something. And acceptance of Europe means pre-eminently

[1] From *A Raw Youth*, p 101 of vol. VIII, Moscow, 1957

[2] See section (iv) below on Masaryk's analysis of Dostoevsky's treatment of suicide and murder.

acceptance of the Catholic religion since Protestantism, in Dostoevsky's view, always remained a negligible force. Yet, by this logic, it follows that since the Europeanised Russian is a nonbeliever, European Catholicism is therefore proven to be no true religion, in fact, not a religion at all but instead a form of atheism and naturalism. Hence, in political terms, a nihilistic Europeanisation of Russia can result only in socialism which turns out to be nothing so much as a social form of atheism.

The nihilist's disbelief[1] is also synonymous with acceptance of European pseudo-science, or rather of its half-science and half-education and for that reason the nihilistic atheist, is, strictly speaking, no more than a half-atheist in the sense that he always remains only half-educated. There are, after all, atheists who *believe* in the Devil! Hence, Dostoevsky tells us often that a Russian simply cannot become a real atheist at all. He draws his own principal atheistic character accordingly: Ivan Karamazov remains simply a sceptic and a rebel against God. He does recognise God even though he turns in the admission ticket to his world. The quasi-educated atheists thus usually turn out to be nothing more than feeble little devils, badly possessed of genuine demonic qualities. In *The Possessed* they are portrayed as semi-literate, unbelieving and yet superstitious.

Dostoevsky refers often to this pseudo-sophistication of the nihilist and sees in this kind of semi-literacy the bane of the nineteenth century. What he particularly deplores is the resulting inner schizophrenia, that half-way house of the contemporary Russian: part Russian, part European, part believer, part secular philosopher, part saint, part demon. . . .

In the letter to Maykov announcing his plan for *The Great Sinner*, as the work was then called, we read about a 13-year-old boy who has already been involved in crime.[2] The parents send him to a monastery where the juvenile nihilist encounters the great man of God, Tikhon. Dostoevsky places much stress on the fact that the boy comes from "our educated classes" by which he means to show that pseudo-literacy can result only in moral turpitude. In fact, Dostoevsky always and with unflagging zeal points to the connection between atheism and moral anarchy. The relationship, however, is not such that atheism merely creates

[1] "Nihilisti appellantur qui nihil credunt et nihil docent—this old definition of St. Augustine quite accurately overlaps with Dostoevsky's conception." (T.G.M.)

[2] Letter from Dresden, March 25/April 6, 1870, p. 264 of vol. II, *Pis'ma*, 1930.

anarchy; on the contrary, it is moral degeneracy which leads to atheism and atheism thus becomes a disguise for infamy. This atheism of semi-education springs not so much from philosophy as from immorality. The revolt of the semi-educated nihilists, as Dostoevsky once put it, is the atheism of "an idea sunk into the gutter."

Dostoevsky singles out sexual promiscuity as the great moral failing of his time. Ivan Karamazov is Faust and Don Juan in one and the same person and the Don remains the stronger of the two. The brothers Karamazov and their father are made the very symbols of the disease: Karamazovites.

By "semi-education" Dostoevsky means liberalism, the Petersburg Russo-European learning which has turned against the indigenous religion—that Westernising liberalism for which he castigates Turgenev so mercilessly in *The Possessed.* Indeed, when his friend Maykov recognised some of Turgenev's heroes in the characters of the novel, Dostoevsky was delighted by the discovery.

(ii) *Zosima the Monk: The Philosophy of Belief*

THE nihilist in Dostoevsky is an atheist, hence an extreme individualist, a god and, as such, master of life and death. This chain of reasoning may well arouse some scepticism among Dostoevsky's readers. And well it may since his conclusion is incorrect precisely because based on a fundamentally faulty premise.

But, before we analyse this interpretation and explanation of nihilism let us hear the opposing thesis and learn just what Dostoevsky means to substitute for nihilism and how he conceives of surmounting it.

From a logical and detached viewpoint, atheism should be opposed by theism, pessimism by optimism, a horror of life by a joy of life. Since there is a God, and life is accordingly based on the principle of harmony, then surely there can be no individualism, murder or suicide. This outlook, seen from whatever vantage point, is surely calculated to arouse doubt. Its basic assumption seems to be that there is only one kind of atheism and, opposing it, only one kind of theism.

Such categorisation into bare theses and antitheses is hardly sufficient if one is to understand a real-life situation. A bare skeleton cannot explain the flesh-and-blood creatures of Dos-

toevsky's novels. Surely, an extraordinary anatomist and psychologist would be needed to learn solely from skeletons anything substantial about living people, much less anything about the actual course of their lives. Dostoevsky himself does not remain satisfied with mere philosophical formulas. He must create and describe people who live according to or in violation of his formulas.

Dostoevsky's most mature treatment of the religious issue is to be found in *The Brothers Karamazov*. The entire action takes place in a monastery or its close environs. It contains a vivid picture of Russian monastic life. Not only is the religious issue portrayed through a heterogeneous array of characters, but we are also offered the very catechism of Dostoevsky's religious philosophy from the mouth of the monk Zosima. The ideal of this man's monastic life is pictured as the very antithesis of Ivan's atheism and worldly philosophy. It is only in a superficial sense that Ivan's real opposite appears in the person of his brother Alyosha as the latter actually lives according to Zosima's teachings and counsel which he sets out to expound in conjunction with the monk's biography. The essential portion of the book occurs in Part II where Zosima's religious and philosophical views are expounded.

Zosima begins his meditations by reflecting on the Russian monk in whom he sees the pure embodiment of Christ. Christ himself, however, is God and hence true theism is faith in Christ and the determination to follow in his footsteps. That vow has, precisely, been taken by the Russian monk and by him alone; moreover, he follows only the Russian Christ and the Russian God. Thus, the issue becomes not one of theism alone: at stake we have not merely God but specifically the Russian God and the Russian Christ; only they are the true God and the true Christ!

Above all, the Russian monk rejects worldly knowledge as it recognises only the evidence of the senses and denies the world of the spirit. The secular world proclaims freedom but it is only the freedom to widen one's sensual needs and to sharpen the receptivity of the senses. Among the rich, this can lead only to loneliness and suicide of the spirit; among the poor it breeds envy and murder. Some may dream of universal brotherhood resulting from the invention of railways and telegraphs but such notions are quite visionary. In reality, the secularist's freedom turns into slavery, his brotherhood to alienation and loneliness. In the end, men acquire more material possessions and less happiness.

The monk chooses a different path. The world may laugh at

his vow of obedience, at his fasting and his prayers, but it is precisely in these that true liberty and spiritual joy lie. The monk is truly free because he emancipates himself from the tyranny of material things and customs. It is not true that the monk is isolated as it is often asserted. He is imbued with love of his neighbour and that love creates a bond between him and the people. The Russian masses trust the monk as they do not the scholar.

> "Russia's salvation will come from the people and the Russian monastery has always been as one with the people. . . . The people believes as we do and the unbeliever—be he ever so sincere and intellectually brilliant—can achieve nothing here among us Russians. . . . The people will meet the atheist, defeat him, and there shall be a single, united Orthodox Russia."[1]

Thus will the Russian monk, fasting and bound by the vow of silence, rise and emerge as Russia's saviour.

Still, the people are being spoiled: moral decay is spreading almost hourly and the essential rot is coming from above. Parasites and charlatans are growing in number. The tradesman is getting affluent and imitates the nobleman in his lack of culture while the people languish in drunkenness. But the truly Russian God can still save the people: the humble man may be spoiled yet he still believes in truth and in God. Not so, however, the upper classes which are attempting to fashion a social order based only on reason and not Christ. They assert that there is neither crime nor sin. European demagogues have tried to pit rich against poor but the Russian people, despite two centuries of serfdom, remain free and are not enslaved. They remain free of feelings of envy or revenge. And that is why Russia remains essentially on the right road: even the richest among Russians is ashamed of his wealth when confronted by the poor muzhik who reciprocates that shame with nothing but love.

> "Believe that it will end like that; all is directed towards that. You may be sure that precisely this will resolve everything. True equality exists only in man's dignity of the spirit, and only our people understand that."[2]

The monastery is also portrayed as the ideal form of communal

[1] *The Brothers Karamazov*, Vol. IX, Part II, Book 6, chapter 3, p. 394 of 1958 edition.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 395.

life, indeed as a form of communism. Surely, there will always be masters and servants as the world would be quite unthinkable without servants. Still, it is incumbent on each of us to act so that our servant will feel a greater degree of freedom than if, in fact, he were a free man. Why can I not be my servant's servant without arousing a sense of pride in myself and of suspicion in him? The Gospel tells us that each can serve all. Yet the secular world and its learning hope to erect a social structure solely on the basis of reason; they mean to introduce equality and justice on rational grounds alone. That is Utopia indeed, and an even greater one than our own faith in Christ.

To love and to pray: that is Zosima's testament. Genuine prayer both elevates and educates. Most particularly you must, according to Zosima, pray for the dying! Love thy neighbour, though he may be a sinner since that is the greatest love on earth which at least approximates God's own love. Love every living creature; love not only the whole but every single particle. Love animals, plants and all things.

"Do not rate yourself above the animals: they are free of sin. . . ."[1] Love children above all since they too are untouched by sin as are the angels. They live so as to affect our consciences, purify our hearts and to set us an example. "Woe to him who harms a child."

Should you ever face a choice between the use of force as against humility and love, always choose love.[2]

"Friends, ask joy of God! Be joyful like children, like the birds of the heavens."[3] Do not fear that human sin and a hostile environment will turn your actions and achievements to naught. There is only one salvation and that is to accept the blame for the sins of all mankind. Each of us shares responsibility for one and all. Whoever blames his own frailty on others ends by falling victim to demonic pride and in rebellion against God. It may well be difficult to understand this diabolical pride but then we neither comprehend the world nor the secret of life and without Christ's example we should lose our way altogether. Many earthly things remain mysterious to us even while we retain a secret and hidden sense of another and higher world. And that sense is the very preserver of life: let it be undermined or destroyed and you perish, feeling only indifference and perhaps even hatred of life.

Above, all, be ever mindful that you may never stand in

[1] *The Brothers Karamazov*, Vol. IX, p. 399, of 1958 edition. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid*, p 400

judgment over another; one man may pass judgment on another only in so far as he is fully aware that he is himself equally to blame.

Always be active and preserve your belief to the very end. Even should everyone else renounce his faith and there should remain only two believers, that would be enough to recreate a whole new world of love. Beware of all desire for revenge. If that evil temptation should seize you, seek out suffering and experience it. You will then understand that only you are to blame. Had you shed the light, another's path would have been illuminated and the evil-doer led along the right path. And even if you do hue to righteousness and spread the divine light and yet see men who stray from the narrow path, still remain firm and do not succumb to doubt. Even the virtuous must die but his light shines after him. Mankind does not recognise its prophets and indeed kills them. Still, men love the martyrs whom they have condemned to suffering. You must act for the whole and for posterity and never seek a reward as you have received it already through enjoyment of the spiritual happiness of the righteous.

Never fear the high and mighty, but remain wise and firm always. Learn time and measure. Love the earth and kiss it insatiably; let tears of joy fall upon it and love even those very tears. Feel no shame for this act as it is God's gift bestowed only upon a few.[1]

Father Zosima ends his preachment with a "mystic" discourse on hell. What may it be? "The torment of being no longer capable of love."[2] Zosima's understanding of eternal punishment may be expressed thus: The soul, as an immortal entity, enters this world in order to proclaim: "I am and therefore I love." Should it ever fail to realise this unique potential, should it remain loveless and without feeling, then surely it will destroy its potential for love through failure to offer up its own life and being to love.

Moreover, even were it possible to free such souls of their suffering their lot would only become the more unfortunate. Were the righteous to summon them into paradise they would only kindle inconceivable flames of mutual, conscious and grateful love. Such an awareness of the impossible could, of course, conceivably act to ameliorate the suffering of such souls who might

[1] The preceding passages are paraphrases and summaries of pp. 400–3 in vol. IX of the 1958 edition of *The Brothers Karamazov*.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 403.

at least perceive the meaning of that active love which they had spurned on earth.

But, beware of the suicide! Officially, the Church rejects them, "yet, secretly I feel that it is possible to pray even for them. Christ is never angered by love. Hence, I have prayed for them all my life which I freely confess to you as my teachers and elders. Even now, indeed, I pray for them daily."[1]

In hell, however, there are also those who remain proud and filled with anger even though they are beginning to glimpse the truth. These are truly terrible beings who have given themselves fully to Satan and his overweening pride. Demons choose to abide in hell freely out of insatiable greed. They are martyrs of their own free will as they have chosen to curse God and life. They feed upon their angry pride very much as if a thirsty man were to drink his own blood in the desert. They are thus insatiable for all time and reject all forgiveness. "They cannot look upon the living God without hatred; they cry out that there must be no God of life and that he should destroy himself and all his works. They will burn in the flames of their hatred forever, craving death and oblivion. Yet, they shall not receive death. . . ."[2]

(iii) *Feuerbach versus The Monk*

RUSSIAN and European monasteries alike still afford comfort to distraught nerves and bruised spirits. We are told as much by the Huysmans, Bourgets, Wildes and many others.[3] And so indeed was the Russian monastery a romantic and bucolic haven for Russia's God-seekers.

Ivan Karamazov sees the monastery as a battleground and so, in a sense, did Dostoevsky and his younger colleague Solovyov.[4] Each of them had, at least for a time, discovered not only peace but also deep excitement in a monastery.

We can understand the physical and spiritual effects of such a place of calm on any philosophically inclined city dweller, but would Dostoevsky have spent his whole life in a monastery? Why did he not retreat to it even while defending it in the face of all worldliness?

[1] Zosima's discourse, vol. IX, p. 405, of 1958 edition. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848–1907), French mystical and "decadent" novelist, author of *Là-bas* and *A rebours*, Paul Bourget (1852–1935), French writer of essays, stories, and novels; Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), English poet and dramatist.

[4] Chapter 17, pp. 225–87, in vol. II of *The Spirit of Russia*, is devoted to Vladimir Solovyov.

In his original plan for *The Brothers Karamazov,* Dostoevsky expected to portray the great Russian ascetic and monk, Tikhon Zadonsky. There is certainly no doubt that Tikhon (1724–83) was a great saint, but then the question always remains as to whether the great figures of the past can really guide the course of future developments. It is said of Tikhon that he was once debating with a Voltairean freethinker who, in the heat of the argument struck the monk in the face. Tikhon straight away falls to his knees and begs his interlocutor's forgiveness and thus Voltaire's disciple becomes a good Christian from that moment onward. The story is doubtless very touching; but does the act of an ascetic really refute the thought of Voltaire, Hume, Kant, Feuerbach, Bakunin and Herzen?

Certainly, what may have been decisive for a crude Voltairean of the eighteenth century lacked persuasion for Bazarov and his successors. Even Maxim the Greek[1] adopted a more critical attitude toward the Moscovite monks in this respect than did Dostoevsky. To the former, at least, the Russian monk in his isolation from the outside world is quite incapable of conquering it.

Father Zosima read the New Testament often and diligently but he was an officer before his conversion and in his early years was much influenced by French, German and Russian Romanticism. Hence, as Zosima himself concedes, his theology and religion are Romantically utopian, for which he consoles himself with the thought that they are less utopian than socialism is.

"The God of Life" is Dostoevsky's God. It is the longing for a joyous and everlasting life which fills him. Belief in God and immortality are synonymous for him. His fundamental principle and point of departure for all action and thought is the conviction that immortality alone imparts meaning to life as also does the impregnability of one's faith in this notion. Materialism and atheism can mean only death while the idea of life can only be that of eternal life which, as Dostoevsky is convinced, can only be realised through an everwhelming rage for life. Man, of course, has the instinct of self-preservation merely as a human being. Even Ivan, the materialist and atheist, has it and yields to it but, as he says, he loves life more than he does the idea of life. The believer, on the other hand, comprehends that idea. "Without the highest of all ideas neither an individual nor a people can endure.

[1] Maxim the Greek: invited to Russia from Greece in 1518 to translate church literature. He composed various works, in some of which he criticised the Russian clergy.

On this earth there is only one highest idea which is that the human soul is immortal, for all other "highest" ideas according to which men can live follow solely from that one idea."[1] And Dostoevsky adds that to him the idea of immortality is, in actuality, the very essence of life itself.

Possibly without being aware of the connection, Dostoevsky is repeating Plato and more particularly St. Paul. Dostoevsky's God is no abstract concept, no theoretical theism. He is Christ himself, both as God and man and a being triumphant over death! That is why he views the devil as the spirit of "self-destruction and non-being," and suicide as the inescapable consequence of materialistic atheism. I leave aside the entirely private longing for life which in Dostoevsky's case as in that of St. Paul was occasioned by personal infirmity. Dostoevsky the epileptic is certainly reminiscent of St. Paul and his "thorn." We feel in both of them an intense search for life and flight from death. Paul preaches the crucified Christ to a sinking and decadent generation just as Dostoevsky tries to explain the religion of life to a degenerate age. And, paradoxically perhaps, it is precisely that kind of an age in which one finds this diseased attachment to life. After all, let us remember that the healthy person is hardly aware of being a well man. It is here that one discovers the Romantics to be Dostoevsky's precursors and the "Neo-Romantics" to be his successors. Who, after Dostoevsky, but Garborg[2] preached the "gospel of life" to his "weary souls"? The fact is that the eternal life as understood by Zosima and Dostoevsky's other believing characters is physical rather than spiritual in nature. Indeed, it turns out to be entirely possible to be ever so great an opponent of materialism and still to have an essentially materialistic view of the soul very much as the Greek Church Fathers did.

Thus, this craving for immortality among Russians must be understood quite specifically as a form of struggle to preserve the integrity of their personality. Equally, one must see that Dostoevsky was neither the first nor the only one to hold this view (compare Granovsky and Radishchev).[3]

Theism and faith in the everlasting are wholly personal matters for Dostoevsky. His relationship with Christ is entirely intimate and it is not with the Christ of the Liberals who have learned

[1] *A Writer's Diary*, December 1876, Vol. XI, p. 487, of 1929 edition.

[2] Arne Garborg, Norwegian writer (1851–1924).

[3] Radishchev is discussed on pp. 76–77 and elsewhere in Vol. I of *The Spirit of Russia* and Granovsky *passim* in both volumes.

about him from Renan. His is always the Russian Christ and God-man and his image of him so real that I would doubt that Dostoevsky could be accepted by the liberal wing among theologians of the historical school given his slogan "Back to Christ." Actually, Dostoevsky emphasises the human element in his God so forcefully as even to appeal to Feuerbach and his Russian disciples.

But the mere knowledge that there is a God and even faith and certitude in His being still do not make for true religion in Dostoevsky's view. Perhaps he recalled the General Epistle of James (II.19): "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble." This passage is crucial for all critics of Dostoevsky. Ivan Karamazov also acknowledges the existence of God but rejects His works and His world as wholly misbegotten and hence requiring the opposition of the Man-god or Superman to the God-man.

If faith in God were alone to be a religion or to constitute its sole substantive content, then Ivan Karamazov would not only have a religion but perhaps the best of all religions. He certainly has his philosophical one which, like every other religion, is rooted in curiosity about the meaning and purpose of the world. "I wish to be present when everyone will suddenly comprehend why it has all been this way. That wish must surely be the basis for all of the world's religions."[1]

For Dostoevsky and Zosima this is simply not good enough. Faith in God and immortality cannot be demonstrated philosophically but we can gain conviction through active love of our neighbour. "To the extent that you develop a love of man so will you become convinced of the existence of God and the immortality of your soul."[2] Likewise, in *The Possessed* Shatov advises Stavrogin to win his way to God by assuming the work of an ordinary muzhik.[3]

Still, Zosima is not even satisfied by this direct sense of God's being. He insists that we have a secret inner sense of lively contact with another and higher world and that the very roots of our thoughts and feelings are not of this earth but derive from other spheres. This leads Zosima straight into Platonic or, rather, into neo-Platonic and Gnostic doctrines of pre-existence. Yet, it is in places just like this, where one expected to be initiated into the

[1] *The Brothers Karamazov*, Part II, Book 5, Chapter 4, IX, p. 306.
[2] *Ibid.*, Part I, Book 2, Chapter 4, IX, p. 73.
[3] Part II, Section 1, Chapter 7, VII, p. 271.

highest truths, that the fundamental verities are left rather obscure and that Dostoevsky does not allow Zosima a single word of apology for the cryptic nature of his discourse.

This reversion to the teachings of Plato about pre-existence are, it seems to me, glossed over by modern interpreters of Dostoevsky who themselves have inclinations toward mysticism, even though the notion is quite implicit in his clearly mystical interpretation of hell. The relevant passage reads as follows:

> "Once, in the infinite existence of being, which cannot be measured in terms either of time or space, one spiritual being which appeared on earth was given the ability to say: 'I am and I love.' Once and once only was it accorded this moment of positive and vital love. Earthly existence was given to it for that purpose, as well as time, and what happened?"[1]

This is the Platonic Gnosticism which, for Dostoevsky, is the final and irrefutable answer to Ivan's "Euclidian and secular reasoning" or nihilistic positivism.

Indeed, there can be no doubt about Dostoevsky's own mysticism. The Book of Revelation became his favourite book. Yet, if I do call him a mystic, it is in the strict theological sense and not that in which modern commentators on Dostoevsky have often employed it. They frequently link his mysticism to his epilepsy from which they infer an unsuspected capacity for clairvoyance. Even more often they read mysticism into his sexual psychology as though that were a form of divination. Epilepsy is epilepsy, sexuality is sexuality.

I am, of course, aware that mystics often have pathological inclinations and often tend toward various maladies, and I do recognise a congenital proclivity to mysticism in Dostoevsky. Still, I must make a clear distinction: in my judgment, he was led to his religious mysticism by an inescapable logic which rests on the foundations of his own faith and that of all Christian and non-Christian religions.

In the 1870's spiritualism was gaining acceptance throughout Russia and particularly in St. Petersburg. At a time when Zöllner in Germany and Sir William Crookes in England were investigating psychic phenomena, a scholarly society of spiritualists had come into being in St. Petersburg under the leadership of A. N.

[1] *The Brothers Karamazov*, Part II, Book 6, Chapter 3, IX, p. 403.

Aksakov.[1] At the same time the sceptics and non-believers had created a commission headed by the famous chemist Mendeleyev which produced a report on psychic phenomena. Dostoevsky was in the thick of the controversy. He visited seances, observed and reported on them. He declined to explain the secrets of spiritualism but pointed with satisfaction to the social significance he ascribed to it. What he saw was the educated, liberal and, in part, the scientific community of Petrograd—the very capital of the Westernisers—going over to a form of mysticism.

Thus, it is hardly surprising that Dostoevsky himself was keenly interested in psychic manifestations. How, indeed, could he help being fascinated by the visible and tangible evidence of immortality which lies at the core of spiritualism's success. Even so, Dostoevsky hardly needed nor did he accept this kind of proof: it was enough for him to know that the scientific outlook appeared to be in dire straits.

Dostoevsky's own mysticism is a mirror of the life of the Russian people: it is derived from his view of the "godly folk", "yurodivye," the religious fanatics within the great mass of the people and those who can be described only as exhilarated and yet demented exalters of the only true faith. Russian literature as a whole abounds in the greatest conceivable variety of these popular mystics and they often form the subject of Russian art. The Russian monastery was the breeding ground of this popular mysticism and often became its official religious organ in so far as many of the monks were nothing else but homely mystics working within the framework of a religious order. Thus, if Dostoevsky sees Christ's only true successor in the Russian monk, he is led quite naturally to accept the religious fanatic as well. He depicts many such characters himself, both as men and women. He was much interested in Nekrasov's "Vlas" in which he sees a true expression of the Russian religious character.[2] He even creates his own "Vlas"

[1] Johan Karl Zollner, a German physicist and astronomer, famous particularly for his studies of spectrum analysis, wrote in 1872 a *Curious Book of Comets*, and defended spiritualism. Sir William Crookes (1832–1919) was a famous English chemist and physicist, who did research on electric properties of vacuum tubes. He too defended spiritualism. In 1871 his *Spiritualism and Science* appeared in Russian in Petersburg. A. N. Aksakov (1821–1903), one of the famous Aksakov family, a Swedenborgian and voluminous writer, took up spiritualism and translated much spiritualist literature. He published in Russia as well as in Germany. All three belong to the group of prominent and respectable men who in the last quarter of the nineteenth century lent their prestige to the curious movement of spiritualism

[2] A poem by N. A. Nekrasov, further discussed by Masaryk below. The title

and tells us that his type will indeed be the saviour of Russia:

> "I am convinced that the Vlasses, whether penitent or not, will have the last word: they will tell us and show us—a—new road, a new way out of all those difficulties which appear to have no solution. It will not be Petersburg which will finally determine Russia's fate.[1]

And yet, there are other occasions on which Dostoevsky is more reserved in his attitude toward mysticism, as when he stresses that the man of Russia's future—his very own Alyosha,—is no fanatic and, in fact, not even a mystic.[2] He tells us that Alyosha elected the monastic life only because, during his youth in the 1850's, his love of mankind could find no other avenue of self expression and that we are, thus, faced with a person suffused with a love of his fellow man and nothing more.

From this it would seem to follow that if Dostoevsky does regard mysticism as the very substance of Russian religiosity and if he sees nothing but rationalism not only in Catholicism but in Protestantism as well, his view can strike one only as an example of exaggerated and muddled thinking. After all, Dostoevsky should have known that his own Zosima is made to borrow the thoughts and, indeed, to utter the very words of St. Francis of Assisi and that Pobedonostsev, the official guardian of Russian orthodoxy, was also the translator of Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*. How is one also to explain that Europe's religious mysticism so completely eluded the Dostoevsky who was himself a reader of Chateaubriand and of other French and continental romantics? Who can really deny truthfully that Russia has not been the only home of mysticism, which is just as developed in the West, not to mention the Orient. Surely, a mysticism plays a role in every one of the world's religious faiths. An examination of the writing even of contemporary European philosophers and theologians shows that, in the final analysis, the basis of all religious belief is to be found in mysticism. In fact, at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was possible to see an

character is an evil man who commits many sins, until he falls ill and is close to death. He makes the promise to convert, if he should recover, becomes better, and spends the rest of his life doing penance, collecting alms all over Russia, and giving money to churches. He is a classical type of the Russian conception of the fallen man who repents

[1] *A Writer's Diary*, No. 6, 1873, XI, 34, in 1929 edition.

[2] Vol. IX, p. 26, of 1958 edition of *The Brothers Karamazov*.

increase in mystical sentiment throughout Europe and not merely in Russia alone.

Now is it true that mysticism and rationalism are always as antithetical to one another as Dostoevsky supposes? They have co-existed and continue to co-exist not only in classical Gnosticism, medieval scholasticism but also in more modern times. It is clearly wise to make distinctions between historical epochs and individual personalities. There are certainly differences between varying types of mysticism, and often substantial ones, as there are between kinds of rationalism. There are contrasts between Oriental and Western mysticism as there are between the Orthodox and other Christian churches. Yet it is patently impossible to assert that the West stands for reason alone while Russia embodies the essence of mysticism.

Dostoevsky's mysticism is not, however, based solely on a metaphysical doctrine concerning man's relationship to God. It also has an ethical and social dimension. A mystical dedication to God, the mystical union with the deity—Dostoevsky's own "Imitation of Christ"—is duly transformed into total devotion to the monk as Russia's only saviour. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky does more than merely depict the relationship of Alyosha to Zosima: he is more broadly concerned with the institution of the "elder" as it is found in Russian and Eastern monasteries. We are actually offered a short history of the institution in *The Brothers Karamazov*, from its origins in the Byzantine Church to its adoption in the Russian monasteries, where it eventually fell into decay, only to be revived at the end of the eighteenth century. The Elder, whose source of authority is moral rather than hierarchical, wields unlimited power over those who have chosen to subordinate themselves to him, whether novices or full-fledged monks. As Dostoevsky puts it: "The Elder is someone who takes your own soul and your will into his own soul and will; whoever has chosen an elder has abdicated his own will and turned it over to him in complete obedience."[1]

Dostoevsky not only accepts but idealises this institution, even though he cannot quite pass up an aside to the effect that it is a double-edged weapon. Yet the institution itself is unquestionably a product of Byzantine absolutism and despotism. It is the quintessence of an aristocratic religion and therefore of a kind of religious slavery since, in the final analysis, every aristocratic order must and does rest on some form of slavery. All of Dostoevsky's

[1] *The Brothers Karamazov*, Vol. IX, p. 38, of 1958 edition.

romanticisation of the monastery can do nothing to mislead one on this particular score.

Dostoevsky sees in the human temperament an inherent need to genuflect to someone else, not merely by showing him an inward respect but literally by bowing and scraping before him. The reader of *The Brothers Karamazov* can hardly fail to be struck by the many bows which are made to serve as tokens of esteem among the most disparate types of people. In fact, Dostoevsky evolves an elaborate system of bowing, in classic Russian fashion: Zosima bows before Dmitri Karamazov just as he once knelt before his own servant; Katherine Ivanovna also bows to Dmitri and so on and so forth. Likewise, in the manner of his own church, Dostoevsky expects an even deeper genuflexion from the faithful before the Godhead. In fact, it remains difficult to repress an oddly embarrassed feeling on seeing Russians bow to the very ground before altars, relics, pictures of the saints, the priests and monks. It is a painful sensation to the Westerner who does not feel as enslaved and oppressed in the sight of his own God. It also inclines one to think that if Belinsky and the other Westernisers were so delighted with Feuerbach's analysis of religion and of Christianity in particular, they also displayed a keener insight than did Dostoevsky into the anthropomorphic and political implications of all these Russian and Eastern bows and prostrations before the deity.

Dostoevsky, of course, does defend his own position. The novel, *A Raw Youth*, has his "Vlas," Makar Ivanovich, explain that whoever denies God in any case creates another idol for himself whether it be of wood, gold or one of ideas. Elsewhere Dostoevsky says that proud men would rather prostrate themselves before God precisely because they refuse to bow to their fellows.

Unquestionably, there is something essentially true in this observation which Dostoevsky makes in several contexts but it seems to me only to support Feuerbach's views. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, for instance, Zosima protests most energetically against the principle of *timor deos facit* but he never asks whether it is not fear itself which induces precisely the kind of obedience which he demands.

Dostoevsky quite simply does not realise that the emphasis placed on passive virtues in the Christian religion had its origins in the age of social and political absolutism. Just as Schleiermacher's understanding of religion was an outgrowth of the romantic absolutism of the restoration, so too was Dostoevsky's

own passive Christianity the product of his Siberian experience and the romantic era of Nicolas I. Dostoevsky simply never fails to extol obedience as the essential equivalent of godliness: over and over again he preaches humility, self-denial, compassion for poverty, sacrifice and asceticism.

This is not, of course, to imply that I wish to be unjust to Dostoevsky. Theologians still do equate faith with organised religion and such faith does, in turn, presuppose obedience. Yet faith and obedience cannot be considered apart from those individuals whom the faithful are to believe and whom they are to obey. In practice these leaders have always been God's "disciples," "mediators" or "representatives" who have utilised faith in God and the principle of obedience in order to achieve particular ecclesiastical, social and political goals which have sometimes been good and sometimes bad.

Dostoevsky himself ought to have better understood this very real connection between human and divine authority. After all, he himself shows us in *The Possessed* how all sources of authority disappear for the nihilistic superman the moment he has "dethroned" God. "What manner of Captain am I if, in fact, there is no God?" That is the wholly naïve question of one Captain during a discussion among officers with nihilistic sympathies which takes place in *The Possessed*.[1] In other words, religious and secular authority are so closely linked that not only does disobedience follow from atheism but that obedience is also inherent in faith. The officer who suddenly rebels against his superior because he has been publicly reprimanded returns to his apartment, throws out all pictures of the saints, chops one of them up with an axe and goes on to put the works of Vogt, Moleschott and Buechner[2] on three separate tables and to light religious candles before each of them. Nor is this an exaggerated caricature, as a reading of Pisarev's essays on Vogt, Moleschott, and Buechner will demonstrate. Note how approvingly he stresses the physiological and wholly material nature of the life cycle as the basis for his own outlook and how he argues with Polonsky[3] who had found

[1] Vol. VII, p. 240, of 1957 edition.

[2] Karl Vogt (1817–95), a German natural scientist and materialist. Jakob Moleschott (1822–93), Dutch philosopher and physiologist; he eulogised the science of chemistry and was admired by Russian nihilists. Ludwig Buechner (1824–99), a German doctor and physiologist, whose books were in Russia considered very fashionably materialistic and anti-traditional, D. I. Pisarev referred to them (Vogt and Buechner) in his essay "The Realists." Masaryk discusses Pisarev, Vol. II of *The Spirit of Russia*, pp 53–81.

[3] The poet Yakov Petrovich Polonsky (1820–98).

Moleschott to be so dangerous an author that the devil himself would have to study him.

Dostoevsky seems to accept his militaristic theology and philosophy without any apparent qualms and appears to have quite forgotten his own encounter with the Major in the Siberian detention camp which he records in *The House of the Dead* where the officer says to him: "I am Czar; I am God!" Feuerbach could hardly have failed to rejoice. The truth is that Dostoevsky's God and his vicars on earth are just too absolutist. He expects a degree of subservience from the faithful that not only breaks the individual but actually kills all individuality. In order to destroy individualism and to dethrone the nihilistic superman, Dostoevsky actually creates a "new" man himself in the idealised figure of the monk Zosima. Blind faith and obedience are gone forever; theology still cannot understand this.

As long as we have men-gods, whether they be Popes, Czars, Grand Inquisitors or Zosimas, we shall also have Raskolnikovs: inescapably, the god-men and men-gods go together.

(iv) *Murder and Suicide*

WE now come to the most important logical consequence of nihilistic atheism: the atheist either murders himself or someone else even though he may be deterred from the deed for some time by the Karamazov in himself. Nevertheless, in the end he does come to confront the ultimate question of being or not being. The implacable logic of atheism wins its inevitable victory.

First of all, we have to be clear about the difference between the "logical" consequence of atheism and the psychological motivation which this consequence creates in individual cases. The logical outcome must, of course, be understood in terms of what one means by atheism. Thus, one has to consider suicide not only from an ethical and religious standpoint but also metaphysically as posing the ultimate question regarding the meaning of life and death. What do we mean by an un-natural death? What is the meaning of murder and self-murder? The answer to this lies in our psychological understanding of murder and suicide. In addition, the individual act must be seen not only in psychological terms but also in a sociological and historical context, i.e. as a social and historical fact and event.

This kind of defensive methodological precaution may strike a

jarring note in a work devoted to the analysis of a creative artist's work and I shall therefore not elaborate further. But I must also call particular attention to the procedure I shall be employing in this discussion.

I have tried to distil the fundamental thought and evolution of a great anti-nihilist as a kind of metaphysical skeleton, but that skeleton supports the flesh and blood of people who live and act. Hence the basic thought receives expression in psychological and historical rather than strictly logical terms because it is conveyed through the actions of individual characters in their particular social setting. Dostoevsky does not give us a logical syllogism but people who live and act. Thus we must abstract the essential idea from a larger whole. This would, in any case, be true with every poet but it is all the easier with Dostoevsky because he does well with abstract ideas in his novels and because we have his commentary in *A Writer's Diary*.

Dostoevsky varies his major theme in a great many ways, but in fact he actually has only one principal theme in all of his post-Siberian novels which appears in different guises through the introduction of new situations and individuals with changing ideas and goals. Dostoevsky as a creative artist is concerned with things social and sociological. He views Russian society from the standpoint of a philosophy of history hoping to understand the meaning of his own time and especially to understand the evaluation of nihilism from the era of Peter the Great to his day. He tries to depict the struggle between belief and disbelief in all its magnitude; he is concerned with the way in which great ideas in the life of the people have been shattered and how the battle has resulted, in individual instances, in actions and deeds which are logically unpredictable. Dostoevsky sees life in general and that of the Russian people in particular in terms of certain historico-philosophical categories and ideas; yet his depiction of that life does not yield "pure" ideas but rather psychological and occasionally psycho-pathological images of individuals and groups. The fact that he is seeking to find a logical scheme in psychological and historical events is a mark of his artistic ability but it almost makes that art such a grave and sombre one.

Dostoevsky is quite aware that the "logical suicide" is not always carried out logically as it is in *The Verdict* where it is made to follow inherently from the premises of materialistic atheism. Yet he does attempt to explain the character of a socio-historical idea as it relates to "logical suicide." In *A Writer's*

Diary for the year 1876 there are several postscripts to *The Verdict* and the novella *The Great Creature* which was written at the same time and to which *A Writer's Diary* for November 1876 is devoted is highly instructive in showing how Dostoevsky formulates and thinks about this problem. The husband of the suicide is attempting to find the meaning of the deed directly afterwards, and to concentrate his thoughts so as to understand the unhappy act. Dostoevsky tells us that he is giving us a stenographic transcript of a thought sequence which contains many logical and emotional contradictions. He calls the story "fantastic" from a formal point of view but in terms of actual reality claims that it is the height of "realism." He is using the word "fantastic" here to denote the psychological aspect of the occurrence whose meaning, explanation, and idea he is trying to discover.

Dostoevsky is concerned with this contradiction between logical and psychological elements in all of his novels. In *The Brothers Karamazov* he uses the speech of the functionary to characterise the "fantastic" side of the nihilist movement; very frequently he has murders and suicides occur which are committed quite thoughtlessly, absurdly, and incomprehensibly and without any reference to Hamlet's question; yet he is also describing the prevailing Russian scene and shows how individual, absurd ("fantastic") acts are the result of a complete erosion of the moral base. The official's actions are, from a psychological standpoint, entirely in line with Dostoevsky's intentions. The individual nihilist and atheist may have a more or less clear idea of his aim or he may have no idea at all about what he is driving at; perhaps he is simply led by others, perhaps he wants to imitate them, possibly he has committed himself to a movement the nature of which he has not clarified in his own mind. Yet this is precisely what nihilism is as a collective manifestation in the historical process. One must ask, however, whether Dostoevsky himself grasped the central idea clearly, or perhaps one really need not since we have already seen how inaccurate his formula actually is.

Dostoevsky endeavoured to come to grips with this problem of suicide at several points in his *Writer's Diary*. He was doubtless encouraged in his search by a number of actual occurrences, some of them very disturbing and involving prominent revolutionary figures. Hence in his sketch for *The Verdict*, he shows how a certain "N.N." condemns himself to death on assumptions which

follow from the tenets of materialistic atheism. The argument goes somewhat as follows:[1]

Inanimate nature causes my advent and that of my conscience in the world of the living irrespective of my own will in the matter. My consciousness, however, brings me nothing but suffering though I do not wish to suffer. Through my consciousness that very same nature compels me to accept a religion which would seek to console me by illuminating the whole of which I am allegedly a part. Yet the concept of harmony remains incomprehensible to me. I remain unhappy and think because I am of necessity inquisitive. Perhaps a flower or a beast may attain happiness but man cannot do so simply because he thinks. Love of my neighbour and his for me cannot occasion happiness since I shall, after death, return to dust. If at least our world and our life were eternal; yet, they are, alas, quite finite. Nor does the doctrine of progress—the teaching that men can be happy or shall be so—bring me joy. Why, then, has mankind suffered so long? Nor can anyone persuade me that conscious man is nothing but inanimate nature's experiment. Nature is dead and nothing and no one in it can be held accountable; nothing and no one in it can be cursed. In nature there are only inanimate laws. Hence, life and its suffering must remain incomprehensible. Since nature cannot answer me, my replies come from myself alone. I put the question and furnish the reply. I am accuser and accused. Hence I must condemn to destruction this natural order which brought me forth so carelessly and with it I must condemn myself to the same fate. "Since I cannot destroy nature, I will destroy myself, solely because I am bored by the need to endure a tyranny of which no one is guilty."[2]

Yet, pessimism and "anti-teleology" no less than the Man-god's own singularity logically end in suicide. In *The Possessed* Kirilov argues that it is through suicide that man demonstrates his greatest power and freedom. If, indeed, there is a God, his will must be supreme and I cannot escape that will. If, on the other hand, there is no God, then I am indubitably my own god; it is then my own will which is supreme and I can assert that will most completely by willing my own suicide—my own destruction.

For the superman the most important thing is to realise and to feel his own isolation: the solitude and disengagement which

[1] Masaryk paraphrases and summarises the sketch *The Verdict* published in the October 1876 issue of *A Writer's Diary*, Vol XI, pp. 425–427, in 1929 edition.

[2] Direct quotation, Vol. XI, p. 427, in 1929 edition.

causes man to sense his alone-ness. Hence, murder and suicide both follow from atheism though they are consequences of a different order: murder is the lowest and suicide the highest expression of the individual human will.

Let us take a closer look at Dostoevsky's ideas on suicide from the psychological angle so that we can arrive at a basic judgment of these ideas. First of all, there is the very important fact that Dostoevsky is much more concerned with his analysis of murder. Suicide is not the subject of any one of his novels; it is the principal theme of the novella *The Gentle Creature* and the latter is actually meant to be an illustration of an idea which appears in *A Writer's Diary* and in *The Verdict*. Murder is examined in his first anti-nihilistic novel, *Crime and Punishment* and he returns to the theme more briefly in *The Possessed, The Idiot,* and *The Brothers Karamazov*. He describes the suicides of Kirilov and Stavrogin in *The Possessed,* that of Kraft in *A Raw Youth,* and that of the murderer Smerdyakov in *The Brothers Karamazov*. The curious thing about Dostoevsky's view is that he regards murder and suicide logically and philosophically whereas, for instance, Zola sees them as a sort of atavism and impulsive madness. For Dostoevsky, however, they remain an expression of one's world view and attitude toward life. Dostoevsky does make some concessions in the direction of Zola's view: the single act is occasioned at least in part by illogical unphilosophical and "fantastic" motives. At one point in *The Possessed* there is a discussion of suicides which are decided upon "for a reason" and those which happen "for no reason at all" and as an act of "free will." Dostoevsky goes further and admits that even a logical idea can be carried out "fantastically," that the decisive act is executed mechanically, in great excitement and at the moment when the will has been fatally weakened. It is easy to grasp the idea but difficult to carry out in practice: the conflict within himself almost reduces the criminal to a pathological state in which he then acts without any deliberation.

In Kirilov's conversation with Peter Stepanovich, we hear that Kirilov did not "eat" the idea, but that the idea "ate" him. In this naturalistic manner of expressing himself Dostoevsky indicates the psychological fact of the fixed idea. Not only Kirilov, but Raskolnikov, Ivan, and in general all bearers of the idea are represented as "eaten" up. Let us observe in what condition Raskolnikov transforms thought into deed. He neither sees nor hears, not only murders his chosen victim but also attacks her

sister who appears accidentally and despite his well-laid plan commits his crime with the door left open. Similarly we can study the progressive steps whereby the murder of the old Karamazov is planned in the consciousness of the perpetrator who, knowingly or otherwise, insinuates himself into the idea.

The sense of excitement which murder or suicide occasions is also seen by Dostoevsky as a collective mood. After Shatov's murder in *The Possessed*, almost the entire society has something like an hysterical seizure and even the preparations for the gruesome act so excite the members of the secret circle that nobody is capable of undertaking the decisive act. The leader of the murder gang, Verkhovensky, has to decide himself whether to carry out the pre-arranged plan. Verkhovensky, however, has an entirely different temperament than Raskolnikov: his is a calculated and reasoned anger, even though he too is in the grip of an *idée fixe*. We are also shown such hysterical outbreaks in *The Gentle Creature*; both there and in *The Possessed* our attention is directed to one individual who begins to shout quite insensibly.

The murder in *The Idiot* is the outgrowth of a pathological connection between sexual love, hatred, and cruelty. Rogozhin is also "consumed" by an idea but his murder has an entirely different psychological background than that of Raskolnikov.

I leave off here with my analysis of Dostoevsky's psychology of murder, even though much else could be said in greater detail. I do, however, want to call attention again to Dostoevsky's voluntarism which has its relevance even here. Just as faith and disbelief come into being against our will but in response to our innermost urges so too is the decision to murder or commit suicide a reflection of our most essential inner being. The articulated thought is merely a rationalised echo of a fateful personality trait. In *The Possessed* murder is characterised as "the low point of free will" and suicide as "the high point." At any rate, that is what the suicide Kirilov says whereas the murderer Verkhovensky insists that he would certainly kill someone other than himself in order to assert his freedom of will.

Dostoevsky's description of Raskolnikov's inner state no less than that of other murderers is excellent; still, one is unable to agree entirely with his psychological explanations. The fixed idea strikes me as being just too fixed. He also seems to me to exaggerate the state of excitement among the perpetrators and I am unconvinced by the role of the subconscious to which Dostoevsky assigns such a major role. That too is why I basically cannot agree

with Dostoevsky's idea of murder and suicide. An examination of a whole series of actions throughout his work from a psychological standpoint will show that Dostoevsky's own fixed idea is hardly based on the fixed ideas of his heroes.

Dostoevsky's formula simply will not withstand critical scrutiny. Look at Raskolnikov, the first nihilist. Is he a socialist, philosophical atheist and nihilist in Bazarov's sense? What kind of a philosopher is it who cannot distinguish in simple psychological terms between Napoleon's massive sacrifice of human life and the murder of a single "rat"? Just where is the superman in Raskolnikov? In a conversation with Sonya, Raskolnikov admits: "Suppose I am full of self-love, envy, anger, vengefulness . . . and perhaps I have an inclination to insanity. . . ."[1] In another piece of self-analysis he concedes that he did not work while at the university, that he could not make a living while others in similar circumstances managed both to work and to support themselves. He spent days on end in his repulsive hole very much like a spider: ". . . and I did not want to go to work; I didn't want to eat; I spent the time just lying down."[2]

Are these the hallmarks of an atheist, much less of a philosophical atheist? And even if Raskolnikov was an atheist, he was certainly not a nihilist. Karakozov,[3] whose case Dostoevsky was able to witness in 1866 as his book was appearing, did not want to kill and rob an old and helpless woman. And if you judge actions in terms of their ethical motivation, you find that Raskolnikov is not a political, but an ordinary criminal, by any commonly accepted standard.

Dostoevsky's idea and formula are both confused and uncertain. In *The Brothers Karamazov* we read, for instance, how Zosima links "the idea" to economic conditions: the rich isolate themselves and thereby become spiritual suicides; the poor, consumed by envy, become murderers. Thus, murder and suicide are seen as products of material circumstances, of materialism, of an "idea," but the poor man's murder is a real and brutal thing while the rich kill themselves in spirit only! I don't think that I am doing Dostoevsky an injustice if I say that by using his own curious method he should have no difficulty in finding reasons to prove that "spiritual" suicide is always worse than physical death.

In "The Grand Inquisitor," the idea is presented psychologically

[1] Vol. V, p. 435, in 1957 edition. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] Dmitry Vladimirovich Karakosov made an unsuccessful attempt at assassinating Alexander II in 1866, and was executed.

in the following fashion: The headstrong and the reckless will kill themselves; the reckless and the weak will mutually fear each other; the powerless and the unhappy will come crawling to the feet of the Grand Inquisitor's successors. If we take a closer look at this psychological scheme, hidden though it is in a smoke-screen of words, we discover that it is incomplete just as is the idea itself. If the leading ideas are unclear then they too must be poor guides which do not serve to explain particular events within a philosophical-historical scheme of things.

Dostoevsky's analysis of suicide is also dubious philosophically and psychologically. The syllogism which is presented to us in *The Verdict* is, in fact, rather strictly adhered to, but the question arises whether the "judgment" itself is substantially correct. Let us briefly review the most important suicides which occur in the body of Dostoevsky's work.

First of all, there is the woman in *The Gentle Creature*, a story which is meant to be a direct commentary on *The Verdict*. It is an old story: a forty-year-old man marries a girl of sixteen. He does not know her well: she had pawned her last possessions with him in an emergency. Yet he likes her and when he learns that a fifty-year-old businessman wants to take her as his third wife and that her aunts want to sell the orphan, he offers her his hand which she accepts after much hesitation. For a time they are happy together, but all of a sudden she becomes defiant and lets him know that she does not respect him. She has heard that as an officer in the service he had to resign his commission because he declined to accept a challenge to a duel out of cowardice and she throws that in his face. He tries to make amends for his action by adopting the splendid, democratic programme of work which Zosima advocates. He demonstrates his courage, their married life ends, he throws himself into his work and yet, no sooner has he discovered rather adventurously that his defiant wife has remained faithful to him, even while he has shown his own courage in a daring way, than his wife experiences a severe nervous breakdown. The "gentle one" has wanted to shoot her husband with a revolver while he is pretending to be asleep. He opens his eyes for an instant just as he feels his wife with the cold murder weapon approaching but he shuts them right away so as to make it possible for her to believe that he is actually sleeping. She abandons her plan and he once again tries to win her love as a husband but she believes that their earlier life cannot be recaptured. He wants to take her abroad to the sea shore, goes to

get the passport, but comes home five minutes too late: the wife has meantime jumped out of the window, clutching to her bosom a picture of the Virgin Mary which she had once pawned with him.

This novella is a monologue and actually a stream of consciousness sequence of the nameless ex-officer who is now the proprietor of a pawn shop. The corpse of his wife lies on the table in the next room and he is trying to review all of the past events so as to understand the wife's action and to weight his own guilt and hers. The account leaves us in doubt as to who was really responsible and whether it was anyone's fault. Typically, Dostoevsky lets the reader make up his own mind: "What are your laws to me now? Of what use are your customs, your morals, your life, your state, your faith? . . . People are alone on this earth, therein lies misery! . . . Nothing but people surrounded by silence—that is the earth! 'Men love one another!'—who said that? Whose legacy is that?"[1]

Now, what about Dostoevsky's formula and what about atheism? "The Gentle Creature" believed in God and sought strength at the very last moment in her picture of the Madonna which she had inherited from her parents. That she believed in the Russian God is indicated by the fact that at the time of her marriage she insisted on the old rite whereas her husband would have preferred the "English" rite which requires only two witnesses. If, therefore, anyone was the atheist, it was he. On the other hand, it is the husband who argues against J. S. Mill's ideal woman, yet who says, at the same time, that people do not love each other. Is that atheism? True, people do not love each other, but the issue here is not brotherly love but love between a man and a woman and it is the second which is called into doubt. And here you have the decisive moment. She takes him for her husband in order to escape the shopkeeper; perhaps she wants to love him, but love him she cannot; hence, despite her Russian belief in God she first tries to murder him and then, when her conscience is filled with guilt, she commits suicide, still believing in God. Or is it the husband himself who drove her to murder and eventually to suicide? Certainly he never thought of murder: on the contrary, he was planning to make 30,000 roubles in three years and then to go and live on the shores of the Crimea with his wife and children. All in all, what you have here is one of those chance marriages which eventually become sheer hell.

Kirilov in *The Possessed* dies by a "logical" suicide, but this

[1] Vol. X, p 419 in 1958 edition.

act is carried out by a psychopath and it is not only suggested but almost forced upon him.

First of all, here is Kirilov's philosophy of suicide. To start, he distinguishes between suicide with and without a reason. In the first category are the suicides which result from great sorrow or anger, from mental illness: these are impulsive acts, undertaken on the spur of the moment. One way or another, they are all a consequence of suffering.

A suicide which is undertaken after much thought and ripe consideration becomes a "logical" and philosophical act. Life is nothing but suffering and anxiety; man is unhappy, yet he loves life because he loves to suffer and to be afraid, and he certainly fears death.

The "new man," however, will not be afraid; he will be brave and happy. There will be no God because God is nothing but pain engendered by the fear of death. History will then be divided into two epochs: from the gorilla to the destruction of God; and from the dethronement of God to the transformation of man and the earth. Man's whole scheme of thought and feeling will change, and it is he who will become God. And who becomes God but the person capable of taking his own life because he thereby displays absolute free will and indeed his very own will.[1] This entirely voluntary suicide is undertaken without cause.

"God has tortured me all my life," says Kirilov. "So far, man has done nothing else but invent God so that he could live and not kill himself; and that is what the history of the whole world up to now has been about. I alone in the world history have been the first to will not to invent God."[2]

In the end, Kirilov admits that he is a god against his will because he is still being *forced* to assert his own will through suicide in order to show others the way. "I am terribly unhappy because I am terribly afraid."[3] Only after man becomes aware that he himself is czar and ceases to be afraid will he be able to live gloriously and with honour.

This philosophy of suicide appears to have the hallmark of logic but I should say that it is an entirely too pure logic. Suicide is supposed to be committed without any reason whatever as a sheer expression of will.

Clearly, we have here a caricature of Darwinism and its superman who is the outgrowth of its theory of evolution. Kirilov him-

[1] *The Possessed*, Vol XII, p. 644, in 1957 edition. [2] *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 642.
[3] *Ibid.*, Vol VII, p. 643.

self is not really an atheist: on the contrary, he believes in Christ whom he does not name but refers to as "Him" with the greatest of respect. "The whol planet and everything in it is sheer madness without this man. There never has been before him and there never will be after him such a man; it is like a miracle. That miracle is that there was never and never will be such a man. And if it is so, if the laws of nature did not have compassion for *Him*, they did not have compassion even for their miracle, but forced even him to live amidst lies and to die for a lie, then the whole universe is founded on a lie and a stupid joke, and all of its laws are a deceit and a diabolical farce.[1] What if the lie consisted in the fact, says Verkhovensky, that there an earlier God had existed.

Stavrogin, the hero of *The Possessed*, also commits suicide during a sudden seizure, or so we must judge from the fact that shortly beforehand he writes quite explicitly that he has no intention of killing himself—though this very fact would indicate that he was already preoccupied with the thought.

There is an entirely "logical" suicide without any ironic caricature in *A Raw Youth*. Here, Kraft kills himself quite realistically and in a positivist sense: phrenology, craniology, physiology, and even mathematics have all convinced him that the Russians are racially inferior and that they can serve the higher race only as base matter. Hence, he concludes that all further action by Russians is futile, he goes on further to conclude that a Russian's life is not worth living. He shoots himself and leaves his explanation behind in a book of notes.

We have still to mention Smerdyakov's suicide in *The Brothers Karamazov*. The servant Smerdyakov has killed the old Karamazov. Later, when the murderer is sought, he kills himself. And Smerdyakov is also a psychopath who suffers from epilepsy like Kirilov.

The conclusion appears to be that we find all kinds of suicides in Dostoevsky's work, which are explained in many different ways. He talks about romantic suicides, suicides resulting from passionate seizures, hatred, etc. Look at how he describes Mitya's mood at the instant when he is dismissing Katherine Ivanovna: he is almost inclined to drive a sword into himself. Dostoevsky does not overlook the habit of carrying a revolver around on one's person. Many murders and suicides have been committed simply because a revolver was ready at hand. It is like the urge to throw oneself into the abyss when standing at the edge of a high cliff.

[1] *The Possessed*, Vol. VII, p. 643, in 1957 edition.

Only Kraft's suicide turns out to be wholly "logical." Atheistic suicide is deliberate, the act of a superman whose chief motive is pride and who imagines that he himself is god. This is what Zosima calls a satanic pride and he cannot explain how it is born in angelic creatures born of God. That is why the Grand Inquisitor calls Satan "a terrible, shrewd spirit, the god who destroys the heavens, the god of non-being."

Thus, it is not death but suicide which emerges as the true antithesis of life and the devil, as the deity of non-being, as the true opposite of the God of life.

(v) *The Grand Inquisitor: Dostoevsky and the Christian Churches*

THE legend of *The Grand Inquisitor* is a prose poem which presents Dostoevsky's most basic conceptions of life and of history. It is nothing so much as a concentrated recapitulation of the whole of *The Brothers Karamazov* no less than of all his other novels and any really exhaustive study of Dostoevsky would demand that it be reprinted in full. I summarise it only briefly but urge the reader to turn to the unabridged text.

The action takes place in the sixteenth century. Christ appears in Seville at the time of the inquisition. He arrives quietly and unheralded and yet the people recognise him and follow him in droves. The miracles recounted in the Gospels are re-enacted and just as Christ has restored a dead girl to life there appears the Cardinal and Grand Inquisitor. He has seen everything and has recognised the Saviour. He points his finger at Him and the people, conditioned to total obedience, retreat before the Inquisitorial Guard which marches Christ off to prison. The ninety-year-old Inquisitor follows the captive to his cell. Without a word, Christ transfixes with him his eyes. The old Inquisitor sets out to explain why His Church has been impelled to adopt the teachings of Satan in place of those taught in the Gospels.

Christ had preached freedom of conscience and of the soul; yet, he was mistaken as he had really failed to understand the nature of man and to perceive that he cannot endure freedom, that he is essentially base and weak and, at best, capable of a crude rebelliousness. Man cares only for a full stomach and even so he will never be satisfied, nor will there be enough bread for all since man can never learn to share it equitably with his fellows.

Christ offered man a heavenly food, but that can satisfy only a very few: the masses crave a more prosaic fare.

Christ simply misjudged man's character. Instead, it was the Devil who revealed it to him during the Temptation and yet Christ had paid no attention. The Roman Church, on the other hand, had learned the crucial lesson and had moved to exchange Christ's teachings for the wisdom of the Tempter. That is why it now rules humanity with unquestioned authority. The Church understands how to subdue and to win the allegiance and the conscience of the meanest of "impotent rebels." It has learned the crucial role of the miracle, of mystery and of authority. It does not extol freedom of the spirit but rather a blind faith in the efficacy of miracles. It is the purveyor of mystery and precisely because it feeds the masses on the teachings of the Tempter rather than those of the Saviour it has come to possess the powers of Caesar and of Rome. It disposes both over bread and the human conscience. Men will inevitably learn that neither freedom, reason nor science can conceivably take the place of either. Freedom and science will only produce rebels: the most willful among them will encompass their own destruction; the less fervent will destroy each other; and the weakest will end by grovelling at the feet of a priest and saying to him: "Yes, you were quite right: it is you who rule by His mysteries and we are returning to your fold. We beseech you, save us from ourselves!"

There is, in fact, nothing more intolerable for man than freedom of choice. If he must truly decide between good and evil, he will rather kill himself than make the choice. Thus, freedom of conscience turns out to be nothing but the worst kind of suffering. People are nothing so much as small and foolish children who will rebel and drive the teacher from the classroom. Yet, presently they do recognise their folly and calm themselves once again. In the final analysis, after all, there is nothing sweeter than the innocence of childhood.

Christ wanted to impart a liberal faith and freedom of conscience to mankind. Yet man does not have the strength to be free which is shown by the fact that the powerful and mighty of this earth perhaps number in the tens of thousands whereas the masses, in their millions, really do not want freedom at all. No sooner does an individual attain freedom than he seeks out someone to follow and obey. With the growth of freedom there is a parallel tendency to discover someone whom all can follow. The weak person not only wants to obey; he looks to and for the mass idol.

Moreover, this need to follow and to obey is quite basic and the genesis both of war and religion. It explains the need for a feeling of universal brotherhood—the craving to be part of "a world-wide ant heap" such as achieved by Tamurlane and Ghengis Khan.

The Church of Rome has not only learned the teachings of these world conquerors but that of Satan as well. Exploiting human weakness, the Church preaches the Redeemer but is guided in practice by the precepts of Satan. The masses demand something absolute and beyond question and nothing is that so much as bread. The Church tolerates the materialism of the masses knowingly and, in fact, permits them to sin. It even accepts the worldly proposition that there is really no sin and that people are merely hungry which becomes the source of its absolute power over the crowd. Thus does the Church lead people from the cradle to the grave and the millions follow it happily. Only those who rule over them remain unhappy in the knowledge that they have been forced to lie and to deceive. . . .

The Grand Inquisitor ends his monologue with the threat to have Christ burned at the stake. The Redeemer's only answer to this is to kiss the old man's bloodless lips wordlessly. The Inquisitor shudders, the corners of his mouth contorted. Then, he opens the door to the prison cell and says: "Go, and do not return; do not come back, ever again!" And so Christ departs, but the old man whose heart has been seared by the kiss remains true to his idea.

The legend of the Grand Inquisitor has been widely praised. Yet, it seems to me that the story leaves something to be desired, even artistically. I am disturbed that the Inquisitor holds his long monologue about the temptation in the desert whereas Christ himself remains a simple prop. This is surely a sharp departure from the legends and church dramas which Dostoevsky claims were a model for this "poem." He does, of course, try to explain Christ's silence: his mere gaze has an overpowering effect on the Inquisitor; he listens attentively, yet maintains his silence quite intentionally precisely because the old man would rather hear something even if it were to be bitter and terrible. And yet, what could the returned Christ really have said? Surely not just what he had said already at Galilee. And so, just why did he return to earth? Surely not only to listen to the Grand Inquisitor merely to depart again into the unknown.

Russian critics have been much occupied with the Grand Inquisitor in an effort to clarify the meaning of the story. Yet, to

me, many of them have been preoccupied with questions of secondary importance. V. Rozanov devoted a whole monograph to the subject,[1] and it was also written about in the periodical *Novoe Vremya*.[2] An anonymous contributor (Infolio) explained that the legend derives from Protestant sources and that Dostoevsky's handling of it is partisan and anti-Catholic. The first Protestant legend, *Venio iterum crucifigi*, represents Christ as reappearing on earth and being crucified a second time. Goethe refers to this legend, and *Infolio* claims that Dostoevsky took it from Goethe. He also says that the second legend is Voltaire's *La mule du pape*, and that Voltaire took it also from Protestant sources.

Rozanov defends Dostoevsky against *Infolio*: the source is neither Goethe nor Voltaire; rather, Dostoevsky has built on the ideas of the Russian schismatics (Old Believers) who held that Christ rules the earth in name only while actual power is wielded by an anti-Christ. Dostoevsky is said not to be condemning Catholicism so much as the whole of contemporary Christianity. We should, therefore, not see in the person of the Grand Inquisitor a specifically Spanish inquisitor but rather the Russian intellectual. In addition, Dostoevsky's contemporary Putsykovich,[3] who assumed the editorship of the magazine *Grazhdanin* (*Citizen*) from him, informs us that Dostoevsky told him in 1879 that the Grand Inquisitor embodied his most important single idea and that theme had preoccupied him all his life. Dostoevsky is said to be criticising the Papacy and Catholicism, especially in the age of the Inquisition. He is not against Catholicism as such, nor against the Church during the first centuries of the Christian era, but in the Catholicism of the Inquisition he reportedly saw the devil's own work which had done permanent damage to Christianity and to mankind at large. But not even Putsykovich believes that the legend derives from Voltaire and Goethe.

In my own view, the story of the Grand Inquisitor embodies the catechism of Father Zosima, albeit in Ivan's rather than Alyosha's rendition and it certainly does emphasise elements of anti-Catholicism as well as anti-socialism. In a letter to Maykov[4] Dostoevsky writes that he does have something to say about Catholicism and Jesuitism in contrast to Greek Orthodoxy and in

[1] "Legenda o Velikom Inkvizitore," *Russky Vestnik*, 1891, pp. 1–4; as a book in 1894.
[2] *Novoe Vremya*, November 24, 1901, No. 9241.
[3] V. F. Putsykovich, in *Literaturny Vestnik*, III, No. 2, 1902.
[4] *Pis'ma*, ed. A. S. Dolinin, II, p. 151.

the context it is perfectly clear that he was already then equating Catholicism and the Jesuits with atheism. Dostoevsky was then spending protracted periods of time in Europe and had every opportunity to make first-hand comparisons between Catholicism and Protestantism. Thus, in *The Idiot*, he takes a very close look at Catholicism and compares it unfavourably to atheism: the latter, at least, is pure negation with no positive message, while the latter preaches a deformed Christ who is, in fact, nothing short of an anti-Christ. Along the same lines, we are told in *The Possessed* that contemporary France is committed to atheism in the guise of socialism which Dostoevsky considers preferable to a Catholic commitment. Again, in a letter to Strakhov[1] Dostoevsky tries to establish a connection between the fall of France as the leader of the Germano-Roman world and the demise of the ecclesiastical state. He suggests that it was Catholicism which eventually caused the West to lose faith in Christ which, in turn, explains the attempts by Rousseau, and the later positivists and socialists to seek the keys to the reshaping of the world in their variously unsuccessful ways. So too, in his *Notebooks* Dostoevsky says quite unequivocally that Christ would not have resorted to the burning of heretics: the Inquisitor is pictured as immoral quite simply because he could have conceived of the necessity for burning people in his heart and conscience. By so doing, the Inquisitor clearly places himself on the same plane as the assassin.

Illustrations such as these surely leave no doubt about Dostoevsky's views. The Grand Inquisitor was certainly aimed against Catholicism, even though not the Catholicism which preceded the eleventh century schism which certainly remained acceptable to him. Still, there can be no doubt about Dostoevsky's enmity toward Catholicism's more recent development. He necessarily sees the Inquisition as its greatest crime when commenting on the Catholicism of the Counter-Reformation period. Yet it would surely be a mistake to assume, merely on the basis of Putsykovich's rather uncertain report, that Dostoevsky was solely preoccupied with the inquisitorial aspect of Catholicism. That, surely, could not be inferred from the broad context of the *Brothers Karamazov*.

In the story of the Grand Inquisitor Alyosha protests that the Inquisitor hardly embodies the entirety of Catholicism but only its worst aspects, nor does he feel that Ivan's Jesuits are depicted

[1] Letter to A. N. Strakhov, from Dresden, 18/30 May 1871, *Pis'ma*, ed. A. S. Dolinin, II, p. 364.

accurately: the real ones have hardly taken the sins of mankind on their own shoulders; they are no guardians of mystery; nor do they feel themselves cursed because they sustain the happiness of mankind on a foundation of lies. In actuality, the Jesuits are merely an army in the service of the Bishop of Rome who seeks power and dominion over the world. Like him, they covet might and power, worldly pleasures and a new servitude designed to supplant that of traditional feudalism. They may well be atheists, but the image of a suffering inquisitor is surely a figment of the imagination.

In the face of this defence of the Jesuits, Ivan asks if Alyosha can really see nothing but a search for worldly pleasures in the Catholicism of the previous century. Alyosha concedes that he had heard much the same point made by Father Paisy but the matter remains unresolved as Ivan continues to insist that his own view of modern Catholicism is correct.

Dostoevsky, as a Russian, could hardly avoid the sharpest possible confrontation with the issue of Catholicism, the more so as he saw in Christianity the very cornerstone of society. Precisely this fact made it necessary to face up to all the other major Christian churches, yet he was quite right to see Catholicism as the chief of his antagonists. In this broader context, it hardly matters whether, here and there, he had read some harsh things about Rome and the Inquisition. As an avid reader of Schiller he could well have encountered some outspoken words about the Jesuits and the Inquisition but this alone could hardly have produced the Grand Inquisitor.

Dostoevsky must have been aware of the inclination toward Catholicism among many of his own countrymen, certainly beginning with the romantic reaction under Alexander I. He was particularly disturbed by Chaadayev,[1] which, as he tells us in his plan for the "Great Sinner" is why he wanted to abduct him and, by way of punishment to incarcerate him in a monastery for a year so as to return him to his senses. Dostoevsky was familiar with the anti-Catholic polemics of the Slavophiles. As noted already he was able to observe Catholicism in Europe where he was a witness to the proclamation of the dogma of Papal in-

[1] In his plan for the "Life of the Great Sinner," Dostoevsky used the name of Chaadaev for his hero, calling attention to his similarity to Peter Chaadaev (1794–1856), author of the philosophical essays, "where in the name of religion Uvarov's formula and the entire history of Russia were declared null," as Masaryk said in *The Spirit of Russia*, Vol. I, p. 221. Pages 221–36 in that volume are devoted to Chaadaev.

fallibility. He was particularly interested in Veuillot[1] and his ultramontist apotheosis as shown by occasional references in the *Notebooks*. He was not unaware of Bismarck's Kulturkampf. He could not very well have seen Solovyov's Catholic inclinations in print but it may be that they discussed the matter toward the end of the 1870s. Still, these things apart, inner reasons must have been uppermost in impelling Dostoevsky to take such a vigorous stand against Catholicism.

Anyone familiar with Russian theological polemics must see as well as sense that the apologists of Russian Orthodoxy are more antagonistic toward Catholicism than Protestantism. The closer, it would appear, two creeds are to one another, the greater the hostility between their respective defenders. That is an old story. In this case, the antagonism on the Russian side betrays a certain fear. Catholicism is theologically strong, it is magnificently organised and, in the Jesuits, has a trained army of theological and political defenders. The Orthodox Church is theologically and organisationally weak and without the protection of the state could hardly venture into open combat with an antagonist. Orthodox theologians are compelled to borrow their most cogent arguments from the Protestants.

Since Dostoevsky idealised Orthodoxy, his hostility toward Catholicism was inevitable. He wished to unite all mankind on the basis of religion. Thus, he hoped for his own kind of "Catholicism" and that is why he had to turn against the Roman variety. He could not remain indifferent to Papal efforts toward Christian unity nor to Catholic propaganda in the East and in Russia itself. He was made specially wary of the ties between Catholicism, the Jesuits, and the Poles.

It might be asked whether Dostoevsky was so keen to combat Catholicism because, in so doing, he was really fighting his own self. I think not since there is really no evidence at all in him of any Catholic sympathy at all. What he did see and repudiate was the power and secular position of the Roman Church which had clear implications for the Orthodox Church as well. In fact, Dostoevsky could not well remain unaware that his strongest anti-Catholic arguments applied to the Orthodox Church as well. What he says in the Grand Inquisitor about the Roman doctrine of Grace applies equally to the Russian Church. Then too, the chapter on Zosima's death which is followed by ordinary decomposition

[1] Louis Veuillot (1813–83), French Catholic writer, author of *Les Odeurs de Paris, le Parfum de Rome.*

rather than a miracle is hardly aimed at Rome as much as it is at the Third Rome. So too does his attack on the Jesuits affect his own church because, like all others, it possesses its own measure of Jesuitism. In his struggle against the latter Dostoevsky was fighting the inner lie which he felt within himself and combated all his life. In fact, it may as well be said here and now that Dostoevsky in his own person incorporates not only Zosima but Ivan Karamazov as well!

The psychologist and close observer of men will hardly stop by simply registering Dostoevsky's polemics against Rome: he will be impressed by their nature and violent tone. Whoever reads the Grand Inquisitor and the passages which remonstrate against the Catholic inclinations of the heroes and heroines in *The Idiot, The Possessed* and *A Raw Youth* can hardly be satisfied by the influence which merely external factors are made to exert on these characters. The writer's idea and its protagonist has a more organic background. Remember that many Catholics—though non-practising ones—have themselves protested the role of Rome and of the Jesuits. Take Carducci[1] as an example or the sobered Parnassian Leconte de Lisle[2] who, at the end of his life, battled Catholicism as an enemy and even attempted to depict the devil as a symbol of Rome much as Dostoevsky tries to do. Yet Dostoevsky's idea in the Grand Inquisitor remains uniquely his own.

Dostoevsky has grave reservations about the relationship between the Roman Church and the State. The issue of Church–State relations is of paramount importance to him because it is so essential if Feuerbach and his Russian followers (and especially Bakunin) are to be discredited. How much this problem preoccupied him can be seen in *The Brothers Karamazov* which takes it up from the beginning and actually starts by raising the whole question of nihilism. The philosopher Ivan Karamazov has gained fame through a critique of Church jurisprudence. The point is whether the Church can pass judgment on a criminal and possibly even mete out punishment to him. Ivan defends the view that the Christian Church cannot and should not punish and that in the spirit of Christianity even the State should change its attitude toward crime and punishment. Indeed the Christian State should progressively assume the character of a church whereas in Europe since the third century the opposite trend has

[1] Giosue Carducci (1835–1907), Italian poet and critic.

[2] Leconte de Lisle (1818–94), French poet, author of impersonal, exact poems, reacting against Romanticism.

been in progress as the Church, which was once entirely distinct and autonomous, is increasingly absorbed into the state.

If we examine the special problem of punishment, we see in Ivan an exact reflection of Dostoevsky's views on the subject as gleaned from *A Writer's Diary*. We read there that the relation of Church and State is the exact opposite in Europe from that prevailing in Russia. In Europe, the Church strives to become a state, whereas in Russia the State increasingly assumes the likeness of a church. Dostoevsky argues against the liberal views of Virchow[1] in Germany and Cambetta[2] in France. He is not at all impressed by Ivan's references to the early Church: Church and State were then separate simply because the latter was pagan. On the other hand, the Christian State can hardly escape close ties with the Church.

Dostoevsky's views on Church and State are entirely logical. If Christianity is indeed the cornerstone of all society; if the Church is truly a community of Christians, then the State must be subordinate to the Church. Dostoevsky therefore contrasts Russia and Europe very much as he does the notions of the Man-god and God-man. Whenever people believe in the God-man, then the State is transformed into a church, and when they believe in the Man-god the Church is absorbed into the State. All very nice, but what happens if the Russians themselves start believing in the Man-god?

Dostoevsky admits in his *Notebooks*[3] that the Russian Church has suffered from paralysis since the time of Peter the Great. The Slavophiles had said that before him, but neither they nor he were right: Caesaro-popism had actually triumphed long before Peter. The Church was not absorbing the State; rather the reverse was true. And if Dostoevsky propounded the ideal of a state which becomes a part of the Church, we should also recall that not only Fichte but a more recent and outstanding theologian, Koethe,[4] had advocated and announced a merger of church into state as a part of historical progress. Thus, there is the question: what is preferable from the Christian viewpoint which Dostoevsky

[1] Rudolf Virchow (1821–1902), Prussian statesman and medical man, also anthropologist.

[2] Leon Gambetta (1838–82), French statesman and lawyer. Held important governmental offices in France after the Franco-Prussian War.

[3] Masaryk used the extracts from Dostoevsky's notebooks published in *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, 1883, Vol. I, p. 356.

[4] Friedrich August Koethe (1781–1850) was a theologian, philosopher, and editor of collections of songs.

advances as his own? What is more logical? If we examine the course of history, we do see in the most advanced societies a progressive separation of Church and State, and are thus led to regard the ideal of Fichte and Koethe as the more justified and correct. If a society can exist without a church, it is more Christian.

Yet Dostoevsky, being a Russian, cannot well imagine the state as the sole organiser of society. He is also Russian in that he simply cannot imagine the Church of John. It is not Christ but rather the Russian Christ who is his ideal. The fact that the Christ of the gospels founded no church was as little understood by him as it was by the Slavophiles.

Dostoevsky did not understand the evolution of modern society, and especially the fact that it is becoming less ecclesiastical, both politically and socially. It is moving in the direction of secularism and statism. The medieval Church had theocratised all facets of life, including the State. With the Renaissance and the Reformation the process of secularisation began, first in the realms of science, philosophy, literature, and art. Simultaneously, the power of the State grew, not only in the Protestant but also in the Catholic states; in the former because they were eliminating the papacy, and in the latter because they were preserving it. This new state is an absolutist state, but in opposition to its all-encompassing power there develops a great revolutionary political movement which is actually a continuation of the earlier religious and ecclesiastical revolution. Confidence in the constitutional and parliamentary state has since developed to the point where we entrust our schools and social policy to it. The Church even ceases to care for the poor, who instead become a concern of social legislation which, in ethical terms, assumes even greater stature than the earlier work of the Church.

Theocracy was gradually undermined, particularly because the modern state established national churches. In the United States, France, and eventually in the Canton of Geneva, the State was totally secularised, and the Church separated from it completely. This is the present trend, which even points to the secularisation of religion.

Dostoevsky has a different attitude towards Protestantism than towards Catholicism. To Russian as well as Greek theologians, Protestantism was an ally against the Catholics. In any event, it appeared to the Russians that Protestantism was a less dangerous creed, even though because of its theology and attitude toward

science and learning, it influenced the Russians much more than did Catholicism.

The Protestants also appeared less dangerous from the national viewpoint. The Protestant Baltic Germans supplied Russia with important officials and army officers. Protestant Finland was constitutionally autonomous, with the result that the Protestant faith did not occasion the same feelings in Russia as did Polish Catholic proselytising. This attitude is amply reflected in Russian literature, where English and German Protestants are held up as models, as for instance in the characters of Leskov's Rainer and Goncharov's Stolz,[1] whereas Poles are customarily assigned quite a different role. In Dostoevsky's case, Germans are rejected in the national and cultural sense, but there is no political hostility toward them, as we shall see presently. In religious terms, Dostoevsky sees Protestantism as the extreme of Western religious rationalism; he views it as hardly a religion at all since, for him, the very essence of religion lies in mysticism. He thus chooses to overlook the mystical element in Protestantism, while also tending to see its rationalism one-sidedly. In the Grand Inquisitor he essentially praises the Protestant revolt and its aftermath, at least to the extent that it was passionately opposed to the Inquisition. Yet he was cool and critical toward Protestantism as such, as he was toward the crypto-Protestant sects in Russia, as for instance the Stundists and Redstockites,[2] toward whom he merely expresses pity in *A Writer's Diary*.

Dostoevsky, like so many Catholics, can only see in Protestantism that which is a negation of Catholicism, but he neither sees nor understands its positive content. Already in *Winter Reflections* he takes aim at Anglicanism and ridicules its "professors of religion" and its missionary activities, thus showing himself to be distinctly a religiously passive Russian whose church engages in no missionary work which would deserve the name, or compare with that of either Protestantism or Catholicism, a feature in which Russians see the superiority of their own church.

* * *

[1] Rainer is a character in Nikolai Leskov's *Nowhere* (*Nekuda*), Stolz in Ivan Goncharov's *Oblomov*.

[2] "Stundists" were a Protestant, rationalistic religious sect widespread particularly in the Ukraine and southern Russia, strong in the 1870's. Close to the Baptists, Lord Redstock: propagated his religious views in many parts of the world. In 1874 he visited St. Petersburg, with great success for his doctrines.

Dostoevsky sees Protestantism as a great historical idea on a par with the idea of Catholicism, but purely negative: the demise of Catholicism also signals the end of Protestantism, since there is nothing left for it to oppose. This superficial judgment is entirely consistent with the fact that Dostoevsky is a most inaccurate observer of Protestantism he only sees Luther and Lutheranism, and considers all other differences within the movement as mere petty sectarianism.

Herzen saw Protestantism as "middle of the road," and said that Russia would never become Protestant, a feeling entirely shared by Dostoevsky. Even the sceptical and non-practising Catholic finds Protestantism too rational; he fails to see that for Protestants the essential foundation of religion is an ethical one, more so than in either of the Catholic churches. Protestant morality appears to him to be too rigid and austere, despite his own asceticism, by which he need not be bound. In Catholicism, the religious element finds expression in an extravagant mysticism and in a highly complicated and tangible ritual. Thus, there arises a clear and sharp distinction between religion and morality. That of the Protestant is a matter of daily practice; that of the Catholic, and even more of the Greek Catholic believer, is rather for Sundays and holy days only. Hence, the Catholic tends to feel that the non-ascetic, practical, everyday morality of the Protestant is somehow too ordinary, prosaic, and "cold." The more mythically and mystically oriented Catholicism, with its animation and spiritualisation of nature and man's entire environment, seems "warmer." These are the sentiments which have brought some Protestant romantics to Rome and which are noted by some realists and positivists such as Flaubert, Taine, and Zola, and entirely shared by Dostoevsky. The decadents of a more recent era, *à la* Przybyszewski,[1] don't even want to hear the word Protestantism.

While making my study of Dostoevsky I often regretted that I could not let him know one small facet of my own experience and observations in America: that would have made an entry in his *Diary*. An American lady of old Puritan stock, as her children go off on a trip abroad, packs for them one of the old family Bibles. But she remembers to pack some laxatives as well, so that not only the heart and mind but the body as well might remain in good working order. They are sent off with

[1] Stanislaw Przybyszewski (1868–1927), Polish author of the trilogy *Homo Sapiens*.

Hugo, translated into Russian. Dostoevsky lives in a make-believe world of miracles. What is decisive with him is an indeterminate inclination either toward miracle or toward fact. That is why he presents a realistic picture of an environment which believes in miracles and expects them to happen.

Is there no evidence that Dostoevsky does have his doubts about miracles? In *The Brothers Karamazov,* as we shall see below, a good deal of attention is focused on the fact that the body of the deceased Zosima soon begins to decompose, and how this subjects Alyosha to a severe test. In the same sense, Dostoevsky often shows that what the faithful crowds understand to be a miracle can be explained quite simply through the mere belief in miracles, as in the case of curing hysterical women. Dostoevsky tells us that Zosima not only commanded his monks to pray and fast; he too gave them laxatives when they were beset by demons (or hallucinations) by day or night. And still Dostoevsky does not deny faith in miracles.

He does stress the antithesis between free belief and a faith founded on miracles. Yet notice that this notion is put into the mouth of the Grand Inquisitor by Ivan. Whoever denies miracles denies God, says the Grand Inquisitor, thus precisely making a point against himself. Dostoevsky only concedes that the faith in miracles can be abused by false prophets. He differentiates between the true and the false miracle, thereby defending the role of the higher world in our own all the more vigorously. He also tries to show that a naive faith in miracles, even if it assumes the character of crude superstition, does no harm to religion. In fact, Dostoevsky freely concedes all the faults and shortcomings of the Russian Church so as to espouse all the more firmly his idealised concept of monasticism. He has no use at all for the secular clergy, so much so that there is not a single portrayal of a noble specimen in any of his works. In *Crime and Punishment,* the priest is helpless when Marmeladov dies. So too does he depict many unpleasant and unclean monks, so as to make his own vision of the ideal monk all the more striking. We must remember, however, that Dostoevsky does not use the ordinary word "monakh" for his conception of the monk, but the unusual word "inok." "Inok" means also a hermit. Dostoevsky writes about lay clergymen in *A Writer's Diary* for 1877. He speaks of the decline of Russian family life as a great problem, and asks who should help the people solve this and other questions. The clergy stand closest to the people, but for a long time have not given it answers.

Excepting a small number of truly Christian priests, the majority respond to the most vital questions with denunciations. Others alienate their charges by such extortion that nobody goes to them to ask for help. It would be difficult to make a harsher reproach to the Russian Church than is made by the Russian saying that their priests send their sons into the world with the words: "May God give you understanding and the rank of general."

Dostoevsky spent many years in Europe, and most of them in Protestant Germany, and yet was never able to comprehend the religiosity of either Protestants or Catholics. He could never transcend the Russian sense of religiosity. His insistence on the superhuman deity, the miraculous death on the cross, on mystery, the spirit of mysticism and the hope of certain redemption: these are the essential elements of Russian religion which Dostoevsky depicts in his work.

Dostoevsky seeks in religion an unshakable faith. He is impressed by the Russian folk, and especially by Russian women and the strong faith of the Russian schismatics. He is impressed by superstition, and sees nothing but rationalism in both Protestantism and Catholicism. He is so impressed by a strong and blind faith, precisely because he himself can no longer believe.

(vi) *The Will to Believe*

IN actual fact, Dostoevsky very much wants to believe, but he can no longer do so. And it is herein that Dostoevsky's world-wide literary significance lies, in that he analyses and depicts so trenchantly the nature of doubt and the unfulfilled longing for faith. The simple and limited Father Ferspont doesn't denounce Father Zosima as a heretic entirely groundlessly.

Dostoevsky constantly wavers between the views and regulations of the Russian and his own religious ideals, which he seeks to derive from his own free interpretation of the course of history. He oscillates between mysticism and rationalism because he attempts to understand the problem of religion mystically and then again rationally. He tries, in every possible way, to justify the teachings and rules of the Church in which he was raised and which he loves. He vacillates, while always hoping to remain within the mainstream of the folk religion, and thus to reconcile in his religious philosophy the idea of the Russian Church and his own religious ideals. Dostoevsky draws too directly on the scriptures, he does not give enough weight to the tradition of the

church, which explains why his teaching contains many unorthodox elements. Zosima, Platonism, Pauline and Augustinian Protestantism, even Feuerbach come in for some good words, as we have already seen. Thus the entire church edifice disappears in allegory and symbolism. *The Brothers Karamazov* ends with Alyosha's invitation to his young friend Kolya to partake of the memorial meal following Ilyusha's funeral; young Kolya finds it a very strange custom, but Alyosha laughingly consoles him: "Don't let it put you off that we shall eat pancakes; it is an ancient, eternal custom, and there is beauty in it."[1] And that, too, is the way to see Zosima's concept of hell. Not even mysticism could save Zosima from condemnation by official orthodoxy. Mystics often were no less dangerous than rationalists, and the churches have always kept a sharp eye on them.

In short, the orthodox catechism does not fare well at Dostoevsky's hands. I have stressed that the Slavophiles had already formulated the ideal of the Russian Orthodox Church, and seen by their standards the state church was far from ideal. Nor does Dostoevsky, through Zosima, give us anything but a somewhat dusted-off version of Greek Christianity.

The theology of Zosima, as well as of all the other figures in *The Brothers Karamazov*, show us the sceptic; not even in his most mature and comprehensive work had Dostoevsky surmounted nihilistic atheism. The truth remains not only on Zosima's side but on Ivan's as well. Alyosha, the future saviour of Russia, does not influence the plot actively, and when he does intervene it is at the instigation of others.

Dostoevsky's scepticism is equally evident in *The Possessed*, a novel most specially concerned with nihilists. One need only turn to the scene where Stavrogin and Shatov discuss nihilism and the Russian problem. It is a grand episode, in which Stavrogin, being destroyed by atheism himself, proves the conscience of the Slavophile who wants to rise above atheism, and where, finally, he hands him a kind of logical pistol: "Do you personally believe in God?" "I believe in Russia and its orthodoxy; I believe in the body of Christ; I believe that Christ's second coming will take place in Russia," Shatov manages to blurt out in his highly disturbed state. "And in God?" "In God? . . . I, I shall believe in God."[2] Shatov would like to believe in God, and that is why Stavrogin is seeking

[1] It was customary to eat *bliny* (pancakes) during memorial meals for the dead. *The Brothers Karamazov*, 1958 edition, X, p. 338.

[2] 1957 edition, Vol. VII, p. 268.

a decisive, unequivocal, and rescuing answer which, however, is never forthcoming from the honest Shatov.

The relationship between Shatov and Stavrogin is also artistically the more effective in that it is the atheist Stavrogin who forces Shatov into his Slavophile ideas. Stavrogin's scepticism leads Shatov into the acceptance of theism at the very same time that it draws Kirilov towards atheism.

The dying Zosima advises those about him: "Do not hate the atheist, the tempters, the materialists, not even the evil or good ones among them, since there are good ones among them, especially in our own time."[1] This analysis of Dostoevsky's work is fully supported by many passages in his letters, notebooks, and *A Writer's Diary*.

We see from Dostoevsky's earliest letters, pre-dating the Siberian exile, that he had already lost the faith of his childhood at the Engineering Institute. In 1838 he writes to his brother: "I have a project: to become mad."[2] He seems to have been influenced thus particularly by reading E. T. H. Hoffmann, since he mentions one of his characters: "It is terrible to see a man who has incomprehensible powers; a man who does not know what he is to do; and who plays with a toy—which is God himself."[3] In letters dating from the beginning of his literary career we read that anxiety about possible failure leads him to threaten suicide, which accords with his later stand. We know from Dostoevsky himself that he later became a passionate disciple of Belinsky's views, and it is against them that he struggles in the post-Siberian years. "Nihilism," he writes, "appeared among us since *we are all nihilists*. We are only frightened by the new and original manner of its expression. We are all Fyodor Pavlovich's [Karamazov]. It was comical to see the alarm and anxiety of our sages when they wanted to discover where nihilists had come from. They did not come from anywhere: they were always with us, among us, and within ourselves (Possessed)."[4] Within ourselves, all of us, myself included, are nihilists, is what Dostoevsky is saying quite clearly.

Here is a trenchant and characteristic comment on *The Brothers Karamazov:* "These rascals wanted to irritate me by accusing me of an *uneducated* and reactionary faith in God. These fools could never have imagined such a strong denial of God as is presented

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, Vol. XIII, p. 173.

[2] Letter to Mikhail Dostoevsky, from St. Petersburg, August 9, 1838, *Pis'ma*, I p. 47.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] From Dostoevsky's notebook, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, 1883, Vol. I, p. 370.

in the Grand Inquisitor and the chapter preceding it and to which the *entire book* serves as a rebuttal. After all, I do not believe in God like a fool or a fanatic. These are the people who wanted to teach me something and who were laughing at my backwardness! Their own foolish heads could never conceive of such a strong denial as I went through. Yet they want to be my teachers."[1]

I think that these words speak for themselves, and that they were evidently written after the publication of *The Brothers Karamazov*, i.e. shortly before his death. In the same vein as this we might also read this remark about *The Brothers Karamazov* as a reply to an open letter by the liberal Professor K. D. Kavelin.[2]

> "The Inquisitor and the chapter about children. In respect of these two you might challenge me on scientific grounds, but you can hardly do it on such exalted philosophical ones, even though philosophy is not my field. Not even in Europe have there been such strong statements of the atheistic case. After all, mine is not a schoolboy's belief in Christ. My hosannah has passed through the crucible of doubt, just as the devil says in my novel."[3]

A lady who, in 1880, asked his advice about her religious doubts received the following explanation and confession.[4] There is a duality in every man's nature: only the degree of this inner schism varies. He means that his correspondent is strongly divided within herself, but he assures her that it is exactly the same with him and that it has been so all his life. Dostoevsky explains this painful and yet somehow joyful duality as a function of being highly gifted and sensitive. Persons who feel this way have a compulsion to be accountable to themselves and to meet their moral responsibilities both to themselves and to mankind. The more limited person, less developed intellectually, does not feel any such contradictions and is satisfied with himself. In any event, this inner conflict is a real martyrdom. "Catherine Fyodorovna, do you believe in Christ and his promises? If you do believe or strongly want to believe, dedicate yourself to him fully and the suffering caused by the duality within you will be lessened and you will find a way out for your soul, which is the

[1] Notebooks, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenny*, 1883, Vol. I, pp. 368–9.

[2] Kavelin's open letter was in *Vestnik Evropy*, Nov. 1880, No. 6. Constantine Kavelin (1818–85) was an historian and a professor holding Westernising views.

[3] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, 1883, Vol. I, p. 375.

[4] Letter of April 11, 1880, from Petersburg, to Catherina F. Yunge, *Pis'ma*, Vol. IV, pp. 135–37.

main thing."[1] Zosima talks to Ivan exactly as this letter does about the blessing of being able to torture oneself with trying to understand the eternal mysteries.

Thus Dostoevsky is only able to express a wish; the will to believe in Christ must become something to which the doubter can give himself over blindly. And since Christ the God-man is incomprehensible, the doubter will inevitably follow Feuerbach's formula and incline authority in human guise, as indeed Alyosha gravitates toward Zosima.

There is yet another most instructive passage in *The Possessed* in the scene in which Stavrogin visits the cell of the old man Tikhon. The conversation between Shatov and Stavrogin is reenacted, but here it is significant that Stavrogin asks Tikhon directly if he believes in God and if that faith can move mountains. Tikhon admits that his faith is not perfect and completely sure, and thus Stavrogin, whose denial of God is imperfect, and Tikhon, whose faith in him is also imperfect, end up by saying that they like each other very much.

Zosima asks for prayers on behalf of atheists. Zosima and Tikhon admit that complete atheism is more honorable than indifference. Complete atheism is right up there on the second-to-last rung, next to the most perfect faith. Whether he does or does not believe, the indifferent person really has no faith at all. Stavrogin is, after all, made to remind Tikhon of the passage in the Apocalypse (III. 15) where the hot and the cold are both given preference over the lukewarm.

Dostoevsky was quite justified in saying in his letter to Strakhov that the question of God's existence had tortured him all his life. Sometimes he was very hot and then very cold on the issue, but never lukewarm.

In the analysis of Nekrasov's poem "Vlas" (*A Writer's Diary*, 1873),[2] the monk is made to tell the secret of a confession. A peasant comes to him from a great distance so that he can finally obtain peace of mind, through confession. As a youth he had made a bet in his village that he would commit the greatest of blasphemies, and took an oath to that effect. Very well, says his comrade, it will soon be Lent, begin to fast, go to confession and communion, receive the consecrated bread but do not eat it, bring it here. No sooner said than done. He brings it and is told to shoot at it with a rifle. He tries to do so, and has already taken aim when the crucified Christ appears to him. The youth falls into a

[1] *Pis'ma*, Vol. IV, p. 137.

[2] 1926 edition, XI, pp. 30–41.

faint. Long years pass, and then he appears before the monk full of guilt. After receiving absolution, he becomes one of the Russian "Vlases."

Dostoevsky examines this episode and uses it to show the true substance of Russian religiosity. The Russians know no moderation, hence they have a natural inclination toward negation. The best of them will suddenly want to deny and destroy that which is most holy to them, their own ideal and that of their people, which they have always worshipped. They are seized with a momentary fit of self-negation and self-destruction. But then, just as suddenly and passionately, they try to retrieve what they have denied, and thus to save themselves. This about-face toward the positive is always said to be more serious than the relapse into negation.

I do not believe that this attempted explanation is entirely satisfactory; I do not think that the best among men suddenly succumb to the laws of the Hegelian dialectic and swing from one extreme to the other. Yet Dostoevsky does make an important point when he stresses blasphemy and the widespread longing to blaspheme. Still, his exposition requires correction. First, one should note that this form of blasphemy does not occur in Russia alone. One can find it in Catholic lands, and notably in French literature, beginning with Voltaire and coming down to the more recent "Blasphemers." In Protestant countries, and thus in the literature of England and Germany, it does not occur so often. Why? Because wherever religion is based on authority rather than reason, and wherever its foundations rest on mystical inspiration and occurrences instead of on an ethical perceptivity about human nature, there scepticism and negation take the form of blasphemy. In such cases, negation is always aimed at the religious environment. Of this blasphemous mood has something in common with fits of laughter which students have in class. It is often a sign of weakness.

Dostoevsky saw correctly the destructive character of Russian blasphemy. Mysticism, and an irrational absolutism on which the Russian Church leans much more heavily than do the Catholic and Protestant ones, induces a singular kind of blasphemy which is often very cruel. Yet Dostoevsky's explanation leaves out of account that there are degrees and shades of blasphemy, which are shown in his own works, sometimes in the form of satire or humour.

In his works Dostoevsky often depicts unbelievers or half-

believers who blaspheme. Remember how Svidrigaylow describes eternity in *Crime and Punishment*, or how the old Karamazov jests uneasily about punishment in hell. There is a whole chapter which describes the effect which the odour of Zosima's corpse had on the monks and the climate of the entire monastery. It was generally assumed that the body of the "saint" would not be subject to decay; it is generally expected that this will be the first miracle to attest his saintliness. And behold! What a disappointment. Dostoevsky describes the scene with relentless realism and with a strong touch of satire. In *A Raw Youth* the old nobleman jokes about how the layman Versilov assumes religious airs: today I eat in the club and all of a sudden I am a relic! In *The Possessed* Shatov cites Stavrogin's remark: "We need a hare if there is to be hare sauce, and there has to be a God if we are to believe in God."[1] The excited Shatov cannot restrain himself in one of the most serious situations in the book, and quotes this "low remark," at which he then laughs even though he does it angrily. It is easy to see that Dostoevsky enjoys these more or less comical diversions. Without this wry humour not even Ivan manages to express his negation, as shown in his dealings with the devil. Incidentally, people also display a characteristic blasphemy in their dealings with the devil.

A monograph on Dostoevsky would have to undertake a much more thorough analysis of his scepticism. Dostoevsky's characters include a number of psychologically interesting shades of sceptical moods: the satirical; the ironic (remember the significance of irony in Hergen!); frivolity (the devil in *The Brothers Karamazov* is a liberal); cold anger (as shown in Stavrogin in *The Possessed*). There are only feeble attempts at desperation, since Dostoevsky's sceptic is active and revolutionary even if he is the object of his own negation and impulse to self-destruction.

The critic Mikhailovsky has called Dostoevsky's a "cruel talent,"[2] and indeed his works do leave a cruel and pitiless impression, which becomes all the more cruel and anguished because the poet is engaged in self-torment. He was conveying the literal truth when he wrote to Strakhov that the issue of God's being had tormented him consciously and unconsciously for all of his life. That was it precisely!

[1] 1957 edition, VII, p. 268.

[2] N. K. Mikhailovsky (1842–1904), critic and journalist, published an essay under that title about Dostoevsky in *Otechestvennye Zapiski* (*Fatherland Notes*) in 1882.

Strakhov is right in defining Dostoevsky's major motif as being that of "penitent nihilist." This nihilist does public penance in Dostoevsky's many works, submits to the severest penance, and even to self-torment. And still he does not free himself of nihilism, and that is why the penance and torment are constantly renewed.

This is precisely the disturbing element in Dostoevsky: he wants to surmount nihilism and unbelief, but can never regain total faith in himself. Dostoevsky often claims that no Russian can really be an atheist, but that only turns out to mean that he is no more than a sceptic. It is in this sense that one must, then, understand the Russian's proclivity to lose faith quite suddenly and then to regain it just as easily.

It is not true that Russians do not become unbelievers and atheists. Dostoevsky is quite right to see indifference as being the equivalent of unbelief and atheism. There are, in fact, Russians and Russians! Milyukov, in commenting on the tendency to desert church and religion, has pointed to the Catholic's aggressive hostility toward his church, especially in France; to the Englishman's ability to reconcile new ideas with his religion; and to the Russian's indifference toward his church. This would appear to be explained through the Orthodox Church's having experienced no inquisition; hence it is neither hostile to new ideas, as is Catholicism, nor, like Protestantism, does it help the individual to come to terms with them.

Milyukov saw the Catholics' hostility toward their church quite accurately, but did not notice that the Russian feels very much the same way in so far as he is not altogether indifferent. Milyukov speaks only for the liberals, and then only for some of them—perhaps for the majority. The feelings of those who have left the church are very similar to those of Frenchmen in the same situation, which can be seen not only from Dostoevsky but a whole series of thinkers, from Belinsky on. The Russian tends to be less nervous about his church than the Frenchman, simply because it is weaker than the Roman Church. The Russian Church has hardly any theology or scholastic philosophy; its tradition is derived from the absolutism of its teachings, and it simply refuses to recognise progress; its monks and priests are less educated; it is much more subordinated to the State, more pliable, and thus appears to lack seriousness. That is why the Russian, as Dostoevsky says, can easily become an atheist, i.e. an indifferent sceptic, since the Church communicates its teaching and its ideas through religious ritual alone. If he becomes disgusted

by this ritual and the Church's authority, there is no Russian scholasticism to hold him, as there is for a doubting Catholic. Dostoevsky very much regrets that the educated Russian has few and rather worthless notions about Orthodoxy, in which he sees the genesis of such movements as the "Stunda" and a variety of sects like that of Redstock.[1] The Orthodox faith and its churches are simply less resilient than is Roman Catholicism.

Dostoevsky, like most religious sceptics, has not perceived that anyone who has lost faith in his church through excessive speculation can never regain that faith again. Goethe had several profound insights into the soul of modern man. One of these can be stated concisely: No one ever regains his faith; he can only return to a conviction.

Dostoevsky, as we have seen, boasts about the depth of his disbelief. He is deceiving himself! Scepticism concerning religion, and notably ecclesiastical religion, is always something weak and superficial as compared with scepticism about man's capacity to perceive and understand.

Modern philosophy commences with scepticism, which is first directed against the teachings of the Church. Descartes and the French School are sceptics of this sort. It is only Hume who makes the transition from religious scepticism to epistemological scepticism, thereby becoming the moving force behind the thought of our own time. It is, in turn, Kant's greatness that he understood Hume, and that he made an attempt to surmount this fundamental scepticism. Kant offers us an epistemological critique of Hume's position. Moreover, even if his system is faulty, as it certainly is not fully correct, it is his attempt to counter Hume's scepticism, his full awareness of this crucial intellectual act, of this conflict, which remain his principle achievement.

Goethe's saying as cited above illuminates the meaning of Kant's criticism. An understanding and full awareness of the conflict is the very core of modern thought.

The teachings of the churches, ecclesiastical religion, inherited creeds are outmoded from the time of Hume and Kant. They have been surmounted in principle. A return to them is simply not possible, as shown by the failure of individual attempts as well as those of groups.

Nor does Dostoevsky's attempt meet with success. He cannot portray a single character who has really overcome his own scepticism. We see Raskolnikov only in a state of crisis, and we

[1] See footnote 15 in the preceding section.

hear at the end of the novel that he is brought back into the fold not by Zosima but by a former prostitute. Zosima cannot change Ivan's mind, nor do Shatov and Stavrogin reach their respective goals. Nowhere does Dostoevsky paint a sceptic returned to the faith. Not even Zosima can effect a complete about-face, apart from not having experienced Ivan's kind of doubt.

Dostoevsky portrays the Idiot splendidly, but he does, after all, remain only an idiot, a child who has retained its faith, a childlike mind which unsuspectingly passes between Scylla and Charybdis. Besides, the Idiot is portrayed from his ethical rather than religious side. Dostoevsky is quite unable to depict a believer, as he would like.

Dostoevsky quite naturally cannot overcome his scepticism. Just look at his religious characters and the way in which they return to their faith. Some of the sceptics grasp at church ritual, though they give it a special meaning; others turn to the authority of a leader, as for instance to the elder Zosima; all lose themselves in mysticism and console themselves with assurances that it is unnecessary to prove religious faith; there is constant reference to children and what is demanded is a childlike faith; some want to regain their faith through peasant labour; others return to it through a sense of nationality, since a Russian is said to be unable to become an atheist, and should he do so he ceases to be a true Russian, etc., etc.

In Dostoevsky there can be found, at least in part, virtually all typical attempts to return to the faith of a church which have been made since the French Revolution, beginning with the Romantics and coming down to our own day. This type of literature interested him most particularly. That is why we hear from him at the end of his life (in the letter of April 11, 1880, quoted above) that the duality of one's nature is a higher gift, and that the main thing, in the final analysis, is to find a way out for one's soul. He advises turning to Christ, very much as his Mitya Karamazov throws himself headlong at everything which fascinates him. To overcome his scepticism, truly to *surmount* it, was something that Dostoevsky could never do, and at the bottom of his heart he did not even want to. Zosima very early on and quite correctly discerns that Ivan's suffering and anguish give him a certain kind of pleasure and a sense of well-being. It was the same with every romantic, both before and after him. Dostoevsky's sceptics are poisoned souls: Poisons are clearly harmful, yet those who make use of them—and they all know it—will never give them up.

(vii) *Education and Science*

IN his first comprehensive literary and publicistic programme,[1] Dostoevsky demanded an education for the people as the next step following the emancipation from serfdom, and indeed as a precondition for all future development. He makes the same demand in later years as well. "Whoever reads and writes has put himself in motion and is on his way, well equipped."[2] Dostoevsky is very dissatisfied with the official purveyors of pupolar enlightenment, whether it be the secular clergy, or the teachers in elementary schools. Instead, he is thinking about the founding of a free academy of sciences.[3]

Yet he soon begins to differentiate between true and false science and philosophy, and all knowledge becomes false which tends to conflict with his religious ideal—a very dangerous criterion, the more so because that ideal is so vaguely defined.

Dostoevsky is quite right if he is fearful that excessive learning may lead to an alienation from life, yet it is necessary to be clear that too much learning is not the equivalent either of good sense or of wisdom. Dostoevsky's stricture on this point is aimed at Kavelin,[4] who had taken issue with him, yet who was himself one of the most industrious and genuine teachers of his time. On the other hand, Dostoevsky himself sometimes defended "bookish individuals" as for instance in *A Raw Youth*, and asks how it is that they suffer to the point of becoming tragic figures.

Dostoevsky is also sensitive on any point of criticism which concerns patriotism and which is aimed against Russia, and there he often finds himself in very bad company. We shall have more to say about his mistaken notions of nationalism.

In his *A Writer's Diary* Dostoevsky expresses the fear that technological progress, such as railways, will seduce the masses into materialism. He may have been right if he was referring to Russian railway officials, but the railways as such are surely not to blame. Here Belinsky was a much better judge of the significance of railroads for Russia, though Dostoevsky himself tells us how, as a great and already ailing writer, he would go to watch the construction of the Nikolaievski Station: "Finally, we too will

[1] In his programme for the magazine *Time* (*Vremya*), 1930 edition, Vol XIII, pp. 496–501.

[2] Notebooks of Dostoevsky, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, 1883, Vol. I, p. 367.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 368.

[4] Constantine D. Kavelin (1818–85) was an historian, professor, of Westernising views.

have at least one railroad. You wouldn't believe how that thought lightens my spirits."[1]

Dostoevsky writes most earnestly against semi-literacy. In Russia, however, the half-educated person has always been much more noticeable than in Western Europe. Dostoevsky portrays several degrees of semi-literacy. Beginning with the servant Smerdyakov and on to the philosophising Versilov, it would be possible to assemble a whole collection of "hothouse progressives" and "master sergeants of civilisation." He perceives many of these types with great acumen, most typically those who use and live by ready-made ideas but who do not think. He even has some who live with prefabricated sorrows!

Dostoevsky was an avid reader all his life, and though his formal education was in the natural sciences, he was always preoccupied with literary and socio-political issues. He admits that he was weak in philosophy, but not in his love of philosophy, even though it seems to me that on the whole he knows the philosophers at second-hand only. He never concerned himself with any discipline as thoroughly and deeply as did Goethe. Perhaps one might say that he had no serious interest in any field of knowledge and that therein lies his failing. How else could he have been so wrong about the political issues of his time? Indeed, he forces politics into the mould of his own preconceptions and does violence to the facts.

It is, of course, decisive that Dostoevsky was a mystic and that, as such, he under-rates logical judgment and generalisation while evolving his own mystical psychology. He subordinates reason to feeling and willpower, and has a rather developed theory which could, in academic terms, pass as emotional voluntarism.

In any description of psychological phenomena there is always a remarkably close connection between reason and sensibility. Dostoevsky is very much aware of this, and his novels offer a psychological justification of the relationship. In *A Raw Youth* one might even find a theory about the idea-emotion when, for instance, we read about the difference between a logical conclusion and a conclusion which has transformed itself into emotion. Elsewhere, we read that a great idea is usually a feeling which remains undefined for too long. Or in *The Brothers Karamazov:* ". . . joy, pure joy radiated from his mind and heart," whereas, by way of contrast, there is a cool, calm, rational anger which is more terrible than passionate anger.

[1] *A Writer's Diary*, 1873, 1929 edition, Vol. XI, p. 10.

Dostoevsky, probably following Schopenhauer, very early adopted the theory that will rather than reason is the measure of the whole man and of his most intimate personal nature (*Notes from the Underground*). Pure reason, in Kant's sense, simply does not exist: it is an improbable invention of the eighteenth century. This psychological perception applies especially in describing so-called innate ideas and their influence on the cognative process. This too is the place to remember instinct, which plays such a major role in Dostoevsky. That is why Dostoevsky recognises the role of the subconscious on such a large scale: "There is much that we can know unknowingly."

This voluntaristic conception appears in Dostoevsky's religious philosophy. He had noticed at the spiritualistic seances which he writes about, and not only on the spiritualists but his own self, that some wish to believe and others do not, from which he is led to conclude that belief and disbelief do not depend on rational arguments but on will. Dostoevsky puts it this way: Disbelief and perhaps even faith may take hold of us without our willing it, but still in response to our secret wish. This voluntaristic view of the religious problem has come to enjoy much popularity. Ever since Schopenhauer, "the will" has been very much in vogue. We now have not only a will to life, but a will to death, to sin, and most recently to faith. Dostoevsky, as early as 1876, characterised the last as "a special law of human nature."

We cannot, of course, expect an exactly defined voluntarism or emotionalism from Dostoevsky. While his descriptions of concrete psychological situations are very good, the theory underlying them is imprecise and vague. What Dostoevsky did do, however, was to think his psychological theories through sufficiently to make them support his mysticism.

The highest truths, he emphasises most insistently, are not understood by reason, but by the heart. His romantic formula reads: Nature, the soul, love, and God are known only to the heart. Reason is a materialistic instrument or machine; the soul and the spirit feed upon ideas imparted by the heart. The terminology alone not only suggests Schopenhauer but the Slavophiles and through them the old gnostics and perhaps even Kant. The disharmony between rationalism and mysticism is thus justified in terms of the psychological disharmony between the intellect, the feelings, and the will. This theory is echoed in the Slavophile view of the antithesis between reason and spirit. That is why philosophy understood in an anti-positivist sense must remain sharply dis-

tinguished from science, and why it approaches poetry. We are even told that poetry is merely a higher stage of philosophy.

(viii) *Religion and Morality*

WHEN I was a boy, I used to hear stories about the Russian troops which were sent to Hungary in 1849 and how they used to hide their crucifixes under their caps so that God would not see them stealing and looting. I do not know whether this is merely a fictitious anecdote, but it is a fact that at carnival time the Russians do turn pictures of their saints toward the wall or cover them with napkins so that they will not see all the roistering and breaches of the peace.

All religions, though in varying degrees, concede the importance of ethics and morality, that is to say, of man's relationship to man, even while their chief concern remains that of man's relation to God and the universe. The Christian churches and particularly the Orthodox one tend to lay special stress on the principle of correct belief (*orthodoxia* does mean correct teaching); they emphasise correct faith in God and Christ and therefore rank proper ritual above morality. Morality implies obedience to revealed commandments: it is not to be justified with reference to a natural moral law based upon entirely independent principles.

This view was, at least in part, opposed during the religious revolution brought on by the Reformation. It was rejected even more forcefully by the revolution in philosophy which followed. David Hume and Kant after him were the principal challengers: they judge religion according to its morality. They asked how religion encourages or impedes moral conduct. Atheistic systems of thought also reject religion on ethical grounds, especially Feuerbach who imparts to atheism an entirely ethical and humanist content.

Feuerbach, in turn, was followed by the Russian socialists, nihilists and revolutionaries and it was against them that Dostoevsky undertook to defend the Christian ethic and morality, albeit neither with felicity nor success if one is to judge by his own religious philosophy.

If we accept morality as flowing from the will of God, then it follows that any doubt about God must lead to ethical scepticism and eventually to Ivan's principle that "Everything is permitted." In a rather different sense, after all, even the devil himself is

atheist. The old Karamazov is a religious man, as are Mitya and Smerdyakov and the various monks around Father Zosima. Why, then, does Dostoevsky distinguish between them? Why does he prefer the regular over the secular clergy? Dostoevsky cannot really escape denying to morality an intrinsically independent status and value but he hardly arrives at this conclusion with any consistency or logic. Here and there we are given some ideas which are echoes of Kant and the modern school; there is repeated reference to the fact that atheism can be the product of immorality which is clearly a thesis which derives from Kant. In *The Possessed* Shatov quite plainly defines religion as a perception of the difference between good and evil, but the thought is not followed out elsewhere. In Dostoevsky's notebooks there are several more plausible references to the nature of morality: conscience is understood there as a kind of feeling and that feeling is given a decisive voice in matters of conviction.[1] In one place morality is proclaimed to be that which "we equate with our sense of the beautiful and with the ideal in which that sense finds its realisation."[2]

Yet these are only concessions to the critical point of view; the basic outlook is that morality derives its sanction from religion, the religious authority of the Church and especially the authority of the monastic rule.

In the self-same notebook there is a categorical assertion that conscience, without God, is something terrible.[3] At the very most, Dostoevsky is led to admit that proper conduct without faith in Christ "is honesty . . . but not morality."[4] It is in this same sense that he makes the philosophical Ivan defend the thesis that any form of action is impossible without a belief in immortality. This is equally clear when he formulates a sentence like this one aimed against the Kantian Kavelin: "If we lack the authority of faith and of Christ, then we must necessarily stray in all things."[5] Thus, moral conviction and scientific knowledge hardly suffice to provide moral sanctions.

Let us take a closer look at some of Dostoevsky's characters. Right away the figure of Sonya, the ideal prostitute, comes to mind. She cannot live without God. She leads the murderer Raskolnikov toward God but she does not give up prostitution; at best, she divides her time between her profession and religious observance. And her stepmother, when Sonya presents her with

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, 1883, Vol. I, p. 372. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 371. [4] *Ibid.* [5] *Ibid.*, p. 374.

thirty pieces of silver, cries at her feet all night and covers her with tears but takes the money nevertheless! The thief Fedka, about to commit murder, still preaches God to the "insane" Peter Stepanovich during a fit of drunkenness. The "insane one" is, of course, a total good-for-nothing in comparison with whom Fedka is himself a paragon of morality but it is still difficult to accept the theism of a drunkard and a ruffian!

Fasting, prayer, and obedience: these are the virtues which are taught by Zosima and which are to be the saviours of Russia. How preposterously misguided! Instead of teaching the Russians how to overcome life's obstacles, Dostoevsky offers the image of the monk to his unhappy countrymen, as the person who has renounced the world altogether. Again, how utterly misguided! Nor can it be argued that Zosima first does send his disciple Alyosha into the world before allowing him to become a monk. It is all the worse that he cannot endure his worldly existence and that after a few attempts and some so-called "experiences" he flees to the sanctuary of a monk's cell. What it all means is that Dostoevsky is searching for a romantic sense of quiet and peace and that he finds the real struggle just too fatiguing.

The mystic sees nothing but the suffering Christ of his own church which, like the Roman Catholic faith, extols only the passive virtues and thus serves religious, secular and political absolutism. Dostoevsky, indeed, goes further: he will not settle for obedience and passivity alone; he enjoins a search for suffering and indeed finds pleasure in suffering. That is not just old-time Christianity; it is decadent romanticism. Dostoevsky seeks excitement precisely because he lacks an inner equanimity, does not enjoy an inner sense of peace and does not know how to find them. He loves strong contrasts and strong passions: for him, even love of one's neighbour must be intense. Mitya Karamazov who blindly tumbles from one extremity to another is Dostoevsky's favourite. More characteristic than anything else are the degrees of sympathy which Dostoevsky shows toward the members of the Karamazov family. Mitya, as I have just said, is his favourite; it is with him and for him that he feels most warmly. Then comes the father Karamazov, Alyosha and Ivan while nothing but contempt remains for Smerdyakov, the half-brother of the sons Karamazov.

Dostoevsky is unable to overcome his scepticism even in the field of ethics. "Do not judge our nation by what it is but by what it should like to become. Its ideals are both strong and

holy."[1] This remark in *A Writer's Diary* reveals Dostoevsky's entire ethic. He is able to find the ideal Russian man of the future even in a drunkard. I am, of course, not denigrating his sense of compassion for the sinner; I only wish to stress the weakness and, indeed, the sickness of this character trait. Dostoevsky simply lacks firm ethical principles and a categorical imperative and that is why he is tormented throughout his life by that phrase which derives from St. Paul to the effect that "Everything is permitted." The Russian revolutionaries also insisted that everything was permitted in the fight against the Russian government and expressly avowed the right to kill (Stepnyak says "all means are permissible against such a government" and there are also the teachings of Bakunin and Nechaev).[2] Dostoevsky, for his part, obviously combats this thesis but he cannot do it in any other way than to preach total submission to an external authority.

We already know the excruciating difficulty of free choice from Ivan's story of the Grand Inquisitor and the very same point is driven home by all of Dostoevsky's characters: their will power is weak and ineffectual. That is why Alyosha leans on Zosima's conscience: the future saviour of Russia, in the realm of morality, lives entirely on the conscience of another man.

The ability to adapt and accommodate oneself on artistic grounds which Bourget has shown us in Renan becomes for Dostoevsky a Russian national characteristic. Indeed, Renan's dilettantism acquires a moral foundation and justification with Dostoevsky He criticised Tolstoy for his directness and consistency and allowed the author of *Anna Karenina* only that measure of Russian common sense which permits a man to see what is plain to his very eyes: "[The Russians] . . . simply don't have the ability to turn their necks in order to perceive what is to their right and left; they must face the object with their entire body. They are often inconsistent because they are so completely forthright in every single instance."[3] Actually, Dostoevsky is saying that Tolstoy makes mutually exclusive demands at various points, but in fact he is arguing against ethical consistency.

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, Vol XI, p. 49

[2] Stepnyak (1851–95; real name, Sergey Kravchinsky), a Russian revolutionary, is discussed by Masaryk in Vol. II, pp. 103–5, and elsewhere in *The Spirit of Russia* His pamphlet *A Life for a Life* and novel *The Career of a Nihilist* describe the views and lives of nihilist terrorists. The anarchists and revolutionaries Nechaev and Bakunin are also discussed in Vol. II of *The Spirit of Russia*, particularly pp. 83–89.

[3] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, Vol. XII, p. 203.

This particular weakness in Dostoevsky is shown in his battle against individualism; it is not just the absurdity of extreme individualism and subjectivism which repels the creator of Zosima and Ivan. The slogan "Man unto himself!" simply does not exist for Dostoevsky. Self-reliance is a wholly unknown quality to the man who lives in the mystical, miraculous world of the Apocalypse and the New Testament.

Siberia had a decisive influence on Dostoevsky. It may even be doubted whether Dostoevsky's views would have developed as they actually did without the Siberian experience. Very likely they would have done so, but certainly they would also have received rather different expression. Dostoevsky would not have formulated his problems so sharply; he would not have been so nervous and irritated; in all likelihood he would not have felt as oppressed and insecure. It would be an exaggeration to say that Siberia had broken Dostoevsky but it is clear that it did poison him: the external pressures of that life both horrified and frightened him but they hardly served to further his inner development.[1]

Siberia compelled Dostoevsky to ponder the problem of crime and punishment which is not to be found at all in his pre-Siberian writing. And it is clear from his attempted solutions how harsh and one-sided an influence Siberia had been.

Zosima's views about collective guilt and conscience have a very beautiful side to them: Dostoevsky looks for and finds a spark of humanity, even of godliness, in every criminal. He had taught us that there is not such a great difference between the criminal and the non-criminal, between the condemned and the judge, as the official machinery of criminal justice would have us believe. Dostoevsky was always the persistent and benevolent advocate of ethical democracy. And yet, there is something unhealthy and perverse in his teaching. Sympathy for the criminal and ethical democracy are easily turned into dilettantism. Dostoevsky might well have made it his business to discover how a criminal procedure which does recognise the principle of collective guilt works in practice by considering the example of some of the Caucasian tribes.

Dostoevsky sensed the weakness of his theory for which he was widely criticised and that is why he tries to explain and defend

[1] Modern biographers and critics of Dostoevsky do not agree on the effects of Siberian imprisonment on Dostoevsky, but most of them would strongly disagree with Masaryk's view.

it in *A Writer's Diary* for the year 1873. If the Russian people refer to the criminal as "an unfortunate" it simply means that the people know that while he is guilty they too share his guilt: the criminal still remains their brother. At the same time, Dostoevsky rejects the environmental theory, which was already then in vogue, and which attempts to excuse crime as resulting from environmental factors.

The question really is why the criminal should have been thought of as "an unfortunate" among the Russians. Was it not simply because of the cruel punishments which Russian justice meted out and applied in such full measure? It is true, of course, that the environmental theory can be abused and this, in fact, is sometimes done. The guilty person often places the blame on others. Yet, this very theory, when properly applied, achieves precisely what Dostoevsky considers to be a sense of justice and which he attributes exclusively to the Russian people. In reality, it is not Russia but Europe—the West—which is more advanced in this respect. Dostoevsky insists that energy, work, and struggle change the environment and represents this as the view of the Russian folk. Actually, however, it is the view of everyone who rejects a fatalistic acceptance of external and predetermined forces.

Each practising jurist will also ask himself what good a punishment, and particularly a heavy one, will do to the condemned: how will it improve him and society?

This, and many other questions in the field of criminology were never considered by Dostoevsky; he simply came to terms with the official Russian criminal procedures. Not only does he defend capital punishment but he also advocates heavy sentences because they allegedly bring about moral regeneration. Likewise, he favours the punishment of pupils in the schools because it is said to encourage manliness! Even Montaigne had already conceded that such an approach will make the boys cowardly, deceitful and more obstinate.

It would be interesting to show how Dostoevsky contradicts his own theory when he describes facts which he saw and noted in *The House of the Dead* (and what a good name for it that is!). Yet, he needed his far-fetched scholasticism in order to find that his own punishment for a political crime was just. This shows how Siberia frightened him. After all, the Decembrists and many of their followers never came to terms with Siberia.

Dostoevsky's lack of clarity on this issue is also related to the

fact that he does not differentiate between political and non-political crimes, a circumstance which is an outgrowth of his polemics with Bakunin and the nihilists. It is simply not true that he always thought only of the most serious crimes such as murder and that he was unable to understand what small and repeated transgressions can mean for the development of a "criminal."

Herein lies the fallacy of his romantic stance. He is concerned only with the severest of crimes; nor is it without significance that he is always preoccupied with the minutest details surrounding the perpetration of a cruel crime. He gives an explicit description not only of Raskolnikov's crime but of every other crime which occurs in his works. Nor is he any less interested in crime detection, which imparts the character of a detective story to nearly all of his books.

The truth is that Dostoevsky likes to deal with upsetting occurrences and nowhere is that more apparent than it is in this area. For example, Dostoevsky puts forth the rather curious theory that Russians are by nature in need of suffering and that they derive from it a sense of elation. He sees in this characteristic a major and fundamental spiritual need. His Stephen Trofimovich finds consolation in the teaching that man needs not only happiness but misfortune as well. Yet, this essentially Russian characteristic can already be found in de Maistre with the sole difference that this philosopher of the restoration regarded suffering as a universal human need. Nor is this point of agreement with the Catholic laureate of the hangman an isolated instance. In any event, there is no need to be unjust about it: all the romantics, de Maistre[1] included, had said very much the same thing long before. Novalis extols pain as the greatest of delights and says: "The more sinful we feel the more Christian we are."

Dostoevsky believes that from the atheistic and materialist standpoint the concept of guilt cannot be justified at all which, of course, is quite wrong when considered in the light of the development of our modern ideas of ethics and criminal jurisprudence. Purely ethical and social considerations are quite sufficient to justify the notion of guilt and of punishment so long as the latter serves and can be made to serve the desired end.

[1] The best brief account of the life and works of Count Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821) is in Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, London, 1953, pp. 48 ff. His *Soirées de Pétersbourg* and *Correspondance diplomatiques* were published in full only in the 1850's and 1860's.

When Dostoevsky justifies the concept of crime and punishment in metaphysical and religious terms, he is hardly advancing beyond the official teaching of the Church. Anyone who ascribes so much weight to ecclesiastical authority will find that authority mainly embodied in the right to judge and to mete out punishment. Although Ivan Dostoevsky knows that the Church should treat the criminal quite differently than the State, so, on the other hand, does Zosima know that the Christian community is, in fact, no longer Christian and that the Church no less than the State simply cuts the criminal off from society very much like amputating an infected limb, instead of giving him an opportunity to regenerate and save himself. Zosima presents his explanation of true punishment almost ecstatically and he is especially pleased by the fact that the Russian criminal, unlike the European one, remains a believer. It is little wonder, therefore, that Dostoevsky himself accepts punishment as something mechanical: Ivan talks about it as simply pagan. We may recall the scene in which Ivan offers his view of the world's disharmony: if Alyosha does want to have the bestial general shot by way of punishment he will only be vindicating the *ius talionis* of the Old Testament whereby the crime has been avenged, but he will hardly be restoring harmony. Alyosha, on the other hand, believes that harmony can be renewed if there is a being which can bestow forgiveness and that Christ is precisely that being. Even so, Dostoevsky's Christology leaves him in a difficult position because he still has to find a justification for eternal punishment which does happen to be imposed by a God of love.

Dostoevsky's analysis of crime and of the criminal despite its psychological veneer, hardly goes beyond the orthodox theological position regarding original sin and clearly demonstrates his lack of faith in progress and evolution even if he did succeed in showing the deep inner workings of several "unfortunates," especially of murderers.

Despite all of his religio-philosophical reflections, Dostoevsky never understood that the official Christianity of the first, second and third Rome became, under the influence of the priesthood, nothing but a continuation of polytheistic augury. Dspite long years of study of the New Testament, Dostoevsky never understood Jesus and his constant battle against the liturgy and the pharisees. Jesus did not emancipate him from the priesthood and from theology and did not free him from the world of myth and miracle. While Christ taught man to define his own relationship

with his God, Dostoevsky followed the Roman example and degraded his "Russian Christ" into a mere go-between. Rome was not detroyed by the forces of atheism but by its own polytheistic Empire. The Roman theocracy, like all others, abused religion in the interest of achieving political power. The religion of love was thus transformed into a religion of blind faith and obedience. The religious liberty of Jesus Christ was transformed into the Roman, Byzantine and Muscovite servility to the Church.

Dostoevsky set himself up as the apologist of the third Rome and as the augurer of the Russian god, but he did not laugh as did Cato's Haruspices. His office oppressed and eventually crushed him.

Dostoevsky is often celebrated for his expressions of love toward the young and the very small. He made his debut with *The Poor Folk* and gained immediate fame; after the catastrophe and Siberia he devoted himself to the "unfortunates" from *The House of the Dead* and in *The Injured and the Insulted.* Going on to *The Idiot* and *The Brothers Karamazov,* one finds that love is celebrated everywhere. Yet is Dostoevsky's works are read with great care and with special regard to the prevailing atmosphere and the conduct of his characters, the conviction grows that even Dostoevsky's best personalities do not act in the spirit of positive love which Zosima is so fond of recommending. This is not to say that Dostoevsky's characters lack the ability to love; frequently, they are capable of honest, deep-felt and intense love, yet one still finds something lacking in that love.

The concept of *sub specie aeternitatis* clearly has a broad and good connotation and, in so far as Dostoevsky justifies love of one's neighbour with reference to the notion of immortality, it is difficult to take issue with him. It even follows that one should love others more than oneself and turn the other cheek whenever appropriate in contrast to the materialist who says: "I am here only for an instant, immortality is a myth and so I shall live just as I please."

I myself certainly believe that religion can and should bring the notion of immortality to bear upon thought, morality, and love, but then the kind of religion and the manner in which you love your neighbour still remain considerations of some consequence.

Dostoevsky was an excellent reader of his own work. At one particular literary gathering which was attended by Turgenev, Polonsky, Schchedrin, Pleschcheev, and Potekhin he read the scene from *The Brothers Karamazov* in which Dmitri is telling his

brother Alyosha about the time when Katherine Ivanovna came to sell herself in order to save her father.

The reading produced a stirring effect: the audience had turned absolutely still and it was only a few moments later that they broke out in praise of the piece. It was on that occasion that Turgenev went over to his opponent and proffered him his hand—which Dostoevsky refused to shake! And yet, it was Dostoevsky who claimed to have made the mystical love of St. Francis of Assisi his own!

There were some who saw the influence of Gogol in *The Poor Folk* and who saw Dostoevsky as a disciple of Gogol. Yet Dostoevsky himself ranks Gogol below Pushkin who is more congenial to him. He never understood the real Gogol and his intuitive sympathy for the weak and the insignificant person. Gogol, for instance, shows quite plainly the essential goodness and gentleness of an insignificant, pitiful minor official in the story *The Overcoat* while Dostoevsky, in *The Poor Folk*, sees in the very same kind of clerk all the faults which poverty has engendered—presumably the reason why the rich Mr. Bykov makes off with the man's sweetheart.

And if you take Dostoevsky's most mature work: does his favourite, Mitya Karamazov, display positive and effectual love? Or who else really does have this quality other than the "Idiot" who actually does not have to sacrifice everything for it or even to work for it. He, the only positive hero in Dostoevsky's works, happens to be a nobleman who is never in need of cash and who can therefore take a comfortable interest in the romantic affairs of his friends and associates.

Dostoevsky has a romantic view of loving one's neighbour. More precisely, he likes sentimentality, but sentimentality is egotism. That is why in his notebook he demands that love for one's neighbour be ardent and passionate.[1] While also telling us in *The House of the Dead* that every contemporary man has embryonic chracteristics of the torturer in him.[2] Dostoevsky's understanding of love really flows from his hatreds and that is why he inclines to mediate on the love of a spider for his victim. Feelings such as that of generosity flowing out of a sense of revenge are always noted by Dostoevsky with very great precision.

Ivan Karamazov admits to Alyosha that he simply cannot understand how it is possible to love one's neighbour; it is com-

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, 1883, Vol. I, p. 373.
[2] 1956 edition, III, p. 596.

prehensible as an abstraction but hardly as a reality unless the beggar were to appear in silken robes. Dostoevsky, of course, knows that love of one's neighbour is not the issue and that he himself personifies a part of Ivan. His *Poor Folk* and his *The Insulted and Injured* are, for the most part, aristocrats who have become impoverished and proletarianised and who dream about elegant and expensive clothes. Dostoevsky himself is an aristocrat to the bone and in no sense a democrat. You need only to compare him with Tom Paine: this ideal democrat already felt as a child that there is something essentially inhuman about any teaching concerning eternal punishment while Dostoevsky quite clearly makes Zosima defend the very same principle.

Precisely because he is an aristocrat, Dostoevsky is unsympathetic to any kind of prosaic and calculating utilitarianism which he equates with simple egotism. That is why he does not like Protestantism, the English, Germans and the Jews. He also objects to the materialistic element of utilitarianism: Chernyshevsky and his school, Dobrolyubov, Pisarev, Bazarov's nihilism are all rejected in the name of impulsive and powerful sentiment. Dostoevsky has no understanding at all for thinkers like Bentham and Mill. He misses the main point of their message: he does not know that Mill demands the sacrifice of one's life in the name of humanity; he misunderstands Lechtenberg's dictum that a silver penny is always better than a tear, even though, in practice, we do often prefer a handshake or a tear. You can even see his aristocratic temperament in his criticism of the railroads where he finds technicians "who have recently made themselves so self-important in our midst." He gives us in the person of the seminarian Rakitin the worst kind of careerist as a counterpart to Alyosha and Zosima and has him propound the allegedly Russia theory about the necessity of suffering.

Dostoevsky's journey to his own Canossa is often paved with the best of intentions. He often preaches the virtues of work and of perseverance, especially to the young. In his explanation of "the Karamazovs," Dostoevsky (speaking as the narrator) praises Russian youth for seeking the truth and wishing to serve it and even to sacrifice its life for it. Yet young people do not comprehend that "to give one's life is perhaps the easiest of sacrifices in such instances and that to sacrifice five or six years of life at the peak of one's youth to the difficult task of study and the pursuit of learning so as to multiply one's own powers manifold the better to serve that truth and those brave ideals which one has singled

out and vowed to realise, turns out to be a sacrifice which is beyond the strength of most of them."[1] In the same vein, Zosima has this to say: "Dreamy love longs for the quick heroic deed achieved in an instant and watched by all. It can go so far that they will sacrifice their lives, just so long as it goes quickly and is over in an instant as on a stage and so long as everybody watches and praises. Whereas active love means work and endurance."[2]

Work and endurance! Well, Dostoevsky's heroes are lacking in both and he knows it very well. At the very most, his favourite characters are aware that they should be working.

By the notion of work we understand not merely hard physical labour but every kind of regular activity which leads to achievement and the realisation of a goal; thus, it is industriousness we really have in mind, which results from rigorous moral discipline. Mankind passed through epochs of slavery and various forms of forced labour before it was able to engage in regular and voluntary work. And the latter is the very antithesis of an aristocratic order which demands regular activity of others but only works at its own pleasure and regards any voluntary activity merely as a sport or a game. Dostoevsky is quite right: people who think and feel like aristocrats would rather give their lives than work at something regularly and the former is a lesser sacrifice for them than is the latter.

Being and feeling himself to be an aristocrat, Dostoevsky understood the Russian aristocracy which preserved the system of serfdom until 1861 very well indeed. He often analyses the Russian "longing for work"[3] especially among the talented and shows how they become nervously selfish and sceptical with respect to their own capablities.

The fact is that the Russian is still educated by his church which bases itself on the aristocratic principle of indeterministic fatalism. According to this viewpoint, nature, the world, society and its history are not governed by laws from which man can learn through careful observation and scientific deduction, but rather by the "Russian God" of whom you may ask miracles if you find yourself in a tight corner. This belief in miracles, this fatalism and indeterminism is hardly conducive to work. Dostoevsky knows this and that is why, when talking about the need to work, he tries to portray Alyosha not only as a realist but as a better one than the nihilistic kind can ever hope to be: Alyosha's

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, Vol. XIII, p. 30.
[2] 1958 edition, IX, pp. 75–6.
[3] *A Writer's Diary*, 1876.

realism does not allow miracles to distort his view of the world and of life. Why this should be so Dostoevsky tries to explain by his theory about the spontaneity of faith: Alyosha accepts miracles because he is already a believer: he does not become a believer as a result of miracles.

Catholicism is more indeterministic and inclined to accept miracles than is Protestantism which perhaps explains why Catholic countries tend to display less economic vigour than do the Protestant ones where determinism and individual responsibility are more generally accepted. In France, for instance, the development of industry was hardly the product of Catholicism so much as of the growth of science and a deterministic outlook which the scientific method encourages. The Russian Catholic, on the other hand, is an indeterminist, a fatalist who does not reckon, or look ahead, or marshal his resources. He relies on chance, luck and miracles.

Religion suppresses the moral sense in the Russians. Dostoevsky stresses ethical passivity and Christian humility which he characterises as a terrifying power, perhaps the strongest on earth. He regards involuntary labour as a form of suffering but he does not complain about it. And because this kind of outlook is not conducive to vigorous economic development, he preaches asceticism: the ascetic monk is supposed to be Russia's saviour and thus, paradoxically, the Russians' greatest enemy is made to become a redeemer. Hence the attacks on utilitarian hedonism, as if the positivist and realistic determinist were not himself able to take a sensible view of the pleasure principle.

Dostoevsky gives a splendid characterisation of the indeterministic personality in the novel *The Gambler*. Here, the fatalism of the players becomes a kind of faith in miracles, luck, and chance. They all hope for the miracle to occur. He saw this trait in the Russian character and not only in himself but also in Khomyakov and all of his other acquaintances. Just think: there is Dostoevsky, thinking about his messianic plans while losing his last cent and plunging his wife and child into the worst kind of difficulties from which he can only extricate them by selling his work and literary talent in advance even while landing his brother in the same kind of difficulty!

And then there is Khomyakov, foremost among the Slavophiles and leading fighter for Russian orthodoxy, losing a million roubles at the gambling table! Here is the literary elite of the nation with no idea at all of how barbaric it is to throw away money—the

blood and sweat of the peasantry—out of sheer boredom and a romantic craving for excitement.

If there was to have been a chance of progress in Russia, Dostoevsky, Khomyakov and the others should have been preaching industriousness and prudence instead of monkish asceticism. The Russian factory worker can only work 276 or 278 days a year because his church and his state give him something between 110 and 116 "holidays." In America and England one works 307 days and even some Catholic countries in the West have been reducing the number of "holidays" so as to get people into the habit of working regularly. Dostoevsky should have had his Alyosha think about how Russian holidays are really celebrated, about the prevalence of alcoholism and about the fact that nothing gets accomplished on the next working day. Zosima should have been showing us how, after long periods of austerity, bouts of intemperance inevitably follow and how this cycle clearly educates the Russian to the practice of irregular ways and excesses of all kinds. Zosima should also have been made to give up his mysticism since it is the enemy of honest intellectual work; mysticism tries to force issues, to arrive at ends by artificial and abnormal means and short-cuts rather than through honest endeavour.

Dostoevsky has also given us a perfect description of the Russian parasite, the human bloodsucker who simply lives on others, particularly if he intends Stephen Trofimovich in *The Possessed* to be a representative of the type. In *A Writer's Diary* for 1876 he says very rightly that "it is a shame to live on charity and alms.[1] He is also right in saying that laziness cannot bring happiness and that good fortune is not a spontaneous event but rather the result of honest striving. It is, of course, characteristic that this excellent advice appears in an article on spiritualism and demons in which he ascribes the longing for miracles particularly to orthodox Christians whom he can frighten with demons, just in case God doesn't prove to be a strong enough argument. We are told in the same place that we cannot really love our neighbour unless we sacrifice some part of our labour to him. That is quite true, but the thought is incomplete: once everyone performs an honest day's work this sacrifice will no longer be necessary, which is something that Dostoevsky quite fails to understand. He does not grasp the fact that the individualism which he combated so vigorously not only spells the end of the atheistic syllogism but

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochnenty*, Vol. XI, p. 39.

that work, industry, and prudence make for self-reliance, manliness, and wholesomeness. To love one's neighbour is interpreted by such men as meaning: stand on your own feet, don't be a burden to others, work, economise, work things out for yourself.

This kind of humble labour is the expression of a true love for one's neighbour. This is not a sentimental, romantic, or demonstrative love but something conscious and responsible. It is a love which demands justice for all: it is an egalitarian love which is realised through work.

So long as men will remain human the need for mutual sacrifice will also stay with us. But all such sacrifices will have to become voluntary whereas they still result from compulsion. Consider, for instance, all of the sacrifice which the era of aristocratic privilege demanded. Only when everyone works will this unnecessary form of sacrifice become superfluous: a society will then come into being which can be built upon the principle of life whereas the present one rests upon the notion of death. Dostoevsky was perfectly aware that murder and suicide form the hard core of philosophical speculation: but here, as elsewhere, he did not formulate the problem correctly and came out with wrong conclusions. Zosima's God of life can only be the God of work!

In *The Possessed*, Shatov, who is turning toward God and the people and who, incidentally, is blaming Stavrogin's atheism on aristocratic indolence has this to say: "You are an atheist because you are a young nobleman (*barich*), the last of the young noblemen. You have lost the ability to distinguish between good and evil because you have lost touch with the people. A new generation is emerging from the very midst of the people, and you will not even recognise it, nor will the Verkhovenskys, father and son, nor will I, because I, too, am a young nobleman, though the son of our serf coachman Pashka. . . . You really should find your way to God through work: that's the heart of the matter, or you will vanish like vile mould. Find God through work. What kind of work? That of the peasant, the *muzhik*. Go and cast away your riches."[1]

Dostoevsky was giving this advice rather early in his career which would suggest that his heroes had every opportunity to follow it, but in fact, they did not. Both his men and women continued to seek excitement and suffering in equal measure. The intensity and turbulent romanticism of these heroes is the complete opposite of the inner peace which is achieved through work.

[1] 1957 edition, VII, p. 171.

Dostoevsky, like his Romantic predecessors, confused work with the "cult of the banal" nor did he understand that real thought and scientific understanding hinge on the comprehension of matters which do not arouse the ordinary kind of curiosity. The truth is that things which look exciting and stimulating are not always the most important ones.

On one occasion, Dostoevsky gives us an example of the humble worker which can only arouse doubt as to whether he ever understood the point at issue at all. In the story *The Gentle Creature* a former army officer, now the owner of a pawnshop, is telling an incredulous lady that cheap largesse is always easy; the sacrifice of one's life is also cheap whereas true generosity is very difficult indeed: it takes place quietly, nobody notices it, it does not glitter, it requires sacrifice and brings you no glory. Here Zosima's hero is rather well described by the narrator of *The Gentle Creature.* The only discordant note is that the anonymous creator of this character wants to arrogate this heroism to himself though it is of a rather unlovely kind and not at all a democratic interpretation of Zosima's sound teaching.

(ix) *Lying and Hypocrisy*

THE problem of lying is an especially important one for Dostoevsky: it is, perhaps, his major problem. In his novels as well as in *A Writer's Diary* there are long discussions of the lie in general and the Russian lie in particular since Dostoevsky believed that the Russian is particularly given to lying and that he does so much more of it than the European. His work abounds in many kinds of lies and liars.

There is, first of all, the ordinary social lie, the lie of sophisticated society and especially that part of it which is given to travelling in Europe. These people lie from a sense of hospitality; some of them would like to appear otherwise than they really are: the truth seems boring and commonplace to them.

Then, there are other types of liars. Both Mitya and the father Karamazov lie a great deal. They boast and exaggerate as a matter of habit. Versilov lies constantly since he holds that love of one's neighbour makes it necessary to do so. This kind of lie has a special name since the Russian language differentiates between the term *"sovrat"* and the word *"lgat"* which seems etymologically to derive from the German *"luegen."* The first of the two specifically designates a harmless lie, one uttered out of

enthusiasm. Dostoevsky makes the point that this is the kind of lie which even an honourable man will utter.

He does not condone what the English, in this sense, call a "white" lie but he does not assign any great moral significance to it. Mitya and his other favourite characters lie in exactly this fashion. Razumikhin, in *Crime and Punishment*, is characteristic: he lies because he is good-natured and loves his fellow man, and Dostoevsky depicts him with great sympathy as an honest honourable, and naïve individual. And this self-same Razumikhin is made to reproach himself for lying in the same breath in which he defends his own honour and that of his lying friends by saying that, "In the end we will lie our way to the truth." Razumikhin throughout uses the word "*vrat'*."

Dostoevsky depicts a special category of liars among lawyers and state officials both of whom lie professionally. The first do it in order to make money, the second in order to gain professional advancement. The public prosecutor exaggerates: he has, at all costs, to make a criminal of the accused; defence counsel exaggerates because he wants the defendant acquitted at all costs. "Lying is essential to the search for truth. A lie added to another lie yields the truth." That is what is inscribed on the title page of a discussion of assize courts in *A Writer's Diary* for 1877.[1] Lawyers always come off badly in his novels: they are always depicted as "adulterers of thought" and as "hired consciences."

Dostoevsky's harshest strictures are directed against Jesuitism and in fact against the whole of Catholicism as being a systematic and total lie. The Grand Inquisitor and his atheistic and secular realm is precisely the product of the big lie. A psychological analysis of the Grand Inquisitor reveals a conscious and wilful lie. Yet this is not a complete picture of Jesuitism; there is also another kind which is not as honest, not so brutally forthright, not as cynical as the Grand Inquisitor is himself. There is, in addition, a kind of Jesuitism which not only lies to others but lies to itself. And this brings one to the root from which the lie must be analysed.

It is Dostoevsky who made me aware of the extent to which thinking people in all walks of life live on other people's consciences and how many of them turn out to act as "hired consciences" if you take a closer look at them. Jesuitism is hardly confined to Catholicism. The theologians of all churches nowadays stand in defence of ready-made teachings and institutions; the same is true of lawyers and economists so far as social and political

[1] October, 1877, Part II, section III, Vol. XII, p. 283 of 1929 edition.

institutions are concerned; the same is also true of political party leaders, journalists, and philosophers.

Jesuitism is a characteristic feature of our modern age: while Catholic Jesuits defend their church and its teachings, others are busy defending the state, the nation, and the party and so forth.

So long as anyone honestly believes in the old truths, he is able to defend them justly and correctly; but as soon as there is the slightest doubt, Jesuitism commences. That is the way scholasticism first arose. From it and through it there appeared the phenomenon of Jesuitism and nowadays we consequently have the progressive theologians who distinguish, interpret, allegorise, symbolise and so forth. They wish us to cling to the untenable and have us believe that falsehood is actually the truth. And it is just the same outside the religious sphere: "politics" and the "politician" are exactly the same as Jesuitism and the Jesuit. And the practice of law has a similar connotation. In this sense, Jesuitism is nothing less than a sign of the times: it is the symbol of the uncertainty and indecision which characterises a period of change.

Seen in this context, Dostoevsky himself emerges as a Jesuit: he is a sceptic who has his doubts about the merits of the established Russian social order but who defends it nonetheless. He typifies the thoughtful person of modern times who is trying to establish his own place in a rapidly changing epoch, yet who is not strong enough to throw in his lot with the forces of progress. A minority of men in his position take their stand consciously; a majority do so only half-consciously; a few are aware that they are lying while the rest are only half aware of it; the smaller group lies for the benefit of others while the others lie to themselves. That, in turn, means that the essence of lying is self-deceit.

"Beware of the lie above all else, of every kind of lie, and especially of lying to yourself." That is the advice which Zosima gives to a lady of the world but, in making him say this, Dostoevsky is talking not only to the liberal-minded lady but to all of his own heroes.[1]

Raskolnikov comes to believe that he is Napoleon; Dolgoruky plays at being Rothschild, Ivan Karamazov, the atheistic philosopher has theistic pretensions, while Zosima manifests overtones of atheism.

In this sense, Dostoevsky remains unexcelled in his portrayal of split human beings. Take someone like Stephen Trofimovich in *The Possessed* or Versilov and Dolgoruky in *A Raw Youth*: they

[1] *A Writer's Diary*, IX, p. 75, in 1958 edition.

are absolutely classical examples of people who deceive themselves both on particular issues and in a broader sense. A case of the isolated lie is illustrated by Dolgoruky in *A Raw Youth*: he tells Katherine Nikolayev that he has destroyed the fatal document but he has actually not destroyed it—he is simply toying with ideas and conceptual distinctions so as not to appear as a liar to himself even though he certainly happens to be one.

Stephen Trofimovich in *The Possessed* is, on the other hand, an example of a thinking person who lies to himself his whole life long and who necessarily stumbles from one lie to the next. A liberal writer, thinker and pedagogue, he thinks that the truth is always improbable and that it had to be dressed up with a lie so as to gain the appearance of truth. On his deathbed, Trofimovich does, of course, confess: "*J'ai menti toute ma vie*, all my life!"[1] but even his confession turns out to be something of a lie, because it is made in a foreign language in which it does not sound so brutally forthright. He is consciously stressing the words rather than the meaning. To say simply, "I have lied all my life" is too strong even as a final confession of a man who always lied to himself.

One might well think that Dostoevsky wanted to strike a blow at much-hated liberalism through the person of Stephen Trofimovich. That is partly true. The main character in *The Possessed*, Stephen Trofimovich's son, is pictured as a political Jesuit, a follower of Nechaev, and a believer in the principle that the revolution justifies all. Yet there remains the question of why Dostoevsky should hate the liberals as much as he does. Why does he depict so many of them, and such different ones? Ivan Karamazov, after all, is also a liberal and in a certain sense, so was Zosima before his conversion.

People lie out of fear; "the slave's only defence is betrayal," says Mickiewicz, and Dostoevsky is perfectly well aware of Wallenrod's[2] principle and refers to it. In effect, the Inquisitor is a kind of Wallenrod. People lie when they lack religious, political, and social freedom. But man is not only afraid of his fellows but of his own self. The whole existing social order is an outgrowth of an age of violence. Man acted with violence in politics and in everything else he did: even his theoretical concepts accepted the principle of violence. He built his world of faith and

[1] VII, p. 690, in 1957 edition.

[2] Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1885) wrote the long Byronic poem *Konrad Wallenrod* in 1825.

blind obedience without sufficient experience, without a critical sense and without thought and knowledge. This, indeed, was the world of medieval theocracy, founded as it was on a mythological view of the universe. It was against this theocracy and its principles and institutions that the Renaissance and Reformation turned. The growth of science, of a new philosophy, of political and social revolution then ensued as theocratic absolutism came to be seen as increasingly absolescent and untenable. Theocratic absolutism is the very embodiment of self-deceit. Only later, in response to the challenge of revolutionary thought, at a time when the brute force of the inquisition was no longer proving effective, did the Jesuits begin to use the lie as a means to an end. And once there were Jesuits, other forms of Jesuitism soon came into existence.

It is altogether possible to show why those peoples who have remained in the Catholic fold lie more than do the Protestants. Protestantism has, so to speak, done away with the big mass lie. The Protestants are also given to less lying because they were the first to weaken the absolutism of the State. The Russians, although they are also Catholics, are by no means the greatest liars, Dostoevsky's opinion notwithstanding. They did not create a theology or scholasticism; they did not try to persuade themselves of the absurdities of church theocracy as assiduously as did the Roman Catholics. Not until the arrival of the Pobedonostsevs, the Slavophiles and their successors, among whom Dostoevsky must be counted, do we have a real Russian scholasticism. The fact is that the oppressed Christian in Turkey is a bigger liar than his Turkish master and that the Pole does lie more than the Russian (which, incidentally, Dostoevsky did notice).

The lie is the weapon of the oppressed, of the person afraid. Thus, Russian theocracy is the mother of Russia's liars.

Kirilov says in *The Possessed*, "I am terribly unhappy because I am terribly afraid. Fear is the curse of mankind. . . ."[1] And again, when Dostoevsky has Zosima say that fear is the result of various kinds of lies, it is only a kind of *quid pro quo*: the liar always lives in fear and bolsters one lie with another one.[2]

Dostoevsky himself is really a sceptic and an atheist as well who wants to talk himself into a blind faith. He is afraid of himself and of the clear and forthright idea and that is why he seeks a forced solution to his problem: mysticism, that opiate of theology.

Dostoevsky knows himself. He analyses himself in his own

[1] VII, p. 643, in 1957 edition.

[2] IX, p. 75, in 1958 edition.

works from every conceivable angle. He creates the ideal positive figure in the "Idiot" so as to show that naïveté is really the height of wisdom; his Idiot is, as suggested by Jesus Christ, a harmonious synthesis between the dove and the serpent. Yet the Idiot cannot stand up to life; he is a misty figure who cannot stand up to the sun and ends in a psychiatric sanatorium. *The Brothers Karamazov* end with a reference to children and there are throughout Dostoevsky's work frequent reminders of Christ's words on the subject of children. Yet children have a positive meaning for Christ, while for Dostoevsky they are merely negative props. Dostoevsky's heroes, when they act in the real world, are not really children nor even Idiots: it turns out that in all of them the snake seems to have swallowed up the dove. These heroes make compromises right and left, even in their innermost being; they lack the fortitude to make the final and major decision; they are afraid of involvement and of their own thoughts. Very characteristically, Versilov says in *A Raw Youth* that just as soon as he tries to clarify an idea in which he believes, his faith in it leaves him. It is from the fear of losing their faith that Dostoevsky's people fail to think along straightforward lines. Instead they think in circles which always lead them back to their initial premises: they lack the courage to move ahead and to take the initiative.

Dostoevsky experienced the pressures of Russian theocracy and Caesaro-papism on his own skin and in his own soul; he knows—he must know—the nature and meaning of these pressures and yet he tries, by rationalising, allegorising and symbolising, to pretend that these pressures do not exist. He is perfectly well aware that fundamental reforms are needed but he tries to convince himself and others that they should be carried out in such a way that those people who are most in need of being reformed should not even notice the change.

(x) *Sexual Pathology and The Woman Question*

DOSTOEVSKY provides preliminary sketches of the Karamazovs in his earliest works. In *The Poor Folk* there is the weak, helpless, violated young woman in the person of Varvara Alexeyevna who returns in all his subsequent works in various forms and guises. In the first post-Siberian book *The Insulted and Injured*, there is the Natasha, who shows us Karamazovite love.

Here are two sentences which reveal the essence of all of Dostoevsky's future male and female characters:

> "Natasha felt instinctively that she would have mastery and dominion over him [Alyosha], and that he would even become her victim. She pre-tasted the pleasure of loving madly and torturing the loved one, for the reason that you love him; and perhaps because of that she hastened to yield to him as his victim."[1]

Here is the whole essence of the Karamazovs, and it is, significantly, portrayed in the character of a woman. Notice that Natasha loves Ivan but that she is suddenly overcome by love of the nobleman; yet, for a long time she continues to love Ivan as well and remains undecided between the two. This kind of double love is re-enacted in *The Idiot*, *A Raw Youth* and *The Brothers Karamazov*.

On the other hand, in *Crime and Punishment* there is Sonya, the prostitute, who saves Raskolnikov. She is one of the finest if not the finest female character in all of Dostoevsky, a woman with an absolutely natural sense of love. Yet love and a normal relationship between the sexes are almost never Dostoevsky's subject. All of his men are sexually corrupted to a greater or lesser degree which is why they are never naïve in their love for an innocent woman. At best they are sentimental and usually they are eccentric, sometimes to the point of abnormality and perversion. A careful examination of Dostoevsky's work would reveal the entire spectrum, beginning with romantic sentimentality and ending with pathological perversity. On the one hand there is the sentimental Versilov who retires to the village with a stack of sentimental novels only to steal his serf's wife; on the other, there is the high school student Lambert in *A Raw Youth* who whips a naked woman with a riding crop.

Stavrogin, the leading figure in *The Possessed*, is a member of a secret society of perverts who, among other things, violate children. When Shatov asks him outright if it is true that the Marquis de Sade could have learned something from him, Stavrogin is evasive. He admits to membership in the society but says that he personally had not violated children which only leaves one with the impression that his close associates had actually done so. And Stavrogin marries a poor, unfortunate, crippled, and

[1] *The Insulted and Injured*, III, p. 52, in 1956 edition.

feeble-minded woman out of sheer caprice so that he can torment himself afterward and derive pleasure from his own bad conscience.

There is also the old Karamazov, his relationship to his second wife, the mother of Ivan and Alyosha, his seduction of the feeble-minded Lizaveta, and his ambivalent relationship with Grushenka who, at the same time, has an obscure relationship with his son Dmitri. The whole gallery of characters is ripe for the psychiatrist and for Krafft-Ebing.

I have mentioned Natasha's "madly passionate" love which compels her to torment her lover. Yet she is not sexually corrupt, being an honest girl and of respectable parents. Still, she "instinctively" craves a love which will give her pain. Nastasya Filipovna, led astray and seduced, is a more extreme version of the psychology which we find in Natasha. She writes about Rogozhin: ". . . he loves me so much that he cannot but conceive hatred for me." Rogozhin kills the woman whom he has loved so much.[1]

Recent readers of Dostoevsky who harbour mystical inclinations themselves find in his psychology of sex new and uncharted depths and revelations about sexual behaviour. They relate these perceptions to Dostoevsky's own mysticism and to his epilepsy: only an epileptic mystic, it is said, could have given us such an analysis of relations between the sexes. At the same time, it is implicitly or explicitly conceded that Dostoevsky had experienced these abnormal relationships himself.

"All of us, to the last man, are Fyodor Pavloviches" is a phrase to be found in the notebooks.[2] Likewise, the repeated appearance in his books of abnormal and perverse personalities undoubtedly has autobiographical connotations. For his part, Turgenev had no hesitation in comparing Dostoevsky to the Marquis de Sade, and perhaps we shall, one day, have some positive evidence one way or the other. I can only judge by what Dostoevsky himself wrote, and I find much internal evidence that he was, in fact, sexually abnormal, even though I do not want to discuss here for how long or in what degree. Perhaps a detailed and chronological analysis of his work might yield the answers. We do know from his letters that he first fell in love at the age of twenty-five with someone else's wife. He adores his first wife (a widow) as she did him, but they were not happy together and

[1] *The Possessed*, VI, p. 518 in 1957 edition.
[2] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenıy*, 1883, I, p. 370.

It is a degenerate and decadent generation that Dostoevsky is describing, yet one wonders whether he was aware of how characteristic this moral and sexual degeneracy was of the aristocracy of his day. Socially and historically what we have in Dostoevsky is a continuation of the life on the country estates of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a life based upon the institution of serfdom. Dostoevsky grew to maturity before 1861 and hence even his last works are concerned with the generation which still knew serfdom. The action in *The Brothers Karamazov* is laid in the second half of the 1870's when emancipation had not yet produced its more salutary results, which Dostoevsky was not inclined to see anyway.

Although Dostoevsky extols Pushkin's Tatyana as the ideal Russian woman he cannot create a character even remotely resembling her. Those of his women who lack the element of romantic animation are lifeless and conventional creations or personalities who are seen with cold detachment and with whom Dostoevsky neither sympathises nor feels at ease. This category includes such characters as Nelly in *The Insulted and Injured*, Netochka Nezvanova in the novella of the same name, the mother in *A Raw Youth*, and the prostitute Sonya. Raskolnikov's sister might have emerged as a noble being, yet her creator's attitude toward her remains cool. All of these personalities remain curiously passive. Even women of Grushenka's kind become active only after their fall from virtue, and that activity really manifests itself only in a desire for revenge.

Still, Dostoevsky does develop one positive feminine character in the person of Varvara Petrovna Stavrogin in *The Possessed*, a sensible widow and mother, a practical woman who is an oasis of calm in a turbulent sea of nihilism. Such characters are rather common in Russian literature dealing with the age of serfdom.

Dostoevsky does not analyse the Karamazovs and the phenomenon which they represent as closely as he does nihilism. He knows that he is dealing with a malady but it does not trouble him to the same extent. Although it is possible to piece together Dostoevsky's philosophy of love and of sex, he himself nowhere gives a coherent account of it as for instance does Schopenhauer, Musset and Goethe.

As I have said already, Dostoevsky never attached sufficient importance to the moral effects of serfdom and did not understand how it had undermined the aristocratic order. That also explains why he was not greatly concerned with democracy.

In his idealisation of the Russian people, he often insists that it is chaste and bashful but the accuracy of that view remains to be demonstrated since, as we shall see, Dostoevsky simply tends to attribute to the Russians everything which forms part of his ideal. It is precisely Dostoevsky who makes the Karamazov malady into the great sin of the times and of the nation, a disease which affects not only the nobility but the peasant and other strata of society as well. Close scrutiny would tend to show that sexual lapses are generally viewed rather naively in Russia and that the extent of these lapses is not seriously considered. We see this quite clearly from the tone which is used by Russia's most important writers when they are on this subject, even though some of the modern and decadent authors go too far in saying entirely too often that Russia is like an unripe apple which has already turned rotten.

This indifference toward sexual laxity in Russia is echoed in France and in other Catholic countries. Not only is it a case of morality being subordinated to religion but also the influence of the ascetic ideal. This ideal tends to bring sexuality too strongly to the attention of the faithful, children included. Nor is it any help that the accepted ideal is consistently violated in practice. In this sense, Roman Catholicism has had a worse influence than Greek Orthodoxy, because it imposes celibacy even on the secular clergy. The ideal of the madonna also has a great deal to do with all of this. To sin against the ascetic ideal brings on painful pangs of conscience, and indecision between the ideal as represented by the madonna on the one hand and the courtesan on the other. This is shown well enough in Baudelaire and other decadent French writers. Because chastity is equated with virginity, married life itself becomes viewed as something unclean, and thereby becomes degraded. In turn, the difference between marriage and extra-marital immorality disappears in man's consciousness and conscience. The notion that married life can be clean and chaste only gained acceptance through the influence of Protestantism which has promoted a healthier attitude toward sex in general by doing away with the ascetic ideal of the priesthood and the monastery.

In addition, there is also the role of religious mysticism which is easily and often associated with excessive sexual stimulation and ecstacy. The sexual misconduct of many monks and nuns, sometimes of entire monasteries, the sinful language of many canonised mystics furnish many examples of the point, as do

various religious sects, some of the Russian ones being rather well known.

The Karamazov malady has a deep religious and moral significance for Dostoevsky. In the discussion which follows the account of the Grand Inquisitor, Alyosha says that Ivan can hardly live at peace with his ideas: he has either to become the Grand Inquisitor himself, a Jesuit, or kill himself. Yet Ivan himself has an out: Karamazovism will keep his head above water at least until he reaches age thirty. For several youthful years, sin fulfills the same role as faith: it sustains life, indeed it is the pursuit of life, even though, of course, the chase does come to an end after a time.

This suggests why Dostoevsky establishes a close connection between sex and death. Excessive love is associated by him with hatred and even with murder, while suicide is a consequence of sexual excess. Consider, for instance, the murder of Rogozhin and the suicide of Stavrogin.

Thus, woman appears as the demon of death, the temptress, a witch and demon—a naïve masculine moral notion and metaphysic.

Dostoevsky sensed the evil of Russian Karamazovism, but his religious and national belief prevented him from seeing it with sufficient clarity. *The Imitation of Christ*, e.g. the monastic ideal, inspired him to create the "Idiot," the pure Fool-in-Christ. But the "Idiot" does not derive his strength from a moral foundation but from a naïve and childish religion. The Idiot is following in Christ's footsteps who says: "Verily I say unto you, Except as ye be converted and become as little children ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. xviii.3). Yet this childlike character bears a closer resemblance to Don Quixote than to the Jesus of the New Testament. Certainly Dostoevsky's Idiot does have many splendid characteristics and he is a joy to those who get to know him but he is unable to influence a situation decisively and does not know how to act forcefully. He displays his native courage in the fateful situations into which he is drawn: he is not afraid, or rather, is afraid but does not run away in cowardly fashion; the coward, he says, is only he who is afraid and does run away. Still, he is unable to act so as to influence either events or people and thus he presently ends up in a Swiss institution for the mentally ill. Anyone who reads *The Idiot* to the end has the impression that there is rising around him like a cloud of smoke a personality without real substance. Eugene Pavlovich gives us an entirely correct

psychological explanation of this fantastic creation. The problem of the fallen Magdalen is never solved at all: the "Idiot" wants to marry Nastasya Filipovna and goes all the way to the altar, only to have her throw herself into Rogozhin's embrace at the last instant, even though she does not really love him as, indeed, the "Idiot" really does not love her. The trouble is that the Idiot cannot decide whether to marry Nastasya or Aglaya: in fact, he would like to marry them both, which means that he would like them to marry him. As he himself admits, he is a man of two minds: he is not a sceptic but the incarnation of lack of will power. A childish believer, weak willed, he is a curious illustration of Dostoevsky's nihilistic formula but remains a splendid proof of Dostoevsky's scepticism.

The fatal monastic ideal stands in Dostoevsky's way always and everywhere. We know, of course, that in the depth of his soul Dostoevsky did not himself believe in this ideal. We read in his letters that there is nothing finer in this world than conjugal bliss and we see that in *A Raw Youth* and *The Possessed* he attempts an analysis of the "casual family" in the Russia of his time. He refers to the same subject in *A Writer's Diary*.

This "casual" family relationship is explained in terms of nihilism: the fathers have no firm or abiding ideas; they repudiate the past, they are passive and weak egotists. Thus, in *The Possessed*, Verkhovensky the father has seen his son only twice in his whole life.

Dostoevsky wrote well indeed on several occasions about the so-called "Woman Question." He writes with great fervour in *A Writer's Diary* for 1876[1] about the need for educating women and giving them all the rights to which education entitles them. He says that Russia will be taking a monumental step forward if it affords the opportunity for higher education to its women. In the same year he gives his impressions of women students: "What simplicity, what naturalness, freshness of feeling, purity of heart and mind, *a most sincere seriousness* and *most sincere gaiety*."[2]

In the notebooks there is a remarkable passage: "The basic trouble with the 'woman question' is that it tries to divide the indivisible, that it takes up man and woman separately whereas they actually are a single organism. If God created man in his own image it is worth remembering that he made him in the guise of

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochnenıy*, Vol. XI, p. 189.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1883, Vol. I, p. 319.

man *and* woman (Genesis i. 27). Indeed, children, progeny, ancestors, all of mankind together form a single organism. Yet the laws are always divisions and separate them into the individual parts. The Church does not separate."[1]

But is it true that the Church does not separate? Is not the monk the true representative of the Russian Church? It would seem that it is precisely here that the Catholic churches have done a great deal of harm because not even Dostoevsky is able to sustain and follow out the sound views which he expressed here. At the very same time that he was writing this passage about higher education for women he was also saying: "To be a good wife and above all a good mother is the height of woman's calling."[2] This is all very well but is it not also the height of man's calling to be a good husband and above all a good father?

Dostoevsky is very emphatically against neo-Malthusianism and the Parisian and French system of two children. Paradoxically, he is in favour of the greatest possible number of children, and women are supposed to bear them to the point of exhaustion. He relates the issue to the agrarian question but without reference to his own diagnosis of the weakness of Russian peasant women. Zosima in the *Brothers Karamazov* is shown to be curing these hysterical creatures who, in line with age-old customs, are seeking their salvation at the local church. Dostoevsky himself adduces the evidence of his medical friends to the effect that these hysterical women provide positive proof of the wretched lot of the Russian peasant wife.

(xi) *Dostoevsky's Mistaken Formula*

IF we review our analysis of Dostoevsky thus far, we cannot but conclude that for all of his questioning of it, he really fails to demolish nihilism and also that his conception of atheism is faulty.

It should be noted, of course, that Dostoevsky is concerned with two kinds of nihilism which he sometimes confuses. The nihilism of *The Possessed* is of a different order than that of the other anti-nihilistic novels. The terroristic variety is dealt with only in *The Possessed* whereas philosophical and religious nihilism occupies him in no less than four books. And since *The Possessed*

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenıy*, 1883, Vol. I, p. 355.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. XI, p. 291.

is also in large measure concerned with philosophical and religious issues there is even in this one book relatively little that deals with nihilism as an expression of terrorism. Nevertheless, it is still useful to arrive at some judgment of the way that terrorism is treated in *The Possessed.*

The novel appeared in the years 1871 and 1872, hence only at the very beginning of the terroristic revolution which was to come and which Dostoevsky had occasion to observe not only in the light of its public activities but doubtless also from reports which he was in a position to obtain privately.

The beginning of the 1870's saw the start of the "To the People" movement, but there were also indications of the birth of a more energetic revolutionary movement. Dostoevsky records as much in *A Writer's Diary* for March 1876.

The early beginnings of a secret terroristic organisation are well described in *The Possessed.* The immaturity and confusion of a movement which for the most part lacks a goal are well conceived. There is really only one terrorist who acquires a group of followers barely aware exactly what they are about. This leader is the young Verkhovensky, even though the movement is ostensibly led by Stavrogin, who, while not a member of the secret cell is nevertheless cleverly used by Verkhovensky. We are given a splendid description of the narrow-minded and lazy society of a provincial town and of the way in which the leading figures of that society, through lack of principle and programme, as well as the state bureaucrats, through inertia and lack of vision all help to encourage the growth of the movement. Thus, for instance, the character who is both nihilist and police agent is certainly well drawn. The movement is made to culminate in the murder of the student Shatov who became a nihilist while abroad but later changed his mind and turned to Slavophilism. Yet, he is not killed for his defection but rather out of simple fear that he might denounce the group. How the murder itself was executed, I have already discussed.

So far as the programme and teachings of the nihilists are concerned, *The Possessed* really has a bearing only on the doctrines of Nechayev and Bakunin, and the latter's ideas are not even presented accurately. When Verkhovensky announces that it is necessary to destroy the State and its official morality and that this will leave only the clever people who can then proceed to lord over the stupid ones, he may be drawing on Nechayev, but hardly on Bakunin.

Dostoevsky's strictures are certainly justified with respect to the individual members of the terroristic organisations as well as some groups of this kind, but his attack on the entire movement is both unfair and unjustified. Thus, Tolstoy was certainly no friend of violence, yet he admitted that the revolutionaries were no worse and probably better than those against whom they were fighting. The terrorists of the seventies were not "possessed" in the sense of being insane.

Dostoevsky's critique is also unwarranted and offensive in specific detail. Phrases like "A sewer for waste matter" and similar characterisations are of dubious artistic value.

Dostoevsky could, of course, reject terrorism on ethical and political grounds, but is he had judged men and circumstances with greater fairness and accuracy, he would have done more good. As it is, his conception of *The Possessed*, when viewed in historico-philosophical perspective, is unrealistic and does not ring true.

But what about atheism? Here, his basic thesis does not stand up because his concept of atheism remains imprecise and almost negative as it ignores its positive and especially its ethical aspect. There is a difference between atheist and atheist just as there is between one theist and another.

Even if we let Dostoevsky's definition stand for the sake of argument, would it still not be true that when *The Possessed* was appearing serially in Katkov's magazine during 1871/2[1] there were in Russia many more atheists who did not associate themselves with the nihilistic-terroristic movement? And on the other hand, were there no believing terrorists? Were not the medieval defenders of tyrannicide and the later Protestant regicides in the tradition of the "Grand Inquisitor"? And in what sense were Catherine II and Alexander I atheists?

Thus, it is just not possible to derive mass revolutionary movements and the Russian revolutionary movement in particular from atheism. A revolution directed against a theocracy, against the State and the Church has to be understood in its historical context and origins and cannot be judged by its acts at any single instant in time. Individuals who have committed acts of terrorism are not all atheists: Sand, for instance, was a believer.

The Possessed is not merely a polemic against nihilistic terrorism but also against nihilism as formulated by Turgenev in *Fathers and Sons*. It is thus also an attack on positivist realism. There

[1] *The Possessed* appeared serially in *Russky Vestnik* in 1871 and 1872.

is little to be said about this attack except that it is an inexcusable farce.

Dostoevsky introduces Turgenev's novel at the literary celebration in the guise of the chief speaker; the talk is a parody of Turgenev's *Enough*. In passing judgment on Karmazinov (who is supposed to be Turgenev) there is no effort to be sparing of vulgar aspersions. And the figure of the old liberal Stephen Trofimovich is used to discredit Turgenev's own liberalism. His son was created as a character who was to annihilate Christ; in fact, he is such a monster that Stephen Trofimovich renounces his Westernism and becomes a Russian nationalist and patriot. The scene in which the son of the old liberal meets Karmazinov is even more inexcusable. Karmazinov (Turgenev) tries to retain the good opinion of this rascal and expounds his nihilistic credo to the effect that he believes neither in the Russian nor the European God nor in any other at all.

The whole structure of *Fathers and Sons* is also parodied. We are shown the relationship between Stephen Trofimovich and his son and are made to witness how he curses him; and then there is the relationship of the son to the mother Varbara Petrovna and so forth.

Dostoevsky, furthermore, continued to nurse this angry malice toward Turgenev in later years, although in the *Brothers Karamazov* he tries to make Alyosha a better "realist" than any other.

In addition to Turgenev, Chernyshevsky and Pisarev are also caricatured in *The Possessed*. The novel *What is to be Done* is presented as the nihilist's "catechism" and is made to illustrate Shatov's relationship with his wife. To take a shot at Pisarev and realistic positivism in general, there is the episode when Stephen Trofimovich wants to lecture about the Sistine Madonna, a notion which is scornfully opposed by the ultra-conservative Varvara Petrovna who, imbued with utilitarian ideas, claims that no one except old maids is any longer interested in madonnas. We are also told that the creaking of wagons loaded with what is more important than the madonna, and much else besides. The scene comes to an end with the son cursing and calling for "Facts, facts, facts, and above all, more briefly!"[1]

[1] Peter Stepanovich to his father Stephen Trofimovich in reply to his curse, VII, p. 324 in 1957 edition.

CHAPTER III

RUSSIAN UNIVERSALITY: DOSTOEVSKY'S SPEECH ABOUT PUSHKIN

(i)

ON June 8, 1880, Dostoevsky delivered a lecture on Pushkin before a large audience of the Society of Friends of Russian Literature. The lecture proved to be both a literary and national event. Indeed, it was an event to hear the author of *The Possessed* and *The Brothers Karamazov* pleading for amity between Slavophiles and Westernisers. Let us summarise Dostoevsky's speech.

Dostoevsky divides Pushkin's work into three periods. In the first he is under the influence of foreign poets, especially Byron, yet this influence remains external to him. Pushkin, even then, shows his genius by not merely imitating foreign giants but by assimilating them creatively. For instance, he achieves this in the poem *The Gypsies*, which Dostoevsky still assigns to this first period. The hero of the poem, Aleko, becomes the embodiment of a root idea—a typically Russian one—which is later voiced in its harmonious entirety by Onegin. In Aleko Pushkin depicts that "unhappy wanderer in his native land, the traditional Russian sufferer," who made his appearance as a kind of historical necessity within Russian society—a society which has remained isolated from the people to the present day, even though in a somewhat different way. Aleko is not yet fully aware of the reasons for his longing; he longs for nature in a Rousseauesque sense; he rejects society and seeks the truth, which, however, eludes him. He fails to see that this truth lies within himself, and therefore goes off to join the gypsies, believing that he will find happiness among people who as he supposes, have neither laws nor civilisation. Yet he does not meet the test in his first encounter with really primitive conditions, and soils his hands with blood. When the gypsies ask that the "proud foreigner" take his leave of them their words

proclaim the Russian solution to the "accursed question" in the spirit of the people's understanding of faith and truth, which Pushkin sensed very keenly:

> "Humble yourself proud sir: above all drop your pride. Humble yourself, you idle one, and give all your energies to your native soil; that is the verdict of the people and their sense of the truth. Truth is not outside of you but within you. You must find yourself within yourself. Submit to your self and master yourself, and only then will you perceive the truth. That truth is not to be found in material things, nor outside of yourself, nor on distant shores, but only in your labours in yourself. If you can conquer and humble yourself you will become more free than you ever imagined possible, and you will achieve great things; you will likewise free others and enjoy happiness, since your life will become full and in the end you will come to understand your own people and its holy truth. A cosmic harmony cannot be found among gypsies or anywhere else if you yourself are unworthy of it, or angry and proud, and if you are not willing to pay the price for living, or indeed unaware that there is such a price to pay."[1]

This is how Pushkin was able even in the first of his periods to rise above mere imitation in offering a solution to the problem to which he was later to return.

In the second period Puskin becomes aware of the positive national characteristics of the Russian people, and embodies them in his characters. Thus it becomes necessary to classify the first volume of *Onegin* with the earliest period, in which the negative Russian type is developed in the person of Onegin himself as a distinctive Russian "wanderer"—an intellectual uprooted from his native soil and cut off from the sources of national strength.

The second, concluding volume of *Onegin*, however, already falls into the second period: Tatyana symbolises the positive national type; her great achievement consists in the fact that she does not follow Onegin, and would not have followed him even if she had been widowed, and she would not have done so precisely because she is national in this positive sense. She remains faithful to the memories of her childhood, she lives by her recollections

[1] Dostoevsky's summary of what he took to be the chief idea of Pushkin's *Gypsies*. Speech about Pushkin, *A Writer's Diary*, August 1880, 1929 edition, XIII, p. 380.

of her native village, her nursemaid, and a variety of vivid experiences from a forlorn part of the Russian land in which her peaceful and clean life began.

In the third period Pushkin develops his prophetic vision in all its power—there now speaks in him a faith in Russia's identity, a conscious hope in the nation's strength, and thus also a faith in Russia's distinct mission among the people of Europe. Thus Pushkin revealed to the Russians their national character and world-historical task. Moreover his own fabulous ability to understand and assimilate foreign genius, to feel it, empathise with it and enter into it, is one such essentially national Russian characteristic. There is also the Russians' historical mission arising from their intuitive perceptivity which will one day bring about a harmonious union of all the Aryan tribes in peace and humanity, and will lead to the realisation not merely of pan-Europeanism, but indeed pan-globalism. The ability to unite everything and everyone; that is the specifically Russian national characteristic. This great work of unification will not be achieved on the economic, but rather on the moral plane: universal harmony will actually materialise on the basis of Christ's teachings. Thus the upshot of this reasoning is that the great schism between the Westernisers and the Slavophiles is merely the result of a misunderstanding. The reforms of Peter the Great and their consequences in the early nineteenth century succeeded in alienating the Russian intellectual from the people, yet this alienation and longing to become a part of Europe were just as necessary as the people's own search, and presently both of these tendencies will merge into one main stream.

2

THE success of Dostoevsky's lecture on Pushkin was immediate and great. In point of fact it did, at least partially, bring about a reconciliation between the warring literary camps. Aksakov proclaimed Pushkin to be the first among Russian poets, which was remarkable, since up to that time the Slavophiles had accorded this position of honour only to Gogol. There was also a reconciliation between Aksakov and Katkov.

At a luncheon organised by the Moscow Duma, Katkov delivered a speech in which he asked all the writers present to unite "within the shadow of Pushkin's monument." Everyone drank a toast with Katkov, including his old enemy Ivan Aksakov.

Turgenev, with whom Katkov also wished to drink a toast, first answered with a curt nod, and then went so far as to cover his glass with the palm of his hand. When his friends asked him reproachfully why he would not forget his old enmities even on such an occasion, Ivan Sergeyevich answered: "I am a crusty old codger and I won't be bribed with champagne! Why should I agree to a reconciliation on a holiday, when I will just have to take up the cudgels again on the weekday?"[1]

It would seem that Dostoevsky and Turgenev saw something of each other during the Pushkin celebrations, and that they came rather closer to one another. In a letter written just afterwards, Dostoevsky reports that after his speech Turgenev and Annenkov came to him to say that he had given a brilliant talk, "and I am not saying this because you praised my Lisa," Turgenev added. In fact, Dostoevsky had compared Turgenev's Lisa (from the story *Nest of Noblemen*) with Pushkin's Tatyana, and Turgenev had blown him a kiss from the audience. It also appears that Turgenev had spoken to him privately about his relations with Katkov after the incident at the Duma luncheon. Still, Dostoevsky's afterthought is significant: after saying that both Turgenev and Annenkov had praised his talk, he adds, "Alas, one must wonder whether they still retain the same opinion."[2]

Despite the climate of conciliation which Dostoevsky's address evoked there was no reconciliation between Turgenev and Katkov, and that turned out to be something more than a symbolic critique of the entire talk. Actually the spell cast by the lecture was short-lived; presently, and particularly after it was published in his *A Writer's Diary* in August 1880, the critical voices multiplied not only within the liberal camp but also on the side of conservatism and reaction, the latter, for instance, being represented by Leontiev.

Every great historico-philosophical goal which is prefaced by the little word "all" has something suggestive as well as touching about it. The imagination sees great and far-reaching vistas stretching out before it, which it comes to associate with our most fervent hopes. Yet it is precisely here that the occasion for the most merciless type of criticism arises. Dostoevsky's concept of *everyman* is precisely so broad as to be utterly vague and disembodied.

[1] Masaryk seems to have based this account on I. Ivanov, *I. S. Turgenev*, 1914, p. 734.

[2] Yu. Nikolsky, *Turgenev i Dostoevsky*, 1921, p. 101.

A word or two is needed here about the Russian ability to sense the feelings and points of view of other national groups, a trait which many had thought important well before Dostoevsky. I suspect that it was Gogol who first recognised Pushkin's extraordinary ability to understand all other types, but Gogol was thinking more of individuals than of national groups.

It would not be too difficult to compile a collection of statements which ascribe the capacity to understand foreign peoples to nations other than the Russians. One could, for instance, cite Lichtenberg, who was a rather careful thinker and who actually ascribes this allegedly "Russian" capacity to the Germans. It would of course take something like a monograph to clarify this matter, for example by analysing the number and quantity of various translations from foreign languages in different countries. The Russians, of course, do read a great deal, but this may well be a result of their need to educate themselves. One would also have to inquire whether there comes a time when the need for mere books is no longer so pressing. Finally, one would also have to discover whether the Russians' capacity to absorb from others is or is not the same in all fields of knowledge.

It is of course possible to concede that Russians are very receptive to ideas, but I hardly believe that this is a unique national characteristic. I find it difficult to discover it in Dostoevsky, and we have also just seen that not even Turgenev perceived or gave an entirely accurate account of everything he took in. The thought to which Dostoevsky gave definitive formulation in his talk on Pushkin had cropped up quite distinctly and in various guises ever since 1861. In that year he wrote a number of literary pieces for the magazine *Vremya (Time)*. In these he ascribes to the Russians a highly developed capacity to "synthesise"—a capacity to harmonise and humanise everything. This word synthesis crops up in several other places, and is evidently taken from Grigoriev and always employed in the sense of "harmonising." Hence we might as well stick with this word, because the notion of "everyman" will not carry us very far: it is simply too many-faceted.[1] Therefore, we should actually be talking about a harmonious organic synthesis, and ask what there

[1] Masaryk noted in a footnote to his manuscript that Dostoevsky used at least three different words for what could be translated "everyman": *obshchechelovek vsemirny*, applied derisively in *Winter Notes* (1863); in 1861, in articles in *Vremya*, *obshchechelovek*; later, *vsechelovek*.

is to be synthesised and at what point a given synthesis becomes a truly organic and harmonious one.

The simple capacity to assimilate, as determined in a purely psychological sense, proves not to be helpful since it is perfectly possible to assimilate both good and bad. The question is, what should be assimilated from among so many foreign cultural elements, and in what proportion? Which particular elements ought to predominate since, after all, a melange of contradictory influences is hardly conceivable. Dostoevsky's notion, as formulated in 1861, is that the Russian idea consists of effecting a synthesis of all ideas which Europe has developed through the agency of its various peoples. Yet, this still leaves the question of whether—its capacity to synthesise quite apart—the Russian nation has ever developed any ideas of its own. In the end, this Russian synthesis turns out to be a simple reconciliation between Slavophilism and Westernism, in which Dostoevsky is clearly following in the footsteps of Grigoriev, and that hardly does much to clarify this particular concept.

Dostoevsky tells us that this synthesis must be effected in the spirit of the gospels and be rooted in a religious and moral foundation, yet it is hardly necessary to stress that this is not a very precise concept, though we know that Dostoevsky clearly had in mind the religion of Father Zosima.

This, however, is not the only hint which Dostoevsky gives us. Actually, he has a political synthesis in mind. He rejects the notion of a purely economic foundation of unity among peoples, but he cannot deny the political one, which in turn is closely linked to the moral one. We shall get to his philosophy of history and politics shortly; for the moment it will be enough to note that Dostoevsky quite clearly envisages a union of peoples under Russian leadership. Thus the concept of "pan-humanity" becomes nothing else than an expression of Russian imperialism. Dostoevsky often considers the possibility of effecting a synthesis in a physiological sense. In his programme of 1861 he says that the Russians have a "physical gift" for fulfilling their cultural mission. He gives as "proof" their capacity to learn foreign languages very accurately. Another sense in which he perceives this physiological capacity emerges from the Pushkin lecture, in which he establishes a specific link between all peoples of Aryan descent. He ignores the fact that in Russia itself there are many non-Aryan nationalities with whom the Russians must live, and that these contain a strong admixture of non-Aryan elements. Nevertheless, un-

daunted he sees the Russians' major mission to be in Asia, and one is led to wonder what is supposed to happen to the Aryan "everyman" then.

Dostoevsky also sees the problem of regeneration in still another way: somehow the Aryan synthesis is supposed to assist this regenerative process, in which context it is perhaps relevant to note his view that the education of women will resurrect mankind, and this would tend, in turn, to explain why we should view Pushkin's Tatyana as a positive heroine.

Tatyana's positive characteristics also illuminate still another cultural element: we are told that Tatyana lives on her memories of childhood: memories of the simple, pure life of the people. This in turn recalls the basic thesis which is Dostoevsky's point of departure: the negative aspect of Onegin's character stems precisely from the fact that he lacks roots and is alienated from the people. Thus a return to the folk is the essence of the synthesis, especially for Russia, since it would not only bridge the gulf between man and woman, but become the precondition of a further and broader synthesis.

I am now leaving this particular aspect of my critique, having, of course, only touched on some of the more important points. Dostoevsky's everyman turns out to be little more than a puzzle in his philosophy of history. If in his literary pieces of the year 1861 Dostoevsky expressed the view that Russia is a sphinx to the rest of Europe, then this Russian sphinx in fact becomes a dual one, in the light of his "everyman." Indeed, it becomes a kind of super-sphinx. In the end, however, it turns out not to be worth while listening to this sphinx because as Dostoevsky says in his *A Writer's Diary* for 1873 it is possible that the Russians' receptivity is not a wholly beneficial gift, and that it contains certain elements of danger. Indeed, does not the question of a lack of individuality immediately come to mind?

3

DOSTOEVSKY himself buried his own everyman; in fact, he gave him two burials, one political, and the other moral.

In *A Writer's Diary* for 1877,[1] there is a piece on the Jewish question. An acquaintance of Dostoevsky's, a Jewess, writes him a letter about the death of a certain Dr. Hindenburg, in the town of M. Dr. Hindenburg devoted fifty-eight years of his life to

[1] 1929 edition, XII, pp. 90–2.

serving the poor and the very poorest, especially among the oppressed Jewish proletariat. He served them not only as a doctor but also as a man. To the poor he not only gave prescriptions, he also supplied them with the money to buy their food and medicine. This man was eighty-four when he died, and as poor as a church-mouse; his estate was not even sufficient to cover burial expenses. All the townspeople of M., without regard to religion or national origin, proceded to organise a tremendous funeral for this man. Jews, Germans, Russians, Poles, and Lithuanians all took their leave of this kindly old man as if he were one of them. The bells of all the churches tolled during his last journey, and a pastor as well as a rabbi spoke over the grave, and both wept.

An isolated case, says Dostoevsky, even though he concedes that only a small number of men of this type are needed in order to save the world, since their inner fortitude is so very extraordinary.

Dr. Hindenburg was both a Protestant and a German, and Dostoevsky acted nobly in not suppressing this information from his readers. True, he does not call him "everyman," but he does use the word "common man,"[1] and in his notations to the letter explains the use of the term as meaning a "man of the people." Clearly, Dostoevsky was aware that he had indeed encountered an "everyman, an isolated case," and that this everyman was a German and a Protestant! Dostoevsky found it particularly disturbing that Hindenburg was a German. The doctor had once healed a poor Jewish lumberjack and his family. How would the patient pay him? The lumberjack says that he has nothing but a goat, and that he will sell it. He is as good as his word, and presently brings the doctor four roubles—to which the latter adds twelve of his own and buys a cow for the lumberjack because he feels that goat's milk is not good for the family. Dostoevsky singles out this episode to show that the old man was indulging in a typically German joke. The poor fellow goes to sell his last goat to pay the expert. He doesn't complain, of course. On the contrary he only regrets in his heart that the goat is worth no more than the four roubles. After all, the old man who has worked for him and all the other poor people also has to live, and what, after all, are a mere four roubles for all the good he has done to the entire family? And meanwhile the old man is chuckling quietly all the while. His heart leaps and he says to himself. "I will play a little German joke on him!"

[1] XII, p. 93: "Eto byl ne obshchechelovek, a skoree obshchiy chelovek."

One cannot help wondering whether this is really the right psychological explanation for this incident. If the episode is truly German in character, then is another which Dostoevsky also relates with great honesty truly Russian? It involves a physician in southern Russia who refused to go to the assistance of some wretch who had just been pulled out of the water simply because the doctor was accustomed to take his morning coffee after his bath.

For the time being, I leave the political burial of Dostoevsky's everyman for another chapter.

CHAPTER IV

DOSTOEVSKY'S PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

DOSTOEVSKY'S philosophy of history is closely related to that of his Russian predecessors. He understands ideas both as the highest of historical categories and as goals toward which the world is stirring. From a psychological standpoint these ideas are realised automatically, as are all innate ideas. Every nation and every individual must have these ideas and aspirations in order to guide national and political life. The "sages," says Dostoevsky, might think such a notion ludicrous, but it grows none the less, and will eventually triumph.

In *A Writer's Diary* for 1877,[1] Dostoevsky essentially reduces world history to three ideas: the Catholic, Protestant, and Slav.

The first of these is made synonymous with the French idea, because his very choice of the three makes it evident that Dostoevsky operates in terms of two kinds of ideas, the general and the particular. He frequently tells us that every nation has its own guiding idea, which has an intrinsic meaning and expresses itself through its own historical mission in the world.

The Catholic idea, for Dostoevsky, is the idea of the Grand Inquisitor. That is why, in modern times, the issue is no longer one of Catholicism as a religion but actually that of socialism, since the two have become synonymous. If socialism appears to be an enemy of Catholicism, this is merely a deception; in reality it is a continuation and extension of Catholicism.

Protestantism is the Germanic idea, and encompasses all Teutons, even though Dostoevsky is thinking primarily of the Germans themselves. From the religious viewpoint he sees Luther as the embodiment of Protestantism, and as we have already heard from him Protestantism is nothing but a simple negation of Catholicism.

The Slavonic idea is, for all practical purposes, synonymous

[1] 1929 edition, XII, pp. 5–10.

with the Russian idea—the phrase which Dostoevsky generally employs, although he does talk about the Slavonic idea at the time of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877.

The meaning of this idea is synonymous with that of everyman: the Russian everyman. In practical political terms it is the Russian idea pure and simple. The Russians, Dostoevsky tells us, have two enormous sources of strength which surpass all others in the world, and these are, respectively, the spiritual purity and unity of the people and its one-ness with the czar.

In somewhat more specific terms Dostoevsky's philosophy of history runs somewhat as follows:

Christianity is an idea, in fact the sole idea which can serve as man's ideal. Dostoevsky identifies Christianity with the person of Christ not only as regards religious teaching but also as a historical event. True, Christianity and the true Christ continue in the Greek Orthodox Church, and especially in its Russian branch. The Russian monk is thus the saviour of Russia, and through it of all mankind. He rejects Roman Catholicism, the schism, and Protestantism, as do other Slavophiles. His evaluation of the great French Revolution and its consequences for the rest of Europe is also thoroughly Slavophile in character, as is his agreement with them on the essential course of Russian history.

Peter the Great, through his campaign of Westernisation, set Russia on a false course. His kind of culture involved nothing less than the enslavement of the people for the sake of creating an educated upper class. Moreover, this "Europeanisation" was questionable from the first, since it introduced Roman Catholic and Protestant ideas into Russia, and with them atheism. The Church itself has suffered from atrophy since the time of Peter the Great.

Yet Russian as well as European atheism (both the Catholic and the Protestant variety) will discover the Russian God, the Russian Christ, and the Russian soul. Holy Russia, the Russian folk, the incarnation of godliness, will bring salvation to itself and to all mankind.

Is it really worth while to criticise these philosophical and historical fantasies if one is already agreed on the value and scope of Dostoevsky's fundamental thesis?

Dostoevsky accepts the Slavophile philosophy of history, and with it the Hegelian dialectical rhythm of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. The sole difficulty is that Dostoevsky's synthesis is reached without theses or antitheses, because the two happen to

cancel each other out. Hence, Dostoevsky's conclusion is not that one plus one equals two, but rather that one minus one equals zero, and he replaces that zero by an invented and quite arbitrary quantity. True, Dostoevsky does have a philosophy of history, but he never took the trouble to study history in any detail and he lacks all historical sense. That is the only conclusion one can draw from the fact that he saw the Russo-Turkish War of 1887 as a critical moment in history not only so far as a solution to the Eastern Question was concerned, but in terms of European and world history as well. Allegedly that conflict would decide the future of mankind, because he claimed that it represented a great crisis and a major break with the past. In fact, Dostoevsky is much like all of his predecessors, who were likewise preoccupied with the philosophy of history. All of them went through at least one major revolution of ideas; he did too.

CHAPTER V

RUSSIAN NATIONALISM

IN her letter to Aglaya, Nastasya Filipovna writes that "an abstract love of mankind almost always boils down to a love of one's own self," and in so saying she certainly expresses a truth which can be applied to many an apostle of humanism. Dostoevsky would have been right if he had expressed his own humanism in terms of a love of Russia. If in fact love means work, then it becomes quite impossible, for any half-way decent person to mouth phrases about loving mankind in general. Humanism is something which is neither supra-national nor anti-national. It can find a practical expression only through labour on behalf of one's own people. Thus, if the humanist idea is understood not in a general sense but as a practical proposition and as a conscious effort to humanise and uplift personal values, then the very best thing you can do for your own people, as well as for others, is first of all to try to humanise your own self. Nor is it necessary to love one's own nation so much as to develop a hatred for others, and particularly for neighbouring ones. Instead, one should have a positive sense of love for one's own people and remain just to all of one's neighbours without necessarily loving them as well.

That, in brief, is the ethical side of the idea of nationality in the sense that the nation is an idea and an object of one's striving. Apart from this, of course, nationality has other connotations. It is often no more than love of a particular geographical area: a kind of habit which evokes the thought of certain fields, meadows, pastures, one's native village, and the woods and valleys of a particular countryside, or the plains, the mountain ranges, the seashore; or yet a particular row of houses in the street of some town. Then too, one is apt to love one's mother tongue, or a particular dialect, and the various customs which one is used to. One also develops an attachment to the literature, art and religion, indeed the entire cultural constellation which goes to make up

one's own nation. Quite naturally, too, this love of folk and of soil can assume very different shades of quality and intensity.

In the final analysis, it is difficult to define the difference between nations and to say whether these are a matter of race, historical and cultural development, or simply of geographical location. The Russian philosophers of history discussed here went a long way towards elucidating the problem, but they did not solve it. The same may be said of Dostoevsky. He believes that sharp differences in national temperament do exist and are exemplified both in daily practice and innate attitudes. In *A Writer's Diary* he says that even science, which is eternal and essentially the same everywhere, acquires a national coloration according to how it is accepted and what fruit it bears among different peoples. Thus religion also becomes national: Catholicism is essentially French, Protestantism Teutonic, and Orthodoxy Russian and Slavonic. Finally, there are national differences in political systems and institutions.

Dostoevsky's own understanding of nationality is ethical and religious in a fundamental sense. Not only from an ethical but also from an historical standpoint, the moral idea is precursor to the national one. He says that the moral idea actually created the national one, and hence is its progenitor. Yet the moral idea has mystical origins. It is based on the belief that man is an eternal and immortal creature, that he does, in fact, have an intimate relationship with higher and eternal spheres. Thus in order to preserve the idea of eternity men band together into society, and come to devise such forms of social existence as will help to perpetuate their spiritual treasure.

Dostoevsky goes further than that. "Neither the individual nor the nation can survive without some higher idea. And yet there is on earth only one higher idea, and that concerns the immortality of the human soul. Love of man is quite inconceivable, and impossible, without a simultaneous belief in the immortality of the human soul."[1] Dostoevsky thus equates the notions of nationality and nation (nationality as a form of collective striving and nation as a social whole) with the State no less than with the Church and with religion, even though he says that the ethical idea has historical priority. Russia for Dostoevsky, just as for the muzhik, is "Holy Russia"; the Russian people are a "God-folk"; Russia has its Russian God and its Russian Christ. The Russian cannot cease believing in his God, because he would thus cease to be a

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, Vol. XI, pp. 389–90 (from *A Writer's Diary*).

Russian. He has an entirely distinctive church and state. The words "Russian," "Orthodox Christian," "citizen of an autocratic state" —are all synonyms for Dostoevsky. Hence, religion and nationality form a mythical unity for Dostoevsky. Shatov in *The Possessed* defines God as "the synthetic personality of the entire nation, from its beginnings to its end." He also tells us that "the more powerful the nation, the more personal is its God."[1]

[1] VII, p. 265 in 1957 edition.

CHAPTER VI

RUSSIAN CHAUVINISM

DOSTOEVSKY'S superman, if we look at him carefully, turns out essentially to be a chauvinist.

If Russia and Russia alone is holy and if only that Russia has the faith which holds the key to salvation, then it follows that the Russian must comprehend his Russian-ness—or, as Dostoevsky often says, his Russism—as something unique, exclusive, and quite personal. This theory is propounded by the converted Shatov; and to underscore the correctness of the assertion it is first put into the mouth of the nihilist Stavrogin, in the form of an entirely logical deducation: if in fact the Russians are a "God-folk," it is absolutely inescapable that they are also unique, and the only ones of their kind.

Russian chauvinism naturally over-simplifies itself into a cultural synthesis. If, indeed, Russia has created the only correct foundation for such a synthesis, then "the future of Europe belongs to Russia," because "we are mightier than anyone else."[1] Thus geography becomes a substitute for culture, and the mass or majority becomes the decisive factor. Messianism and universalism are transformed into Russian imperialism. "Long live Skobolev and his little soldiers, and glory to those who have fallen! We shall inscribe their names on the rolls!"[2] These are the last words in *A Writer's Diary* for the year 1881, which Dostoevsky was editing on his death-bed. Thus the Russian idea is transformed into a concept of naked power; the Russian monk turns out to be the Russian czar.

Dostoevsky, of course, is not blind. Willy-nilly, he has to see Russia's faults, and he does see them and criticise them. Yet his critique remains ineffectual. The difficulty is that Dostoevsky looks for a person worthy of love even in the worst of criminals, and this tendency predominates when he comes to consider

[1] *A Writer's Diary, Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenty*, Vol. XI, p. 105.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1929 edition, XII, p. 457.

Russia's faults as a nation. At the critical moment, as for instance during the war of 1877, he forgets all of the faults and shortcomings, and shouts "Hurrah!" with the worst of the chauvinists. He extols war quite uncritically, is blind to weakness in the army command, and although he feels a love of humanity at large and loves his own people, he does not see that Skobolev and all the others are herding the troops to the slaughter, and that they rely entirely on sheer numbers to cover up their own inhumanity and their spiritual vacuity, which they hope to make good by a display of forthright bravery.

"Long live Skobolev!" That means long live Russia's waste of human life, nothing more or less, and this Dostoevsky will not understand, even though he is the creator of Father Zosima. He does not see that Russian chauvinism rests on no other foundation than the bravery of her faithful soldiers. True, the Russian soldier is brave and good, yet how is this brave soldier regarded by the General Staff, by the prefects, by the aristocracy and the generals? I understand Dostoevsky's love for the Russian earth, and his love for all things domestic. I can understand why Dostoevsky would like to see a drunken Russian rather than a German drunkard as his everyman. Lermontov, long before him, had already voiced this characteristically Russian, almost physiological, longing for the homeland in his poem *The Fatherland,* but these factors of earth and custom may never intrude upon the essential idea—the Russian idea. Dostoevsky soon hits on the idea that a really critical look at prosaic things and relationships could possibly paralyse the energies of his hero (as, for instance, in *The Possessed*). Here Dostoevsky can no longer distinguish between criticism and nay-saying.

I am personally fearful of every kind of chauvinism, and do not believe that anyone who thinks and observes clearly can nowadays consider his own nation as a chosen people. No nation is a chosen nation. No criticism on the other hand even if very sharp, can really be damaging to a national cause. Clearly Dostoevsky would have had little understanding for Byron and his battle against contemporary conditions in England. He would not have understood Thomas Paine and his work on behalf of France and America against the English. He would hardly have comprehended Schopenhauer's embittered pessimism, which was directed against the Russia of his day, nor would Elizabeth Browning's Aurora Leigh, who found two homelands—England and Italy—have been intelligible to him.

It is the achievement of Dostoevsky's illustrious predecessors that the launched the literature of "accusation." We are told by Chaadayev that blind patriotism is destructive, and that perhaps is why Dostoevsky wanted to incarcerate him in a monastery by way of punishment. He failed to grasp that chauvinism makes all progress, including moral progress, impossible. Every right-thinking human being would do better not to try to serve humanity but rather to work for his own people instead and perhaps not even so much for his own people as for himself—for the sake of serving his people and the cause of humanity. Russian messianism has not borne any good fruit, and Dostoevsky's chauvinism remains nothing but a manifestation of weakness.

CHAPTER VII

THE RUSSIAN CHARACTER

IT is necessary to accept only with the greatest of caution any expressions voiced by writers and other social observers regarding the national character of their own or of other peoples. Otherwise good judges tend to stick to the surface and not to distinguish between substantial and insubstantial things, nor do they sometimes have sufficient detachment from others. For the most part they discover themselves in their own nation rather than in others, since they naturally reflect the sympathies and antipathies of their own people.

Thus Dostoevsky's explanations of Russia's being, the Russian national character, the Russian soul, remain for me nothing but an expression of Dostoevsky's own personality and of the way he understands people and things. This picture is painted for us by an outstanding Russian who ruminated about Russia and her history his whole life long. It remains a very subjective picture. We can see in Dostoevsky a symbol of Russia, but we should not forget that he symbolises the Russia of a certain period, and only a certain sector of Russian society. The temper of a nation does, after all, change over time, even though within given limits. Dostoevsky's world is made up of the inhabitants of the capital, the lower and middle aristocracy, writers, and government officials. He was torn away from this world and spent several years in a Siberian jail and in a Siberian military regiment. Granted that this prison constitutes an important aspect of Russian reality, yet it is certainly a most abnormal aspect. Dostoevsky came to know the muzhik intimately while in prison, but he came to know him under quite unusual circumstances.

In a nutshell, the picture of Russia painted for us by Dostoevsky runs like this: the Russian is for him, as for most other writers, a man of feeling. I have already noted Dostoevsky's emotional and voluntaristic psychology, but here I would further underscore that

he does not distinguish between individual components of the psychological complex, such as instinct, feeling, will, and wish. Dostoevsky forgets what most "men of feeling" do not tend to forget: that there are qualitative differences in the areas of feeling. Not every sentiment is noble, nor can it be necessarily justified as sentiment; nor is every instinct either noble or good.

Dostoevsky finds that the Russian has a keen love of his neighbour, more so than other Westerners do. That is why he supposes that Russia will solve not only the social question but also the larger overall "problem" and that she will become the saviour of mankind.[1] Yet how is it then that Dostoevsky so often depicts people of extreme cruelty and inhumanity? And not only does he paint this cruelty, he even advances the theory that Russians love suffering, meaning thereby that they suffer the cruelty of others gladly. Cruelty can, of course, also be found in the works of French and German writers, but the element of extraordinary harshness is surely a typically Russian attribute, if not actually a more generally Slavic one. Thus it is quite wrong to try to make the Slavs out to be people of exceptional sensibility.

It is often objected that these are only the bureaucrats, that this is official Russia; yet is Russian officialdom not made up of Russians? And what does this harshness really mean, since it recurs again and again, as in the present wave of political reaction? One thing, of course, is correct, and deserves to be underscored. People are often harsh and cruel out of ignorance. That is how the barbaric punishments of earlier days can be explained. The simplest thing to do was to execute the culprit, or to render him harmless, because no better alternative was known. Thus the Russian is very often harsh and cruel because he finds himself helpless and lacking in sufficient inventiveness. The Russian, and the Slav in general, is full of sentiment, deeply forthright, yet very harsh at the same time. This is very characteristic of him, as are his frequent and rapid transitions from one state of mind to the other. His feelings are anything but stable and he is unable to follow the English precept "Love me little, love me long." Probably, however, this inconstancy is a matter of the times, and conditioned by his religious and ethical education and understanding.

Dostoevsky depicts almost all of his characters in this fashion. His characterisation of Raskolnikov is quite typical when he ascribes two quite contradictory temperaments to him. Ras-

[1] In his speech about Pushkin.

kolnikov, for instance, makes a frantic attempt to save an abandoned drunken girl whom he has met in the street quite by chance. He alerts a policeman, has a run-in with an unknown gentleman who attempts to approach the helpless child, and when the policeman takes charge of the girl "in that instant something almost stung Raskolnikov; in that single moment he as it were turned around."[1] Similar reversals of mood are also shown elsewhere in Raskolnikov's career, for instance after a disagreeable scene in the office. "All of a sudden Raskolnikov felt the urge to say something very pleasant to all of them."[2] Razumikhin, in his conversation with Raskolnikov's mother and sister, characterises his friends as follows: "He is large-minded and kind. He does not like to speak out what he feels and rather acts cruelly than expresses what is on his heart' Sometimes he is not at all hypochondriac, but simply cold and unfeeling to the point of being inhuman. It is just as if there were two opposite characters in him which took turns."[3]

One does notice, of course, that Dostoevsky's preference is always to occupy himself with people's abnormal, more of less pathological inclinations, which is why he draws characters who are in fact abnormal. Thus, his romantically decadent psychology of man's sexual life always reveals the intimate interplay of cruelty and love in its various gradations.

The Russian treats animals harshly not out of cruelty but simply because he hardly knows what else to do. In *The House of the Dead* Dostoevsky reminds us that the plain Russian people regard the dog as an unclean creature. That is why they pay no attention to it and often treat it cruelly and meanly. It is also remarkable that Dostoevsky has almost nothing to say about the intellectual attributes and characteristics of the Russians; he is actually interested only in the nation's ethical and social characteristics.

Very often and in almost all of his characters Dostoevsky stresses their lack of moderation and inability to restrain themselves which is of course closely related to their violent oscillation between one extreme and another. Over and over again his characters fall into extremes and throw moderation to the winds as soon as they find themselves torn from the normal routine of their lives. Once that happens, his characters no longer know what to do or how to readjust.

[1] *A Writer's Diary*, 1957 edition, V, p. 55.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 107.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1947 edition, V, p. 222

It is extremely important to note that Dostoevsky does not show his characters in process of development. This is very apparent with Alyosha, in *A Raw Youth*, and elsewhere. His children are like little adults, except that he sees them as angels—which is surely an archaic point of view. The concept of gradual development is one which escapes Dostoevsky, and that is why his characters always change quite abruptly, and why the word "suddenly" is so characteristic of Dostoevsky.

His female characters do not differ markedly from his men, and that would not necessarily be a fault if it were done deliberately. I suspect, however, that Dostoevsky took few pains to study women in any detail.

Dostoevsky also sees instability and immoderation in Russian laziness and aversion to work. I have alluded to this subject before but it might be said again here that this fault must be ascribed at least in part to the teachings of the church and to its indeterministic religious faith in miracles. There is also the element of climate and physical surroundings (northern lands, for instance, being for the most part infertile and undeveloped). Dostoevsky considers vagrancy to be a specifically Russian characteristic, as I have already suggested in connection with this analysis of Nekrasov's poem *Vlas*. He sees in this shiftlessness a morally unsettled conscience, which may be an outgrowth of prevailing economic and cultural conditions. The peasant in a rural village setting easily leaves his house and homestead; poverty drives him to the big city or into the newly colonised frontier regions, while the educated person longs to be off to Europe. Russian fatalism, which so impressed Bismarck that he had the word *nichevo* engraved on his ring, likewise acquires significance in Dostoevsky. He points to the phrase "just so" (*tak*) as being most characteristic and expressive of the Russian outlook (as in the novel *A Raw Youth*). In that novel, A. P. Verilov claims that his relations with Sofya Andreyevna developed "just so" (*tak*). This typically Russian *tak* (just so), describing how their relations for all of life arose, also indicates how the "casual family" (*sluchaynoe semeystvo*), about which Dostoevsky often writes, comes into being. It is not easy to say what the origins of this fatalism are: religious indeterminism and the belief in miracles, modesty of wants which borders on asceticism, the influence of recurrent disaster, etc.

Dostoevsky proclaims the Russian people to be pure and chaste. He deplores their constant lying, but excuses it by saying

that the Russians are by no means the greatest of liars. On the contrary, he finds it necessary to praise the essential honesty, forthrightness, and guilelessness of the Russian peasant. These good qualities are depicted throughout Dostoevsky's work even though he portrays few common people. (In *A Writer's Diary*, when speculating on the universal mission of the Russian people, he praises the sympathetic qualities of the Russian soldier.)[1] It is commonplace to refer to the expansive Russian personality, and Dostoevsky himself uses the words and provides the illustration: it is possible for someone to cherish the highest of ideals while succumbing to the greatest of vulgarities, and to do both in all honesty. Is this an extraordinary breadth of character or is it vulgarity pure and simple? that is the question poised in *The Brothers Karamazov*.[2]

Dostoevsky displays extraordinary tolerance toward the drunkard, a tolerance which he also ascribes to all Russians in general, and this is all the more remarkable if it is true, as Strakhov relates, that he himself was very restrained in both his drinking and eating habits. Dostoevsky even has a theory about the Russian drunkard. He says the Russian drinks out of sheer sorrow and weeping; when he starts laying about him he does so only because he knows in his drunken heart that he is a drunkard, and feels a deep dissatisfaction with himself. The Russian drunkard is more revolting than his German counterpart, but the latter is more stupid and ridiculous.[3] I do not know to what extent this corroborates the fact that according to available statistics the Russian consumes only about half the amount of alcohol that the German does, but to make a real comparison one would have to take into consideration that the Russian's diet is also much poorer.

[1] *A Writer's Diary*, 1861, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, Vol. X, p. 27.

[2] Dmitri Karamazov in his "Confessions of a Passionate Heart," Chapter III, to Alyosha.

[3] *A Writer's Diary*, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, X, p. 191.

CHAPTER VIII

RUSSIA AND EUROPE

DOSTOEVSKY'S sceptical indecision is revealed in a curious way when he is passing judgment on Europe. He sees Europe both intrinsically and religiously as the antithesis of Russia. Europe for him consists of Catholic France and Protestant Germany, and is thus a realm of atheism and death. Ivan tells Alyosha that Europe is a graveyard, but he adds that it is also the most precious graveyard.[1] Dostoevsky says much the same in *A Writer's Diary* for 1877. Europe is the Russian's second home, and almost as dear to him as Russia itself.[2] And we also have Dostoevsky's word for it that Venice, Rome, and Paris, with their artistic and scientific treasures, were more precious to him than Russia. In a letter in which he answers questions put to him by Moscow students in 1878, in which he actually urges them earnestly to opt for theism, he also offers Europe as an example, since he says Europe does believe in God.[3] It is not merely interesting to observe Dostoevsky in Europe; it is remarkable that he travelled to Europe so often and stayed there for such long periods of time. Actually Strakhov is of the opinion that the four years which Dostoevsky spent in Europe were the best period of his life, and maintains that they evoked his most profound and purest ideas and sentiments.

In point of fact Dostoevsky is himself a living example of the interpretation which he gives to the poem *Vlas*. We need only recall the many years he spent in Siberia and the months and years spent in Europe, travelling about, to see that he himself is the embodiment of Vlas.

Dostoevsky wrote a letter from Geneva in 1867[4] saying that

[1] *A Writer's Diary*, IX, p 289 in 1958 edition

[2] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenıy*, Vol. XII, p. 25. [3] *Ibid*, Vol. I, p. 336.

[4] He wrote to Maykov on 28/16 August 1867, from Geneva: "Russia from here is seen in greater relief." *Pis'ma*, II, p. 27.

he was in a far better position to study Russia from Europe, and in this he was surely right. Yet Europe meant more than that to him. Europe became a kind of need to him even though the experience often exasperated him—it was precisely this kind of stimulus that he seemed to look for. He says himself that Europe was for him something "holy yet terrible." It would have interested me to know how Dostoevsky felt in the various European countries and their most important cultural centres and what he saw and found there, but unfortunately the sources are too few to gain a really complete picture of his European impressions and experiences.

On his very first journey in 1863 Dostoevsky visited Rome, the capital city of his chief enemy, the Grand Inquisitor. Saint Peter's made a powerful impression on him—the shivers ran down his spine, he was speechless with wonder and lost in thought.[1] One gathers from this that Dostoevsky actually hated European Russia, or rather half-European Russia and the Russians' semi-Europeanisation and half-education. This is what he characterised with such disparaging words as parroting, lackeyism, etc. He once met a Russian expatriate in Germany who had renounced his country so as to escape from Russia's barbarism. His wife and children had become Germanised, and he himself had become a firm Westerniser.[2] This kind of "liberal" and "progressive" was deeply distasteful to Dostoevsky, and led to remarks to the effect that two hundred years of Europeanisation have borne no fruit in Russia and have only brought about intellectual chaos (*A Writer's Diary*, 1877).[3] Dostoevsky spent most of his time abroad in Germany, also visiting France and the French part of Switzerland for longer periods, but he barely stopped over in England.

France and Frenchmen were in no way to his liking, although his education actually derived from French literature. France and Catholicism are one and the same thing to him. He has hardly anything to say about the national characteristics of the French; France is simply the carrier of the Catholic idea, and hence he is interested there only in political events, which as he supposes justify his essay on "The Three Ideas."[4] The Paris Commune of 1871, for instance, he takes as proof that positivism—that is to say reason and empiricism—is by itself incapable of changing the world. The West has lost Christ, and that is why it is in decline. That is the sense also in which he understands the fall of the papal

[1] Letter to N. N. Strakhov, 18/30 September 1863, from Rome, *Pis'ma*, I, p. 335.
[2] *Pis'ma*, II, p. 28. [3] XII, p. 23, of 1929 edition. [4] *Ibid*, pp. 9 ff.

states. France is to expect the same fate as Poland: it will be destroyed by Germany in so far as it does not go into decline on its own as a result of its Catholicism. He speaks of Paris in some detail, and is struck by the way everything there is regulated, not only as regards externals but also in an intellectual sense; it is a kind of oasis of orderliness. England and the English remain alien to him. He cannot deny the humanity of the English and their piety, nor fail to rate these qualities highly. He naturally approves of Gladstone's Balkan policy,[1] but on the whole he paid remarkably little attention to England. He stayed in London for only eight days, and apparently saw very little there, if what has been published so far does in fact contain all of his English impressions. London has more individuality and freedom than Paris, and English women are the most beautiful in the world, etc.

He lived longest in Germany, but the German people and their inner make-up seemed not to preoccupy him at all. He spent the period of the Franco-Prussian War in Germany, and was much interested in political happenings, yet we find only a few cursory remarks about the German people. For instance, in a letter from Dresden he notes that everyone in Germany is "educated," yet unbelievably uncultured, stupid, obtuse, and with the lowest conceivable kinds of interests. Although he expected and foresaw the fall of France and placed Germany in the role of a destroyer, he has very strong words about Germany's conduct toward France during the war. He reminds "a young German" of the words of the gospel, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matthew xxvi. 52). He finds that the Germans have played themselves out because, having experienced a remarkable philosophical and scientific development, they have now espoused the idea of the sword, blood, and violence. This he takes as evidence that the Germans have lost their vitality, that they are a dead people without a future.[2]

[1] This was clearly a premature judgment, given Dostoevsky's chauvinism and his later enthusiastic support of aggressive Russian imperialism. Great Britain had consistently opposed Russian designs on the Ottoman Empire since the end of the eighteenth century and the Liberal Gladstone's "little England" outlook and consequent opposition to Disraeli's interventionist policies in the Balkans might have struck him as advantageous to Russia's interests. Paradoxically, however, it was Gladstone's second ministry (1880–86) which threw British support behind Balkan and specifically Bulgarian nationalism during the crisis of 1884–5, seeing in it a better bulwark against Russian claims than mere support of an increasingly moribund Ottoman state.

[2] Letter to Maykov, from Dresden, January 26/February 5, 1871, *Pis'ma*, II, p. 325.

"If you only knew what a deep hatred and distaste Europe has aroused in me during these four years. God only knows how many prejudices there are among us about Europe. Isn't the Russian childish (almost all are) who believes that the Prussians have been victorious simply because of their book-learning? It is a shame. What kind of school and what kind of learning is it that teaches you to plunder and to torture as Attila's hordes once did, if not actually more so?"[1] These were harsh words, which soon came home to roost, as will be seen from Dostoevsky's own political plans.

Dostoevsky evidently accepted the then current Russian attitude toward the Germans quite uncritically. The Russians were looking at Germans and half-Germans from the Baltic provinces who in Bismarck's phrase made up the core of that officialdom which administered the Russian land, and this helped to perpetuate an image rather similar to that cherished by the uneducated Roman regarding the Greek tutors of his children.

On the subject of other nationalities we find in Dostoevsky only passing remarks which are hardly observations at all. It is remarkable, though, that Dostoevsky did not pay more attention to the various nationalities within the Russian state. We find no more than an occasional word about a Finnish cook.

Only about the Poles is there somewhat more, for it transpires that Dostoevsky had no love for them. In his writings he depicts them, as for instance in *The Brothers Karamazov*, as worldly, aristocratic adventurers. For Dostoevsky the Pole is not only a Catholic and a Jesuit, but also a political revolutionary. He says in his notebooks that "the Inquisitor is immoral because his heart and conscience could harbour the very idea of the need to burn people. And so did Orsini and Konrad Wallenrod."[2]

The Czechs are mentioned only in one letter, and then indirectly. In a letter to A. N. Maykov in the year 1868, he writes: "Many Slavs, for instance in Prague, judge us entirely from a Western point of view, that is, from German and French ones. It is even possible that they are surprised that our Slavophiles are little interested in the generally accepted forms of Western civilisation. We should thus bide our time and not be anxious to court the Slavs. To study them is another matter, and we can also extend

[1] Letter to Maykov, from Dresden, December 30, 1870, *Pis'ma*, II, p. 308.

[2] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, 1883, I, p. 371. Konrad Wallenrod refers to Mickiewicz's poem by the same name, written in 1828.

them a helping hand, but it is not necessary to pursue them and fraternise, that is, we should not chase after them, but they are our brothers, and should be treated in brotherly fashion."[1] In Dostoevsky's notebook we find a direct and derogatory reference to Czech secondary school teachers serving in Russia: "These Czechs think of everything here as being peculiar; they are cold, indifferent, hostile toward our young people, they do not know the Russian language and look down on it. . . . Sometimes the teachers even insulted the pupil's patriotic sentiment, of which the Lord knows very little has remained in this country."[2]

Finally, a word about the Jewish question. Dostoevsky avoids this issue, which is such an important one for Russia. Jews do not appear in his works as active characters; in the north he had no opportunity to study the Jews or their relations with Christians. We do have a letter of Dostoevsky's to a Jew in the year 1877, in which he defends himself vigorously againt the charge of being an enemy of the Jews.[3] He claims that he is not and never has been. He notes simply that the Jews, because of their distinctive characteristics which stand out so sharply and their tenacity, do form a state within a state. The Jews in Russia, moreover, make up the strongest state within a state, and hence have no alternative but to live entirely apart from the Russian people. Dostoevsky does, however, qualify this separateness by using the word "partly." He advocates complete equality, but says that the Jews share the responsibility for the existing state of affairs, and that they should trust the Russians more and take the first step toward a reconciliation.

We read in the notebooks: "The Bismarcks, the Beaconsfields, the French Republic and Gambetta, etc., all of these do not represent real power: they are only phantoms. More and more all the time. The master of all, the master of Europe, is the Jew and his bank. One day he will say "No" and Bismarck will fall like a plant cut by a scythe. The Jew and the bank are masters of everything: Europe, enlightenment, civilisation, and socialism; he is particularly the master of socialism, because through it he can pull Christianity up by the roots, and thereby achieve the destruction of European civilisation. And then, when only anarchy

[1] Letter to A. N. Maykov, from Milan, October 7/November 26, 1868, *Pis'ma*, II, p. 143.
[2] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenny*, 1883, I, p. 361.
[3] Masaryk probably has in mind the letter of February 14, 1877, to A. G. Kovner, from Petersburg, *Pis'ma*, III, pp. 255–8.

remains, the Jew will truly become master. While preaching socialism the Jews still remain closely united among themselves, and once the whole treasure-house of Europe is destroyed, only the Jewish bank will still remain. The Anti-Christ will come and stand above the anarchy."[1]

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij*, 1883, I, p 358.

Catholicism—socialism. In Bismarck's view, France is doomed already. The question is one of whether either France or Germany will survive, and Dostoevsky comes out quite unequivocally for Bismarck and Germany against France because he feels that so long as France lives, Rome will be shielded by a powerful sword. Even the French republicans are nothing without Rome, because only Catholicism as a unifying idea can conceivably, if only temporarily, save a decadent France, at least in the area of foreign policy.[1]

One sees here that Dostoevsky esteemed Bismarck as uncritically as did his German admirers, who failed to see that Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* was, in fact, a half-hearted affair (which is evident from his attitude toward the broader Catholic movement as a whole), and that his campaign against socialism actually turned out to be a major error. Dostoevsky, of course, did not live to see how this policy took its revenge on its creator, or how the Iron Chancellor, at the end of his career and despite his carefully calculated policy of reaction, came to oppose the monarchical principle.[2]

Trusting in Bismarck's traditional Russophile policy, Dostoevsky dreams about the reality of an eternal Russo-German peace. An alliance of these two great nations could change the face of the earth and lead to a partition of the entire world: let the Germans have the West and organise it according to their own ideas instead of those derived from the Roman and Latin tradition; meanwhile, Russia will herself take care of the East. Yet the same volume of the *Diary* for January 1877 contains the essay "The

[1] This, perhaps, was not an entirely untenable view at a time when France, under its President Marshal MacMahon was still governed (in 1877) by a royalist and clerical cabinet and the future of the Third Republic by no means assured. Dostoevsky, having no sympathy for or confidence in French republicanism under Gambetta, and lacking the qualifications of a trained political observer, could hardly have anticipated the solid republican electoral triumph of 1879. Thus it is hardly surprising that he failed to sense the growth of secularism and anti-clericalism in France as exemplified first by lesislation in the field of education under Jules Ferry in the 1880's, the later curbs on religious orders imposed at the turn of the century, much less the final Act of Separation which formally abrogated the Napoleonic Concordat with the Vatican of 1801 in late 1905.

[2] While it would be difficult to overstate Bismarck's bitterness at his ouster from office in 1890 after 28 years of service to the Prussian state and the German Empire, or to exaggerate his contempt for the Emperor William II, this statement can still not be taken at face value. True, during his years of enforced retirement, he did once say to Sir Charles Dilke: "Were it all to come over again I would be republican and democrat; the rule of kings is the rule of women; the bad ones are bad and the good ones are worse." Yet, evidence which might throw serious doubt on Bismarck's deep loyalty to William I and his profound attachment to conservative principles during any of his last years would be difficult to find.

Three Ideas," which discusses the negative character of Protestantism, and assigns it the same fate as Catholicism. In the November number, however, a project is again advanced which envisages the division of the world, but this time it is the self-same negative Protestantism which is cast in the role of becoming the future organising force of the West. Rome and Constantinople each in a new guise: is that supposed to be the newly-projected synthesis, and can the very notion of partition really be a synthesis at all?

Dostoevsky has nothing to say about the treaty of San Stefano or about the Congress of Berlin. He did not publish his *Diary* for the year 1878, though he promised to continue with it in 1897. Yet the outcome of the war with Turkey did not satisfy him and hardly could satisfy him, and therefore in 1878 he published a political "allegory" in the periodical *Citizen* (*Grazhdanin*) under the title "The Triton."[1] Not surprisingly, it is directed against the Berlin peace treaty, and attacks the English and more specifically "the great Jew" Beaconsfield, as well as Germany and Russia's own diplomacy. Dostoevsky did not publish the next and last number of his *Diary* until 1881 but his thoughts are even then still occupied with the Eastern question. But if, together with Danilevsky, he had advanced the slogan "Constantinople must be ours!" during the war, we are now told that Russians should go "forward into Asia!"

Dostoevsky is always and above all preoccupied with the original and major root of Russian life; the muzhik and his ideal, with Russian socialism, and the notion of uniting the whole world in the name of Christ. Before San Stefano and Berlin the call was for a partition of the world; after San Stefano and Berlin it was Christ, a universal Catholic Church, and no balancing of the budget as demanded by the liberals. An assembly (*zemski sobor*) should be summoned, and the muzhik should there tell his czar what had best be done. The intellectual is asked to remain in the background and to listen quietly, and to learn. Russian liberals no less than Europeans remind Dostoevsky of Krylov's fable about the pig which starts uprooting the oak tree from which it gets its acorns precisely because it does not know that acorns grow on oak trees. In the meantime, however, Skobolev had captured the Turkish stronghold of Ghoek Teppe, and therefore "Long live Skobolev," because "the Russian is not only a European but also an Asiatic. Not only that; more of our hopes lie in Asia than in

[1] 1930 edition, XIII, pp 473–6

Europe, and the course of our future fortunes will have Asia as its chief point of departure."[1]

The synthesis of Russia and Europe would thus actually appear to consist rather of a division of East and West, and a proclamation of Asiatism. Accordingly, Russia should have made peace with Napoleon Bonaparte, and ought to have divided the world with him into East and West. Had that occurred the thorny Eastern question would have been solved long ago. But instead, Russia was content to play the role of liberator and peace-maker, and for her pains the liberated peoples turned against their Russian emancipators.[2] Russia, indeed, made a particular mistake in allowing Germany to gain strength. All of Europe mistrusts Russia and is afraid of the Russian idea, which it cannot comprehend. If Europe could only attain an understanding of that idea it would not only lose this sense of anxiety but it would even rejoice.

In Europe the Russians have been slaves yet in Asia they will be masters. Europe always regarded them as Tartars, but in Asia they will be seen as Europeans. In Europe they were hated, but Asia will receive them with open arms. All that is needed therefore is to strike out in a new direction. Asia must become for Russia what America became for Europe. In Asia there will presently arise a new Russia capable of awakening and renewing the old. Scarcity ought to compel the Russian both to act and create. In Europe, due to its sheer population density, communism will arise and abolish private property as well as the family, while Russia will be able to expand throughout Asia at will. If anyone should point out that this would likely take money, he was certainly right. Why, then, does Russia squander so much of its wealth in Europe, as for instance on sustaining so many embassies, etc.? Actually, it would do Russia no harm to look poorer in the eyes of Europe—as it were, to sit by the side of the road, cap in hand, collecting pennies. That at least would provide time for gathering strength at home.

So far as the Eastern question was concerned: "Surely there is among us today no political thinker who would maintain that Constantinople must be ours. The crux of the Eastern question today hinges upon the alliance between Germany and Austria and the Turkish provinces seized by Austria with Prince Bismarck's connivance." What, then, should be done? "If only we would let them know that we do not intend to interfere in Euro-

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, XII, p. 501. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 502.

pean affairs to the extent that we once did, then perhaps they would fall out among themselves so much the sooner. Surely the Austrians are not likely to believe that the Germans love them simply because of their beautiful eyes. On the contrary, Austria is well aware that Germany's final goal is to unite with the Austrian Germans so as to bring unity to its final fruition. Yet Austria will never give up its own Germans, even if it were to be in exchange for Constantinople. The seeds of discord, therefore, are quite evidently here. What is more, Germany has the immediate problem of the French question to consider, which remains unsolved and is likely to remain so for a long time. Apart from this, it suddenly develops that not only does German unification remain incomplete, but that it does not even rest on a firm foundation. Then, too, European socialism is far from dead, and remains a powerful danger. In other words, it is quite enough for us Russians to bide our time and not to interfere, not even when the others start calling for us and certainly not until conflict between them has actually broken out and their so-called balance of power has collapsed. At that point we can solve the Eastern question forever. If only we choose the right moment, such as another Franco-Prussian massacre, we should be able to announce as we did then in respect of the Crimean Sea, 'We do not choose to recognise Austria's occupation of Turkey,' and that occupation will cease, as perhaps will the whole of Austria."[1]

It is unnecessary perhaps to offer a criticism of this final point in Dostoevsky's Eastern policy, as it is unnecessary to argue with his foreign policy in general. Nor does one need to ascribe these views to Dostoevsky's age and failing strength or the bare fact that it was his last work. Dostoevsky was not all that old, and while he may have been tired and weary he certainly was anything but senile. He was writing about this new principle and the coming revolution shortly after he had finished *The Brothers Karamazov*: therein lies the tragedy of this political, philosophical and, above all, philosophico-religious fiasco. We are told on the one hand that the Russian monk will save Russia and the world; but from his death-bed we also hear that Asia will be the saviour of Russia. In the first instance religion and Christ are set down as the underlying principles of life and death; in the second, a Russia, which has sustained defeat in Europe, is advised to set out into poverty-ridden Asia so as to force its flabby muscles into action. What is more, European technology of all things, is to become the hand-

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochneniy*, XII, pp. 508–9.

maiden of this enterprise. Dostoevsky wants to see two railroads built into Asia. one of them into Siberia and the other into Central Asia. Then, he says, there will be results, clear to both Europeans and Russians.[1]

One need only ask what Dostoevsky would have said about the Russo-Japanese war and the evolution of events after that.

Dostoevsky is at least consistent in his aristocratic proclivities. He defends war, most extensively so in his lively polemic against Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* which rejects the Russo-Turkish war as a conflict in the name of Slavic brotherhood. Dostoevsky, with considerable effect, takes the example of a pagan who makes a child laugh in its mother's arms by tickling it with his revolver only to shoot him through the head at that very instant. That makes war a great and just cause for the nation and for the State. Here once again, Dostoevsky finds himself in full agreement with de Maistre who sung the praises of the soldier no less than of the executioner. But then, Dostoevsky is also in other good company on this issue, including Nicholas I of Russia, von Moltke, Bismarck and Emperor Wilhelm of Germany, Theodore Roosevelt in America and others.

Dostoevsky produces some remarkable justifications for war: people, and Russians in particular, do not go to war in order to kill but to sacrifice their lives; war is conducive to democracy because it makes master and servant become equals. I should not care to argue with these sophisms by making actual reference to the histories of the Russo-Turkish and Russo-Japanese wars. It is simply a fact that Dostoevsky is a monarchist, an advocate of absolute monarchy, wherefore he defends war and expediency and even Russia's outdated military leadership: Skobolev and the Cossacks are his heroes.

Dostoevsky happened to be in Geneva in 1867 while an international peace congress was meeting there and wrote that he had never heard such nonsense and foolishness spoken in all his life. It is certainly possible that the proceedings were unrealistic and naïve, but Dostoevsky had always tried to grasp the "idea" behind a given historical event, yet curiously the idea behind this one seems to have eluded him entirely.

The only kind of wars to which Dostoevsky objects are those conducted by bourgeois societies because these are said to lack just and heroic goals. Such wars only serve the money bags and stock market speculators. the shopkeepers and the exploiters.

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochmeniy*, XII, p. 505.

Every now and again it does occur to him that one world is pretty much one of flesh and blood, even though, to be sure, not the blood of those who spill it in war. Still, he cannot rid himself of the dazzling idea of Russian imperialism.

It is understandable that soldiers often appear in his novels. That is simply a reflection of the contemporary Russian scene. He is right in stressing the good nature and the naïveté of the Russian peasant soldier but, above and beyond this, he is spellbound by the romance of war and by the notion of war as a grand game. Here again, you have the aristocratic temperament which is fascinated by dangerous gamesmanship and which has nothing but contempt for quiet and measured industriousness. He sees the duel in very much the same light: despite some reservations in individual instances where he does not defend it as the *ultima ratio* you will still not find any general condemnation of the practice. Even here the emphasis is on the blind play of chance.

CHAPTER X

RUSSIAN DOMESTIC POLITICS

I

ANY comment on Dostoevsky's view of Russia's internal politics must take into account that he devoted substantially ıore attention to his country's external rather than internal ɛlations. He is more concerned with man as a religious and ıoral creature and views the Church essentially as a social ɾganisation. Thus he tends to mix up Church with State and ation and to view them as a sort of vague composite.

As we have seen in a previous chapter, he regards social organisaon as having had a "mystical" origin. In fact, Dostoevsky often ɜes the word "society" to designate such an organisation. The ate—so it appears from his polemic with Kavelin in the noteɔoks[1]—has always been guided by a chosen few, and the pro·amatic ideas of these higher types become the code from which ıe lower orders derive their standards of mediocrity. Yet, a ·eat man appears from time to time who alters this code radically. hus the State is nothing absolute or fully mature. So far, at least, has been a mere embryo. "Societies"—the word society and ate are used interchangeably here—are not the "result" of the ɜed to live communally but rather the outgrowth of a great idea. Elsewhere in *A Writer's Diary* for 1877,[2] Dostoevsky suggests ·at the nation is a political organism and advances the thesis at the State must accept the same authority which every dividual does, namely the authority of Christ. A political organition, like all others, needs a guiding light. We have already ɔted his assertion in *The Possessed* to the effect that it ıs imɔssible to organise a people merely on the basis of science and ason. We have also seen him put forward a demand for idealism politics, in the course of his dialogue with Granovsky. A great

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij*, 1883, I, p. 371 [2] *Ibid*, XII, p 53

policy can only achieve success by being wholly truthful, as in the case of the freeing of slaves in America and the emancipation of the serfs in Russia during 1861.

Dostoevsky is, in fact, a supporter of theocracy and of the Russian national theocracy in particular: the Church, State, and nation become indistinguishable, both conceptually and politically. It obviously follows from the essential vagueness and passivity of a mystical creed that authority does not devolve from Christ but rather from the pope-emperor. "Men, not measures" could well be Dostoevsky's motto, even though he would like to retain the Russian man, or rather the Russian everyman in his conceptual scheme. Still even this everyman must first evolve spiritually, so as really to become an everyman, and must, as we are told in *A Raw Youth*, "re-educate himself." Further, it is said in the notebooks that "man does not simply live out his whole life; he is actually in process of moulding and creating himself."[1] These are fine and noble words, but only for those who do not believe in the "higher types" to the same extent that Dostoevsky did.

2

THE czar is the embodiment of the national organism. Thus—in the last volume of *A Writer's Diary*—we are offered the old, officially sanctioned patriarchal theory, which holds that the czar is the father of his children, a relationship which is to be understood in the most literal sense possible. The czar of all the Russias is no external or exterior power: he is the organic embodiment of all power and might. Here in Russia there exists no force to shape, protect, and lead us other than this organic, lively link between the nation and its czar, out of which everything springs.[2] This child-like, not to say childish, theory of the State takes on some ugly overtones once it becomes clear the Dostoevsky emphasises this paternal role of the czar chiefly when he has the "Czar-Liberator" in mind. Not every czar actually turns out to be quite the same kind of all-embracing father. Some are softer in the scale of hardness which Dostoevsky's political mineralogy assigns to this organic element.

We read in the notebooks that: "I, just like Pushkin, am the czar's servant, because his children, his people, do not hold the

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenny*, 1883, I, p. 359.

[2] *Ibid.*, XII, p. 489.

zar's servant in contempt. I shall be his servant even more once e comes truly to believe that the people really are his children. omehow, he has not seemed able to believe it for all too long."[1] hus, the bland equation between czar and the "higher man" ecomes problematical, even to Dostoevsky. If he often does voice ıch doubts about czarism since the days of Peter the Great, it is ırely legitimate to ask whether even those czars who preceded eter actually did believe in their own people.

The patriarchal theory of social organisation certainly requires ıat the people no less than the czar be heard. In the light of that, is difficult to discover from Dostoevsky's own statements how ne might formulate the relationship which he conceives to exist etween czar and people by biological analogy, yet we are evidently ıpposed to see the czar cast in the role of brain to the entire :ganism. It is hard to tell whether he, like the patricians of ıcient Rome, assigns the role of the stomach to the people or hether even that is left to the czar. Whatever the case may be, owever, Dostoevsky does manage to deduce from his theory the ıagic word "have trust."

Politically and administratively this expression of trust means ıe convocation of the Assembly (*zemskı sobor*), which had not et since the seventeenth century. Dostoevsky demands that only enuine muzhiks be called together and even though, quite oviously, the village kulak and money-lender will also make his ievitable appearance, he too is seen as a muzhik at bottom who ill not betray his country on large issues, because "that is our ıtional temperament." Dostoevsky leaves the mechanics of ow actually to carry out this plan to those who "are in charge government," but he foresees no difficulties since the Russian eople is worthy of trust. "Who, indeed, has not seen the people ound the czar, close to the czar, and with the czar?"[2]

We, "the national intelligentsia" (the quotation marks are ostoevsky's), will remain on the sidelines at the start, observing e muzhik and listening to what he has to say, and if that in- lligentsia is asked to remain in the background at least for a ne that is for pedagogical rather than political reasons. "Let us arn from the people how to speak the truth. Let us learn the eople's humility, its realism, and the earnestness of its common nse outlook."[3] Thus Dostoevsky advances the idea that, for om being easily led, men united will interact with each other so

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, 1883, I, p. 366. [2] *Ibid.*, XII, p. 488.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 490.

as to articulate the voice of reason. The muzhik is the very one to tell the czar "the truth and nothing but the truth."

Dostoevsky hankers after a *zemski sobor* just as the Slavophiles and the Narodniks did, but certainly not a parliament in the European sense. In literal translation, he refers to parliament as a mere talking shop (*govorilnya*), and see parliamentary representatives as no more than word-mongers and gossips. Hence, a parliament in Russia would mean nothing but a new enslavement of the people carried out at the hands of the intelligentsia. We are told in the notebooks that the people require no midwives to stand between themselves and their czars.[1]

Dostoevsky objects to a constitution because he feels that elected representatives would not defend the interests of the people as a whole, but only those of their own social strata, and would thus only institute a new form of oppression. "You will be asking that guns be turned upon the people! And you will exile the press to Siberia, when it does not sing your own tune. Under your rule it will not only be impossible to speak as word against you: it will be scarcely possible to breathe!"[2]

Dostoevsky is not, of course, the first opponent of constitutionalism and parliamentarianism. He could have defended his own position by referring both to Herzen and Bakunin, as well as Carlyle, whose ideas he evidently absorbed through Grigoriev. Naturally, too Katkov was likewise against a constitution and parliament in the later stages of his development, as were Pobedonostsev and all the other supporters of absolutism. Of course, it never did trouble Dostoevsky that Carlyle could well afford to be a foe of parliamentary institutions, since he already had the benefit of enjoying them. Dostoevsky was also very much preoccupied with the French Republic. There are many articles in the *Diary* about France at the beginning of the 1870's. Since he sees in France both Europe and Catholicism, Dostoevsky studies her politics as carefully as he does those of the Vatican. As an absolute monarchist himself he finds himself in the cross-fire between the republican Thiers and the legitimists. The republic strikes him as mere negation while legitimism is simply a creation of the papacy, a view which was also held for a time by Bismarck. Occasionally he contemplates the possibility of France's redemption which from his viewpoint seems possible only after a return by the intelligentsia to a faith in Christ, but these are only his fleeting thoughts.

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, 1883, I, p 373 [2] *Ibid.*, p 360.

Dostoevsky is a harsh critic of political parties. France, with its growing political divisions, is held up as a dire warning. He speaks most critically of the proliferation of factions within parties. In Russia he sees only one political party, that of the Westernisers, and he would like to see others; he can discover only their dim outlines, whereas he suspects the Westernisers of actually being supported by the government.

3

DOSTOEVSKY'S political views also emerge from comments about the administration. Officialdom is often the focus of his attention. As early as *The Poor Folk* he gives us a humorous description of the whole world of the clerk. Later on (as for instance in *The Double*) the darker aspects of Russian officialdom are much emphasised. This is also true in *The Possessed.* Dostoevsky sees the government official of his day as the very embodiment of Europeanism. In the notebooks he calls him "Europe itself."[1] From his standpoint, he views unfavourably the reforms carried out after the emancipation of the serfs (the courts, jury trials, etc.). He would welcome the *zemstvo* as a return to popular institutions, and he is surprised that the liberals support the *zemstvo,* when as Europeans they ought to support the bureaucracy.[2]

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenty,* 1883, I, p 362 [2] *Ibid*

CHAPTER XI

THE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF DOSTOEVSKY

DOSTOEVSKY became more intimately acquainted with his own people in Siberia; he mingled with the muzhik and persuaded himself that this thief, murderer and drunkard still had that essential kernel or spark within him without which human life is impossible. He saw at first hand both the muzhik's faith and his love for his fellowman. This was the core of Dostoevsky's early message from Siberia to his friend A. Maykov, and it is a theme to which he returns again and again at later times to explain the changes within himself which occurred during his Siberian exile. He makes the point in *A Writer's Diary* for 1873, when defending himself against the charge that Siberia had made him a broken man. On the contrary, he says, Siberia had certainly not broken him, but rather something else had indeed wrought a profound change. "It was my intimate contact with the people, my fraternal association with them in common misfortune, and the realisation that I had actually merged with them, that I had been placed on their level and that I had become a part of the bottom-most stratum."[1] Dostoevsky nevertheless turned out to be mistaken in his judgment of himself. This had been his goal when he returned from Siberia, but the path upon which he set out afterwards did not lead in that direction.

The programme of the periodical *Time* (*Vremya*) proclaimed the unity of intelligentsia and people as the goal of the magazine as well as of the historical moment. Dostoevsky finds the common man to be a foundation, a soil (*pochva*) upon which the edifice of Russian culture can be securely erected. Dostoevsky thus accepts the emancipation of the serfs, and hopes for an understanding between himself and the newly-freed peasant. Indeed, both *Time* (*Vremya*) and *Epoch* (*Epokha*) were periodicals which Dostoevsky conceived as having their roots firmly in the soil, as

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenny*, X, p. 304.

against the many other publications which had severed this vital link.

He considers the peasants' soil a foundation. That is why the earth acquires such crucial importance in Dostoevsky's symbolism. Raskolnikov literally kisses the earth he stands on to announce his change of heart, and Zosima in his religious preaching demands that one kiss the earth often. Thus Dostoevsky's programme is a populist one: he is a Narodnik, member of a highly heterogeneous movement which was based on work for the people.

Naturally Dostoevsky had first to come to terms with the two leading ideological trends before his day. In his first sketches and polemical essays he is much more concerned with the Slavophiles than he is with the Westernisers, precisely because the Slavophiles also preached a "return" to the people. Very much like his friend Grigoriev, he saw the conflict between the Westernisers and the Slavophiles as having been surmounted. Despite all his respect for them, he regards the Slavophiles as rather too abstract, one-sidedly historicistic, and Muscovite. He admits that the Slavophiles love Russia, yet they have lost an understanding of the Russian spirit. Dostoevsky rejects their aristocratic prejudices when it comes to solving social problems.

This is the sense of Dostoevsky's writing in *Time* (*Vremya*) and *Epoch* (*Epokha*). Before long, however, his tone changes, and the gap between him and the Slavophiles narrows. He still distinguishes between the older and the younger Slavophiles, as for instance in *The Possessed*, and remains sensitive to the differences between himself and the younger Slavophiles, who are his own contemporaries. Khomyakov and Kireyevsky were in a real sense the mentors of Dostoevsky and Grigoriev both in religion and the philosophy of history. Yet, at times Dostoevsky does come rather close to the standpoint of the later, more politically minded Slavophiles.

In *A Writer's Diary* for 1877 he offers a "Slavophile confession of faith." In it he accepts the notion of a union of all Slavs based on a distinctly Russian religious foundation. Yet, in line with Kireyevsky, he is at the same time also urging the concept of world-wide unity—a kind of union among all of humanity.[1] While this is a faithful enough reflection of Kireyevsky's viewpoint, after the Polish uprising, Dostoevsky moved closer to an espousal of official Russian state policy. Not only Danilevsky, a former member of the Petrashevsky circle, but also Katkov and his

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, XII, pp. 203–6, in 1929 edition.

followers came to exert an increasingly powerful influence on Dostoevsky both in specific issues and in their overall outlook.

Dostoevsky's change in attitude was also reflected in his re-evaluation of the Westernisers.

When he began his career as a publicist in the pages of *Time* (*Vremya*), he viewed Westernism as being merely too narrow and somewhat archaic, yet he still felt himself to be one of the Westernisers, even though one who had discovered the people. He maintained that even Belinsky had been a Slavophile toward the end of his life, and would have become a full-fledged one but for his death. Evidently, Dostoevsky was seeking a way to surmount the endemic conflict between Westernisers and Slavophiles, and thus to arrive at a new synthesis. He recognised the value of Westernism and of European civilisation. The reconciliation between the educated elite in both the Western and Slavophile camps and the common people was to take place simply by bringing enlightenment to the populace at large. The man of the people was to be made one with his brother the intellectual. That, in effect, was the tenor of his 1861 programme. The bad influence of the educated man was to be eliminated by the simple expedient of spreading enlightenment to the masses. Yet Dostoevsky's own view of the relationship between the intelligentsia and the people underwent a barely noted change, as he came to pit faith and philosophy against each other. Just as faith came to acquire greater value than reason, and reason became merely an instrument of the soul, so too the intellectual was to become no more than a tool and servant of the people, and one who essentially learns only from the people. Thus, whereas the intellectual was depicted as a teacher of the people at the start, so eventually the people and the muzhik in particular became the intellectual's true mentors.

We have seen that the real muzhik (not excluding the village usurer) is expected to tell the educated man what is actually supposed to be done. This is, in fact, Dostoevsky's testamentary national programme, and presupposes that the muzhik will become the mentor of the intelligentsia in all matters social and political. Yet Dostoevsky never bothered to explore how or whether this might become a realistic possibility. He never suggested any practical way of effecting a return to the people, and never came close to resolving a problem even though he returns to it again and again. In a letter to Strakhov of the year 1871 he says that every genuine talent in whatsoever area of

activity has always turned to the people.[1] Dostoevsky wants to go even further in seeking to justify a kind of "rule" which has it that only the untalented Russian can become alienated from the people, turn to Catholicism, etc. It is therefore worth repeating that Dostoevsky nowhere indicates how this return to the people is to be realised. He does point to Pushkin as an example yet no one can really claim that Pushkin effected a return to the muzhik simply by having created a handful of national types derived from a study of his country's history.

In the end, a return to the people turns out to be little more than a return to that people's primitive faith. This is really what Dostoevsky was striving for, but he did not succeed even in that. We are told that Zosima was both converted and tutored by his servant, and still he expounds the people's faith in an entirely distinctive manner. In *A Writer's Diary* for 1877 Dostoevsky has a rather lengthy critique of Tolstoy's Levin in which he tries to discover whether Levin's faith derives from the muzhik. Eventually he concludes that people like Levin are incapable of the muzhik's uniquely complete faith. If Dostoevsky finds Levin to be an educated aristocrat and large landowner who will never be capable of believing in quite the way the muzhik does, one can hardly say that he is wrong; yet he himself hardly managed to get further than Levin, except in the sense that he plunged head over heels into mysticism, and even that did not in the end save him from seeking an escape in, of all things, Asia. He himself is not willing to wait for that meeting of the *zemski sobor* and to sit quietly in the background listening to the muzhik. What he does want are those two railways lines on which to set forth. Thus, by definition, Russia's dunces are destined to become Europeans, Catholics, and Nihilists, while the real talents are evidently meant to become Asiatics.

Dostoevsky found himself in a false position *vis-à-vis* the progressive movements of his day almost from the start. This was especially true in respect of the Westernisers, who appear as liberals in the Age of Reform.

Dostoevsky became an enemy of these liberals and remained so to the extent that they remained indifferent to the issue of religion. This indifference was perhaps indeed one of the liberals' major weaknesses, but Dostoevsky's strictures tend to become more and

[1] Letter to N. N. Strakhov, from Dresden, May 5/April 23, 1871, *Pis'ma*, II, p. 357.

more right-wing in tone even though he knew that he could not reasonably adopt the standpoint of people like Katkov. Dostoevsky, moreover, does an almost deliberate injustice to the liberals and Westernisers since there were, after all, many shades and kinds of liberalism, which required differentiation. There were a good many among them who were hardly indifferent to the religious issue, as for instance Granovsky and Chicherin.[1]

Dostoevsky's great mistake lay in the fact that he wanted to reduce the complexity of all things to a single mould. Liberalism to him was identical with Europeanism, and thus inescapably identified with bureaucracy—simply because Peter the Great had introduced European ways into Russia by means of a bureaucracy. Going further, he equates liberalism with nihilism. He thus overlooks the fact that Herzen had abandoned liberal Westernism some time previously, and that Dobrolyubov and Chernyshevsky had also turned against it, which suggests that Dostoevsky himself suffered from a kind of political colour-blindness. Liberalism certainly did pave the way for nihilism; and if in *The Possessed* the leader of the nihilists does turn out to be the son of the liberal Stephen Trofimovich, that is hard to object to in itself especially from a literary-artistic standpoint, if only the author had not made that son into such a completely miserable creature. When one is told later on in the *Diary* for 1876 that Granovsky was one of the purest and most idealistic of the men of the 1840's, that he was the most honourable of the Stephen Trofimoviches, and that Dostoevsky himself really loves that kind of Trofimovich, one is tempted to feel that this must be the kind of love which the spider feels for the fly.

Early on, Dostoevsky also entertained kindly thoughts toward his teacher and friend Belinsky. Yet later he turns against him more and more categorically both in his letters and *A Writer's Diary*. He makes judgments which are not merely unjust but downright fanatical, and which cannot be understood otherwise than as expressions of a bad conscience; indeed they can hardly be explained in any other way. Hence, perhaps, why the recently published chapter of *The Possessed* has bad things to say about Granovsky, Griboedov, Belinsky, and the Decembrists.

[1] Timothy N. Granovsky (1813–55), historian, professor at Moscow University, a Westerniser, often referred to by Masaryk in Vols. I and II of *The Spirit of Russia*, particularly in I, p. 348 n.

Boris Nikolaevich Chicherin (1828–1904) was also a Westerniser, a liberal, and a professor of constitutional law in Moscow. See esp. *The Spirit of Russia*, I, p. 349 n.

Just as Dostoevsky had become unjust to Belinsky, so too did he become unfair to Turgenev. He read Turgenev in Siberia with the greatest of pleasure, and considered him one of the greatest among the newer writers. Even after his return from Siberia he still seems to rate him highly, yet in *The Possessed* he becomes the chief proponent of a higher liberalism devoid of any purpose or goal. Then, finally, in the last volume of the *Diary*, one is faced with Krylov's fable about—the swine. This relationship toward Turgenev was false both in a personal sense as well as objectively unjustified. It was all the more unjustified since Dostoevsky remained religiously immature himself and because he numbered among his friends a good many who were not all that much above and beyond the very liberalism which he castigated so vehemently. Certainly, for myself I cannot help seeing some of Strakhov in the personality of Stephen Trofimovich. I do not know the extent to which this portrayal may have been conscious on Dostoevsky's part, but to avoid misunderstanding, I would only add that this is not intended to be a slight on Strakhov or his memory. After all, Dostoevsky always depicts himself quite mercilessly as well.

If he tells us most earnestly at one point in the *Diary* for 1876 that he is not only a foe of the liberals but equally so of the conservatives, we could perhaps take it as an expression of his awareness of the kind of society he had come to live in.

All of this suggests another point about nihilism, and Dostoevsky's outlook once again emerges as rather questionable. Actually the older liberals had already set forth arguments against nihilism very similar to Dostoevsky's, of which Golovin is a good instance.[1] Yet Dostoevsky found himself in anti-nihilist circles during the 1860s and 1870s including not only that of Leskov but also those of Klyushnikov and even Krestovsky.[2] A good deal has already been said about Dostoevsky's nihilism, but a few concluding remarks may still be in order.

In a series of articles which appeared in *Time* (*Vremya*) during 1861, Dostoevsky describes his own return to the people very beautifully in terms of his own inner inclination toward Western-

[1] I. G. Golovin left Russia in 1844 and wrote against absolutism. Yet he was a conservative who opposed socialism and nihilism. See *The Spirit of Russia*, I, p. 128 n

[2] Nikolai Leskov, the great novelist and story writer, published the anti-nihilistic novel *Nowhere* (*Nekuda*) in 1864. Victor Klyushnikov and Vsevolod Krestovsky were minor novelists, now forgotten, who likewise wrote anti-nihilistic novels in the 1860's. See *The Spirit of Russia*, II, p. 59 n.

ism, and gives no credit to the Slavophiles for a new *pochveniki* ("to the soil") trend. He is talking in favour of realism in a completely forthright fashion and sees a rebirth of life in such a realism as well as the beginnings of self-knowledge and a new outlook on life. He praises dispassionate analysis, and says that realists are never afraid of the outcome of this kind of examination, whereas the Slavophiles, by virtue of their idealism, lose sight of reality and even tend to kill it. Dostoevsky offers the example of Ostrovsky's plays, in which he sees displayed the positive elements of Russia's essential qualities. Although Dostoevsky vigorously rejects Dobrolyubov's one-sided utilitarianism in literary matters, he still accepts realism precisely because he does not equate it with utilitarianism.

This is not to say that Dostoevsky defined the substance of realism quite accurately but it does mean that in 1861 he had not rejected realism, at a time when it constituted the most important element of the nihilistic outlook. Even as late as *The Brothers Karamazov* we find Alyosha, the man of the future, proclaimed a realist. The question thus is why Dostoevsky could not identify nihilism's other components by further careful analysis? Why, in *The Possessed*, does he condemn nihilism in all its aspects?

Dostoevsky sticks with his formula from *Crime and Punishment* through *The Brothers Karamazov*, even though he could have seen its fallacy from the actual evolution of the nihilistic and revolutionary movement, which he was in a position to follow both in Russian and European literature. This is difficult to excuse, and evidence of a narrowness of outlook which is little short of damning. Surely it is inconceivable that a psychologist, a sociologist, a philosopher of history, whose job it was to observe and investigate objectively, could fail to distinguish between the most important elements which went into the making of Russian nihilism, and thus it is precisely here that his real weakness lies. The Westerners had already divided into two camps—liberals and socialists—some time before Dostoevsky's own catastrophe. Hence a writer who lived and became a part of Russian life, and who wished to be thought conscientious, ought to have been able during the '60s and '70s to distinguish between such concepts as individualism, anarchism, socialism, and terrorism. Dostoevsky was in a position to compare the respective programmes of these various political trends, and thus ought to have sensed the shades of difference between the terroristic proposals made by his own colleagues and the quality of Nechayev's brand of terrorism. He must have known

how Herzen viewed Bakunin and so forth. In short, I find Dostoevsky's formula absolutely inexcusable.

In *A Writer's Diary* Dostoevsky denied the fact that his Siberian exile had broken him. He mentions Nechayev's terroristic circle in 1873,[1] and concedes that he himself might have become just such a terrorist in his youth; yet, allegedly, his acceptance of Belinsky's socialism was merely theoretical and never political. Political socialism, he asserts, wants only and always to rob the rich! As late as *The Brothers Karamazov* Dostoevsky is still pretending that socialism is not something that concerns workers but rather that it is an issue having to do with God.

It is here that one comes to discover his essentially false attitude toward religion and his mistaken conception of mysticism. His speculations about the Apocalypse in *A Raw Youth* as well as later are simply not susceptible of solution in any social sense.

Dostoevsky counters "political" socialism with "Christian" socialism. Indeed, Zosima calls himself a socialist. Also, because Christianity and Russism are generally identical for Dostoevsky, he often talks about a "Russian" socialism, particularly as late as the last number of the *Diary*.[2] Father Zosima looks forward to an eventual reconciliation between Russian plutocrat and Russian beggar, presumably because the monastery itself is the true embodiment of communism. Obviously, however, the equality which prevails in monasteries is no true equality at all, and that is quite clear from Dostoevsky's own portrayal of Russia's monks. I should be most surprised if Dostoevsky had failed to read Leskov's descriptions, in which his colleague-in-arms in the battle against nihilism elaborated on the subject of the priesthood and hierarchy. Yet neither Father Zosima nor Tuberozov are able to resist the idea of socialism.[3] The principle of the whole thing is questionable: there appears to be a need for some kind of social legislation, apparently because the Christian teaching of brotherly love somehow remains insufficient.

In answering a letter from one of his correspondents in 1877 who tells him that he has no qualm of conscience about something he did in a certain bank. Dostoevsky has this to say about his own Christian socialism: "The Christian—that is to say, the perfect, ideal, and higher Christian—says: 'I have a duty to share all with my younger brother, and to serve him in every way.'

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, I, p. 198 [2] January 1881.

[3] Masaryk is referring to Leskov's novel *Cathedral Folk* (*Soboryane*), in which Tuberozov is one of the chief characters.

On the other hand, the collectivist should say, 'Yes, you are bound to share your wealth with me, the younger and poorer one, and you must serve me.' The Christian is right, the collectivist is not."[1]

This way of putting it is effective, but it is only a skilful way of parrying the question. Where are these perfect, ideal, higher Christians, and how many of them are there? In the ordinary course of events love rarely transcends sentimentality, because so many Christians adhere to the precepts of the Frenchman who taught: Love thy neighbour, but just in case, continue to do as you see fit!

One is led to conclude willy-nilly that Dostoevsky has to accept socialism in the end even though he tries to give it a Christian veneer. It was precisely the dynamic force of socialism which brought forth Christian socialism, which in turn came to figure as a kind of concession to, as well as a retreat from, the maximum programme. Incidentally, there is something quite extraordinary about Dostoevsky's theism: in *The Brothers Karamazov* we are told by a Parisian police officer that the most forthright and courageous socialists are those who believe in God. Dostoevsky, of course, always does have a tendency to play with fire, but in this particular instance he seems to be playing with "political" rather than merely with "theoretical" fire.

Socialism, understood as atheism, is viewed by Dostoevsky as being very much the same as Catholicism; he even tells us that atheism is better than Catholicism. We have already learned from Dostoevsky that he equates Catholicism with France, and also that he sees France as the motherland of socialism. And yet, as early as 1863, he remarks that even if socialism were possible at all it would prove least possible in France.[2]

Dostoevsky is unable to judge the economic side of socialism fairly, simply because he makes a mystical distinction between ethics and religion. We have already noticed his apocalyptic fear of the Jewish bank. In his *apologia* for Nekrasov, in *A Writer's Diary* for 1877,[3] we are told that gold is "coarseness, force, despotism," and yet we find Dostoevsky himself in pursuit of mammon his whole life long, simply because he was unable to economise. I have made this point elsewhere, and indeed ever since I became acquainted with Goethe I have not believed that genius must somehow be associated with a lack of practicality and

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochneny*, 1883, I, p. 321. [2] In *The Winter Notes*.
[3] Part II of December 1877 issue, XII, p. 359, in 1929 edition.

with profligacy. Here, perhaps, is why Dostoevsky seemed to envy Turgenev just a trifle: "Why should I with all my needs only get 100 roubles per printers' sheet, when Turgenev, who owns 2,000 souls (serfs), gets 400? My poverty *forces* me to write in haste and for money, and thus necessarily spoils my work."[1] Dostoevsky is of course writing this prior to his departure from Siberia and before he had formulated his own Christian orthodox socialism. But in 1863 he is still describing himself to Strakhov as a literary proletarian. Even later, when he had managed to put his own financial affairs in order, he is still telling himself that the liberals' demands after the war with Turkey for bringing order into the public finances are materialistic. What is needed is to preach Christ. In the end he wants two railroads to be built into Asia, and that of course will require money—perhaps even Jewish money! His premature death saved him from the experience of seeing Russia under Alexander III conclude a treaty of friendship and alliance with atheistic-Catholic-socialist France and its moneyed interests.

Dostoevsky also had other grievances against socialist materialism. He has the Grand Inquisitor declare that there will never be enough bread. Apart from this, he argues along the following lines in *A Raw Youth:* "Now that I am full, what am I to do with myself?" That is certainly an important question, but surely only for the person who is full.[2]

Dostoevsky makes a sharp distinction between the people or nation on the one hand and the individual on the other. He wants the latter not only to become a part of the whole and to subordinate himself to it but actually to fuse with it. Yet personality must not be destroyed by the collectivity. In fact, Dostoevsky writes tirelessly against what he calls "the isolation of personality" and says in the notebooks that science is quite unable to establish where one personality begins and another ends.[3]

Still, Dostoevsky makes many an error in justifying his own relationship to the people (*narodnichestvo*) and "the soil" (*pochvennichestvo*). First, notice that his concept of the collectivity contains many vague and disparate elements. Folk, nation, state, and theocracy all appear to merge into his single idea. Clearly, however, it is quite possible to accept Dostoevsky's notion of the people or folk, and yet to reject the state as well as the theocracy.

Dostoevsky is also mistaken when he equates extreme individualism with socialism: actually socialism stresses the whole

[1] Letter to his brother Mikhail, from Semipalatinsk, May 9, 1859, *Pis'ma*, I, p. 246. [2] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, IX, p. 201. [3] *Ibid.*, 1883, I, p. 356.

just as he does, the only difference being in its conception of the whole.

Dostoevsky fears extreme individualism and isolation, because he sees it leading to suicide. His Kirilov in *The Possessed* expects that one day he will be able to tell himself: 'You are a czar in the full sense of the term,' and that will mean the advent of a new man, a superman. Dostoevsky quite fails to see that such a superman will mean an historical evolutionary process and not merely extreme individualism.

Dostoevsky also appears to be altogether at odds with himself on this issue. His chief religious dogma, a belief in immortality, is, after all, a religious and metaphysical expression of his struggle to assert the claims of personality, and yet he weakens and dilutes this struggle by injecting political fear into it. That is why he sees nothing but an exaggerated and even a diabolical pride in the revolutionary aspirations of an educated intelligentsia which has only contempt for the common people. You must re-educate yourself, he reminds the students of Moscow, and you must learn not to despise the people.

Dostoevsky makes a ready equation between the striving for the development of a strong personality and terroristic anarchism. Yet, he has no clear conception of anarchism: his notion that everything is permitted under anarchism is an exaggeration. There are, after all, various kinds and degrees of anarchism.

On the other hand one can understand why Dostoevsky should have equated anarchical terrorism with socialism during the 1860s. The various programmes of the period suggest that the two were often confused, especially so in Russia. Still, by 1873 he ought to have been able to make a clearer distinction between Marx and Bakunin than he actually does in the *Diary*,[1] and he certainly ought to have been in an even better position to do so when writing *The Brothers Karamazov*. Thus the fact that he misjudges the revolution and fails to analyse its motives, methods, and scope accurately can only be explained in terms of a philosophical and political weakness on his own part. Confronted with the issue of revolution, Dostoevsky could hardly disguise the fact from his own self that in all the states of Europe revolution had actually mitigated and then eventually triumphed over absolutism. Whether in Holland, England, America, France, Prussia, Austria, etc., revolutionaries had really won out over political and ecclesiastical despotism. Certainly in this sense, he was quite right to

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, X, p. 302.

view Europe as the embodiment of revolution, even as the Slavophiles had regarded it.

In 1848 he was naturally in favour of revolution himself. When he was once asked in the Petrashevsky Circle what should be done in the event that the peasants could not be emancipated otherwise than by means of an uprising, Dostoevsky had agreed that it would then have to be through an uprising. He also has a beautiful story about the wives of the Decembrists who came to visit him and his colleagues in Tobolsk to present them with copies of the scriptures. Clearly this kind of gesture was the product of neither atheism nor lawlessness. Yet after Siberia, after the Polish uprising and the reaction which followed it, Dostoevsky adopts the precept that those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword.

I am inclined to think that Dostoevsky's view of the world and its life is aristocratic rather than democratic, and that his aristocratic proclivities derive from a religious and philosophical foundation. It could well be objected that Dostoevsky often defends democracy in *A Writer's Diary*. Even his antagonists emphasised his article of 1876 entitled "Unquestionable Democracy,"[1] in which he not only recognises but defends the democratic element within Russian society. Here Dostoevsky suggests that the Russian people can expect a promising future since "a pervasive democratic spirit does exist and there is general consensus among the Russian people, starting with the top.[2]

Here I must disagree. I shall try to comment on some of the terms.

Certainly Dostoevsky was in essential sympathy with the trend toward democracy, but the question is of method and degree of democracy. When he talks about it Dostoevsky qualifies his own concept of democracy by using the word "popular" (populist), yet we know that he identifies the "people" with the state, and that in the final analysis he does opt for absolutism. It is therefore worth noting that he is in this particular article really talking about democratisation in the sense of popularisation as "the highest peak." The "peak" is populist and democratic.

Dostoevsky had a rather democratic image of the Russian aristocracy. The older Russian nobility was in fact closer to the people in a cultural sense, even if not in an economic or political

[1] In Part II of May 1876 of *A Writer's Diary*, XI, pp. 305–7 of 1929 edition.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 306.

one. Actually, Dostoevsky tries to depict the archtype of the Russian aristocrat in *A Raw Youth*, where he draws a character who endures the suffering of all mankind for everybody else. He sees the future of Russia definitely assured if there were to be no more than a thousand of such people. These plans of the liberal Versilov may not be entirely Dostoevsky's own, but if they are half the same, that is sufficient. Dostoevsky was an aristocrat, a pleasant and brotherly aristocrat like his own Idiot. He is quite satisfied to see equality achieved on a religious and ethical plane, but is quite indifferent to it on the economic and political ones, because he takes a religious and ecclesiastical view of the State itself. I would concede that Dostoevsky felt himself a "proletarian." He makes frequent critical comments about great landowners who do nothing. He also evidences a democratic attitude of sorts in the matter of literary rewards, as shown by his remarks about the royalties paid to Turgenev. In 1871, he refers to the writings of Turgenev and Tolstoy as "the literature of the landlord."[1] Tolstoy's Levin appears to him in 1877 to be nothing more than a "young gentleman," a "squire," in whose being still remain traces of what Dostoevsky calls "idling" (*"prazdnoshataystvo"*). Yet, this is a rather negative democratism, just as is his certainly honest discontent with the economic and social conditions prevailing in his day. Shatov, in *The Possessed*, not only calls the nobleman Stravrogin an aristocrat; he thinks of him as the son of a lackey in the same way. Dostoevsky, in his heart believes only in "higher" and "chosen" people.

It is in this context that one should understand his distaste for the bourgeoisie, about which he talks exactly like Herzen and the other aristocrats. He speaks of the masses also in aristocratic fashion. As early as 1846 he credits the general public with having instincts and no education.[2] In the '60s, when he was working out the first of his *narodnichesko* programmes, he is still demanding education for the people. It was only later on that he created a kind of fetish about the people, which was supposed to overcome all the difficulties and obstacles connected with the first programmes. Needless to say, above this people-fetish there is also another fetish, that of a "higher man," or the czar fetish.

I have already mentioned that Dostoevsky often speaks out

[1] In a letter to N. N. Strakhov, from Dresden, May 18/30, 1871, *Pis'ma*, II, p. 365.

[2] Letter to his brother Mikhail, from Petersburg, February 1, 1846, *Pis'ma*, I, p. 86.

against juries, which is to say, against an essentially democratic institution. I am aware that he defends himself against the charge by saying that he simply wanted the authorities to leave the people in peace and that he did not wish to see them regimented. Yet, why then does he fail to tell us what might be done to improve the existing situation?

Dostoevsky often speaks out against serfdom, and depicts its ill effects in many places, as for instance, in the person of Yefimov the musician in the tale *Netochka Nezvanova*. Also, along with the Slavophiles and the Narodniks, he professes great admiration for the Russian *mir*, but that, strictly speaking, is hardly the same as harbouring democratic ideas. Not even his love of the "poor people" is democratic. To be democratic is rather to recognise work well done, and to insist on justice, guaranteed by law; it is, in fact, a new and fresh approach to life and the world, whereas Dostoevsky's view of both remains aristocratic through and through.

Dostoevsky lacks a sense of evolution and accordingly he fails to grasp the concept of evolution. This is clearly shown in all his characters, who fail to develop but rather embody certain of Dostoevsky's ready-made ideas. Alyosha is very characteristic in this respect, as are Raskolnikov and many others. Perhaps Dostoevsky received encouragement for his characteristic outlook from Grigoriev, who in the pages of *Epoch* (*Epokha*) in 1864 wrote open letters rejecting exaggerated historicism. I find this rejection quite congenial myself, but exaggeration cannot discredit something which is correct. Not even Wallace's[1] deductions about spiritualism, derived as they are from a Darwinist foundation, can be grounds for rejecting the idea of evolution.

Dostoevsky can claim to be a historian and a philosopher of history only by virtue of the fact that he is responding to the actions and activities of his contemporaries, and that he depicts the events of a very crucial period. He scrutinises the years from 1846 to 1880 very meticulously; he analyses them; he is a social philosopher of that era.

It is true that Dostoevsky spoke out in favour of progress in the programme for his periodical *Time* (*Vremya*). It almost seems to be a central programme, if one believes in his term "progressi-

[1] The British naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace (1832–1903) wrote *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, London, 1875. The book defended spiritualism, and was widely commented upon particularly in Germany. Dostoevsky might also have read Wallace in German translation or read about him in Alexander Wiessner's *Der Wiederestehende Wunderglaube*, Leipzig, 1875.

vism." Yet Dostoevsky is anything but progressive politically precisely because he lacks a sense for evolution completely. As a mystic, he conceives of history apocalyptically, and not in terms of gradual perfectibility. On the contrary, he sees it as a progressive deterioration from an earlier order which was both true and good. In his view, Peter the Great created disorder, and hence it is not progress that is needed but a return to the Russian god and Christ, and to the embodiment of that god, the people.

Dostoevsky is also a dualist in his way of understanding history. For him history is a manifestation of the good and evil principle: the struggle between God and Satan is played out in the history of man and of the Russian people. History only comes to its end with the final advent of the kingdom of God. History is nothing but a succession of illustrations of mystical ideas, and consequently has no intrinsic worth or substance of its own. In turn, this indeterministic mystical belief in miracles precludes any real faith in an orderly development of human society. Dostoevsky is indeed a Utopian, but a Utopian of the past; he is a radical and even a revolutionary, but he does not wish to forge ahead. Rather he wants to move backwards. He is, in other words, quite evidently a reactionary.

I have entitled this chapter "From Belinsky to Uvarov," but perhaps I should have called it "From Belinsky to Belinsky" —that is, from the Belinsky to the end of the '40s to the Belinsky of the end of the '30s. Belinsky began with the idea that the institution of czarism was both mystical and holy, and, along with Hegel, consoled himself with the thought that everything that exists is reasonable. Later on, he found out that not everything that exists is in fact reasonable. Dostoevsky, on the other hand, started out from the second of Belinsky's realisations at the end of the 1840s, and ended up with the notion of a mystical czardom. One need only compare the last issue of Dostoevsky's *A Writer's Diary* with Belinsky's account of the battle of Borodino. As early as 1861, in the introduction to a series of articles on Russian literature, Dostoevsky discovered in the Russian a synthetic ability and a capacity to empathise with everything, and also the quality of discovering reasonableness in everything that has the least element of humanity about it. With the passage of time his outlook narrowed; he comes to terms with Russian Caesaro-papism despite all of his inner doubts. The monk will be Russia's saviour. Dostoevsky made his confession and received communion before his own death.

CHAPTER XII

DOSTOEVSKY AND RUSSIAN LITERATURE

WE have examined Dostoevsky as a philosopher of history and religion. Yet he was above all an artist, and therefore it is necessary to view him also in that role. This means that one must see how his historical, philosophical, and political ideals were given artistic expression and try to evaluate Dostoevsky's place in Russian and world literature. One would also like to know how some other great Russian writers handled and conceived of Russia's problems in this era. Obviously, this is not the place for a detailed survey of contemporary Russian literature and yet the point is to arrive at an analysis in depth of the Russian problem as assayed by Dostoevsky by looking at those very artists on whom Dostoevsky himself most relied in formulating his own viewpoint. These include, Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, Goncharov, Turgenev, and Tolstoy. Dostoevsky certainly also knew other literary figures of his age, and followed the various attempts to analyse the problem of nihilism during the 1860's and 1870's. But the major figures were certainly his main preoccupation.

To me there is a very real justification for the selection of those I have named. Their works are most truly relevant to the Russian problem, which they, apart from Dostoevsky himself, understood best. I am aware that they were not the only ones, and that it would indeed be possible to discuss a whole body of new literature with reference to this Russian problem, but the substantial fragment represented by Dostoevsky's own life work should be sufficient.

The specialist in Russian literature might take exception to the omission here of Griboedov, Nekrasov, Saltykov, and Ostrovsky. Still, Dostoevsky simply did not pay as much attention to them as he did to those named—with some justice in so far as the Russian problem and the issue of shedding light on the social and historical origins of Russian crisis are concerned. The latter four

were preoccupied with certain phases and aspects of Russian life, but when they try to portray the whole spectrum of Russian life, as do Saltykov and Nekrasov, they fail to reach the real roots of the problems and conditions they describe; or, as in Ostrovsky's case, their analysis is confined only to a small segment of Russian life since he happens to be largely concerned with merchants and their world. Ideally it would of course be desirable to gather interesting fragments relevant to Russia's development from these as well as a good many other writers, but that would involve nothing less than a massive work on modern Russian literature.

A comparison of Griboedov and Pushkin is ready to hand, but unnecessary. Dostoevsky praises the artistic quality of the comedy *Woe from Wit*, but he does not rate the author's philosophical analysis very highly. This judgment is not entirely correct but, Griboedov apart, the reason for rejecting one and not the other is quite clear. As to Saltykov and Nekrasov, I must confess that I myself do not rate them as highly as is generally done. I have the impression that the majority of liberal literary historians are too much under their influence. Dostoevsky had an early acquaintance with Nekrasov, which he later renewed. Also Nekrasov, together with Grigorovich, recommended Dostoevsky's first work—the tale *Poor Folk*—to Belinsky, and thus in a sense discovered Dostoevsky as a writer. No doubt Nekrasov has some things in common with Dostoevsky, especially his portrayal of Russian diseases. Yet if one takes a closer look, and bears in mind Dostoevsky's own correct judgment of the year 1873[1] one is apt to find too much artificiality in Nekrasov and too many superficialities.

Saltykov produced several good things, particularly in his early period, but later on he is too apt to don the shabby, conventional uniform of liberalism. Dostoevsky came into literary conflict with Saltykov at the beginning of the 1860's, from which he emerged most honourably. Nor did Saltykov display any great perceptivity or depth when he characterised Dostoevsky, Grigoriev, and their contemporaries by applying the double-edged expression "swallow" (joker) to them all. Dostoevsky did not of course spare Saltykov either, and consigned him to the ranks of the nihilists. Beyond this, Dostoevsky surely also knew those works which specifically dealt with nihilism—for instance, those of Pisemsky, Leskov, and others. I even think that Leskov suggested certain ideas to Dostoevsky, but I cannot find it in me

[1] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, X, p. 185 f.

to rank either Pisemsky or Leskov among the great explorers of the Russian soul.

Dostoevsky liked to read Pisemsky as early as his stay in Siberia. Pisemsky, though, understood nihilism as "a stormy sea," and exaggereated greatly.

Leskov is a very interesting writer. He used to be condemned as a political reactionary, sometimes this is still done today, but unjustly so. In his novel about nihilists *Nowhere* (*Nekuda*) (1864), several problems occur which Dostoevsky treats later. Leskov emphasises the truth as against lies and lying to oneself; he places the monastery as the antithesis to the world; his nun is strikingly close to Dostoevsky's Zosima. Especially significant is the character of Rainer, who reminds us of Dostoevsky's Idiot. Rainer's mother on her death-bed exacts from her son the promise to live in purity and to lead his wife to the altar a virgin. Dostoevsky also noticed Leskov as a portraitist of spiritual states. Dostoevsky also polemises with Leskov's story *The Sealed Angel* and with the novel *Cathedral Folk* in his *A Writer's Diary* for 1873.

I do rate Ostrovsky rather highly as a poet, but his work does not require analysis in relation to the goal we have set ourselves here. Dostoevsky thought well of him, but never studied him very carefully. It seems to me that the judgment he made of him in Siberia in 1856 ("as an artist . . . as a poet, without ideals")[2] was only altered later under the influence of A. Grigoriev, who was Ostrovsky's enthusiastic admirer.

[1] Letter to A. N. Maykov, from Semipalatinsk, January 18, 1856, *Pis'ma*, I, p. 167.

PART TWO

CHAPTER XIII

TOLSTOY

I WAS in some doubt whether to discuss Tolstoy here along with other Russian writers, or perhaps to treat him in an entirely separate context and place. In his role as artist he of course belongs with the other artists of his time; likewise, his religious preoccupations make for a close relationship to Dostoevsky. On the other hand, both as artist and religious thinker Tolstoy does stand quite apart from other writers, and I should like to stress the point by discussing him in a separate context rather than as part of a collective portrait. Then, too, there is the question of whether or not Tolstoy deserves to be treated as a philosopher of religion in his own right, or indeed as a poet. In the end I have decided to discuss him as one of a series of writers. And, because I have been emphasising the sociological ideas of all these others and especially their philosophies of history, I do not intend to differentiate between the artist and thinker in Tolstoy, even though that distinction has been made frequently in recent times. The decisive consideration for me has been that Tolstoy can illuminate both the religious philosophy as well as the artistic qualities of Dostoevsky, being his exact opposite.

I have said that Tolstoy occupies a rather unique place on the Russian cultural scene. One cannot really say of him that he evolved from any particular predecessors, as, for instance, it has been alleged of Dostoevsky that he is the successor to Gogol. If there is a basis for comparison between Turgenev and Goncharov or Turgenev and Pushkin, there is precisely no such basis for associating Tolstoy with any of his literary precursors or contemporaries. Instead, Tolstoy always stood apart from the literary mainstream. In Petersburg he did for a time see something of Turgenev and several other leading literary figures and critics, such as Nekrasov, Grigoriev, Goncharov, Sologub, Panayev, and Druzhinin. Yet this very contact revealed both to him and to

them the disparity between their chosen courses. Just as Tolstoy chose to live in the country, far away from the big city, so too was he removed from the mainstream of literature, literary society, and the principal literary organs. From time to time he does publish in one or another periodical, but there is never any intimate feeling about or toward these journals nor their distinctive points of view. Similarly, Tolstoy remains quite indifferent to contemporary trends in literary criticism. While Dostoevsky certainly was an outstanding publicist and journalist, Tolstoy has little of this same expertise. The reason for this is that, from the very start, Tolstoy worked only from his own experience and the events of his personal life. He read as widely as other writers did and knew both Russian and foreign literature well, but his familiarity with the minds of others rarely became a personal experience for him. Perhaps Rousseau influenced Tolstoy more than anyone else from his early youth on and thus helped to mould his temperament. His daily spiritual food also derived from religion as he experienced it within himself and from his immediate surroundings, as well as from the church, its teaching, and the scriptures—especially the New Testament. One can certainly surmise that, both directly and obliquely, the personality of Jesus came to be the most decisive of influences for Tolstoy. I say "obliquely" because, for instance, of Tolstoy's predilection for Pascal, to whom he returns again and again and whom he always discusses in the context of the teachings of the New Testament. For that matter, he also does the same with Epictetus and Kant. Thus, he accepts only that which accords with his *own* gospel. He likes to read Schopenhauer, but accepts none of his pessimism. He is familiar with and interested in Zola's *The Earth*, as well as his other novels; he knows Zola's theories of aesthetics, yet no one is likely to wish to demonstrate that Zola influenced Tolstoy in any way. From childhood on Tolstoy was especially familiar with French literature, like almost all other Russian writers of his time. He is very fond of Maupassant, particularly of his later works, and holds Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* in high esteem. He was also given to reading English and American writers, but found these to be more remote than various Frenchmen. Likewise, his study of German literature distinctly took second place to the French.

Tolstoy's independence of mind is all the more remarkable precisely because he studied and read so much. During his later years, for instance, he read voluminously in Matthew Arnold and

Henry James, but he read them only to fortify his own views and aspirations.

I should not claim that Tolstoy's "apartness' is exactly a sign of strength. It is probably also an indication of some weakness and of a certain limitation or restricted receptivity. My stress on his independence is also not intended to suggest that Tolstoy was wholly self-sufficient from the start. He tells us himself that his maiden effort (*Childhood*, 1852) was powerfully influenced by Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* and by *Bibliothèque de Mon Oncle* (1832) by the Swiss writer Topfer.

One should also be clear on the matter of Tolstoy's development and its various stages. Indeed, it is often remarked that there is a substantial difference between his first so-called artistic period and the second religious, philosophical, and moralistic one. Chronologically, the first runs from his literary debut in 1852 to 1879, when *My Confession* appeared and would thus include the 1850's, 1860's, and 1870's.

Yet Turgenev's contrary view notwithstanding—he makes a sharp distinction between Tolstoy the artist and Tolstoy the moralist, and shortly before his death was still strongly urging Tolstoy to return to a literary-artistic career—I should myself maintain that, even though some differences may be discerned in content during Tolstoy's first and second periods, these are merely a matter of degree, and not of kind. Stylistically there is no difference, nor is it reasonable to assume that Tolstoy necessarily had to write nothing but large novels. In fact, he did compose a major work of fiction in his second period, *Resurrection*; and there is the drama *The Power of Darkness*, as well as other works.

Perhaps I am not mistaken if I discern Tolstoy's second period in his first works of the 1850s, in embryonic form, confusedly fermenting. In fact, *Childhood* already has something of the later *Confession*, very much as there is also a kind of confluence between Tolstoy's personal and poetic experience. In *The Cossacks* we find in embryo the formulation of his later views on war and morality, founded upon the notion of non-resistance to evil. The analysis of suicide in the short story *The Billiard Marker*, no less than his analysis of two generations in *The Two Hussars*, or the psychology of *Family Happiness*, are all as it were studies for *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. All of them set forth views which are later given a philosophical formulation.

2

WE learn of Tolstoy's inner development from his various confessions as well as from his novels, especially *Anna Karenina.* Having been brought in the church, he loses his childhood faith in school, because what he learned there in any way attacked his religion. It was more indirect than that: the constant sense of the scientific significance of things and of people led Tolstoy to abandon his theological outlook, morality, and ecclesiastical religion. As an eleven-year-old he is once told by a friend that there is no God. He did not believe this, yet the information nevertheless struck him as interesting and plausible, and indeed twenty years later on he himself had done with ecclesiastical religion completely and for good.

This loss of religion made Tolstoy discontented and unhappy. Life at the university, in the army, in the capital; society, women, entertainment, and drinking helped to pass the time, but within himself he continued the search for a hard inner core of belief. Not even his literary activity and successes could allay the inner turmoil. Repeatedly, Tolstoy simply abandoned the external world and from habit sought the calm and peace of village life, only to return again to the big city and its pleasures. Not even travel abroad, a happy marriage, and family life assured him peace of mind. For a time he was happy, indeed more than happy, and he hoped that family life would indeed bring him spiritual health, but this hope always proved to be illusory. Not only his reason but his instinct told him that the loss of religion was the true cause of his discontent. The fear of somehow being orphaned and alone; the hope that some kind of help would be forthcoming made his inner unrest and discontent manifest and indicated to him his inability to live without God and without a religion.

While in this emotional state, Tolstoy was powerfully affected by several external events. He took up the cause of a soldier who had struck his superior officer and had been condemned to death. He used all of his personal contacts in vain to have the verdict reversed. In 1873 he was much affected by the famine in the Samarkand region, and again in 1881 the assassination of the czar and the sentencing of the terrorists, for whom he pleaded in vain with the new czar, occasioned strong personal involvement. All of these disturbing episodes seemed to highlight only one elemental fact: death.

One must surmount death and the fear of death, and that

ı ndeed was the clear task which he set himself. This is why in his writings, Tolstoy deals with death so often and in so many ways. Recall, for instance, the death of the mother (the horror of death becomes wholly apparent when he looks at the child who has recoiled from the stench of the corpse); the death of Musarov, the death of Ivan Ilich, of Prince Andrey, and the description of various suicides; indeed, in *Anna Karenina* the magnitude and significance of death are underscored artistically by giving a single chapter the stark title "Death."

Death or life, suicide or God—that was the outcome of many years of doubt and despair. Even in his earliest works suicide is shown to be the result of this despair, quite clearly so in 1856 in the story of *The Billiard Marker.* A study of the greatest philosophers could not save Levin: Plato, Spinoza, Kant, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Comte, Spencer, etc., could not bring peace to Levin—he still had to hide every piece of rope and to avoid the hunting rifle so as to escape the thought of shooting himself.

We find Dostoevsky's notion of suicide in all its nakedness in Tolstoy: atheism equals death and suicide. If anything, Tolstoy's formulation is even more forceful than Dostoevsky's. Levin cannot continue living without God, even though he is happy in the conventional sense, happy in his family life. Ivan Karamazov is single, but Levin on the other hand is married, loves his wife and child, and therefore is not so lonely as Ivan. Nevertheless he seizes on the notion of putting an end to his life. Dostoevsky's Kirilov is a psychotic, as most of Dostoevsky's other atheists are emotionally disturbed. Levin, however, is a perfectly normal human being whose financial and social standing are excellent and who is not affected by any upsetting external circumstances such as those working on the nihilists in *The Possessed,* and that, precisely, is why the notion of suicide is driven home with such sombre and harsh logic by Tolstoy.

In this predicament Tolstoy finds himself saved by the Russian muzhik. He notices that the people, the masses, the ordinary millions have no thought of suicide, whatever suffering and misfortune life may bring them. Day after day Tolstoy observes that the peasant, despite his misery and misfortunes, retains an inner peace and contentment; he sees how patiently he endures poverty and disease, and that he does not fear death, which leads him to the conclusion that he must himself recapture the peasant's peace of mind and that of his own childhood.

Morbid subjectivism and individualism drive Levin close to suicide. Goethe's Faust, Byron's Manfred and Cain each try to help themselves to overcome it in their own way: they can objectivise themselves by their own inner strength, and are able to endure as Levin is not. Instead, Levin turns back, as he must in order to save himself, and finds his saviour and ideal in the muzhik. Faust and Manfred push onward and forward, while Levin retreats. Faust and Manfred do not abdicate, they do not give up their activities or the direction of their work, while Levin reverts to complete passivity, since, in fact, his life-saving muzhik's faith, is nothing but passivity. The muzhik's faith after all, is quite plainly a faith in the pope, the Church, the czars, the State, and in God; it is the most objective stage of belief, which Belinsky characterised as superstition. If Auguste Comte had already announced the return to fetishism, Levin–Tolstoy, in proclaiming a return to the faith of the muzhik, was similarly asserting the triumph of fetishism.

Levin, of course, can no longer believe in exactly the same way that the muzhik does. Philosophy has left its mark on him. Consequently, Levin hardly wants to believe precisely what the muzhik believes: he only wants to believe in the *way* in which the muzhik believes—in other words, he wants the how, but not the what, the psychology but not the logic, the muzhik's faith without its content, and only craves for the effects produced by the muzhik's belief. Hence the *quid pro quo* whereby "God" and "life" become one and the same.

Yet not even the muzhik is always and in all circumstances entirely secure against despair and suicide. Does not Polikushka[1] hang himself because he has lost his mistress's money and no one believed him? Suicide is, of course, much less frequent in the village than it is in the town and among other strata of society. To that extent Levin is perfectly correct. On the other hand, murder is by no means so infrequent in the village, and Tolstoy faces that problem often and in many guises. As early as *The Cossacks* he depicts quite simple people and their devotion to the ways of nature. He also perceives that these "natural" individuals not only kill animals while hunting but that they murder each other quite readily and without any qualms of conscience. That is why the issue of killing and murder broadens itself for Tolstoy in the course of time and becomes the problem of war. "Thou shalt not kill!" he now cries, whereas at the beginning he cried: "Thou

[1] In the story under the same title, *Polikushka*.

shalt not kill thyself!" If Dostoevsky had formulated the dual problem as centering on murder—suicide, Tolstoy's own version of the same problem becomes that of war—suicide.

Later on Tolstoy comes to analyse murder and its manifold motivations more precisely. In his play *The Power of Darkness* we are confronted with the murder of a child and its consequences; the problem assumes special importance in *The Kreutzer Sonata*—the murder of one's own wife. *The Kreutzer Sonata* actually describes the disease of the Karamazovs. It deals with the Don Juan problem from a wholly subjective point of view: a highly tense and abnormal love becomes transformed into bitter hatred. Tolstoy's Pozdnyshev develops exactly like Musset's Octave, and arrives at the same end. Although Octave does not actually kill his mistress, he has nevertheless decided on the deed, and only a chance miracle prevents him from carrying it out, whereas Tolstoy's Pozdnyshev actually goes through with the deed.

Tolstoy's psychological analysis of the situation is deeper and more detailed. In particular he examines with much greater care the effects of sexual excess on the male and female nervous systems as some form of hysteria. Yet at bottom there remains the old problem of how polygamy and premature sexual promiscuity impair the marital relationship, how a polygamous marital life cannot preserve a man's moral sense, and how it actually kills the wife for whom he has nothing but carnal lust. Thus physical murder becomes an extension and consequence of a prior moral murder.

In sum, Tolstoy places an objective religion of love in opposition to a deadening subjectivism and individualism: love-life-God for him is the trinity which brings about salvation.

4

TOLSTOY blames Schelling for his own scepticism and subjectivism, but he could, with greater justice, have named him as the authority for his pantheism, since Tolstoy's manner of feeling and thinking are in fact nothing so much as pantheistic. This pantheism however derives not from Schelling alone but also from Hegel and German philosophy in general. It is, in any case, the modern religion of many poets, whether Russian or European.

Tolstoy's pantheism has often been ascribed to the influence of Buddhism and other Asian and semi-Oriental influences, but

this can hardly be entirely correct if one takes into account the European influences which were working on him, and examines the evolution of his pantheism over a span of time. If indeed one can differentiate between a variety of theisms, so too are there differences between one patheism and another.

Consider some specific circumstances. The Caucasus, with its mountainous landscape, had a powerful effect on Tolstoy, as it had had on his predecessors Lermontov and Pushkin. The contrast between the plains and steppes of his homeland and the southerly climate and topography must impress every sensitive Russian from the north most forcefully. In *The Cossacks* Olenin describes the effect which this imposing landscape has on him. He feels like a moth, or pheasant, or what-not, much like the creatures that surround him; he actually becomes a part of that distinctive flora and fauna. This pantheism is entirely objective, and is the absolute antithesis of his solipsistic subjectivism.

Later on Tolstoy no longer conceives of pantheism in such a naturalistic way, but rather in a religious and ethical sense. He understands nature and all that lives therein as life, and through this life he overcomes death and the fear of death. We find in him often an inclination to interpret immortality and the indestructibility of life as an evident conviction held especially in the face of death. For example, he describes the death of the mother in *Childhood* and shows that the mother's love for her husband and children is a feeling by which she has lived and continues to live. It is a feeling so strong that it is quite impossible for it to perish.

In the same spirit we go on to read how the sight of the dead mother deprived him of a sense of his own existence, and made him feel a peculiarly lofty and agreeably melancholy sense of beatitude. Pierre philosophises in just the same way in *War and Peace*. He feels that he always has been and always will be. And to this he adds the old teleological argument that the being against whom you have sinned will die—what is the meaning of it? It is surely impossible that there should not be an answer to this question.

These are arguments often used to defend individual immortality. Tolstoy makes them his own, but he takes immortality non-individualistically, pantheistically; he wants to surmount individualism not only ethically and socially but metaphysically as well. Later on he did not think at all in terms of individual immortality, and said so explicitly on several occasions. For instance, he makes the point in 1903 that the loss of memory is a

great good fortune, since he would not wish even after death to be troubled by the recollection of his own faults.[1] His starting point here is the teaching of the Church, yet he quite deliberately transforms the Church's theism into pantheism, which was then reaching Russia through European literature and philosophy. Tolstoy, in turn, understood this pantheism rather materialistically, very much as did the rest of Russian educated society.

Philosophical and deductive thinking is not one of Tolstoy's strong points. That is why we find such disparate formulations of the fundamental pantheistic idea. His Plato Karatayev, for example, stresses the wheel of life: the misfortune of some becomes the good fortune of others, the death of some becomes the condition of life for others; hence a kind of metempsychosis, which is already postulated in *Childhood*, since eternity can never be single-faceted.

Nor did Tolstoy ever entirely renounce his subjectivism. Under Hume's influence he presently comes to challenge the concept of causality and causal relationships, and thus again arrives at pantheism even from this vantage point.

5

I MUST repeat that I distrust Tolstoy in philosophical matters. In no field of study did he undertake any serious scientific work, even for his own benefit, and hence he never understood that science and the scientific approach depend on whether or not we acquire the scientific method. In this regard Tolstoy always remained a dilettante, and not in the best sense of the word. Here lies the explanation for his perverse attitude toward science in general and medicine in particular. He actually stands opposed to Russian professorial and academic endeavours, and assails half-knowledge as "the fruit of enlightenment," in which he happens to be largely correct. The same attitude explains his dislike of medicine. When he says that we are either to believe in God or medicine, this can be accepted only if understood in the right sense. Were man only to live correctly it would be unnecessary for him to be ill so often, since medicine itself promotes sound hygiene. Socrates often insisted that disease derived from sin, and that too makes rather good sense. Yet Tolstoy often exaggerates and then has to correct himself later on. In practice it

[1] In his diary for January 6, 1903, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenny* (Jubilee edition), 1935, V, p. 154.

turns out that he does not refuse medical assistance, or even constant medical supervision, and if he were to attribute this to his own sins, the argument would not become one whit sounder.

In a philosophical sense it is the weakness of his noetic foundation which counts heavily in Tolstoy, and this explains both his brand of pantheism, and at the same time his emphatic agnosticism. He is a pantheist, but simultaneously also wants to be a true interpreter of Christ. The differences and contradictions between particular philosophies and teachings are glossed over because Tolstoy's main interest is directed toward evolving a practical religious mode of life. Like Kant, he equates religion with morality and in his later years accordingly came to have a very high regard for Kant.

Since his philosophy is not based on any too strong a foundation, neither is his theology, particularly the philosophical aspects of his personal theology. Even as a youngster he had criticised the weaknesses and absurdities of the Church's catechism; indeed, it was evident to him very early that the entire edifice of ecclesiastical orthodoxy was deficient. Nevertheless, because he is of a religious temperament and has religious needs, he constantly returns to the teachings of the Church. One is also struck by how many aspects of the Church's teachings irritate Tolstoy for propagandistic and pedagogical reasons, arousing his ire and bringing out both his sense of irony and satire. As a person of religious temperament Tolstoy does not give up living according to the Church's precepts completely, nor does he do so all at once. In the story *Family Happiness* both the man and the wife pray; even Levin is still praying in *Anna Karenina*, even though Tolstoy had already hinted at the uselessness of prayer in *The Three Deaths* by showing that it cannot alter the course of nature. Thus he is left only with the ethical and subjective side of prayer.

Tolstoy's own theology derives from radical, progressive protestant theology and its critique of more traditional concepts. The German historical school, and the English and American rationalists in particular, had already suggested Tolstoy's own critique of the scriptures, and specifically his uncritical attempt to accept only the gospels, and in them only the ethical passages and their content. Tolstoy simply by-passes the Old Testament, the Apostles, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Apocalypse of the New Testament; he glosses over all the miracles and everything supernatural, which shows that he views the gospels not historically but only rationally and logically. Like earlier reformers, Tolstoy

is a foe of his own church, yet he takes from that church its holy scriptures without furnishing an historical critique of their origins. *A priori*, he fails to question the fundamental canon of the Church's teaching.

Tolstoy here adopts an older position, much resembling that taken by Kant. In any event Tolstoy is a rationalist rather more than an historian, in respect of both his religion and theology. His is a strict and lofty ideal as regards reason: good practical and theoretical sense turns out to be his highest notion of knowledge, cognition, and desire. Still, he never defines this highest of arbiters and ultimate authority in any noetically acceptable terms. Good old common sense is simply made to speak through the mouth of the muzhik; it becomes a kind of voice of conscience, in that Tolstoy is most of all concerned with a knowledge of ethics and practical matters. At the same time it has something of Hegel's absolute reason, and suggests the voice of a pantheistic god enunciated through man.

Tolstoy cherishes the same ideal in his philosophy and his religion as he does in his art: he seeks the truth. "The hero of my tale, whom I love with all my soul, whom I have tried to portray in all his beauty—who indeed always was, is, and will be beautiful —is the truth."[1] Tolstoy remained true to the principle underlying this, his second Sevastopol story, all his life and in this consistency lies his strength and his meaning. It is a virtue which made Tolstoy's life-work meaningful not to Russia alone but for Europe as a whole. And it is precisely here that Tolstoy differs most critically from Dostoevsky. The latter always continues to hope that the Russians will somehow lie their way to the truth; Tolstoy, on the other hand, speaks the truth no matter where the chips may fall.

All the same, even this truth-seeker finds himself a victim of scholastic temptation. One instance: whereas Christ countenances the dissolution of a marriage, Tolstoy tries to justify marriage in his own way as in fact an indissoluble compact.

Tolstoy seeks the truth, desires it and lives it, yet he cannot escape incorrect opinions and erroneous teachings. Still there is little of the scholastic in him, which is where he differs from Dostoevsky. The reader is given an opportunity from the start to penetrate into Tolstoy's very soul, which is why the autobiographical aspect of his work is so very significant. In his search for the truth, and in his struggle within himself, Tolstoy is any-

[1] Famous passage in the last paragraph of Tolstoy's *Sevastopol in May* 1855.

thing but secretive: he discusses his inner battles, the victories, and defeats quite freely. Nor is he satisfied only to communicate his personal experience artistically, thus leaving it to the perceptive judge of men and the psychologist to reconstruct the whole of a character from such an artistic rendering. Instead he also indulges in public confession from time to time. He is actually driven to confess. The Russians of his day saw their literature as accusation; Tolstoy, instead, is self-accusatory and becomes his own severest prosecutor.

"What is to be done?" Tolstoy poses the same question as Chernyshevsky had done before him. The answer is not to lie, neither to others nor above all to oneself. It is also to have pity, to do penance, and to re-examine one's own position and function. In attempting to overcome his own scepticism and subjectivism, Tolstoy uses the authority of Jesus as an objective and historical starting point. He does not consider Jesus as his sole and highest religious authority in all things and every circumstance (he places the Buddha, Confucius, Epictetus, and others on the same plane), but he does find in him, his ethical teaching, and his life, an objective starting point and foundation. This makes his point of departure essentially the same as that of the Russian muzhik as well as that of the Russian rationalist sectarians (molokane, dykhobors, stundists).[1] Here again he is trying to escape from the isolation imposed by subjectivism. For the same reason he clings to his God—the God of life—since he neither can nor desires to set up himself or his own reason as a point of departure for his own thought or conduct. "Human reason is a sad, worthless cause for moral conduct" is what he says as he rejects subjectivism. Just as Turgenev tries to objectivise himself by indulging in hunting, and accordingly subordinate his philosophy—not to mention his theology—to the hunt, so Tolstoy seeks to objectivise himself through religion: he turns to God again and again, and because he fears anthropomorphism—he knows as much about Feuerbach as did Herzen, and is also aware of Herzen's and Bakunin's views on religion and anthropomorphism—he clings to the historical Jesus and his historical teachings at all costs.

This longing to objectivise himself likewise reveals itself in his fatalism, where he again finds much common ground with the muzhik. There is already some evidence in *Childhood* that fatalism

[1] Molokane, dukhobors, stundists: three of the many Russian religious sects. Tolstoy was particularly active in aiding the dukhobors.

had a soothing effect on him in trying moments. By the same token, Tolstoy's sense for and perception of nature are a form of objectivisation: for instance, his description of a blizzard (if I am not mistaken Tolstoy has more of an artistic sense for winter than he does for summer and spring, while Turgenev has the opposite) reveals a man who can completely empathise with and indeed lose himself in nature. As already noted, he feels he is a gnat.[1]

This urge to objectivise and to overcome subjectivism and scepticism also leads Tolstoy to equate religion with faith. Faith however may never contain something unreasonable: it must be truthful, yet it is faith—faith dedicated to objective truth. Tolstoy thus has a very vivid understanding of why Turgenev's Rudin or his Nezhdanov have such a longing for faith.[2]

6

TOLSTOY'S religion is the religion of humanity. His pantheism ends the antithesis between "you" and "I." Through it one loses the unbearable sense of loneliness and isolation. The sense of despair which makes one want to escape from life disappears; man is reborn. By making a comparative study of all religions and their founders, Tolstoy comes to the conclusion that the essential foundation of religion is always and everywhere the same and that it consists of peace and love.

Tolstoy sets down five conditions for worldly happiness in his essay "What Is Happiness?"[3] about which he asserts that no one could be in doubt. He uses this favourite device to emphasise his own belief that they are self-evident. He often says "I cannot deny," or "it is impossible to deny," or "one cannot accept" to express the absoluteness, the self-evidence, the necessity, and the universal application of this judgment or that.

The first condition—(we see here how Tolstoy gives precedence to an anti-subjectivism objectivisation)—is direct contact with nature, with the earth, with plants and animals, rather than a life in the city. The second condition is the ability to work of one's own free will and to work manually. The third and fourth conditions are a good family life and good relationships with all men,

[1] Reference to Olenin's feelings of empathy with nature and with gnats in *The Cossacks*.

[2] Rudin is the hero of the novel of the same name by Turgenev (1856), Nezhdanov, of his *Virgin Soil* (1877).

[3] "What is Happiness?" was written in 1886.

irrespective of class, nationality, etc. (incidentally, he rejects the notion of moving in the narrow circle of so-called "society"). And finally he mentions good health and a painless death.

These surely are conditions with which the great majority men would agree. Nor are they novel in any sense. Hence the question, 'Why did Tolstoy's teachings have such a forceful effect?' Life in nature, and physical, free labour had been called for by many others before Tolstoy, and several Russian nihilists had actually put this prescription to a practical test. The reason for Tolstoy's great influence can therefore only be explained by virtue of the fact that he put the whole weight of his own personality into a life based on these fundamental principles. Nor did it do any harm to his cause that Tolstoy as a count should have deliberately left the privileged circle of so-called "society." The broad public (as well as educated men) are still affected by the Son of God or a prince living in poverty, but for modern man and his fantasies a count with an illustrious ancestry was also quite adequate. Above and beyond this Tolstoy was influential because he placed his ethics in a religious context and regarded his morality *sub specie aeternitatis*. The self-same ethical principles and identical actions have an entirely different significance if undertaken out of habit and mere utility, or as expressions of the religious idea of eternity. If as deed, events, and motivations, they have universal applicability—only then do they have an absolute worth. A morality based upon religion gives to the individual act and life as a whole a distinctive character, imparted only by the notion of eternity—a religious earnestness and a hierarchy of values. This religious valuation is never indifferent to small things even while it cannot abide pettiness. Only he who lives in eternity, only he who is convinced that every moment of his life actually his eternity, can attain a proper perspective on this thoughts, feelings, and activities; only he, indeed, has the right perspective and total objectivity.

Tolstoy completely rejects a morality separate from religion. Ethics can and should be independent of metaphysics, a point for which he particularly praises Kant, who did precisely separate the two, but ethics cannot exist without religion, since it is in fact inherent in religion. Morality is not merely a consequence of religion; religion as a principle of life alone provides the answer to the basic question: What meaning is there to my life?

Yet religion is far more than morality, Particularly in his later years, Tolstoy is very emphatic that the purpose of his

religious striving is not merely to make mankind happy, but rather to serve God by fulfilling his will and commands. Thus, religion is not simply an effort to perfect oneself, nor a mere striving to bring happiness to mankind, but service to God. It is precisely this service to God which makes for the happiness of the individual and of humanity more surely than any striving after one's own happiness or that of others. This service to God imparts to man the joyful feeling which comes from calm certainty; it dispels all sense of haste, even in a noble cause.

Tolstoy also produces so powerful an effect because he describes the awakening to life *sub specie aeternitatis*, and the various degrees of religious consciousness, with such felicity. That is why he is able to depict an ever richer inner life. He shows up the worthlessness of the Russian aristocracy, and describes how people from the so-called best strata of society kill time only to fill their inner emptiness. Cards, women, horses, and the rest are all simply devices to pass the time, and when a person like this really no longer knows what to do with himself, he makes bets that he can drink an entire bottle of rum sitting on the window-sill of a high building.[1] The empty man always rushes into some kind of danger. He seeks to combat mountain tribes, he looks for wars, for movement and excitement, because he cannot comprehend quiet happiness, a happiness with small things. A masterly analysis of this aspect of ordinary social life is given in *Family Happiness*, in which Maria Alexandrovna sacrifices a quiet family life to worthless excitements and worries about "society," and its rounds of engagements, balls, flirtations, etc. It is thus no accident the Tolstoy has her husband, Sergey, recite the verses of Lermontov:

> Rebellious, he asks for storm
> As if there were peace in storms.
>
> (*The Soil*)

Most people evidently prefer, and find it easier, to experience their emotions on the edge of a cliff, and to be wrapped up in the dangers besetting themselves and others, rather than savour the drama of their inner lives more quietly.

This then is the sense in which Tolstoy's religion is the religion of eternal life. Here he is in total agreement with Dostoevsky, and, in fact, reiterates the latter's fundamental notion in his own characteristic way. His rejection of society and its opinions and

[1] Tolstoy is referring to Pierre Bezukhov as a young man in *War and Peace*.

activities makes for the fact that Tolstoy advances this or that demand more categorically or perhaps one-sidedly. Yet this comes also from his being at odds with himself. Yet then he tries to correct himself. For instance, against his praise of physical work he puts idleness. His own example sanctions not only humble work in garden, field, and forest, but also work to relieve hunger, propaganda against alcoholism, etc.

7

THE commandment regarding love of one's neighbour is understood by Tolstoy to imply the principle of non-resistance to evil. He glosses over those precepts of Jesus which tend to contradict this, or interprets them in his very own way. In my view, however, this commandment to love mankind, to which I fully subscribe, not only permits but actually demands resistance to evil. Indeed, we have to defend ourselves against evil by arms where necessary, if we are ultimately to become really human. Tolstoy says that we must not counter force with force, and in this I am inclined to agree, yet simply to defend oneself is hardly the same as the mere use of force: the external physical act may perhaps be the same, yet the motive is entirely different, indeed, wholly opposite, and it is after all the motive which determines the nature of an act. Thus, the act of killing is very different in different circumstances, just as the ultimate sacrifice of oneself is radically different from suicide. For Tolstoy the State is the embodiment of force, war, and revolution, and hence his most important works are written not only against the concept of war, but all forms of combat. He is a staunch opponent of both Darwin and Marx, and rejects their theories of struggle whether for survival or between classes. He too strives for freedom, but believes that true freedom will only be achieved when all alike are convinced of the futility and injustice of force.

This is not the first instance in which Tolstoy attempts to solve a question in utilitarian fashion. His strategic arithmetic is well known according to which the barbarian hordes stand a better chance of being humanised by the passivity of Tolstoy's Christians than by meeting with resistance. Less blood will be shed than if there were armed opposition, which would be likely to arouse combative passions on both sides.

All of this is largely a question of fact. History teaches us that armed resistance, wars, and revolutions have sometimes brought

about rather good results. For instance, without a revolution, czarism would never have consented to a national *duma*. I am aware, of course, that Tolstoy would have had psychological objections to this interpretation of history and of czarism; I know that he would have advanced all the arguments of the anarchists against the notion of a state *duma*.

The crux of the matter, I think, is this: vengeance and original sin are evil in themselves and persist only through force of habit. The fact that men tolerate small, even minute acts of violence by their neighbours leads them eventually, under extremely oppressive conditions, to rise in their own defence, yet they soon relapse again into idle passivity and indifference. This indifference however is itself the worst of evils, since it fails to nip evil in the bud and instead allows it to recur again and again. If, therefore, the gospel of love is ever to become a reality, indifference must be overcome: the new ethic demands a new ethical initiative, a vigorous defence and a positive prophylaxis against violence. Tolstoy has an old-fashioned outlook in this matter: in the final analysis he does fear the passivity taught by the official Church in its servility to the State and to the mighty of this world in general, and that is exactly why he failed to understand what is good about modern democracy and socialism.

I am aware that Tolstoy demands non-resistance to evil of himself and others, yet I say to myself: if love of one's neighbour forbids the use of force, it forbids it not only to me, but to you and to him and to everyone! I have a duty to love my neighbour, but I also have the right to expect the same love in return. Thus, I understand this particular commandment not only subjectively but objectively, not only in an individual but in a collective sense. I do not choose to put all my trust in my neighbour; rather, I wish to be self-reliant precisely so as not to burden him, from which it follows that each one of us has to struggle against the incubus of violence, and to work actively in order to prevent bloodshed.

I concede, of course, that it is most difficult to abide by this precept, that is to say, to defend oneself without committing an act of violence even while meeting with violence; but then, adherence to Tolstoy's precept is just as difficult.

The reasons for and against each would require extensive consideration. Meanwhile, perhaps I would only need to remind the reader of Dostoevsky's polemics against Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, and the latter's strictures against the Russo-Turkish war. Dostoevsky, of course, defends war, and his principal reason

is that men go to war not in order to kill but rather to defend themselves and their country. Yet how it can come about that both Russians and Turks take to arms simultaneously to "defend" themselves is a question I do not wish to go into. It is, after all, necessary to judge war ethically, in terms of motives, and this must be done dispassionately and without prejudice. The truth is that war tends to inhibit war, and that people are less and less anxious to go to war. Surely it would not be difficult to demonstrate to Dostoevsky and other disciples of war, such as von Moltke, that peace does not necessarily sap the energy of peoples nor heighten their craving for idle pleasures.

I should only add that war perhaps may not be the worst fate that can befall mankind, and that we should rather pass judgment not so much on war but upon militarism as an institution of the modern State.

8

TOLSTOY, together with Dostoevsky, praises the Christian virtue of humility precisely because he equates Christianity with non-resistance to evil.

Yet although he preaches the virtue of physical labour, he rejects the European and English concept of work, which aims to produce comfort and wealth. Instead, he conceives of labour not in an economic but an ethical or religious sense. He proclaims the European and Anglo-Saxon notion of work to be cruel and questions the motives which underlie it by advancing the concept of ascetic idleness, and especially praising the discipline of religious meditation. He also accepts the ascetic idea of poverty, and hence regards modern entrepreneurship as both abnormal and unhealthy, whether it involves industrial activity, commerce, or socialism. In fact, Tolstoy's economic notions are defined in terms of the needs of the muzhik and the common people, and he thus condemns every amenity which goes beyond the sheer necessities of life. "Yes, yes, Christianity does not smell of *eau de rose*, rather it has lice. It has been that way, and will continue to be that way. I am not the one who made this discovery, but I flatter myself that I understand it." This remark of his was picked up in 1895, but I myself heard it from him personally as early as 1888. On that occasion, one of his young disciples who lived in the country after the fashion of a muzhik had come to Moscow on foot (Tolstoy himself on several occasions tried not to use the railroad),

and had first to rid himself of the vermin which he had picked up on his journey. Tolstoy told me this with a sort of cheerful satisfaction. He seemed to feel that modern cleanliness was something unnatural, and made possible only because other people do our work for us. The cleanliness of actresses and other members of the *demi-monde* made it inevitable that the muzhik should have lice. Yet the muzhik's soul remains clean, even while is body is not, whereas civilised and well-scrubbed people have souls which are anything but clean. He recalled a particular place in India where lice are deemed to be sacred animals to whom ascetic fanatics sacrifice themselves as though they were holy creatures. "Yes, yes, the holiness of lice . . ." said Tolstoy thoughtfully, and went on to try to dissuade me from the American precept that "cleanliness is next to Godliness." He was seconded by his young acolyte, who recited something from Epictetus, whom he knew by heart. A French scholar who had also come to visit Tolstoy remained undecided. Drastic convictions and decisive action are always impressive even if they are not right.

Tolstoy's Rousseauism, his flight from civilisation and return to nature, were inevitably transformed into an ascetic escape from the world itself. The more Tolstoy tried to follow Rousseau's teaching in practical and concrete fashion, the closer he was brought to the muzhik's way of life. At the start Tolstoy admired men of nature in the Caucasus. He saw and loved the simple, natural, and strong, and turned away from the more complex ways of civilisation, especially as found in the cities. Yet, as soon as he became a Christian, his Rousseauism turned into asceticism.

Oh! How only to become plain and simple! Yet is the peasant, the muzhik really as simple as all that? Why, too, should the more complex be wrong by definition? Moreover, if one examines village and peasant life with a critical eye, one is bound to find that it is hard to see in it an ideal diametrically opposed to the evils of urban existence. Why should it be more natural to walk than to travel by rail? Into his old age Tolstoy enjoyed riding horseback and one wonders if that is any more natural than going by train.

The question in the final analysis is, what is right or wrong in a given time and place, and at a given point in the development of civilisation. What is healthy or unhealthy, good or bad, in specific circumstances, simply cannot be dealt with in off-hand fashion. The more Christian he becomes, the more pronounced does Tolstoy's Rousseauism become. The more he wishes to follow Christ's teaching and to emulate his life, the more he sees

the pinnacle of spiritual life in religion, without considering that religion cannot displace all other spiritual values and that it cannot simply be substituted for them. If we do make Christ our mentor and religious leader, that cannot mean that we should also renounce Galileo, Copernicus, and Newton. In science, art, and politics Christ cannot be our sole teacher, nor ought even his religious teaching be accepted entirely uncritically. Theologians have been writing the life of Christ for a long time, and they have variously depicted him as a being of very different temperaments. Besides, how many denominations and sects claim to possess the key to true Christianity? Thus, Tolstoy's Jesus and Tolstoy's Christianity are merely one among countless others.

9

TOLSTOY'S asceticism reached a peak in *The Kreutzer Sonata.* These views, however, were never adequately formulated, and, the explanations which followed publication of the work notwithstanding, there remains some doubt as to the actual meaning of *The Kreutzer Sonata.* In fact, only this much is clear: that a man accustomed to a promiscuous life and to prostitution can, when married, succumb to Pozdnyshev's attitudes and moods, particularly if sexual excess began prior to sexual maturity and actually resulted in nervous disorders. Tolstoy is concerned with the sexual life of wealthy aristocrats, much as were his predecessors, beginning with Pushkin and ending with Turgenev. In *War and Peace* we read about the longings of Onegin, Pechorin, and others for the life of Don Juan, as we do again in *Resurrection.* Yet Tolstoy strips Don Juan of his romantic and decadent aura, and diagnoses instead a nervous and pathological state in psychological terms, ending by recommending total abstinence. Logically, it can only follow that the double standard must be abolished, and that men must remain as chaste as they expect their women to be; it does not follow that the sensual side of marriage must also be abolished. It is unclear whether Tolstoy is simply trying to conform to Christ's saying about those who become eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19, 12), whether he is guided by the teaching of particular theologians or the monastic ideal of the Catholic Church and certain other sects, or whether he was influenced by some of the modern pessimists, such as Hartmann.[1]

[1] Charles Hartmann (1842–1906) was a German philosopher.

In any case, the error into which Tolstoy falls, just as the Catholic ascetics do, is rooted in the fact that he understands purity and chastity as physical abstinence and virginity. In other words, he conceives of sexual relations between men and woman entirely too naturalistically. Put in another way, he starts out with the experience of promiscuity, and proceeds to set up a distinction between the spiritual and physical sides of the sexual relationship. Since he understands the life of Don Juan to encompass only the physical side of sexual intercourse, he sees the marital relationship entirely too much in biological instead of emotional terms. He wants each man to have only one wife, making this demand only on biological and hygienic grounds, for entirely preventive reasons, to safeguard against possible excesses. He hardly has any sense that marriage can and ought to be not merely a physical but also a spiritual union.

Tolstoy describes the failure of married life which, in the popular view, only serves to "save" the man, and does so with great perceptivity. He also makes a great advance over other Russian and European writers in that he is not merely concerned with the love relationship prior to marriage, but is much more concerned with marital love. He shows that marriage and family generally displace individual egotism with a family egotism, and hence that they hardly fulfil the commandment to love one's neighbour. He also elucidates the moral and pathological consequences of incontinence, which make marriage into something like legalised prostitution. Naturally, it is possible to learn something about the effects of prostitution on marriage, the family, and society from every book which deals with the subject, but Tolstoy gives us his own distinctive and penetrating insight into the subject. In *Resurrection*, prostitution is characterised as a social institution; Tolstoy even idealises his prostitute to a certain extent, though Katusha Maslova is very far from being Dostoevsky's Sonya. Still, it is significant that both Tolstoy and Dostoevsky explore the intimate connection between prostitution and Russian family life in very much the same way. Tolstoy, moreover, considers so-called marital neo-Malthusianism as being a near equivalent to prostitution.

In a question of such importance as sexual relations, Tolstoy, however, hardly got beyond the views of the official church. He does not accord women equality with men and when he writes against the emancipation of women, one can see that he is not only against the nature of that movement, but more fundamentally

that he sees women as inferior creatures. This, in fact, becomes perfectly clear from his attitude toward his feminine characters in his various novels. One of his finest is Sonya in *War and Peace*, though it is clear that he does not really understand her. He is cross because she will not marry when unable to get the man she really loves. On the other hand, he likes the pleasant, naïve, and rather ordinary Natasha. Evidently he feels that "old maids" are something superfluous. He also seems not to like old wives. In the drama *The Power of Darkness* he stresses the role of the mother who helps a worthless son against his father, her husband. It all goes to show that Tolstoy accepts the old and quite erroneous view that woman's only mission is to become a mother and to bear children.

Given the fact that Tolstoy does reject science, art, and politics, it becomes easy to understand why he disliked emancipated women even more than emancipated men. Of course, there remains the question of what happens to Tolstoy's teaching about physical labour, particularly in respect of women who do not happen to be peasants. In the final analysis Tolstoy really wants everyone to become either a landowner or a peasant, and that seems to decide the fate of women for him.

10

TOLSTOY understands society to be the city of God in the strictest sense of the word. He means all men to be united in an invisible church. He teaches that salvation is within you, and this amounts to little less than ethical and religious anarchism.

Tolstoy's invisible church is supposed to comprise all of humanity, but we are not told how this can be brought about in practice. Tolstoy evidently conceived of a kind of spontaneous union without giving any real thought to the practical, statutory requirements needed for its organisation. He simply envisages a union based upon a deep-seated identity of views and on mutual love. True, Tolstoy recognises both family and patriarchal organisation, but he tends toward inconsistency when he rejects both the State and every manner of political organisation, the former expressly because it is the embodiment of coercion.

Tolstoy's anarchism is very logically also directed against the church, which he rejects along with the State. He discovered the inner connection between the Christian, and particularly the Orthodox, Church and the State, and thus came to understand

the theocratic basis of Russian Caesaro-papism. When in the late 1880's he discovered Chelčický's *Web of Faith*,[1] he found confirmation of his own anarchistic views in the teachings of this founder of the Bohemian Brethren.

Tolstoy understands the State to be organised violence, and thus finds the Christian State to be a contradiction in terms. Going a step further, he logically rejects militarism, war, and the death penalty. Following the death of Alexander II, he actually wrote to Alexander III pleading that the assassins of his father not be hanged. He is in fact opposed not only to concept of governmental rule, but also to that of mere administration. He is against politics as well as government, and hence a foe of bureaucracy and public office. He himself refused every form of government service, and by the same reasoning advised others not to pay taxes.

Since he does reject the state as such and on principle, he must fall back on arguments such as those employed by Carlyle when he supports the programme of Russian constitutionalism, universal suffrage, and democracy. Even so, a *duma*, or parliament, the separation of Church and State, and similar political devices seem to him both worthless and devoid of meaning.

Tolstoy did not even try to organise his own followers, and in so far as these did found communities of their own, it is certain that they did not do so at his behest. Although Pierre has good things to say about the Freemasons in *War and Peace*, we should hardly infer that Tolstoy himself would have lent his support to any such organisation on either ethical or religious grounds.

In his later years he repeatedly had occasion to state his views on revolution. He was led to this since he not only denied the claims of existing states but also those of the state as such. Nekhlyudov learns a good deal from the revolutionary Krylstov[2] in *Resurrection*; the companionship between the two explains much to Nekhlyudov which had previously eluded him. More generally, Tolstoy is concerned throughout his work to give sympathetic accounts of political offenders who have been exiled to Siberia, and especially those among them who are revolutionaries. He acknowledges the heroism of these revolutionaries in several pamphlets written during his last months, and praises

[1] Petr Chelčický was an important Czech fifteenth-century religious thinker and writer. His *Net of Faith* circulated in manuscript, was printed in 1522, and published in Petersburg in a critical edition in 1893.

[2] Nekhlyudov is the chief male hero of *Resurrection*; Kryltsov, a prisoner whom Nekhlyudov meets in Siberia.

their courageous willingness to sacrifice both themselves and others, no less than their lofty morality. Still, he does insist that theirs is no way to reach the desired goal, and claims that it only makes matters worse.

Being an ethical and religious anarchist, Tolstoy is at the same time an outspoken foe of revolutionary anarchism and terrorism. At a relatively early stage, as for instance in *War and Peace*, Tolstoy already implies that he understands revolution as little as he does war. Later on, however, he does acquire a deeper understanding of the meaning of revolutionary terrorism, and rejects it just as he does the State. Yet, he does retain something in common with the Russian terrorists because both repudiate the existing Russian State, and many of the terrorists rejected the very concept of the State as he himself also did. I have already said that as the years went by Tolstoy came to speak more and more kindly of Russia's revolutionaries; he recognises their self-sacrifice and is intrigued by their selfless dedication to the cause of revolution. Perhaps this is why he had already made an earlier attempt to portray the Decembrists. Indirectly, he also espoused the revolutionary cause by speaking out against the mass hangings. Still, he tries to show that the revolutionaries are attempting to achieve a noble goal by entirely wrong means. This is why he believes that they will never attain their ends and that they are really denying them by pursuing their activities. Tolstoy not only condemns the act of killing but also revolutionary propaganda and agitation which incite to hatred, and hence deplores the fact that the revolutionaries are devoting their lives to an empty and worthless cause. Precisely because he rejects the State and the rule of the few over the many, he also sees the ambitions of the revolutionaries as leading to an almost obsessive desire to obtain that power for themselves.

At one point, Tolstoy discussed this issue with a number of actual revolutionaries. These revolutionaries made it quite clear to him that the most progressive countries had moved ahead only through revolution, and that Tolstoy was clearly wrong to persist in the belief that progress has only been achieved through a growth in moral stature rather than by revolution. He dismisses the usefulness of revolution quite gratuitously, just as his revolutionary opponents ridicule his notion of declining to do military service and refusing to pay taxes. The issue thus boils down to the question of whether the life which Tolstoy strives for is or is not better than that toward which the revolutionaries are working, and whether

it is paramount to reject the principle of resistance in each and every case. Could one not, indeed, say that on a lesser intellectual and moral plane and in the face of a baser kind of force which tends to crop up on this level of being, revolution does, after all, have a kind of justification of its own? I cannot be entirely unsympathetic to the ideal which the revolutionaries set for themselves, just as I find that I cannot sympathise entirely with Tolstoy's own ideal. Tolstoy consistently and vehemently inveighs against so-called "society" and the power it wields over the individual. He rejects the demands made by this society, its forms, and its concept of "*savoir vivre*"; he repudiates current fashions and extols the free human being who is guided only by a moral law.

Significantly, Tolstoy fails to recognise the modern principle of nationality. As a Christian he calls for a union among all nations, and speaks in favour of a universal artificial language believing the promotion of Esperanto to be a Christian deed. Tolstoy's anarchism essentially rests upon individual consciousness. Certainly in *Anna Karenina* the national consciousness so dear to the Slavophiles is roundly rejected. Possibly, however, it is worth stressing here that Tolstoy may not have been making enough of a distinction between national feeling and national consciousness understood in the sense of an ethnically-founded brotherhood. Tolstoy attacks the Slavophile writer, attempting to refute him by arguments of his own servant, who did not have the remotest idea of any national consciousness and feeling for his Slavic brethren. Surely, this individualistic viewpoint is at variance with that expressed in *War and Peace*. On the one hand he is against patriotism, yet on the other he stresses State patriotism. He has little more in mind than excesses of chauvinism. Even so, Tolstoy feels himself to be rather strongly Russian and has a definite appreciation of the distinctive character of his nation, as seen in his characterisation of Germans, and the way in which he clings to his native roots. Yet he seems to view the whole question from a utilitarian standpoint and to feel that every man can simply act most effectively on his own native soil. His ascetic modesty leads him to oppose emigration as well as the flow of population from the countryside to the towns. By extension he also opposes foreign travel, and forgets that he himself was abroad on two occasions, reads in several languages, and is constantly visited by foreigners. Nor, of course, did he ever experience the miserable poverty of the muzhik, or even understand it.

Tolstoy entertains the mistaken view that the individual need not concern himself with the consequences of his acts so long as he is acting on his moral convictions. People need to concern themselves with consequences only in secular matters, which they actually cannot control, and something other than what they wanted happens anyway. Thus, revolutionaries have striven for freedom and for a better life, yet the French Revolution did not bring about freedom but instead gave birth to Marats and Napoleons. Tolstoy is very fond of pointing out that people's influence is greatest in areas which they hardly think about at all. These, however, are dangerous and double-edged principles. which do not even happen to be true. How, indeed, can a thoughtful person fail to look to the future? Nor does it follow that the individual cannot attain his ends while consciously seeking to influence those about him. Whether or not revolutions did or did not have desirable consequences is a question of historical fact, and history seems to show that most revolutions were in fact successful. Tolstoy for his part does not admit that there are moral degrees and shades in all actions, and quite fails to judge individual deeds in the light of their usefulness. That is why he rejects revolution *in toto*, and remains inattentive to various justifications of and motivations for revolutionary action at different times in different countries.

It is, of course, obvious that someone who believes that only religious values and a religious life based upon them have any real value, clearly cannot give his enthusiastic approval either to politics or to revolution. That is why Tolstov is solely interested in a religious revolution, which he believes in and which he hopes for.

Tolstoy's anarchism also emerges clearly in the question of education, which leads him to ask just who is entitled to bring up and educate others. Since he begins with Rousseau's pedagogical and didactic precepts, he sees the whole educational process as an application of force which lacks all rational justification. He is least hostile to the notion of an education imparted as a result of religious influence. He is also prepared to concede the necessary pedagogical function exercised by the family and state, but he is quite definitely opposed to education by society. A university education is to him education by society. It is nothing but a manifestation of pride in human reason. Tolstoy was voicing these ideas about 1862, when he was looking after his own village schoolhouse.[1]

[1] In the essay *Education and Upbringing* (*Vospitanie i obrazovanie*), *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy* (Jubilee ed.), 1936, VIII, pp. 211–46.

Yet he presently abandoned the project altogether and with it his various educational and pedagogical experiments. Later on, he even comes to reject science, at least official sciences, though he always advocated true education.

It hardly needs emphasis that Tolstoy's form of anarchism is closely related to Utopianism and utopian over-simplification. He was, for instance, quite honest in saying that he had no clear idea where his political anarchism might lead him. This is reminiscent of the way in which Bakunin used to talk, not to mention the fact that Tolstoy had, in a broader sense, many other points in common not only with Bakunin but also with Prince Kropotkin. He clearly agrees with their belief in the victory of anarchism only parting company with them on the issue of tactics, since he does not hold that it can be realised through revolution, insisting instead that it will come about by peaceful means.

Tolstoy is very much preoccupied with both social and economic issues. He is very much a realist, and that is why he does not stop at mere morality, knowing full well that men are greatly dependent upon their economic circumstances. He is particularly aware of this dependence as it affects the peasantry and nobility. In fact, all of his works are essentially concerned with the peasant and his aristocratic master, whereas they show remarkably little interest indeed in any other segment or stratum of society.

Tolstoy is a "Narodnik" throughout, if only in an ethical sense. His teacher, Rousseau, led him to discover "mother earth," and from him he went on to Henry George, of whose land reform proposals he became an enthusiastic advocate.

It is hardly surprising, therefore that Tolstoy also emerged as an economic anarchist who hoped to see the economy develop without State supervision or guidance. His attitude toward industrialism and capitalism is conditioned by Proudhon rather than John Stuart Mill and certainly not by any official school of economists. He feels that every individual should own a piece of land as his share of the national wealth, and that he should cultivate it himself. Physical labour is essential for everyone both for reasons of morality and health. Industry should be limited to an indispensable minimum. Thus, he emerges not only as an enemy of an excessive division of labour, but also of a money economy, and favours barter exchange instead.

Tolstoy is a communist, but his communism has an exclusively moral and religious underpinning. That is why he opposes

socialism, criticising its materialism, despotism, and irresponsibility. Take his story *The Master and Servant*, and you see that he wants the relationship between the two to be based solely on ethical and philanthropic principles. The ascetic ideal can actually be realised only by having the smallest of incomes and the most limited of means. The muzhik who fasts can only see modern industry as the most extravagant of luxuries. This is why Pierre's remark in *War and Peace* about ending serfdom is so characteristic: he wants to see the emancipation, but not on the peasant's account, to whom it really has not done any harm, but rather for the sake of those landlords who have been beating the serfs.

Tolstoy also endorses the practice of alms-giving, and remains quite oblivious to the way in which one man degrades another economically and morally by giving to a beggar. He is so ascetically insensitive as to look for ascetic self-control in a beggar.

Likewise, he quite fails to comprehend the meaning and purpose of social legislation. He does not understand the difference between justice and love, and so remains quite oblivious to the reality of class distinctions. He depicts only two classes, the aristocracy and the peasantry. The others he simply fails to analyse, confining himself to brief vignettes. He has no comprehension at all of the Russian intellectual and activist who does not happen to come from the ranks of the nobility. Moreover, he was quite outspoken in his view that only the aristocracy and peasantry have any firm roots, and that tells a good deal about his brand of agrarianism. All this shows how Tolstoy who grew up in the country and never had anyone else to deal with except the peasant and was himself the landlord, could never advance beyond his characteristic kind of aristocratic agrarianism. At one point Levin is made to extol the offspring of a good family; and a good family turns out to be one which can produce three or four ancestors who were educated people and had never committed any evil deeds or relied on anyone else for help. Tolstoy himself feels exactly that way as a descendant of the Counts Tolstoy. He is not in any sense arrogant about it, but still has a keen awareness of his status as an aristocrat and as a member of a specific clan of aristocrats.

This explains why Tolstoy, try as he will, can only imitate the ways of the peasant but can never really become a peasant himself, and never in fact became one. Also the very effort to imitate is a clear indication of someone who is in fact an aristocrat infected by Rousseauist ideas. He lives in a palace which belongs either to

him or to his family, but he has his own room made up to look like a peasant's hut; he has a low ceiling installed and has simple furniture brought in, and he calls that living the life of a peasant. He goes to the splendid salons of his palace to meet there with his educated and aristocratic friends, and he eats what his meticulous wife has had prepared for him by the cooks in clean and hygienic kitchens; he spends part of the year in Moscow and is able to eat delicacies in the country which his family gets for him from the big city. Thus, Tolstoy is able to enjoy all of this even while he reviles city life, commerce, the railroads, and civilisation in general, and rejoices in wearing shapeless boots of poor quality made by his own hand, as well as worn-out clothes—though they are made of first-class material. I am impressed by this game of being a peasant, and impressed above all by the fact that such a great man should have needed to play such a game. Above all I am astounded by Tolstoy's inconsistency. He was in reality a good, kind, loving person, and that perhaps is why his manner of life was so inconsistent and superficial without his even knowing it, although his good wife had few illusions on the matter. Perhaps his imitation of peasant life was simply a protest against the slavery imposed by social etiquette and its foolish and ostentatious conventions.

I remember vividly my surprise when I first arrived at Yasnaya Polyana. It was at the beginning of May 1887. The wooden bridge over the stream was in such poor condition that we had to by-pass it. The entrance gates to the park were almost in ruins. I thought to myself: Is this the kind of example which Tolstoy is setting to his peasants, and is this the way he proposes to go about educating them? Still, I soon came to understand Tolstoy's notion of being a peasant and the reason for his utter disregard of material things and economic issues. I came to see that both peasant and landowner are equally indifferent to these matters. The English and German squires would of course have been managing things quite differently, and in this sense it was really true that Tolstoy's Christianity did not in fact have the odour of *eau de rose*.

II

TOLSTOY is essentially concerned with a sociological and psychological analysis of a mass movement when he tells the story of the great wars against Napoleon in *War and Peace*. An

epilogue gives Tolstoy's own view of the nature of history and the historical process. He attempts to show that nations are not really guided either by God or great men—the so-called heroes of history—nor even by ideas or governments. He appears much influenced by the ideas of such historians as Buckle who was then being widely read in Russia, and comes to the conclusion that a mass movement like the wars against Napoleon arose without the help of any single force or individual, but rather in the manner in which bees swarm. This mass movement initially commenced in France, moved toward the east, and then its direction was reversed. The great Napoleon himself was no more than one of the bees who helped to set the movement in motion. Man, in essence, has a dual personality: as an individual he acts and makes decisions freely and with some definite aim in view, on the other hand, his collective actions are anything but free and are really governed by the laws of the crowd. Thus Napoleon was not really the instigator of these wars, although he may well have thought the contrary, which, if true, was nothing but an illusion. In reality Napoleon was only a vignette who gave his name to a particular set of events.

This, in brief, is Tolstoy's attempted explanation of the relationship between the individual and the mass. Yet, he hardly sheds much new light on the issues because he is satisfied to accept Kant's old categories, which make man empirically unfree yet transcendentally free. Tolstoy seeks to apply this formula to the life of actual societies: man is said to have his individual consciousness and yet he still remains the unconscious tool of historical forces, and thus history becomes nothing but an irrepressible force of the masses.

The story of *Anna Karenina* also revolves around a mass movement, this time involving the Russo-Turkish war. The Slavophile man of letters, Sergey Ivanovich Koznyshev, declaims about the mass consciousness of the people very much as if he were reading from the epilogue of *War and Peace*, with only the addition that he makes Lavrov's intelligentsia and the Narodniks become the voice of the people. Yet Tolstoy cannot himself understand the Slavophile conception of the folk. "I myself am the people, yet I have no sense of being so." That is the categorical statement of Levin the intellectual, who in order to fortify his own individualism impersonates a household servant, a man of the people, just in order to demonstrate that he knows absolutely nothing about a popular movement. *Anna Karenina* first appeared serially in

Katkov's journal,[1] yet the last part which contained the individualistic critique of the popular soul was refused by Katkov and had to be published as a separate brochure. It was precisely this part of the book that Dostoevsky singled out in his *Diary*[2] for one of his ruthless criticisms.

I do not intend to compare the various references and implications which emerge in *War and Peace* and to say if they are or are not in harmony with the theories propounded in *Anna Karenina.* What is interesting is how Tolstoy views the major questions of his day as they were then being debated in Russian literature. The principal issues related to the nature of nationality and folklore, the relationship of the individual to the community and the people, and the relationship, finally, of both the individual and of particular peoples to the historical process as a whole, no less than the nature of that process itself.

It is obvious from both of these great works that all such issues relating to the philosophy of history were of the greatest interest to Tolstoy. He addresses himself to them as early as 1861, when he was setting up his elementary school and found himself preoccupied with the pedagogical tasks which this entailed. A number of his essays dating from that time show that he was trying to find his sociological and historical bearings. The emancipation of the serfs which had just taken place made it necessary to go to the very roots of popular education and enlightenment, and this in turn raised a whole set of other issues.

Tolstoy certainly did become an assiduous student of the historical process and the notion of progress in particular. These were problems which were then being widely discussed among Russian thinkers, and Tolstoy himself goes straight back to Hegel and poses the question of whether "that which is historically real is also reasonable." Even then, however, he is already opposed to an exaggerated "historical outlook," that is to say, to an exaggerated historicism. He is also, however, no friend of excessive relativism, on both logical and ethical grounds. He is already convinced that ethical principles have the same kind of absolute validity that mathematical laws do.

Tolstoy continued as a foe of historicism, and indeed his views became further fixed by his study of Kant, Schopenhauer, and

[1] *Anna Karenina* was published in instalments in *Russky Vestnik* in the years 1875 to 1877. The last, eighth part, was published separately in 1877.

[2] Dostoevsky discussed the last part of *Anna Karenina* in *A Writer's Diary* for July–August, 1877, Chapter II.

even of Nietzsche. As soon as he had discovered his own religious anchor in the person of Jesus, he also adopted Jesus' attitude toward these various questions, especially the teaching that one ought not to be concerned with the future at the expense of today. Thus Tolstoy himself lives in the present and not the future, and is able to say to the revolutionaries of his day that one ought not to be concerned with the consequences of one's actions and that only the secular and political man, but not the religious individual, is ever preoccupied with the future.

Since he rejects historical relativism, Tolstoy also denies progress. He feels, at any rate, that the laws of progress still remain to be demonstrated. In particular he feels that Russia does not need to evolve further, especially along the lines of European progress. This is his view in 1862, although when writing *Boyhood* in 1854, he still believed in progress, or at least in evolution, and had formulated a kind of biogenetic law according to which the development of the individual parallels that of "whole generations." Here, and in a much more pronounced fashion later, we see his pantheistic proclivities. The individual is viewed as having an organic connection with the whole. How this takes place, however, was never clearly explained. The lessons which he draws from the philosophy of history in *War and Peace* remain symbolic rather than explicitly conceptual. What we read about Napoleon as a mere vignette and about mass movements remains rather disjointed from a sociological viewpoint, since it is certainly clear that Napoleon was much more than a mere label in his own day. After all, the issue of whether there are or are not great men in history does ultimately reduce itself to a question of fact, and a realistic study of history and society has the job of discovering what the so-called great men did or did not accomplish. If, as he does, Tolstoy confronts Napoleon with the soldier-muzhik, Plato Karatayev, he is in fact putting him up against a very great muzhik indeed. Tolstoy is, of course, head and shoulders above such of his predecessors, as for instance Marlinsky,[1] in his description of wars and armies not only in terms of great commanders but also the nameless common soldier. Yet even if Plato Karatayev was great in a religious sense, that hardly means that Napoleon was small in a military one.

Among other things, Tolstoy also rejects the Comtean view that

[1] Alexander Bestuzhev-Marlinsky (1797–1837), one of Russia's most Romantic writers, was the author of many Caucasian and Gothic tales. His accounts of military life were conventionally Romantic.

mankind is an organism. This in itself would not be objectionable if only Tolstoy had defined such concepts as mankind, nation, generation, and state with greater precision.

The Russo-Japanese War and the revolution of 1905, however, did force Tolstoy to search for a comprehensive outlook based upon a philosophy of history. The end of an era was approaching and a new one was being born. After two thousand years Christian civilisation was about to be rocked by a great revolution which had its roots in a time when Christianity had been made a state religion, even though the State and Christianity are irreconcilable opposites. A false Christianity, which had countenanced the overlordship of some and the slavery of others, was beginning to crumble from within. True Christianity was beginning to re-emerge, and with it the principle of equality and freedom for all. Tolstoy saw the external manifestations of this decay in the class struggle, the armaments race between states, in socialism, science, and art, and above all in the absence of any religious feeling among the upper strata of society. Russia's defeat at the hands of the Japanese and the subsequent revolution were proof to Tolstoy that the Russian state was in decline and this decline in turn signified the fall of a false Christian civilisation. The revolution of 1905 demonstrated to him that men are unable to reconcile their legitimate aspiration for a free and honest life with the arbitrary force personified by a so-called Christian state. This conflict was sensed keenly by the peoples of Russia. Thus Tolstoy tended to adopt the philosophy of history of the early Slavophiles and Narodniks when he described the Russian people as essentially anarchist and hostile to the State.

The Russo-Japanese war led to an awareness among the Russian people of the injustice and falsity of their state, and thus this tragic, senseless, and cruel war led directly to a major internal upheaval. Over and above this the Russian people had also learned that it had been cheated of its right to the free use of the soil, and this became a second major cause of revolution. The overwhelming majority of the Russian people is agricultural. It feels its land has been stolen. This theft makes it the victim of the worst kind of serfdom. The man who cannot use the land freely becomes a slave to all. The lack of land thus made for a pervasive serfdom which is worse than personal serfdom. The Russian people will carry out their revolution believing that the State is evil in and of itself, and that it had been robbed of its land. The older kind of revolution carried out by the city-dwellers of

Europe and America had been superseded. What was coming was a revolution in the villages, a revolution of peasants, a non-violent and bloodless revolt distinguished by the fact that the people would simply renounce the State and politics altogether and that it would go on to live within the *mir* as a peasant community. It would not meet force with violence, from whatever source it might come; it would simply reject the possible application of force inwardly and overcome it by the application of true Christian principles. According to Tolstoy the course of history to date has simply been a mistake. He believed with Rousseau that man was originally good, even God-like, and that he has been spoiled by a civilisation based upon the State. His view of the foreseeable future rounds out his apocalyptic vision, which was influenced by the gospels, Rousseau, the Slavophiles, the Narodniks, and Henry George. Certainly it made an interesting contrast with the apocalypse of the Slavophiles.

In all of his discussions of the historical development of society Tolstoy consistently displayed a strong individualism, and always defended individual freedom. This is readily seen in *Resurrection*, in which the inner process of regeneration is described. In his larger works, which depict a wide range of characters, the cardinal principle is that the individual always and quite definitely and freely determines his own actions and that he is not under the influence of external circumstances. Nekhlyudov begins to understand the meaning of life in Siberia. This perception comes to him while he is reading the gospels, which he had failed to comprehend until that critical moment. His new life and resurrection come about precisely at the point when he perceives that life in a new sense.

Tolstoy is, of course, honest enough to end *Resurrection* on a question. He says that only the future can tell how the converted Nekhlyudov will end along the new path which has been opened up for him. We do, however, know from elsewhere what the meaning of this new life and regimen will be. Nekhlyudov will actually continue to live according to Tolstoy's own principles. Still, it is significant that Tolstoy should, in his most mature work, present a psychological and ethical analysis of the former life. He does not tell us how Nekhludov straightens out his relationship with Maslova, and leaves us in doubt whether Maslova is to marry Nekhlyudov or Simonson. In fact Tolstoy talks a great deal more about the old life than the new one: he is much better at saying what the new life should not be rather than what it ought to be.

12

TOLSTOY, if perhaps not *the* most Russian, is certainly among the most characteristically Russian individuals. Foreign influences never suppressed his indigenous Russian side, nor did they even much alter it. Conditions in Russia were a decisive influence on him from the very beginning, and remained the subject of his thought and plans for reform. In emphasising this I do not, of course, have in mind the mystical nationalism of several Slavophiles, but rather the concrete cultural realities under which Tolstoy grew up, beginning in the reign of Nicholas I.

I have said that Tolstoy was most deeply influenced by his religious environment, and here perhaps is the place to give this point more precise meaning. This religious environment, with the education it provided, gave Tolstoy food for both philosophical and religious thought, but it also hardened his views and his ideas. True, Tolstoy came to reject Russian theology and the Russian Church, but he clings to Russian religiosity and religious morality, and certainly retains the concept of the Russian Christ. He rejects the authority of the Church yet accepts its concept of passive love, which is made necessary by the Church's authoritarianism. In so far as he does take issue with the official church, which appears to him to be necessarily inconsistent, he feels himself in sympathy with some of the Russian sects, and, in truth, he himself was indeed a sectarian.

It was consistent with these views that Tolstoy should have always been well inclined toward the muzhik, and, following the latter's example, attempted to find a practical way of working toward Rousseau's state of nature. Whereas, however, the majority of Rousseauists wish to satisfy their longing for nature and the simple life by adopting various kinds of natural philosophy and esthetics, by sometimes living in nature, or by travelling in exotic lands, Tolstoy seeks nature in the Russian village, and gives himself over to village life. True, he does not do so completely, or without returning to the big city, but he is nevertheless rather consistent about it. Thus Tolstoy's views should be understood as being in one sense a negation of certain aspects of Russian culture: the Russian state and its faults, the Russian university with its shortcomings, the ineffectuality of Russian science—these are the things which drive Tolstoy toward negation and anarchism. And if one is careful to add the word "Russian" when-

ever Tolstoy speaks about the State, science, patriotism, and so forth, it becomes difficult to disagree with him.

Tolstoy as a Russian emerges very clearly from *War and Peace:* the very first French chapter[1] depicts an aristocratic family of the time of Alexander—Tolstoy himself having been educated in French, so much so that some Russian philologists even blamed him for employing Gallicisms. We are shown how an aristocrat is educated and see the significance of the Russian military establishment and its close relationship to so-called society. In fact, the entire book depicts the realities of Tolstoy's own life and shows which influences had been most important for him since childhood. Thus *War and Peace* becomes an historical exemplification of what he sets down as a personal confession in *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth.*

The intellectual content of Tolstoy's work is derived from the same background from which Pushkin and his successors drew their subject-matter and themes. In fact, all of them were aristocrats who, roughly speaking, shared the same kind of experiences. We must therefore see Tolstoy the poet and thinker as the descendant of an aristocratic family which was highly placed both in the State and in society. He could thus become familiar with Russia's political and cultural undertakings and concerns not only from his family tradition but also through vivid personal experiences. He is almost a born philosopher of history. His interest in Freemasonry and the Martinists,[2] the Decembrist movement, the Napoleonic wars and their consequences, etc., were not general concerns but very personal ones indeed. Tolstoy thus gained a familiarity with all of the more important sociopolitical tendencies of his time, including various philosophies of history, with all of which he became intellectually involved, although contemporary as well as older thinkers seem to have influenced him rather less. He remains characteristically independent and individual. And it is worth adding that Tolstoy did not visit Europe as often as did Turgenev, that he did not live in Petersburg as did Goncharov and others, choosing instead to contemplate Russia and the rest of the world with greater calm and equanimity from Yasnaya Polyana.

This may be a good point at which to remind ourselves of what

[1] The first chapter, in the Russian original, is rich in French conversations.

[2] The Martinists were a sect founded in the eighteenth century by Martinez Pasqualis. They believed in supernatural visionary powers, and had some Russian following.

Tolstoy had in common with the literary, political, and philosophical tendencies of his day, however he may have differed from them in his own characteristic ways.

Along with the older Slavophiles, he underscores the primacy of religion and demands that the life of both individuals and entire societies be erected on strict moral principles. Yet while the Slavophiles—with certain exceptions—entertained a mystical concept of religion and were generally prone to come to terms with the State church, Tolstoy himself remained strictly a rationalist who never succumbed to the influence of Orthodoxy but rather responded to the teachings of Protestantism and their implications, which tend with him to militate against Orthodoxy. Above all, Tolstoy lays stress on morality and good sense in religion. He was inclined to reject Catholic authoritarianism in favour of Protestant individualism and subjectivism. In fact, he conceived of authority as being able only to have external effects: essentially, it is the same as force and oppression, especially in matters of religion.

Tolstoy occasionally challenges some Slavophile notions in detail. For instance, he criticises Khomyakov's definition of the Church and convinces himself of Khomyakov's error by embarking on a comparative study of Catholic and Orthodox theology. On the other hand, he quite agrees with K. Aksakov in rejecting the European concept of the State.

Tolstoy resembles the Narodniks in his worship of the muzhik and the *mir*. Even though he depicts the ugly side of peasant life in *The Power of Darkness*, he still sees the peasant both as a teacher and as an ideal. Scratch the surface of Russian life and, rationalism notwithstanding, the religion of the Church comes through by way of an agrarian detour. Tolstoy's own asceticism vindicates the Russian monk just as his call for humility and non-resistance to evil turns out to help both the Russian state and the Russian church.

In this connection it is worth recalling that Tolstoy was in literary contact, as well as on personally friendly terms, with Strakhov,[1] who was in turn the most important successor to Grigoriev.

Tolstoy was led to Henry George and his agrarian politics through Rousseau and the Narodniks. Yet Tolstoy does not seem to be aware that he had been preceded by the Slavophiles and their

[1] N. N. Strakhov (1828–96), was a friend of Dostoevsky as well as Tolstoy, literary critic, writer, and frequent correspondent with the two writers.

distinctive view of the Russian as opposed to the European concept of the State. Tolstoy finds himself in sharpest disagreement with most Western trends of thought in matters relating to his major preoccupation. Even those men of letters who followed Granovsky in their acceptance of religion, as, for instance, Chicherin, all reject religious radicalism and Tolstoy's anarchism. Yet Tolstoy's religious and philosophical rationalism and democratic outlook lend encouragement to both liberalism and radicalism. His denial of the Church and active struggle against it, and thus against theocracy as well, brought it about that he became the darling of the most radical parties and sects. Struve[1] expressly voiced these sentiments in the programme of Russian Constitutionalism, and unfortunately Father Gapon, who was a follower of Tolstoy's, prsently also turned into a revolutionary leader. Yet Tolstoy is surely not responsible for Gapon's variety of police socialism.

Tolstoy's most determined and self-conscious opponents were not found among the nihilists and the socialists, but within the hierarchy of the official church, which ended by excommunicating him. The liberal and radical camp failed to understand him at the beginning, when he appeared to favour religion and to be fighting against civilisation. For instance, Chernyshevski was outspoken and categorical in his criticism of Tolstoy, a criticism which became sharpened still further among some other nihilists and liberal positivists and reached the point where Tolstoy was made to appear as a reactionary. It was only Mikhailovsky,[2] despite his many critical reservations, who lifted the anathema. Thereafter, the liberal and radical thinkers rejected only Tolstoy's principles, but not their political and social consequences. Tolstoy himself, however, rejected liberalism as being simply impractical. His religious and moral convictions set up an effective barrier between him and the Marxists and socialists. His teachings regarding non-resistance to evil make revolutionary terrorism unacceptable to him. The degree to which he does share some common ground with all of these outlooks and movements in respect to their opposition to the State and its policies could be neatly demonstrated in terms of a comparison between him and Alexander Herzen,

[1] Peter Struve (1870–1949) was an important economist and statesman. He began as a Marxist, but then became a leader of the liberal democrats and, after 1917, an outstanding political thinker among the emigrés.

[2] Nikolai K. Mikhailovsky (1842–1909) was an influential Populist and radical. He was a literary critic as well as a political writer. Discussed in Vol. II of *The Spirit of Russia*, pp. 136–90.

whom he esteemed highly as a writer. It also goes without saying that Tolstoy's attitudes toward literature and art, and Russian literature and art in particular, are obviously conditioned by his religious outlook.

I recall from my conversations with Tolstoy in the years 1887 and 1888 that he did pay his respects to certain writers in the so-called constellation of Russian literature. Roughly speaking, he said then that "we older writers have written only about those things which we actually experienced; moreover, we had firm ground under our feet, since we came from the upper strata of society. But now you have people of middle-class background writing, and what they do is pretty much worthless." Among this older generation he numbered, apart from himself, Turgenev, Goncharov, Dostoevsky, Ostrovsky, and Pisemsky, whom he compared with Goncharov in his limited horizon and attention to detail. He criticised the younger man for not having experienced anything and merely writing about what they had thought up or imagined. He had some good things to say about Garshin, whom he saw as writing on the basis of actual experience, but men like Potekhin, Reshetnikov, Ostrogorsky, and Korolenko he did not value very highly.[1]

Nor did Tolstoy regard Pushkin as a particularly bright light, thinking that his poems lacked content. In fact, Tolstoy did not care much for poetry in general. "If we are to walk, let us walk naturally, not unnaturally" he used to say, mimicking an unnatural walk. Still, he does command the verses of Tyutchev, apparently since Tyutchev follows a definite idea. He referred to Tugenev on several occasions in our conversations, and particularly to his natural descriptive powers. He gave highest marks to his *Hunter's Notebook*, followed by his essay on *Hamlet* and *Don Quixote*, as well as *Enough*. In these, he said, Turgenev had risen to a serious consideration of life. Apart from that, he also liked Turgenev very well as a person.

His judgments on both Pushkin and Turgenev are already suggestive of his views regarding the nature of art, which he elaborated later in his famous study. Not only does he reject in its entirety the notion of art for art's sake but also that of an art in which the underlying idea does not fully determine the artistic technique employed and where the artist himself is not utterly

[1] Potekhin, Reshetnikov, Ostrogorsky, Korolenko: all writers of the end of the nineteenth century. Korolenko is the only one of the four who is still widely read and remembered.

swept up by his guiding idea. As early as the 1860's we find Tolstoy remarking that art is nothing more than a beautiful lie, which is why he came to emphasise truth in art so much. In his study of art he defines it entirely in social terms; art is meant to unite people, and that alone is its proper function.

These judgments on the subject of art are all remarkable, and they make a good deal of sense. Tolstoy stresses the element of truth in art. He is less interested, however, in the creative process, because he is less interested in the artist than in his finished work, and hence it is that he places philosophy, literature, art, morality, and religion pretty much on the same plane. Given this assumption, he then concludes that art flowers only in a vital religious environment, which of course makes his rejection of Shakespeare quite incomprehensible. He thinks that there are no ideas in *King Lear*, and that the language is too poetic, which is an obvious esthetic error. Nor is that his only one. His judgment of Pushkin is equally unjust, and while it is possible to understand why he should prefer Schiller to Goethe, it would appear quite wrong to place one categorically above the other.

I became particularly interested in Tolstoy's relationship to Dostoevsky. The two did not know each other, but after the latter's death Tolstoy quite correctly said that, to him personally, Dostoevsky was "very close, precious, and necessary. . . . I have lost a certain kind of support. Now I don't know quite what to do. I wept at his death and I weep still. Just before his death I was reading *The Insulted and Injured*, and I was thoroughly moved."[1] He also wrote at the time that he had never compared himself with Dostoevsky, and insisted that the whole of Dostoevsky's accomplishment came straight from the heart and that it gave him nothing but joy. I myself talked with Tolstoy about Dostoevsky some five years after he had set down this judgment, yet I was not left with the impression, either from his work or from what he said, that he had ever evolved an intimate spiritual relationship with Dostoevsky. He did praise *The House of the Dead*, because in it Dostoevsky recognised every criminal to be his brother and saw at least a spark of a moral human being in him. He had, in any case, already expressed the same judgment to Strakhov as early as 1880.[2]

[1] Letter to Strakhov, February 5/10, 1881, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy* (Jubilee ed.), Moscow, 1934, Vol. 63, p. 43.

[2] Tolstoy reread *The House of the Dead* in September 1880, and wrote to Strakhov about it in that month, with high praise. Strakhov answered on Novem-

In so far as Dostoevsky's philosophy of history is concerned, and particularly his view of Slavophilism and the religious issue, Tolstoy said that it appeared to him that Dostoevsky had always been rather unclear on these matters. Hence it is interesting to compare what Tolstoy and Dostoevsky respectively had to say on this issue of religion.

I am inclined to find a substantiation of my own hypothesis in the second volume of Biryukov's biography.[1] Tolstoy had written to Strakhov in 1883, concerning the latter's biography of Dostoevsky. He said that Strakhov had somehow manoeuvred himself into a false position toward his subject because he chose to use the then prevalent exaggerations about the man: both he and others had elevated Dostoevsky to the rank of prophet and saint. Yet Dostoevsky was only human, and died in the midst of an intense inner conflict. "He is able to move us, he is certainly interesting, but a man who was full of inner conflict cannot be placed on a pedestal and held up as an example for future generations."[2] Tolstoy goes on to compare Dostoevsky with an expensive horse which suddenly goes berserk, thereby losing its entire value: both Dostoevsky's heart and his mind were destroyed for no valid reason, whereas Turgenev's work will turn out to outlive Dostoevsky's because the author is free of that kind of fault.

In actual fact, even though both Tolstoy and Dostoevsky are apostles of a regeneration with a religious foundation, the contrast between them could not be greater. The striving of both can, perhaps, be reduced to a single formula: both seek a return to Christianity and its values, both are seekers after Christ, but the content of what they seek is fundamentally different in each case. In fact, we have in the two men entirely distinct religious types.

That difference is nothing less than one between rationalism and mysticism. Tolstoy seeks a rational religion, acceptable to the intellect and justifiable by it; on the other hand, Dostoevsky requires an a-rational religion, though perhaps not an anti- or irrational one. This is why the basis for Tolstoy's religion is moralistic, whereas Dostoevsky simply rests on faith in God and immortality. Apart from this the devil plays a very substantial

ber 2, 1880, and left a page of the letter with Dostoevsky, who was pleased with the praise. *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy* (Jubilee ed.), Vol. 63, p. 24.

[1] P. I. Biryukov, *L. N. Tolstoy: Biografiya*, Berlin, 1921, II, p. 480.

[2] *Ibid.*

role in Dostoevsky's religious scheme, not merely for literary-artistic purposes in the guise of Mephistopheles; he is present throughout transcendental reality. Tolstoy, on the other hand, does away with the devil altogether, which becomes one of the characteristic elements of his own theology. He finds his solace in Jesus, whereas Dostoevsky seeks his in Christ, and specifically in the Russian Christ, the Christ of the Russian Church and of the Russian monks. Tolstoy is a religious individualist, whereas Dostoevsky looks for support in the Church, and with it in the State and nation. Tolstoy is satisfied with the gospels, and though Dostoevsky also values them highly, he attaches even greater worth to the tradition of the Church, which is what makes him into a dogmatic and scholastic. Tolstoy, meanwhile, succumbs to the temptation of making scholastic distinctions only occasionally, as for instance when he uses Matthew, Chapter xix. 8 and 9 in defence of absolute monogamy.[1]

Both Dostoevsky and Tolstoy conceive of religion as the very essence of life itself, which is why we find Dostoevsky's equation of suicide and murder reiterated exactly by Tolstoy, since both see it as resulting directly from a loss of faith. Whereas, however, Dostoevsky stresses the individual murder, particularly that perpetrated by Nihilistic terrorism, Tolstoy repudiates those mass murders which result from war and which Dostoevsky, on the other hand, attempts to defend by all manner of devious arguments. Both men reject Titanism in favour of Christian humility and love, yet while Dostoevsky takes the Russian monk and his relationship to his elder as his model, Tolstoy seeks to learn from the muzhik. Dostoevsky, of course, sees himself much more in the role of Elder (Father Zosima) than in that of the acolyte Alyosha, while Tolstoy, in turn, explains the gospels with a naïve certitude which quite fails to disguise the aristocrat, very much as Dostoevsky's professed love of the weak fails to carry real conviction. Both see faith as the essence of religion, and both try to ward off scepticism with faith in their struggle against inner conflict and turmoil. Indeed, they are in this respect very close to Turgenev and the others, but they part company with them and each other as soon as it comes to defining the actual content of one's faith.

[1] Matthew xix 8, 9. "Moses because of the hardness of your heart suffered you to put away your wives. But from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you that whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and who so marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

Schädliche Wahrheit, ich ziehe dich vor dem nützlichen Irrtum:
Wahrheit heilet den Schmerz, den sie vielleicht uns bereit.
(Harmful truth, I prefer you to the useful error:
Truth heals the pain which it perhaps prepares for us.)

Dostoevsky, on the other hand, holds with Fontenelles:

Si j'avais la main pleine de vérités, je me
garderais bien de l'ouvrir sur le monde.
(If I had my hand full of truth, I should be very careful not to open it to the world.)

If there is some truth in Dostoevsky's criticism of Tolstoy's straightforwardness, which manifests itself in his Utopian desire to over-simplify, the stricture is certainly quite irrelevant when it comes to Tolstoy's fearless and consistent devotion to ethical principles.

The attitudes of these two writers and thinkers toward truthfulness also affects their respective positions on the issue of guilt. Tolstoy underscores the importance of confession and often indulges in critical self-accusation. Dostoevsky, on the other hand, makes no confessions, talks about himself but rarely, and sees penance and punishment as the only ways in which to expiate guilt. Tolstoy, for his part, as a seeker after truth, is a revitalising force for the Russia of his day. He deserves high praise for doing away with Dostoevsky's mysticism and revitalising the positivist search for reality started by Belinsky and Herzen and doing so by pointing to the reality of the religious life.

Even the Russian government and censorship were compelled to bow to Tolstoy's magnificent inner strength: they never persecuted him. The Church did get up the courage to excommunicate him and to oppose the official celebration of his eightieth birthday. Yet the State never dared to be so consistent, and this bothered Tolstoy, who used to complain that he was not allowed to suffer for his beliefs as others had to. Thus Tolstoy personally escaped punishment, though the dissemination and reading of his works remained punishable.

13

IF I am to give my own judgement of Tolstoy, I would being by quoting his diary for the year 1879: "There are earthly creatures of a certain heaviness, and lacking wings. They do their

mischief down here. There are among them some very strong personalities, such as Napoleon, who make a terrible imprint on mankind, and occasion tremendous turmoil, but all they do remains earth-bound. There are also men who manage to grow wings and to soar, such as the monks. There are some winged people who easily soar above the crowd, only to come down once again, as some idealists tend to do. Again, there are men with large and powerful wings who descend to the level of the crowd capriciously, and thus contrive to break their wings. I fall into this category. Such men try to take off again with their broken wings, and experience a fall. Yet the wings will heal, and I shall fly high once again, with God's help. Finally, there are some who have heavenly wings and who, folding their wings, descend on purpose and out of love for humanity. They teach men how to fly, and soar away themselves once they are no longer needed. That was Jesus Christ."[1]

I am personally very fond of Tolstoy and my own ethical and religious persuasions have been shaped by frequent reflections on his life and teaching. Still, I know that his deficiency is in the area of feeling, though not in that of thought. Tolstoy is not sensitive enough in feeling, and thus certain aspects of life remain inaccessible to him. I have given several examples of this, including his view of woman. Then, too, Kropotkin has shown how he behaved toward the poor musician in the short story *Lucerne*. In his moment of fury at the cruelty of the English, he quite fails to see the suffering which he is inflicting on the poor wretch himself. Another example may be found in his infatuation with Heine. This and other failures of taste may be seen as precisely part of this weakness. With a man like Tolstoy it is important to be very clear about this aspect of his being.

As thinker and philosopher Tolstoy is rather singular: he thinks rhapsodically. His personal development is characteristic since he moves step by step. For example, he had become a vegetarian and given up alcohol by 1887, but did not stop smoking until a year later. Nor did he become aware that all of these properly go together until some time after that. Thus Tolstoy reveals himself as a curious kind of empiricist; he is not deductive, but builds upon a succession of actual experiences, and that, of course, had some curious consequences when it came to the ethical and religious experiences which fashioned his inner life.

[1] In *Zapisnaya knizhka*, No. 7, October 28, 1879, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy* (Jubilee ed.), Moscow, 1952, Vol 48, p. 195.

All of this, however, merely shows how very genuine Tolstoy really was. It does not make him a dilettante who jumps from idea to idea or from one emotion to another. On the contrary, he painstakingly assimilates one experience after another. His personality is gradually rounded out as a result of long and persistent endeavour in pursuit of a single goal, and not by means of any quick, syllogistic construct. That is why his errors are not as disturbing as those of men who create with a more forceful imagination. Tolstoy experienced and actually lived the greatest not less than the smallest of events, and that is precisely what always made him what he was. He even made the experiences of others entirely his own, and that too made him precisely what he was.

Tolstoy was a typical Russian realist, an empiricist and an observer in the positivist tradition. While in Russia I came to know several of his fellow-combatants from Sevastopol, and all of them were carried away by Tolstov's realistic truthfulness. General Dragomirov,[1] for instance, the well-known writer on military affairs, had the highest praise for the manner in which military preparations, soldiers, and battles are described in *War and Peace*, even though he disagreed with Tolstoy's philosophy of war.

[1] General Mikhail Dragomirov (1830–1905) participated in the Russo–Turkish War of 1877–78. He was an outstanding military theoretician, nationalist, and writer. He also wrote an essay analysing *War and Peace* from the military point of view

PART THREE

VARIOUS WRITERS

CHAPTER XIV

THE PHILOSOPHY OF FRENCH ROMANTICISM: MUSSET

IF we turn to the Russian writers' spiritual homeland in the generation commencing with Catherine the Great or even Elizabeth and stretching down through the reign of Alexander, we must choose Musset as the representative of the France in question.

The starting point of our analysis must be *La Confession d'Un Enfant du Siècle*. The *Confession* is the best and most authentic commentary on Rolla and all of Musset's other work, and also shows us Musset as a man and the child of his own century.

* * *

How does the Voltairean sceptic meet his end: by committing physical or moral suicide? Musset in any case did attempt actual suicide in 1839, and after vegetating for twenty years longer finally managed to drink himself to death on absinthe.

Here then is the disease of the century. In the chapter of the *Confession* where Octave describes his arrival at the night club and his encounter with the prostitute, we are given a brief but pregnant diagnosis: "This was the disease of the century. The girl herself was that disease."[1] Musset describes the historical origins and development of the disease in the first chapter of the *Confession*. It is a brilliant analysis, and presents in a sparse few pages the philosophy underlying modern French literature and the evolution of France in general.

The heart and core of Musset's philosophy of history is one of transition from the eighteenth century of Voltaire to a new and different age. "The disease of our century may be traced to two

[1] Chapter IX, *La Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle*, A. de Musset, *Oeuvres complètes en prose*, ed. de la Pléiade, Paris, 1960, pp. 112–13.

causes. The people who lived through both 1793 and 1814 bear two wounds on their hearts. Everything which used to be is no longer, and that which shall be is not yet."[1] Voltaire destroyed belief in the holy scriptures while Napoleon destroyed faith in the old kings. The old regime had fallen, yet there was still no new regime. Napoleon did away with the kings but met his own downfall and the young generation educated under him and in line with his plans for world conquest suddenly found itself without any goals whatever. With the restoration of the king some part of the old order returned yet old parchments could not afford the young people a new life. The king and the priest, religion and the old politics, were restored in a *de facto* sense only since no one believed in them any longer. Kings had fallen, and the younger generation had become intoxicated with the notion of freedom, but it had not learned to act freely or to live as free men do. The rich became libertines, the middle classes seized on the goal of becoming functionaries while the poor had become intoxicated with the notion of freedom in a cold and terrible way. Big words had engulfed the whole of France and had drowned her in a sea of frightful deeds without purpose.

* * *

Rousseau is a good example of the romantic relapse into the Middle Ages. For a time he became a Catholic, because the strict, deterministic Calvinism in which he was reared did not suit him in his newly chosen life. Yet Catholicism hardly tamed him: the hero of his *Nouvelle Héloise*, Saint-Preux, is not destroyed by his passion but is able to sustain life in the manner of Faust. Actually, Rousseau, more than any other Frenchman, resembles Goethe, and his *Nouvelle Héloise* more than any other French work resembles *Faust*, especially in the second volume. Likewise, Wilhelm Meister has much in common with Emile, though Rousseau is in actual fact the real creator of Saint-Preux and of Julie, in the sense that he thought in terms of a rebirth, and more specifically of his own rebirth, which is really Faust all over again.

The other titans of French literature were only would-be titans. The strongest among them were in reality debilitated by the disease of the century. Musset confesses to his aimless impotence quite freely and it is in this that his considerable and representa-

[1] Chapter IX, *La Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle*, A. de Musset, *Oeuvres complètes en prose*, ed. de la Pléiade, Paris, 1960, p. 78.

tive importance lies. Musset's life and his poetry form a single whole, and that makes him resemble Byron in large measure. The other would-be French titans turn out to be weaklings when compared with Rolla and Octave, and they are all the weaker since they try to disguise their weakness. Chateaubriand's Atala in despair is driven to suicide in emulation of Werther, but René is very much more careful, making a promise to his beloved sister to stay alive. Sénancour's Obermann (1804) also plays with the notion of suicide, but in fact is too apathetic to become really desperate. Lamartine's elegy (*Job lu dans le désert—Chute d'un ange*) is also anything but forceful (which also goes for Benjamin Constant's talkative Adolphe). The latter rejoices in his own weakness and remains satisfied to analyse it. Perhaps the strongest among them is Vigny: stoically he decides to pay no attention to God, but he experiences more than one relapse. In his *Eloa,* Satan is almost redeemed by his love for Eloa, but in the end he finds himself defeated by chance. His stoicism leads to the passivity of a model soldier. The soldier's honour and awareness of his duty become the highest of manly virtues. Victor Hugo is too infatuated with the large words of his own titanic auguries. Georges Sand (in *Sept cordes de la lyre: Lélia*) really offers nothing but echoes of her reading of *Faust, René,* and *Manfred,* while Leconte de Lisle turns to antiquity and to the ancient gods in a peculiar kind of intellectual mythology and belief in exotic names wishing to enthrone Satan in opposition to Catholicism.

The same goes for the others: the French simply do not have either a Faust or a Cain. Their struggle with God and against God never gets beyond negation. This negation can sometimes be extreme, yet the French titan, all his negation notwithstanding, remains a prisoner of the Catholic outlook. Sainte-Beauve called this a "Catholic fantasy," and Flaubert discovered an equally felicitous phrase in calling it "Catholic melancholy." Actually, the fact is that the Catholic's sensibilities and modes of thought are so impregnated with the teachings, ideals, and institutions of his Church that he is simply unable to conceive of a different form of religion or a different church.

This Catholic learns to conceive of religion mystically. He sees it as something quite different and higher than mere morality. He becomes accustomed to the absolutism and uniqueness of his Church.

Within his religious framework he cannot understand either progress or evolution. He stands in awe of the political edifice of a

magnificent church organisation and hierarchy. He is ready to renounce God but ready to continue to recognise the pope. The Catholic's sensibilities are also moulded by the sound of pealing bells, incense, a multitude of lights, music, the altars, and by church architecture. That is why doubt is a more tortuous experience for him than it is for a Protestant. He may become an atheist or a libertine, he may deny God, but his Catholic preconceptions remain with him. All he does is to use different names. Auguste Comte, the founder of positivism, is surely a model example of all this. The reader needs but to study Comte's attitude toward religion in his later years, as discussed in the biographies by either Mill or Lewis, and he will understand what the Catholic fantasy and melancholy are really about.

Comte looked for the focal point of religion in morality and in politics rather than in theology, which is why he always recognised the Catholic Church and its institutions while rejecting Protestantism. His views regarding the Church and its socio-political and socio-pedagogical importance were entirely in accord with those of de Maistre, the founder of French Ultramontanism. For his own religion of humanity he is prepared to retain the whole of the Catholic ceremonial and Catholic morality, so that his critics, not without much justice, designated his religion as Catholicism without Christianity.

CHAPTER XV

TITANISM AND RUSSIAN LITERATURE

ALL Russian philosophical writers discovered and analysed inner duality and schizophrenia of the Russian personality: the conflict between the individual and Russian society, between philosophy and science, religion and Church, the intelligentsia and the people, the intellectual and the muzhik, Russia and Europe, the new Russia and the old.

From Pushkin through Tolstoy and Dostoevsky all Russian writers long for unity. They attempt to bridge these many gulfs and to bring harmony to the individual no less than Russian society. That is the object of their search, their endeavour, their struggles and their battles.

Achievement of that harmony, however, is impossible without a revolution in the course of which the old must be combated and set aside. Yet is it really necessary to destroy the old root and branch? What is worth while in the old, and how much of it can be organically absorbed by the new? And what of value is there in the new; why precisely is it so valuable that it must be fought for and that the old should be sacrificed to it?

There were those who gave up the fight and turned back, and of these Gogol was the most prominent and consistent to the point of absurdity. For the most part, members of this group were unable to overcome a certain ambivalence. This was actually true of Pushkin and all the others with the sole exception of Tolstoy. The latter did have the courage to turn his back completely on the clerical-religious tradition, even though in theory only. In practice he too was unable to free himself from some of the important traditional attitudes. Some examples of all this are ready to hand and would include Turgenev and Dostoevsky no less than Tolstoy. Turgenev surmounted the old ecclesiastical view of life and the world, but only in an academic sense and as a result of a European university education and a life imbued with

progressive European ideas. He did not, however, leave behind either the old modes of thought or the old way of life. And that is precisely why he, willy-nilly, espoused the cause of socio-political revolution. Dostoevsky's ambivalence was of a quite peculiar order. Here was a sceptic and unbeliever who discovered every plausible and implausible argument in favour of Caesaro-papism and ecclesiastical and state absolutism. He was a curiously broken soul. He had a vision of the new truth, but being afraid of it, could only summon the courage to try to lie his way toward it. He is the dogmatist of orthodox Jesuitism.

Only Tolstoy had the fortitude to begin the journey toward the light of truth; he was in the vanguard of the religious revolution.

2

THE Russian revolution of the nineteenth century revolved, both theoretically and practically, as well as philosophically and morally, around the problem of nihilism.

In the most radical sense of the word, nihilism signified the negation of the old—negation pure and simple. When Dostoevsky identified nihilism with atheism he was not entirely accurate. Just as it was impossible to subsume the whole of the old order and its world outlook under the term theism, so the term atheism could hardly convey the positive content of the new order. However, this much was true: nihilism and its problem reduced itself, in the last analysis, to a religious and philosophical and essentially a metaphysical one because the old Russian culture rested upon a religious and ecclesiastical foundation. That foundation was ecclesiastical and not merely religious. Theocracy was a historical fact in Russia, as were the close ties between Church and state as a form of socio-political organisation. That is why the Russian revolution had to be not merely philosophical and religious but socio-political as well: it could not ignore the social organisation of the Church and its intimate ties with the institution of czarism, In practice, the revolution was directed against the State, while philosophically and morally it was aimed against the Church, ecclesiastical religion, and religiosity. Since the State protected the Church with its armies and its bureaucracy, the revolution had to be physically directed against the State, but spiritually it struck against religion. Turgenev depicted the material and moral aspects of the nihilistic revolution; Tolstoy led the spiritual fight against the Church no less than against nihilism, although he

helped the latter in its physical struggle precisely because State and Church were as one. Meanwhile, Dostoevsky being fully cognisant of this connection, served as an analyst of nihilism and of its intended revolution.

Russia's writers and poets, no less than her philosophers and sociologists, attacked the historical foundations of Russian theocracy. It was not to Herzen alone that Feuerbach had demonstrated the connection between Church and State and between politics and religion. That is why one can conclude that Russia's writers no less than her philosophers and sociologists all sought to comprehend the substance and significance of anthropomorphic and sociomorphic religion.

3

THE struggle for God—for the new God—turned out to be a bloody battle for life, and thus one finds in Russian literature the most profound analysis of this great longing for life. Yet a longing for life is also synonymous with the flight form death. God—life—death: these three words might well summarise the content of Russian literature as well, of course, as that of all non-Russian literature. Once one has become familiar with Russia's most important literary figures one is no longer disturbed by the possible objection that death has been a central problem for philosophers and theologians for a long time, and that, in fact, it is a problem that crops up in all thought, and hence that Russian literature has nothing new or extraordinary to offer. In fact, Russia's writers and thinkers direct our attention to the issue of death in the specific form of murder and suicide. God or suicide and murder—that is the alarming dilemma which they pose. As late as the time of Nicholas I, Custine, in his study of Russia, was stressing the rarity of suicides there. "The people suffer too much to put an end to their lives and this is one curious facet of the human mind. If terror fills his life, a man does not seek death. He already knows what death is."[1] Custine refers to Dickens' observations in America, which show that among prisoners, and especially those in solitary confinement, suicide is rare. Their despair is such that it breaks their character and saps their vitality. I do not wish to go into the question of whether these identical findings of Custine's and Dickens' are really meaningful,

[1] Astolphe Louis Leonard Custine (1790–1857), wrote *La Russie*, 1839. Quote from *Journey for Our Time*, New York: Pellegrini & Cudahy, 1951, p. 319.

nor into why people tend to avoid suicide. What is important is simply the fact that a Frenchman finds suicide to be rare in the Russia of the 1840's. In France during the same period suicides were already quite frequent, which is evidently why Custine was struck by the situation in Russia. Since Custine's day, however, conditions have changed substantially. Statistics show that the incidence of suicide in Russia mounted rapidly, particularly within the educated strata of society. The literary historian Skabichevski showed that suicides among young people became a daily occurrence toward the end of the last century.[1] That off-hand remark was characteristic of literary history in that period. The historians noted the fact, yet they had no conception of the major problem which was at the root of it. In fact, Shelgunov also touched upon the issue, but not even he understood what was at stake.[2]

In so far as the literary historians dealt with the problem, they called attention to Karamzin, who was the first to depict suicide in a new, romantic and sentimental light in the short story *Poor Liza*, where Liza comes to drown herself. We are told that Karamzin was under the influence of *Werther*. Perhaps there may be something to this, yet shortly after Karamzin had written his story in 1791, the outstanding philosopher and thinker Radishchev poisoned himself, explaining his voluntary death by his inability to endure human suffering in the world about him. Thus, for Radishchev, who even experienced Siberian exile, Custine's diagnosis clearly did not hold.

Suicide and its motivation remain a constant problem for Russia's writers from Pushkin onward, yet it is only Dostoevsky and Tolstoy who gave their full attention to it and who understood its deeper substance. Pushkin was still rather confused on the issue; he did say that his hero suffered from the "Rusian disease," yet Onegin was ready to stand in the path of his friend's bullet, and was therefore ready to commit suicide indirectly. Thus Onegin became Pushkin himself, and in similar fashion Lermontov found his way into a duel and Griboedov travelled to Persia out of boredom and not, as Herzen remarked, to find death there. It is all very much like Onegin-Pushkin! Both

[1] Alexander M. Skabichevski (1838–1910) wrote various histories of Russian literature and studies of Pushkin and Lermontov. Starting as a populist, he changed to a liberal Western position.

[2] Nikolai V. Shelgunov (1824–91), revolutionary democrat and publicist. Wrote on history, economics, and politics *Skizzen des russischen Lebens*, *Werke*, III, p. 651.

Griboedov and Lermontov committed figurative suicide repeatedly and consciously, and the same was true to an even greater degree in Turgenev's case. It is worth noting that the motive for the deed in Turgenev received its most philosophical justification from a woman, Klara Milich.[1] As a matter of fact, suicides among women are very characteristic in Russian literature, as shown by the death of Anna Karenina in Tolstoy. Likewise, it is worth mentioning Catherine's death in Ostrovsky's *Storm*, a deed which Debrolyubov correctly characterised as an expression of strength and the result of a correct evaluation of life.

Tolstoy insisted that religious faith preserves life. Religious faith enables one to comprehend life's very meaning, gives one strength, and preserves man from the act of suicide. Lack of belief, the absence of faith in God, arouses fear in man: it gives him a sense of loneliness and isolation which reaches unbearable proportions. That is why Tolstoy equated the search for God with a longing for life. To know God means to live, since God is actually hope incarnate. It was in this sense that Dostoevsky proclaimed God to be the God of life and of immortality, and "logical" suicide to be the inescapable consequence of atheism.

4

AMONG the factors which tend to explain the growing proclivity toward suicide a prominent place must surely be assigned to the mounting psychosis of the age; in fact, one could say that mass psychosis and suicide are both characteristic of the state of modern society.

Dostoevsky understood this general picture very well indeed, although perhaps he caricatured it. Even so, he described it exceedingly well in the varied and abnormal characters whom he depicts. Of course, Dostoevsky was not exactly normal himself, but this in itself is only confirmation of something which has been established about modern cultural life in diagnoses offered by various psychiatrists, cultural historians, and sociologists. In fact, Dostoevsky demonstrates how various levels of psychosis develop along with the evolution of modern cultural life, and how they arise from it. In this connection one would also be well advised to examine a literary project of Ogarev's:[2] this revolutionary philo-

[1] The heroine of a story sometimes called by her name and sometimes entitled *After Death*, written by Turgenev in 1882, one of his last literary works.

[2] Nikolai P. Ogarev (1813–77), frequently referred to in Vol. I of *The Spirit of Russia*, collaborated with Herzen in publishing *The Bell* and *The North Star*.

sopher and friend of Herzen's once wanted to write a drama entitled *The Artist*, in which he expected to depict a person of encyclopaedic knowledge whose inner conflicts cause him to become emotionally disturbed.

Dostoevsky was not entirely balanced himself, but he was hardly alone. One actually finds that numerous Russian writers of note were emotionally disturbed, including, for instance, Batyushkov, Garshin, and others. The latter, in fact, committed suicide during one of his seizures.

Perhaps an especially incisive psychological and psychiatric probe of Russian literature might be able to establish a peculiar and characteristically Russian form of psychosis and pathological inferiority complex. Thus, perhaps, the entire pathological condition of modern culture might be revealed in Russian literature in a singular and quite extraordinary fashion.

Alcoholism is a case in point. Russian literature abounds in alcoholics. Dostoevsky treated the subject from a psychiatric standpoint. Indeed, it was a clear indication of the abnormality of Russian cultural life that it should have been possible to find so many typical alcoholics among Russia's writers. All one needs to do is read a biography of Pomyalovsky, or to consider Yazykov,[1] who is just as typical a case.

Apart from the alcoholics one could also point to the pathological mystics whom Russia produced in greater numbers than Europe did. Nor am I thinking here only of the pathological aspects of folk religion, but rather of some newer and decadent religious tendencies—a kind of spiritual alcoholism to which many latter-day seekers after God have fallen victim.

Precise psychiatric analysis could also elucidate the psychological make-up of an Oblomov and the reasons for his weakness of will. In general, therefore, I would say, and repeat, that Russian literature is itself the best mirror of cultural pathology.

5

DOSTOEVSKY made the Russian problem into a question of human conscience: it was one of murder or suicide. Yet it is remarkable that precisely Dostoevsky should have devoted his

[1] Nikolai G. Pomyalovsky (1835–63) died after an attack of delirium tremens at the age of twenty-eight. A very talented novelist, he wrote in the last three years of his life *The Seminary Sketches*, *Bourgeois Happiness*, and *Molotov*. Nikolai M. Yazykov (1803–46) was a poet.

greatest works to an analysis of murder rather than of suicide. Nihilism leads Raskolnikov to commit a crude murder and Ivan to give tacit assent even to patricide. That was not precisely the conclusion at which some of the other writers arrived; they were more concerned with an analysis of the nihilistic political revolution as it developed in Russian society, and were largely preoccupied with political murder as its noblest instrument.

Tolstoy, on the other hand, declared war on the act of murder very much as Dostoevsky considered any act of political terrorism to be akin to murder. Both refused to recognise a difference between the act of killing and the act of murder.

Tolstoy thus condemned official policy just as Dostoevsky condemned revolutionary policy.

6

RUSSIA'S "God-killers" became commonplace murderers. Pechorin kills a Grushnitsky; Raskolnikov kills an old and helpless woman. Ivan contemplates death for his old and weak father. Russia's titans thus turned out to be Oblomovs; Stolz humbly renounces Manfred and Faust.

Turgenev earnestly tried to overcome the Faustian legacy philosophically; Dostoevsky falsified Faust, yet both of them, together with Goncharov and Tolstoy, proclaim humble labour to be the salvation of the Russian people. Dostoevsky discovered the apex of wisdom to rest in the idiot, and Tolstoy did the same in the stuttering Akim.[1] It might thus be possible to define the difference between Russian and world literature by saying that the former was never able to create a truly original titan. Goncharov is absolutely right to say that Russia lacked either a Manfred or a Faust.

One can find approaches toward titanism in both Lermontov and Herzen, but they are nothing more than approaches, and are merely the products of European influences. I quite agree with the way in which Turgenev assimilates his Goethe, and Faust in particular, as Herzen does Byron's Manfred and Cain. However, it is merely comical that Prince Vyazemsky ("a prince among the aristocracy, a bushboy in literature"—Belinsky) should be translating Benjamin Constant's novel *Adolphe*, or that Zhukovsky

[1] Akim is the God-fearing peasant father in Tolstoy's *Power of Darkness*.

should be tackling Ahasverus.[1] Don Juan likewise loses his Faustian attributes in Russia and remains no more than a particular manifestation of Karamazovism. Russian literature did not seek to resolve universal or world-wide problems; it was solely preoccupied with Russian problems, and then only with Russia's problems of the day.

The Russians of that period were satisfied with a decent, moderate individualism, and they were willing to settle for a keener self-awareness in the individual. Russian heroes from Pushkin to Tolstoy did not wish to be supermen or gods, but merely people.

In this sense Russian literature resembled the French more closely than it did German or English writing. Musset and other Frenchman lived through a political revolution, and that is why they were essentially concerned with immediate goals; some of them, in fact, were inclined to return to the past. The Germans and the English had their political revolution behind them; they had even triumphed over the French revolution and Napoleon. Manfred and Faust hold their heads erect in the face both of God and man. Faust becomes a modern gnostic. Cain and Manfred defy their century as well as the Highest Being.

The Russians did not have a Mephisto, and much less a Lucifer. All of them, including the atheists, believed in the old-fashioned Devil, who turned out to be a puny devil at that. At best, he appeared as the long-expected anti-Christ. Milton, and even Byron, had both elevated Satan to the ranks of the titans. The destruction of the old God and the old Jehovah simply required elimination of the old Satan. The Russians, on the other hand, were incapable of renouncing either the old God or the old Satan.

7

THIS peculiarity in Russian literature can be attributed to various causes, including a feeling of inadequacy and backwardness, and the like. Certainly it is related to the fact that the Russians never developed a sense of subjectivism to the same degree as the West had, as exemplified so typically in the philosophy of German idealism. We have seen that Russia's philosophers tended vigorously to reject German idealism in the style

[1] Vasily Zhukovsky (1783–1852), the outstanding Romantic poet, wrote about half of a projected poem called "The Wandering Jew," about Ahasverus, shortly before his death. It remained unfinished.

of Fichte, and that Russia's thinkers, whether contemporaries or pupils of Belinsky and Herzen, equally tended to reject subjectivism. In his essays on *Faust* and *Hamlet* Turgenev rejected the subjectivism of Kant and of Fichte. He denounced subjectivism because he built an entire universe around his own "I." He feared the doubts to which subjectivism and disbelief give rise, and which in the final analysis might call that very "I" into question. He blamed subjectivism for being the source of destructive self-analysis, irony, a lack of enthusiasm, and negation. He felt that ethical subjectivism leads to egotism. . . . "Not even an egotist can believe in his own self. We can believe only in that which is outside ourselves or above us. The crux of man cannot be man himself." For his part, Dostoevsky struggled against subjectivism, solipsism, and the self-apotheosis of the Man-god as it results from subjectivism and individualism.

Russian literature does show evidence of various kinds and degrees of objectivism, but there is at the same time inevitably also a measure of subjectivism, since to remain wholly objective would indicate a lower stage of development. In this respect Turgenev was quite right to see that the modern age is more subjective than the medieval period was.

"My God! What will the Countess Maria Alexeyevna say?" These last words spoken by Famusov at the end of Griboedov's comedy *Woe from Wit* are marvellously characteristic of the objectivism of Russian society in the 1820's, as well as of the entire period. At the time people lived as if entirely lost in their own environment. Chatsky is equally objective, even though what he believes in may be rather different. Yet, psychologically he is exactly like Famusov, though the latter believes in the foolish socialite lady while Chatsky chooses to believe in European science and progress. Onegin too, very much like Chatsky, is preoccupied with the external world.

The inactivity to which thinking people were condemned in the age of Nicholas compelled them to pay more attention to their inner selves. Just as it did in Europe, so too in Russia the post-revolutionary reaction encouraged the growth of subjectivism and individualism. Lermontov's Pechorin is a good example of this development. His attitude toward life stands in poignant contrast to Onegin's. His subjectivism and individualism actually —if only occasionally—came close to being unbridled egotism and ethical indifference. This titanic burgeoning of individualism and subjectivism presently came to assume the aspects of demonism.

Where Chatsky believed in himself and in his mission, Pechorin believed neither in himself nor in anyone else. Isolation and doubt thus lead him to despair. The tried and true device of the dual was for him only a disguised attempt at suicide. Indeed, suicide or insanity are the two best ways in which Lermontov's characters meet their end. His demonic hero is even led to murder simply because crime provides a kind of stimulus, much as it did for other Byronic heroes.

Still, that Pechorin's individualism and subjectivism are not wholly extreme is shown by his rather objective fatalism. He accepts fate completely, and entirely believes in the miracle which points the way to salvation. Nor has Lermontov's demon forgotten how to pray: Pechorin is actually well on the way toward reconciliation with God and country.

Whereas the Pechorins and Onegins were angry and malevolent, Gogol's characters do not have a trace of wrath. Nor would this help their pettiness and sense of anxiety. All those Chichikovs, Khlestakovs, Plyushkins, Sobakeviches, Manilovs, Derzhimordas, Tyapkin-Lyapkins, Korobochkas, Tentetnikovs, and whatever else they might be called, are a worthless bunch, yet they are not even great in their very badness, nor do they desire greatness. Gogol did not create one type; he sketched dozens of them, and for that reason emerged as neither an individualist nor a subjectivist. Byron and the other individualists had no effect on him, since he remained wholly absorbed in the observation of his own surroundings. Even though he did analyse himself, he continued to look for his own traits in others, thereby trying to objectivise them and to project them against a social background. His self-analysis was psychologically shallow; it was essentially social and ethical, and he was satisfied to apply old-time objective norms.

Lermontov's proud dream did not last long: Gogol returned in every aspect and without reservations to the bosom of the Russian Church, quite according to Uvarov's and Nicholas's prescription. Later writers were more subjective again, but we do see in Turgenev how he watered down the German subjectivism of his teacher Goethe, and consequently the degree to which he remained an objectivist himself. The subjective Rudins point the way to the Bazarovs and Solomins.[1] In tune with the era of socio-political reform under Alexander II, the Solomins do get

[1] Solomin, an efficient factory-overseer in Turgenev's *Virgin Soil*, steady and reasonable, marries in the end the heroine Marianna.

temporarily excited by revolutionary ideals, yet they actually reject revolution as destructive and negative, and eventually come to preach the gospel of quiet and humble work. They are followed in this by Stolz and Tushin,[1] and indeed, by Levin, who would have liked to substitute the happy contentment of the muzhik for corrosive and self-destructive despair. The muzhik taught him the joy of life; the muzhik's religion revealed the secret of the living God to him, and thus he came to renounce suicidal ideas. The muzhik taught him not only to believe, but also to work: that is why Levin himself became a muzhik. Dostoevsky's Shatov advised Stavrogin to overcome his landowner's atheism by engaging in work similar to the muzhik's. Dostoevsky noted with approval that he came to know the real people in *The House of the Dead*, where he simultaneously discovered God and Christ. The monk's faith was thus set against Ivan's titanism and a philosophy which led him on toward crime—in fact, toward murder and suicide.

Both Tolstoy and Dostoevsky sought support from objective authorities: one from the Church, and the other from the gospels. Yet we do know how Dostoevsky forced himself into this, and how subjectively Tolstoy interpreted the gospels. Thus, individualism and subjectivism are much more powerfully at work on both than they were in Pushkin's case. Tolstoy's reduction of religion to morality would hardly have been possible without the influence of Kant and of subjectivistic Protestantism, which Turgenev quite correctly knew to be such.

Still, objectivism did remain much more characteristic of Russian literature than its subjectivism. Yet, in this context, objectivism means: faith in the external world, in God, society, and the state, in the monarch and the patriarch, the nation and one's brother. . . . The struggle for one's own identity is at one and the same time a struggle for faith, whether for the new one or the old.

[1] Tushin is a solid, reliable character in Goncharov's *Precipice*.

CHAPTER XVI

LERMONTOV

MANY literary historians regard Lermontov as the Russian Byron. They point to the long epic poem *Demon*, and its history, because its author was preoccupied with the underlying idea during his whole life, as shown by the various draft versions. In fact, Lermontov did spend a long time on *Demon*, having begun in 1829 when he was a mere fifteen years old and continuing until 1838 and even later—which is to say, quite literally throughout his short life, since he died in 1841.

Lermontov read Byron frequently, and liked to translate him. The second version of *Demon* takes for its motto those of Byron's stanzas from *Cain* which characterise Lucifer. Yet the character of Demon remains entirely un-Byronic, and Lermontov himself quite unlike Byron. He knew this himself as early as 1832, and much better so than did the literary historians.

> "No, I am not Byron, I am somebody else,
> A still unknown chosen one,
> Like him a pilgrim driven about the world,
> But with a Russian soul."[1]

However, let us stay with *Demon*. Lermontov contrasts the angel with Demon. That angel is the embodiment of faith, love, hope, beauty, and good. Demon does not believe, does not love, and does not hope. He is the soul of doubt and of reason, a ruler (czar), and represents enlightenment and freedom as well as being the foe of heaven. He is the evil element in nature, but he does evil without passion: evil bores him. He actually hates against his will, and his contempt and envy, like his hatreds, are equally lifeless. He corrupts people with ease only to abandon

[1] M. Y. Lermontov, *Sobranie Sochineniy*, Moscow, 1958, II, p. 270.

them to their own devices. He has only contempt for them, since they are stupid and dishonest.

This Demon, upon seeing Tamara, recalls his original angelic condition and sees a way to redemption in his love for her and hers for him. He is ready to love once more, but at this point he encounters Tamara's guardian angel, and hatred wells up in him once again. Tamara asks him to forsake evil, and Demon makes her a long and solemn promise, whereupon Tamara does give herself to him. Yet this act at once leads to her own death. Nevertheless, the soul of this "beautiful sinner" is led to heaven by an angel. Her fears are banished, and the footprints of her fall and suffering are washed away by her own tears. She hears heavenly music in Paradise, and at that instant Demon appears from the nether depths and with brazen forthrightness declares: "She is mine!" In Tamara's soul her fears are driven away through prayer. Her once-loved Demon now appears to her in quite different guise. He is once again the evil Demon who hates, who is as cold as the grave itself, and the embodiment of uncertainty:

> The defected Demon cursed
> His mad dreams,
> And remained again, proud,
> Alone, as before, in the universe,
> Without hope and love.[1]

Can this indeed be Byron? Surely this Demon is not Byron's Lucifer. He may be Pushkin's Demon, but even that only partially since the latter is actually moved by the sight of a pure angel, while Lermontov's Demon is only temporarily transformed by love for his wife. He soon reverts to his original conditions, and does so precisely at the sight of an angel.

This sequence of reactions is not truly Byronic, whether psychologically or metaphysically. On the other hand, we are told that Demon had Tamara's image engraved in his soul from the beginning of the world, and that he was burdened by it even while still an angel, feeling as he did the loneliness of his secret vision. This is a theme which also appears quite often in French literature, as for instance in Alfred de Vigny's *Eloa* of the year 1824. However, we are never told how Demon, moved by love

[1] From "The Demon," M. Y. Lermontov, *Sobranie Sochinenty*, Moscow, 1958, II, p. 110.

to the point of tears and despite his oath and Tamara's sacrifice, reverts to his old self.

In Lermontov's *Demon* we have also to seek for the demonic in Tamara, in a woman, and this creates a degree of ambiguity. She, too, is said to be proud, and that pride is shown to be one of Demon's attributes. She proves entirely compatible with Demon, yet his love for her is destructive and deadly. Tamara's love is thus reminiscent of those in Heine "who perish when they love."

Lermontov drew on Heine, and not merely on Byron. That is why he does not emphasise the demonic in Tamara. Only in the later poem *Tamara*, written shortly before his death, does she become demonic and appears as a feminine Don Juan, or perhaps more accurately as a female Bluebeard. On the other hand, in his dedication to the poem *Demon* of the year 1831, Lermontov sees himself as the demon who has regained the hope of heaven through love.

* * *

Lermontov, in fact, always remained dissatisfied with the transcendental fable of his own *Demon*, since he is neither Byron's Lucifer nor Goethe's Mephisto. Instead, he is much closer to Onegin, crushed, aware of his own guilt, seeking salvation from the apathy engendered by precocity in matters of love.

* * *

Lermontov did have much in common with Byron, including the nature and Napoleon cults as well as his sense of irony, and yet a question remains as to the extent to which one is dealing with genuine empathy as against mere influence by one man upon another. I find some temperamental likenesses, but these are external, like the desire to visit strange lands, a certain aristocratic lack of tact and consideration made possible by wealth which in turn enables both poets to perceive a kind of unity between life and poetry, a poor aristocratic education, etc. Byron thus drew Lermontov's attention to characters like Corsair, and even to the Russian Mazeppa, an influence which, for instance, shows in the plan for *The Criminal* (*Prestupnik*, 1829).

In his attitude toward life, and in his despair, the Russian was very different from his stubborn English counterpart. Both, however, were influenced by the German poets, especially Schiller, as well as by French ones.

In *The Hero of Our Time*, Lermontov is concerned with the fate of a rich Russian aristocrat and officer in the baleful reign of Nicholas I. He is a victim of Onegin's boredom, but to a higher degree, since his contemporaries have nothing either within them or surrounding them except perhaps gambling, the pleasures and dangers of feminine liaisons, and the false pathos of the duel, to which Lermontov fell victim no less than did Pushkin. In fact, the duel was even more important to Lermontov than it was for Pushkin, as shown in *The Hero of Our Time* when Pechorin, the hero, kills his friend out of sheer boredom, as, indeed, had Onegin. For this self-same reason of boredom Pechorin kidnaps and seduces the Caucasian girl Bella, whom he of course later throws over like a discarded toy. This precocious and blasé hero, inspired by Rousseau, does long for the naïveté of the child of nature, but no sooner does he come face to face with it than he is repelled by it, just as he is by civilisation. But then, of course, "to love briefly is not worth the trouble, and to love forever is impossible."[1]

The Hero is, like Onegin, old before his time, and prematurely dissipated. Lermontov himself, living in a very similar society, made some precocious contributions to pornography, as Pushkin had done, albeit he was only twenty-two in 1836. He, however, again like Pushkin, also longed for real and pure love. We find in Lermontov a certain resemblance to Musset's regret at the loss of innocence, while he shares with Byron a sense for spirits (*The Demon*).

Pechorin's life runs its course without plan or goal. He does what his environment allows or encourages him to do, and is led by the blind hand of fate. Like Lermontov's other heroes, Pechorin faithfully accepts guidance by fate, and stumbles into every kind of danger with truly Turkish resignation. This fatalism is described in *The Hero of Our Time* in Lieutenant Vulich. He wants to find out whether his major's pistol is loaded, and does so on himself. As it turns out, it is loaded but jams on the first try as he holds it pointed at his temple. The second time the bullet merely goes through the top of his cap. Yet no sooner is Vulich thus saved, than a Cossack murders him on his way home.

Life is boring, sad, and barren, an empty and foolish jest. . . . The men of this age grow old doubting their learning without being capable of acting; indifferent to good and evil, they flee danger in cowardly fashion and slavishly bow their heads in the presence of power. Precocious, prematurely old, they have

[1] From Lermontov's poem "Boring and Sad."

paralysed their ability to think by cramming themselves full with useless knowledge; both their loves and their hates are entirely fortuitous. Their blood does boil, yet there is only a leaden iciness. Life is empty and consistently grey. It remains without joy and aimless. Their offspring can have nothing but contempt for this generation, and feel only bitter contempt for a father who squandered his fortune in a fit of absent-mindedness.[1]

Lermontov is unable to dedicate himself either to the community or to history in any political or social sense. He is incapable of political or social work. "The history of the human soul, even of the humblest one, is surely more interesting and useful than the history of an entire nation." That represented Lermontov's thinking at the time when Prince Uvarov was sacrificing individuality on the altar of his absolutist trinity.

True, the maturer Lermontov became, the more critical was he of absolutism. His *Demon* could not be published during Nicholas's reign, and Lermontov himself was repeatedly exiled from Saint Petersburg to the Caucasus. His pride and indignation continued to swell, yet they remained those of an aristocrat who had been personally affronted. He never harboured any democratic feelings, and remained without a social conscience. The crowd, even a crowd of aristocrats, always seemed stupid and alien to him. He had a personal hatred of tyranny, yet in greeting the July revolution we are made to sense that he had only a symbolic understanding of the French king and his fate. On the other hand, it is true that he recognised the evil of serfdom. "O fatherland! O fatherland!" Arbenin cries out in the play *The Eccentric*,[2] when the muzhik recounts the sufferings inflicted on the peasants by the land landowner, and he ends up by giving his friend money in order to buy the village and to free the serfs.

* * *

Dostoevsky mentions Lermontov's demonism in his programmatic study of Russian literature in 1861, but is far from correct in what he says. He equates Lermontov with Gogol as being true demons, both thereby giving the very term a meaning quite unsuitable to Lermontov. Although Dostoevsky conceded that he and his contemporaries loved Lermontov perhaps even more

[1] This paragraph is a close paraphrase of passages in the poem "Thought" (*Duma*, 1838).

[2] *Stranny chelovek*, Lermontov, *Sobranie Sochinenty*, Moscow, 1958, III, p. 330.

than Gogol, he weakens the statement by the ironic remark that every bureaucrat knew his Lermontov by heart and that every one of them, as soon as he left his department, began played at being a Mephisto.

Dostoevsky could hardly be said to have had a true appreciation of Lermontov's poetry. He seemed to find the criticism of cultural conditions in Russia too negative. Lermontov, in the introduction to the second edition of his *Hero*, himself conceded that he was probing the disease of his generation, but added that only God could, of course, know how it might be cured. Dostoevsky sees the Byronic problem altogether too neatly when he paints the Russian Byronic temperaments as consisting only of fat rascals who wish simply to enrich themselves. The ironic qualities in Lermontov require keener analysis than Dostoevsky was prepared to give them even had he wanted to do justice to the Nihilists. But then, Dostoevsky saw the salvation of Russia as coming from the monk, whereas Lermontov (in *Mtsyri*, 1839) depicts a monk fleeing the monastery in order to escape spiritual death. The dying man extols his good fortune at being in God's open nature, and at being able to move about freely. The struggle with the panther has a romantically aristocratic quality about it, but no more so than does the romantic passivity of Dostoevsky's monks.

CHAPTER XVII

GONCHAROV

I

THE Russia of Nicholas is revealed quite clearly in the social position of the writers of that time. All of them are aristocrats, and soldiers or bureaucrats by profession. Sometimes they are quasi-officials, and it is precisely these social orders which are depicted in their work. Griboedov describes high society in Moscow; the others describe the upper strata of Saint Petersburg and the countryside. True, Pushkin and Gogol were already interested in people from other social levels yet their principal interest still focuses on those of their own class.

We are shown how these people were educated and brought up in their families, schools, finishing schools, universities, and military institutes. We are introduced to the Russian family of that time. The rule is that the man and wife contract a conventional marriage. In the best of circumstances, a kind of decent relationship between them evolves by force of sheer habit. The wife looks after the household, while the husband "keeps up appearances," which is really the only way of describing his function. They send their children to private schools, and later on to the universities.

Not only is their education bad; the upbringing in the home is positively ludicrous, as conducted by either French or German governesses. Comparatively speaking, the best formative influences derive from the Russian nursemaids and other servants recruited from the villages, simply because these are the least artificial ones.

As a rule the children get the most superficial kind of French or pseudo-French cultural upbringing. It also generally happens that the more gifted individuals indulge in unsystematic and random reading. Libraries dating from the days of Rousseau and Voltaire

furnished the reading matter not only of the 1820's but no less so of the 1840's and 1850's.

More serious philosophical, religious, and moral interests are rare. The theocratic censorship, often under the personal direction of the czar, warps a Pushkin, suppresses a Lermontov, and destroys a Gogol.

Politically, Griboedov ventures to take a step or two forward with his Chatsky, but Pushkin had already learned to repress his own Decembrist thoughts; Lermontov arrives at them himself, but his untimely death saves him from drawing the necessary conclusions from a given set of premises; Gogol languishes under the regime of Nicholas, both in body and in spirit.

If it is true that the family serves as the social foundation of society and the school as the foundation of political and public activity, then one can gain a clear picture of those times from the descriptions of both as given by both the major and minor writers. Among the heroes who are meant to preserve any of their vitality at all, not a single one marries. Chatsky, Onegin, and Pechorin all engage in a great deal of love-making, but they do not marry. Marriage, in short, means that every form of striving comes to an end. It spells death to every kind of activity. Pushkin and Lermontov are still concerned to analyse love and its emotional and physical implications, but Gogol eschews the problem of love altogether.

The women are very much like the men. We find a blatantly repellent character in Sophia Famusova, the fashionable seventeen-year-old Muscovite girl who has a sentimentally platonic liaison with her father's scribe. And it is this foolish goose who can attract Chatsky even though not for good.

Tatyana must be rated high in terms of character, but she falls victim to conventionality. She would like to remain physically faithful to the old general, but does not know that the relationship of man and wife also entails spiritual faithfulness and candour.

Lermontov's Bella and the Countesses Mary and Vera are made to represent various shades and degrees of love. *The Hero of Our Time* experiences joy for a while from love of the savage child of nature. He is also aroused by the lioness of social high life, but finds the greatest satisfaction in his relationship with the wife of his acquaintance. Tamara becomes the ideal which is abstracted from these three feminine types.

2

IN any event, an over-view of this first period in Russian literature is best obtained from Goncharov's works. One need only read the novel *A Common Story* to have the entire period distilled as if in a crucible. *A Common Story* was finished in 1846 and published in 1847; the same theme is treated again in *Oblomov* (1859), and one is made to sense the influence of Pushkin and Griboedov since many scenes and dialogues are as if taken from *Woe from Wit.* Yet the analysis is more explicit and almost programmatic.

Goncharov follows Gogol in depicting ordinary life, but he does so in order to praise it and not to criticise it or to make it the subject of irony. His analyses are realistic to the point of being almost positivist. Events speak for themselves and illustrate their own significance. Goncharov is wholly objective, and in fact has an immovable quality which he later praises himself and which actually makes his descriptions so effective. Artistically, however, *A Common Story* does remain weak.

Goncharov is himself a point of transition from the earlier to the later writers, including Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy, although, in point of time he remains a contemporary of his predecessors. This fact is worth noting. The question here is not one of a chronological but a substantive evolution (Goncharov was born in 1812, Griboedov in 1794, Pushkin in 1799, Lermontov in 1814, and Gogol in 1809). It is evident from this alone that Goncharov outlived his contemporaries by almost half a century, since he died in 1891. He was the first writer to come close to Goethe's longevity: Pushkin dies in his thirty-eighth year, Griboedov in his thirty-fifth, Lermontov in his twenty-seventh, and Gogol in his forty-third. If nothing else, these short life-spans are characteristic of the epoch between the great Moscow fire and the Crimean war. Three of these greatest of writers die unnatural deaths while the fourth dies a natural death in name only.

3

A COMMON STORY is a didactic novel. Uncle Aduyev is bringing up his nephew in the spirit of Nicholas's regime. Fame and fortune are both the motto and the aim of life. Fame is to be achieved in the bureaucracy, and fortune by contracting

a good marriage. Goncharov paints both goals with delicate irony and humour. Unlike Gogol, he recounts events calmly and without irritation.

The Aduyevs are sensible practical people. "He is blessed who is sensible," is Aduyev senior's motto; Aduyev junior draws the conclusion from this piece of wisdom that "one should be sensible with those who are close to one, as, for instance, one's wife." Thus, the Hegelian formula which already captivated Belinsky, is applied here in the realm of morality and religion. Goncharov describes the education and upbringing of these "sensible" people of both sexes. He describes their superficiality and inadequacy, which, of course, is worse in the case of the women, who are thrown back on the worst kind of education, derived from the teachings of heterogeneous Frenchmen and Germans. Goncharov tells us something about the education of Julias: her French teacher spoils her, by his frivolous and slick behaviour; the German tutor is conscientious but so incredibly dull that he only succeeds in reinforcing the influence of the Frenchman, while her Russian teacher is plainly stupid. It is this girl with whom Aduyev junior, the man of the world, falls in love. Both, of course, are impelled by little more than plain sentimentality and by their respective egotisms which like to play upon the feelings of others and are shortly transformed into simple boredom. Only the sheer force of habit prevents the newly launched family from falling apart altogether.

The Aduyevs, guided by their understanding of what constitutes good sense, are, of course, only in search of material things: a nice body and a pile of money; and if you cannot have both, then, of course, the money is very much to be preferred. Out of rudimentary caution the young Aduyev does not marry until he is thirty-five. By that time he has sown his oats, acquired a little paunch, and is suitably bald. In his youth Aduyev seized on every occasion to indulge his sentimentality, both in theory and practice. On the theoretical plane, he writes verses and plays in the manner of Byron and with due regard for Goethe and Schiller. In the practical realm, he makes fervent declarations of love to Nadine, but precisely because Nadine has recently met a nobleman, her "yes" actually comes through as a "no." The customary despair ensues, but eventually Julia appears, and so it goes. When he gives up Julia and goes for a rest in the country, he establishes a liaison with a girl called Liza, who is there on holiday. Aduyev assumes a Byronic pose of melancholy and romantic distraction.

His heart and mind are distraught, and he is supposed to deserve pity. The bored girl falls for this bait immediately, and is ready to declare her love for him, in the fashion of Tatyana. Aduyev junior gains his immediate goal through a few deft moves on the chess board of the emotions, but his further progress is blocked by Liza's father, who merely shows the would-be Byron the door. And precisely because the would-be Byron is so very sensible, he makes off like a wet cat. The circumstances impel the younger Aduyev to philosophise, and in line with the best among his romantic models he begins to recall his youth. Right away he hits upon the idea that only an intense faith can bring true happiness. The conflict between science and faith has poisoned life, which would otherwise not be insupportable at all if only it were not for the charms of Liza and the temptations put in his path by her aunt's good cook. And what had he actually learned from it all? What did it bring him? Nothing but doubt and theorising. . . .

After this philosophical monologue Goncharov tells us what Aduyev's faith was and what he wanted it to be. The aunt and an old *babushka* nurse him by using the old superstitious recipes.

The *History* ends with Aduyev's marriage, which nets him 300,000 rubles and a village with several hundred souls, and some additional expectations. It is very delicate of Goncharov simply to give us this matter-of-fact report about the ending of Aduyev's story. He does not introduce us to his prospective bride, because nothing could matter less to Aduyev. He does deal with several of his love affairs, which would of course be of interest to men, but then marriage is, after all, the most sensible of all sensible steps. Goncharov himself later provided a commentary on his own works, published in 1891, in which he explains that Aduyev senior had already come to understand that what Russia really needed was work rather than empty routine, real, honest-to-goodness work, which could overcome the inertia of the "old Russia." Allegedly Aduyev founded a factory later on and I am inclined to take Goncharov's word for it. Whether consciously or not, his careful study of Russian life led him to the conclusion that idleness and a demoralising laziness were the sources of all evil.

Goncharov himself came from a wealthy merchant family, which is probably why he was able to offer such an objective diagnosis of the disease of the Russian aristocracy. He saw how life without work took on a rather fantastic quality, precisely because there was nothing to do and because one was not allowed

to do anything. He saw, too, how relationships between these empty people, whether in friendship or in love, remained on a level of ephemeral sentimentality, and thus demanded that this sentimentality and fantasy give way to realistic, positive good sense.

Goncharov quite accurately sees what ails the Russia of his day: it is, according to him, a universal lack of freedom, which rests on the institution of serfdom and those of the old regime as a whole. To a writer who lived almost his entire life in the capital the problem of family life and social intercourse assumed paramount importance, and he came to see with particular clarity the slavish position of the Russian wife and mother. He shows us in masterly fashion how the wife of the older Aduyev, Elisabeth Alexandrovna, languished both physically and spiritually in the process of becoming accustomed to her husband and tyrannical master.

4

IN *Oblomov*, Goncharov again returns to the theme of *A Common Story*, but he tries here to give it better treatment, both from an artistic and philosophical viewpoint. The book appeared in 1859, after the Crimean War, when everyone was discussing the emancipation of the serfs. However, the plan for the work had already been conceived in 1849, when one of its sections, "Oblomov's Dream," appeared in print for the first time. *Oblomov* vividly portrays the indolence and frailty of the aristocracy, which is dying in an atmosphere of unfreedom and in consequence of its own day-dreaming. The hero of the story, Oblomov, knows that he should be working, but he freely admits that he has not even put on his own socks during his entire life. Why, he asks, should someone with three hundred indentured muzhiks work? Now and then Oblomov does hatch plans which have an Icarus-like quality about them, but soon enough he falls back on his sofa, where he dreams out the rest of his life without any great spiritual conflicts or qualms of conscience.

In certain particulars Oblomov is a sort of second edition of Alexander Aduyev. In *Oblomov*, however, Goncharov does try to offer a kind of remedy for Oblomov's disease in the person of Stolz (the word *Oblomov* suggests something that is broken—like a set of wings) that is to say, against the disease of aristocratic impassivity. He suggests that the Russian ought to learn from the

German's industriousness and conscientiousness. Stolz gives his declaration of faith in his jungle conversation with Olga, who loves Oblomov and tries, just as Stolz does, to stir him up and save him from the morass of his own Oblomovism. Stolz and Olga are united by this common goal. Stolz says to her: "We have to arm ourselves, and to go our way with patience and fortitude." He continues, as he embraces her: "You and I, we are not Titans. Unlike the Manfreds and the Fausts, we shall not do serious battle on the major issues; we shall not accept their challenge; we shall bow our heads, live calmly through difficult moments, and then life and happiness will smile upon us once again." And Olga asks: "And what happens if these difficult questions never cease? Shall we find ourselves more and more disturbed and melancholy?" Stolz extricates himself from this difficulty by distinguishing between melanchoy as a personal condition as against a "general disease of mankind" which can affect Olga only in the tiniest degree. He and Olga are not ill themselves. "All this is terrible when a man cuts himself off from life and has nothing to sustain him. But we——"[1] Stolz intends to say that they in fact have something to lean upon.

Dobrolyubov, in his study of Oblomovism, reads more into Olga's question that does Stolz, as though she were in fact to try to solve the disturbing questions and, not wishing to bow her head meekly, to discover an Oblomov-like quality in Stolz himself. Goncharov, of course, says that she does not herself know just how she will carry on, and that, actually, is his own confession as well. We are told that after this conversation Olga madly flings herself into the arms of her husband. "She remained absolutely motionless for a moment, as if in a trance," with her arms around her husband's neck. " 'Neither fog nor desire nor illness nor even death! . . .' she whispered with deep emotion, even though once again consoled, happy, and calm. It seemed to her that she had never loved him as at this instant."

"Take care lest the fates overhear your grumbling, and lest they consider you ungrateful," says Stolz at the end of the conversation, with keen premonition. "The fates are displeased if we are not satisfied with what they give us. So far you have only been learning about life, but a time will come when you will actually have to experience it. . . ." "Olga sees this other life unfolding in her mind's eye as it will have to be lived: full of travail, pain, and work. . . . She envisages disease, poverty, the

[1] I A. Goncharov, *Sobranie Sochineniy*, Moscow, 1959, IV, p. 386.

loss of her husband . . . yet their mutual love does not weaken or wither and still gives them the strength to live. . . . The calming influence and strong words of her husband, in whom Olga has boundless confidence, make it possible for her to continue gaining in spiritual stature. . . ." "Andrey Stolz comes to see that his one-time ideal of woman and wife is unattainable, but even Olga, who is its pale image, brings him a joy which he had hardly expected."[1]

Goncharov's Stolz is a curious mixture of romanticism and realism. Olga tries in romantic fashion to side-step the fundamental issues posed by Manfred and Faust, and seeks refuge in passion, just as Stolz seeks his refuge in romantic superstition. At the same time he is helped by a self-conscious sense of resignation, and will not permit Olga to succumb to doubts but, on the contrary, helps to preserve her strong faith in her husband.

Goncharov's Stolz is modelled on Griboedov's Chatsky, whom he rates more highly than he does Onegin and Pechorin. In his study of Griboedov, Goncharov praises his hero, and likes the fact that he does not talk about love or boredom, nor even about science, but rather that he really works, whereas he sees Onegin and Pechorin as parasites who are incapable of work. This ancestry of Stolz's ought to have satisfied the Slavophile poet Tyutchev, who was loath to see Goncharov use a German character to represent German conscientiousness and perseverance, even though he was actually only half German, his mother having been a Russian and his father a German. The important thing, however, is that Goncharov had hit upon a truly Russian type in Oblomov himself, even though Gogol had already drawn such a character in his Tentetnikov, but without adding, as Goncharov did, an analysis of serfdom as an institution which had moulded the character of the aristocracy. Every writer who followed Goncharov discovered some aspect of Oblomov in his own characters.

Goncharov was at pains to stress the adverse moral effect which serfdom had upon the landowner, and this in turn led him to stress the deplorable conditions of family life. He is one of the first in Russian literature who actually tried to come to grips with the so-called Woman Question, and in so doing he set a high ideal both for Russia's men and her women.

Herzen had already touched on this subject himself. During his first exile at Novgorod in 1841 he began to write *Who is to Blame*, which he delivered to the published in 1846. Herzen solves

[1] I A Goncharov, *Sobranie Sochineniy*, Moscow, 1959, IV, pp. 386–9.

the conflict between love and official morality by having the husband fall victim "to chronic suicide." He drinks because his wife, Lyubov, is in love with Beltov; Beltov is transferred, Lyubov dies, and her husband continues "praying and drinking." Herzen had given up the Georges Sand of 1834 as a model, while Druzhinin is still faithful to her in 1847 in his novel *Polinka Sachs* where the husband sacrifices himself because, being much older, he does not wish to stand in the way of young love. For his part, Herzen repudiated the French solution to the problem; he explores it from a moral angle and gives it a tragic meaning, which is to say that he offers no solution to it at all. Goncharov tries for a solution to the same problem by offering a detailed analysis of the first love between Olga and Oblomov and by placing the second and later one on a wholly moral plane. In this, as in many other things, Pushkin remained his great teacher. Just as the latter had done with the sisters Olga and Tatyana, whom he portrays as contrasting types, the one as a traditional patriarchal female and the other as the new woman who acquires self-awareness, so too does Goncharov try to depict both of these types.

5

GONCHAROV attempts to tackle this, no less than all his other problems, in his most elaborate novel, *The Precipice* (*Obryv*). Even though he began work on it in 1849, it presents his vision of the 1860's. It actually appeared in 1869. *The Precipice* was intended to be a continuation of Oblomov, and its hero, Raysky, was supposed to depict Oblomov at a later stage. Raysky, as the author himself said, was conceived as Oblomov's son, who has awakened from his father's slumber. He knows what he ought to be doing, yet still does not act accordingly. While Oblomov expects to have a serf put on his socks for him, Raysky confines himself to allowing his boots to be removed for him. The novel, as I have said, was planned in the 1840's, and this is especially true of the character of Raysky; and again, if Raysky is intended to be a representative of the generation of the forties, he finds himself in the company of the younger nihilists, and stands between them and an older generation. Herein, however, lies the fault of the entire book. It fails to give a picture of a particular period or of a particular tendency: it simply depicts a group of quite disparate characters whose connection with one another derives only from

being together on the estate of Raysky's grandmother in a God-forsaken place in rural Russia.

We have here a collection of very different personalities. Some of them are drawn brilliantly, as, for instance, the grandmother Tatyana Markovna, who is a masterpiece of Goncharov's miniature portraiture. We also soon learn that Tatyana Markovna is Goncharov's socio-political ideal. She turns out to be a symbol of the Russia of his day. In a letter to Count Valuev,[1] Goncharov explained his fondness for Raysky's grandmother and for his two cousins Vera and Marfinka. The grandmother stands for a conservative but powerful Russia. That Russia is moving ahead slowly, yet is loath to make concessions to the demands of its day, which has little use for established ways and habits. It is practical and honest, and therefore wise enough to know that it cannot stand still any more than it can retreat into the past. Goncharov loves this Russia, and wishes to keep his own children there, very much like the old grandmother, who not only leads the younger and obedient godchild Marfinka along as if on a leash but does the same for the independent, inquisitive, and forthright Vera, who is made to symbolise the younger intelligentsia as a whole.

Just as the grandmother is a symbol of Russia, so too Marfinka, Vera, and Raysky, as well as many of the other characters, are not simply types whom the author observed in his day; instead, they are artfully contrived allegories, which is particularly true of Goncharov's younger people. The title of the novel is itself allegorical ("There are many precipices in the Russian land"), as are the names of many of its characters. Oblomov-Raysky reminds his sister Sofia Nikolaevna of Griboedov's Chatsky. Yet this can hardly be right, since Chatsky was a dedicated idealist who believed in his mission, where Raysky is a dilettante who cannot decide whether to paint or write novels. He is a great talker, who is supposed to inspire work in others yet does nothing himself except talk about the virtues of work.

Raysky is a blasé romantic who, entirely in line with the classic prescription, expects nothing but animation from life. His friend Ayanov tells him, quite correctly, that he is nothing like Chatsky, but rather a composite of Don Juan and Don Quixote. No sooner is Sofia rid of him than he begins flirting with Marfinka, and later with Vera as well. It is characteristic of the man that he would evolve this kind of relationship with his cousins. He is a senti-

[1] Letter dated December 27, 1877. I. A. Goncharov, *Literaturnokriticheskie stat'i i pis'ma.* Edited by A. P. Rybasov. Leningrad: GIKhL, 1938, pp. 322–3.

atheist, yet both these prove insufficient for Goncharov himself. He underscores the right to immortality, the idea of eternity, and places a faith in chance against faith in God. He attempts to refute atheistic positivism by making the observation that the laws of perception which the nihilist is alone prepared to recognise do not explain the unknown forces which give these laws their validity.

These are Goncharov's own philosophical thoughts, as seen from the fact that he does not put them into anyone else's mouth. They summarise the critical thinking of Vera and Volokhov, yet the whole scene still leaves the reader cold because Goncharov's metaphysics read somewhat like an administrative circular.

One also gathers from some of his chance remarks that Goncharov is inclined to approach religious questions in the conventional and official manner. Religion fulfills no real function for him. Religious ceremonial is a simple matter of habit, and it is only Vera who needs consolation after he fall from virtue. She kneels down before the icon and, in typically Russian fashion, expects that it will convey a miraculous sign.

Very much like Bazarov, Volokhov himself feels nothing but contempt for art. He repudiates Karamzin no less than he does Pushkin, which is as apparent from his behaviour as it is from his appearance. Volokhov is a consistent cynic, and that cynicism derives from his materialism. Love, for him, is nothing but a physical need (which is precisely the way Bazarov philosophises about his love for Odintsova), and that, in turn, is why love can never be perpetual, but can only last a while, as in the case of Vera.

Her relationship with Volokhov is a constant inner struggle. Vera herself has renounced many of the old views and sees that Volokhov is right in some things, yet she also sees and senses that one's own will and reason are simply not enough. In order to continue living she feels the need of other people's experiences (as, for instance, her grandmother's) as well as the experience of past generations, e.g. tradition.

> "Vera listened to him in silence on such matters as she was not really prepared for herself, and she was careful to note whether he actually believed in his own teaching and had an unshakable source of support, or some experience, or whether he was simply taken in by a clever, even brilliant hypothesis. He led her on by painting a picture of a splendid future, of a

magnificent freedom; he tempted her with the thought that all the veils would be removed from the image of Izida; he saw this future as being just around the corner, and invited Vera to sample at least a part of this life, so that she would be rid of the old notions and so she would come to believe if not him, then at least in her own experiences. 'And we shall be like gods!' he added ironically."

In the end, Vera did not listen to him; she resisted his blandishments and slowly and imperceptibly set herself the task of guiding him along the path of proven goodness and truth. She tried to carry him along with her, first in seeing the truth of love, of human happiness, rather than of mere animalism, and then to lead him into the realm of her own faith and hopes.

Volokhov did give in on some points: he became more moderate, sensible, and cleaner. On the other hand, Vera for her part succumbed to her own nervous and passionate temperament, and fell in love with Volokhov as a person rather than with his ideas, and the result was that she did give herself to him one day, after an enervating inner struggle while Volokhov remained cynical enough to take advantage of her fatigue and hope that she had actually won out over his ideas. "He was like a wolf," Vera had to admit to herself later on.

I do not think that the psychological explanation for Vera's fall is quite satisfactory. Musset's *"curiosité du mal"* plays too large a part in the circumstances. As he says himself, Goncharov wished to depict in Vera a whole generation of Russian women and girls who had, in various ways, experienced very much the same thing as Vera did during the 1860s. He explains Vera's fall in terms of her courage and innocence. At almost the same time as Vera's sister achieves happiness in a marriage contracted in the traditional manner, Vera becomes aware of her own misfortune, which is occasioned by not having enough respect for the old order. Of course, it is true that Marfinka loves in the manner of a child, and that stronger personalities are incapable of that sort of love. Vera requires a conscious love, and a spiritual one; she believes in friendship between a man and woman, which is made possible only on the basis of freedom and justice in human society —a possibility which, incidentally, Raysky denies. Vera falls in love with Volokhov's personality, but she knows that she can never take him for her husband, since they differ so much in their

[1] I. A. Goncharov, *Sobranie Sochnenıy*, Vol. 6, Moscow, 1960, p. 261.

views. Yet she still gives herself to him, having been seduced by none other than this very Volokhov.

Vera goes much farther than did Pushkin's Tatyana: she does not listen to her mother's entreaties; she does not marry the old general. Instead, wants to emancipate herself from the old order by her own efforts; she stumbles along the way, yet in the end she does emancipate herself. It is clear to her that she is the victim of her own lack of knowledge and experience of the world; she understands that she ought not to have given up the old order entirely; then, with the grandmother's care, she recovers and regains her equilibrium. Moreover, it is a surprising and delicate facet of this relationship that Vera discovers that this remarkably good and kind grandmother had in her own youth made the same mistake as Vera. And it was precisely this experience which had made the grandmother mature into the kind of character that later made it possible for her to shield so many of her relatives. The old Russia thus had every reason to deal humanely with the new Russia—in fact, to do so very humanely indeed!

The Precipice ends as Raysky begins writing the final version of his novel, which is to be called *Vera*. Raysky is composing the title page, and adds a motto from Heine's verse, which he had selected long before. I cite these lines because they characterise Raysky so perfectly:

> Now is the time for me to get rid of all foolishness reasonably; for such a long time I acted out a comedy with you, like a comedian.
>
> The splendid stagewings were painted in high romantic style; my knight's mantle shone like gold; I felt the finest feelings.
>
> And now that I am rid very neatly of the mad rags, I still feel miserable, as if I were still playing a comedy.
>
> Oh God, in joke, without knowing I had been saying what I really felt: with death in my heart, I acted the dying fencer!

Raysky then stops to meditate on the poem; he recites the last two verses over again, and then sets out to pen the dedication, in which he addressed himself to women, setting forth his ideal of the new Russian woman. "We are not equal; you are superior to us. You represent strength. We are merely your instruments. We perform the menial tasks, but you, who bring us into this world, shield us like Providence, . . . teach us to work, teach us humanity,

goodness, and that love which the Creator put into your hearts, and we . . . shall follow you to the place where everything is perfect and where there is eternal beauty. This is to say, the women must show the way to the life of the spirit, just as they have brought men up physically. That is their true mission!" "We do the ordinary work: in science, in art, in the conquest of nature; we are the labourers who concern ourselves with the surface of things. You are the creators and educators of mankind: you are the direct and the superior instrument of God."[1] Raysky reminds women that they should use their newly-won freedom better than men have used theirs. "Be rid of cunning and all its devious ways and purposes. It is the weapon of weakness."[2]

This is a little over-stated, yet Raysky's ideal is also Goncharov's own. They are beautiful and noble words, but the trouble lies in the fact that Goncharov establishes too much of a contrast between man and woman in wanting to make her man's regenerator. The polarity between the sexes notwithstanding, there is yet a greater and more intimate moral and spiritual consensus between them.

This philosophy of Russian women does not seem to be entirely consistent with Vera's relationship to Tushin. It is suggested to us that such a relationship does in fact evolve and that it is no longer the German Stolz but the Russian Tushin who discovers in himself the real strength to lead the new and wiser Russia. It would also seem that Tushin had learned something from Dostoevsky's Prince Myshkin. In any event, Goncharov describes the brave Russian of the future as an essentially naïve person who lacks self-awareness yet who is still prepared for his new and difficult tasks. It is to him that the grandmother turns to ask that he lead Vera over the "gorge." (Actually, Goncharov's allegory, on which the novel ends and in which the grandmother is made to symbolise Russia, does not really come off well.) Tushin, it seems, has the natural gift of being human, and has it simply because he works. He belongs to the middle landed aristocracy, who have already learned how to labour, yet to work means—as Goncharov explains in the study of his three novels—to perform "humble work" in the sense of menial labour, which for him is made to include science and art. Vera admits her fall to Tushin and asks that, in her name, he settle things with Volokhov once and for all. In the end, Volokhov is honest enough (and

[1] I. A. Goncharov, *Sobranie Sochineniy*, Vol. 6, Moscow, 1960, pp 343–4. (Partly direct quotation, partly Masaryk's paraphrase.) [2] *Ibid*, p. 344.

Goncharov underscores Volokhov's positive quality of honesty) to admit to having behaved like a wolf, but also no less so than a fox when he had interpreted Vera's cry of "Adieu" actually to mean that she was calling him to her.

Goncharov, much like Turgenev, was blamed for caricaturing the younger generation of the 1860s through the character of Volokhov. He rejected this charge. For him Volokhov was meant to represent no more than the other Volokhovs of his day, rather than an entire generation. Tushin is after all equally representative of that generation. Volokhov is not the image of a socialist, a doctrinaire, or even a democrat; he is simply a radical, a demagogue, who has lost his firm footing and espouses pure negation, which he would translate into action if only the possibility for such action existed in Russia whether in the form of communist propaganda, international "underground" activity, or what have you.

In a note from the year 1891 which is added to his diagnosis of 1875, Goncharov had to admit, with heavy heart, that this possibility did exist even in Russia. Let us leave aside the question of whether he should have discerned that possibility in 1875 since surely Dostoevsky and the entire literature of nihilism before 1875 would have made it possible for him to do so. Still, it is certainly clear that Goncharov did not intend striking a blow at socialism. If that much is conceded it must also be allowed that Goncharov was perfectly well aware of the difference between anarchism and socialism in 1869 and even earlier. Volokhov is, in fact, a disciple of Proudhon, or at least of his slogan that "Property is theft," which Vera is made to exemplify in her attitude toward other people's apples. All that needs to be said here is that Goncharov was perfectly aware of these distinctions and more so than the majority of his contemporaries.

Goncharov remained faithful to his conservative liberalism even in *The Precipice*. This liberalism he had already adopted from his teachers as a child. One of these was a Freemason who had been connected with the Decembrists, and the other was a priest, though one with considerable knowledge of the world. Goncharov describes how Raysky discovers a Voltairean family library in the grandmother's house. He finds Voltaire himself, and the Encyclopaedists, but not a single French socialist, not even in the works of Georges Sand. Thus Goncharov's realism actually reached its philosophical and practical maturity by hard work performed in an office.

When Raysky examines the list of books which Volokhov is passing out to the young people, he is completely taken aback. " 'These books for young people!' he whispered quietly." "You, it seems, Sir, believe in God?" he is asked by Mark.[1] Raysky does of course believe in God, although it is only Voltaire's kind of God, yet that is exactly why he, in contrast to Volokhov, accepts the tried and tested authorities as well as the established social order. "I am not asking you whether or not you believe. If, in your regiment, you did not have faith in the regimental commander, or in the rector at the university, and if you now reject the governor and the police—all of these things which are so obvious—then, of course, you cannot believe in God."[2] This naive sociomorphic argument in defence of theism can also be found in Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*, since, in truth, Dostoevsky himself had learned something from Goncharov.

[1] I A. Goncharov, *Sobranie Sochinenij*, Vol 6, Moscow, 1960, p 59
[2] *Ibid*, p 59

CHAPTER XVIII

TURGENEV

THE reception which was accorded to Turgenev's Bazarov, and especially the way in which the younger generation in Russia greeted his analysis of the new man is rather well known. As he points out in his essay about the book, Turgenev tried actually to depict the *new* man of the 1860's in the most realistic way possible. He took as his model a young country physician who had died shortly before 1860.

One has to differentiate between Bazarov's philosophical and political sides. Philosophically and ethically he is supposed to represent the kind of Positivists into which Turgenev and his contemporaries evolved in consequence of Hegel's teaching. Turgenev constantly extolled science, as shown in his letters to Herzen, and he deprecated religion. To him as to Comte, religion is to be replaced by science. Yet, against the spirit of positivism, he interprets positivism materialistically, even though he does find allies among the German materialistic philosophers as well as those of his contemporaries like Herzen. Turgenev was not entirely clear about these distinctions, and his greatest confusion comes in attributing his own scepticism and pessimism to the character of Bazarov, who in actual fact is really a man of faith. Paul Kirsanov was quite right in saying that he believed in his own frogs.[1] To use Turgenev's own terminology, Bazarov was so much of a Don Quixote that the Hamlet in him barely has a chance to get a word in edgewise. Still, Turgenev was never entirely clear about the extent to which these two elements intermingled in his character. This is demonstrated by the fact that he quite seriously equates Bazarov with Rudin in the afore-

[1] I. S. Turgenev, "About *Fathers and Sons*" (*Po povodu otsov i detey*), *Sobranie Sochineniy*, Moscow, 1962, X, pp. 131–9.

[1] I. S. Turgenev, *Fathers and Sons*, *Sobranie Sochineniy*, Moscow, 1961, III, p. 140

mentioned essay, and insists that they are one and the same type! Yet we are told at the same time that Bazarov is supposed to stand for the new man, and it is Turgenev who underlines the word *new*.

One thing is clear: the term nihilist was ill-chosen to describe Bazarov; it was too strong and put off those among the younger Russians who were believers. Their negation and lack of faith was directed only at the old Russia and its defenders; they certainly did believe most fervently in the new Russia and in the victory of democracy and socialism.

Turgenev remained unclear about his own relationship to Bazarov. He said that he was wholly caught up in his hero while writing the book and there is no reason to doubt it. Yet he should not have glossed over the fact that he was also repelled by Bazarov. He says rightly that he regarded him both critically and objectively; he had no notion of idealising him and was read to depict him as a wolf, yet still to make excuses for him. Even that, however, is putting it incorrectly, since Turgenev seemed to forget that, with the sole exception of his view on ethics, he himself agreed with all of Bazarov's other principles. This would certainly accord with the dedication of *Fathers and Sons* to Belinsky's memory, but it is out of keeping with the remark about "wolves." Bazarov simply isn't anything like Hobbes' wolf (*homo homini lupus*). At best, one finds some theorising in this direction, as for instance, in the scene where he is watching the spider dragging off a half-dead fly. "Take advantage of the fact that you, as an animal, have the right not to recognise the feeling of pity."[1] Yet surely this holds only for animals, as the words which follow clearly indicate. And, besides, Turgenev was already too much under the influence of Schopenhauer to write against the sentiment of compassion, nor could he have done so from his own sheer weakness. Bazarov is more a bear than he is a wolf. His toughness and lack of consideration are, in large measure, the studied pose of a cynic.

Bazarov, as a positivist, should in fact be truly positive: a real man who does not bandy words about, like the romantics who end up by doing nothing. Instead, he should be a genuine activist: "The real man is one about whom there is not much to think; one to whom one must either listen or whom one must hate."[2] Yet Bazarov is not even faithful to this formula: he does not so

[1] I. S. Turgenev, *Fathers and Sons, Sobranie Sochineniy*, Moscow, 1961, III, p. 217.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 218.

much as begin to perform real work and he comes to grief through sheer clumsiness. He cuts himself during an operation and dies of blood-poisoning. A "real" person would have known what to do even in that situation, but Bazarov perishes through a country doctor's sheer carelessness, lacking the proper instruments and drugs. What would it have cost him to hurry off to the nearby town and to one of its doctors? Bazarov dies at the start of his life's career very much as Nezhdanov does.

Bazarov often talks about romanticism but thereby he is talking against himself, since his positivism failed to overcome the romantic in him, especially in matters of religion. Turgenev's attitude toward it is best seen in the last chapter of *Fathers and Sons*, in which he relates the subsequent fate of various characters in the novel. At the end he describes the cemetery where Bazarov lies buried and which is visited by his old parents, who have a good cry and say their prayers there.

> ". . . Surely their prayers, their tears, are not fruitless? Surely love, sacred, devoted love, is omnipotent? Oh no! No matter what passionate, sinful, rebellious heart is concealed in the grave, the flowers growing on it look at us serenely with their innocent eyes; not of eternal peace alone, of that great peace of 'indifferent' nature do they speak to us; they speak also of eternal reconciliation and life everlasting."

It has always struck me that this final sentimental paragraph constitutes the most eloquent expression of Turgenev's philosophical weakness. He sways uneasily between materialism and pantheism and lacks the courage to take a direct and unambiguous stand on the religious issue.

Actually, Turgenev is indifferent toward religion. Like all other educated Russians of his generation, he saw the shortcomings of his own church and its religion. In other words, he simply lost his religion in the course of his European education, and this shows throughout his work. The Church and its servants appear only here and there when one has to say something about them because they happen to be a part of Russian society. But the entire function of the Church is for Turgenev limited to the administration of the sacraments at birth, death, and at funerals: that is all it seems good for. Turgenev depicts a hypocritical reactionary who obsequiously kisses the priest's hand so as to set the people a good example; we are also shown a priest who makes it impossible for a teacher to discharge his function. These are all

rather small, if characteristic, strokes of the brush, but nowhere does he really come to grips with the essence of the religious problem. Yet this is precisely what he ought to have done in *Fathers and Sons*, because Bazarov's positivism and materialism are directed against religion, theology, and the older philosophy. This, however, is where Turgenev's weakness shows through: he is satisfied to introduce religion briefly as the superstition of the peasantry and of some educated folk, which is how he draws Bazarov's parents. Bazarov junior has a few ironic remarks to make about his parent's superstition to his colleague Kirsanov, and that is where the matter ends. Bazarov himself has sentimental spells and moments of religious feeling, yet he remains undecided, lacking the courage to make up his mind even on his death-bed, very much like Turgenev himself, who always suppressed the religious impulse within himself from fear of the radical liberals of his day. When faced with the necessity of talking about life's fundamental questions and the mysteries of eternity, he takes refuge in the kind of words we read in the scene where the parents are at the grave of their son. In *Faust* he makes his bow in the direction of the "unconscious," and generally hides behind obscure phrases of this sort. In his uneasiness he takes refuge in vague phraseology and avoids the use of clear and straightforward language.

What I mean here can be illustrated in a letter of his to Herzen written in 1862, when he was working on Bazarov. Herzen had reproached him for being a nihilist, to which Turgenev retorts: "I am no nihilist, if only because—in so far as I am able to understand it—I discern tragic features in the fate of the whole European family of nations, Russia, of course, included. Still, I am 'European'. . . ."[1] "Tragic features" '—that is the kind of evasive phrase which shows Turgenev's liberalism in its weakest light. Bazarov argues against the liberalism of his hosts and sees the pitiful weakness of Arkady, yet Turgenev himself remains a liberal in the sense that he fails to take any definite stand on the religious issue. Herzen even accused him of mysticism because of the scene which describes Bazarov's death and the way in which *Fathers and Sons* is made to end. Turgenev again defended himself against this charge, and talked evasively about faith in a personal god and about not falling prey to mysticism. He also cites Goethe's Faust:

[1] Letter to Herzen, November 13/25, 1862 *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenıy i Pisem*, Leningrad, 1963, Part II, Vol 5, p. 73.

"Who dares to name him
And confess: I believe in him!
Who dares to feel and to say
I do not believe in Him!"

Turgenev's religiosity sometimes bears a striking resemblance to old Karamzov's sceptical materialism. There is a remark of Turgenev's which could have come from the old Karamazov himself. When the question was being discussed whether the body's decay after death also implied the destruction of the human personality, Turgenev was heard to deny a person's individuality apart from his body: "What should I care about a soul which lacks arms, legs, ears, and a nose?"

At one point Turgenev did examine, if not the religious problem, then at least the religious character, doing so in *The Nest of Noblemen*. He remains satisfied merely to see how Lisa makes out in her religious life. Evidently he was following one or more models. Lisa's religiosity manifests itself in her passive humility, which accepts the blows of fate. We are not Christians—as Lisa once says—in order to comprehend heavenly and terrestrial things, but merely because everyone must die. Lisa thus becomes a nun in order to solve the problem arising from her love for Lavretsky when it develops that his wife, who had been presumed dead, reappears on the scene.

Turgenev's description of Lisa is sympathetic, and he does her justice artistically, a fact which must be conceded all the more because he draws Lavretsky as a person indifferent to religious matters. Pisarev is not right in blaming Lisa for a dubious ethical vigour and for religious fanaticism. Lisa need not have become a nun; she could have remained in the secular world and continued to work without getting married, but that precisely would have required a different and higher religion both in her and her surroundings. In the circumstances, her religion does a great deal for her, and certainly no less than his Slavophile philosophy does for Lavretsky. After his experiences during the years which follow, Lavretsky ceases altogether to look for happiness; instead he becomes an excellent landowner who ensures prosperity for his peasants.

It is actually difficult to determine the extent to which Turgenev is consciously concerned to deal with the religious problem. For instance, there are some reflections on immortality in the short story *Klara Milich*, but they appear in almost mythical and

mystical form. Aratov believes in the presence of certain forces and currents, some of which are benign but which are menacing more often than not. The way in which he expresses himself is suitably vague, and when Aratov begins to love the departed one "passionately and uncontrollably" this love is given a spiritualistic flavour by Turgenev's way of talking about it.

We are also offered a sketch based upon popular religious pathology in the story *A Strange Story*, dating from the year 1869. Sofia, a young, well-educated girl of nineteen, daughter of a wealthy aristocrat, leaves her family and joins "a man of God" to serve him, to wash his wounds, and to be his servant in his mendicant life. Eventually, the parents manage to get her back home, but she dies, never having uttered a single word. The narrator, who is evidently speaking for Turgenev, admits that he does not understand the entire affair. He is sorry for Sofia, but he can neither admire nor respect her.

The Countess Tolstoy tells of Turgenev's visit to the Tolstoys in 1882 when, at table, the conversation turned to the subject of death. Turgenev somewhat naïvely but honestly admitted that he was afraid of death and that death was, indeed, to be feared. Suddenly, he raised his hand and cried out in French: "Whoever fears death, let him raise his hand." No one did so, and Turgenev, letting his hand fall, said awkwardly and sadly, with head bowed, "Then I am the only one."[1] Others have also told about this fear of death, Koni having been the last one to do so.[2]

Turgenev never overcame a certain falsity of religious feeling. Like other educated men, he renounced the religious views of his childhood and youth, yet he retained the religious feeling of those younger years in diluted form. In fact, he never advanced beyond the religiosity of his church. In his *Prose Poem*, the next-to-last piece is entitled "Prayer." It is from the year 1881, and goes as follows:

No matter what a man may pray for he is praying for a

[1] A. F. Koni, *Na zhiznennom puti*, Revel-Berlin, n d., Vol. 3, part 1, in the article "Savina i Turgenev", pp. 41–82, particularly pp. 53 ff.

[2] The prose poem, in which a girl stands on the threshold beyond which lie dangers which she is willing to face because of her convictions, is actually dated May 1878, and hence more likely to be inspired by the trial of Vera Zasulich, who fired a shot at the Petersburg chief of police in January 1878. Sofia Perovskaya was executed for participating in the assassination of Alexander II in 1881. Masaryk's point, however, holds, even if Vera Zasulich was meant and not Sofia Perovskaya.

miracle.—Every prayer amounts to the following: "Great God, cause that two and two may not make four."

Only such a prayer is a genuine prayer from a person to a person. To pray to the Universal Spirit, to the Supreme Being of Kant, of Hegel—to a purified, amorphous God, is impossible and unthinkable.

But can even a personal, living God with a form cause that two and two shall not make four?

Every believer is bound to reply, "He can," and is bound to convince himself of this.

But what if his reason revolts against such an absurdity?

In that case Shakespeare will come to his assistance: "There are many things in the world, friend Horatio. . . ." and so forth.

And if people retort in the name of truth—all he has to do is to repeat the famous question: "What is truth?"

And therefore, let us drink and be merry—and pray.

July 1881

It was in these sentences that Turgenev—the praying Turgenev—expressed himself most completely. The whole sentimentality and half-heartedness of the liberal comes through in these lines of the prose poem: superstition which hopes for miracles; hesitation as between anthropomorphism on the one hand and Kant and Hegel on the other; scepticism and its hedonistic fatalism. Lermontov also had moods in which he wanted to pray, but his were indeed more noble than Turgenev's.

We also learn how Turgenev, as a thinking Russian, familiar with the ways in which the West and the Slavophiles had approached the problems of the philosophy of history, tackled life's most fundamental questions. This emerges in the last of the prose poems, written in 1882 at the end of a long life of literary endeavour. Entitled "The Russian Language," it goes as follows:

> "In days of doubt; in times of anxious thought about the fate of my native country—you alone are my support and consolation, Oh you great, mighty, true, and free Russian language! Were it not for you, how could one fail to succumb to despair, seeing all the things which are happening here at home. But, it is impossible to believe that such a tongue was not bestowed on a great people!"

Thus, what we have here is a prayer to the Russian language. One understands, of course, how a great poet sensed the beauty

of his mother tongue. Gogol had already expressed the identical sentiment most beautifully ("It is itself a poet"). Yet, it was characteristic of Turgenev that he was unable to overcome his doubts forthrightly and intellectually and that at the end of his career he should be clinging merely to words. Having subjected the Russian problem to analysis in many of his works, he still failed to find a philosophical formula suited to his country's problems.

Herzen understood the substance of this weakness very well when analysing Bazarov and Turgenev's nihilism. Bazarov actually turned out to be a weakling and not the Byronic titan whom Herzen wished to see in him. The dying Bazarov himself confesses to Odintsova, "I simply fell under the wheels. . . . Look at this ugly spectacle: the half-crushed worm is still wriggling! I, too, used to believe that I would accomplish great things—that I would not die! I had a mission, I was a titan! And now the whole of the titan's mission is to die decently, even though it really isn't anyone's business. All the same: I shan't wag my tail."[1]

Bazarov was certainly no titan, nor was Turgenev a Byron. Indeed, how differently Byron faced his own adversaries, while the plaintive, not to say pitiful, way in which Turgenev reacted to criticism from one segment of the younger Russian generation can be taken as an indication of his pervasively pessimistic outlook on life and not merely as an emotional reaction to the polemics to which Bazarov had given rise.

Turgenev's indecisiveness in matters metaphysical inevitably showed through in his politics as well. He remained a liberal where social and political issues were concerned, but always going only halfway. Occasionally, he allowed himself to be drawn somewhat further to the left, only to retreat again in the direction of the right. This fence-sitting is best seen in his relationship with Herzen. At heart he could not agree with him because he found him too radical. Yet he continued to play with fire. He was a vigorous contributor to *The Bell* (*Kolokol*), and supported both the magazine and the Russian exiles financially. In the prose poem "Threshold," which was for a long time known in manuscript only, he extols the revolutionary Sofia Perovskaya, who had made up her mind to an act of terrorism.[2] Yet the poem is artistically weak and contrived, indicating that he was forcing himself into a radical mood which was really not congenial to him. Still, that was

[1] Letter to Herzen, December 13/25, 1867, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenıy i Pısem*, Leningrad, 1964, Part II, Vol. 7, p 13.

[2] I. S. Turgenev, *Smoke, Sobranie Sochineniy*, Moscow, 1961, Vol 4, p. 27.

exactly Turgenev's way. On other occasions, as in a letter to Flaubert in 1871 which concerned the Franco-Prussian War, he hoped that the devil might take politics altogether.

When, after the emancipation of the serfs, some liberal aristocratic elements began petitioning for a constitution, Turgenev, in 1862, objected to signing one on which Herzen and Ogarev had collaborated. Allegedly, the peasant had become rich through the emancipation (!), yet he remained a political conservative. It is only the educated minority which has political interests and is inclined to harbour revolutionary ideas and to promote schemes of reform. Yet even it must wait for the initiative to come from the government. Turgenev agrees that a Zemsky Sobor should be summoned and that petitions should uncover administrative shortcomings. He considered drafting such an address himself but never acted on his intention.

Turgenev, in company with the "old man" Goethe, consoled himself with the thought that man is not created to be free. The Russian people, he explained to Herzen in 1867, seem to strive for freedom less than other nationalities do.[1] At one point, he celebrates one of the accomplices in the assassination of March 1, 1881; at another he is distressed to be considered a friend of Labrov's and writes denials for the Parisian press. He did dedicate *Fathers and Sons* to Belinsky's memory, but, alas, he lacked the powers which were vouchsafed to the latter.

Turgenev consistently rejected socialism in favour of individualism, both in theory and in practice. He was a determined enemy of serfdom, but was more concerned about its moral than its political and social effects, thereby laying bare his weakness once again. In describing Nikolai Kirsanov and his relationship to Fenechka, he was really depicting his own self.

If Turgenev proclaimed Bazarov to be a revolutionary, we must be careful to understand what he really meant. Bazarov preached social revolution but his democratism was directed exclusively at those faults of the aristocracy which were most harmful to it, he himself, after all, having stemmed from the gentry.

Turgenev always remained a faithful Westerner. On occasion—as in *The Nest of Noblemen*—he tried to understand the utopian ideals of the Slavophiles and the influence which they had had on many people, yet he still remained a Westerner who, moreover, liked to live in the West.

[1] Letter to Louis Viardot, June 12/24, 1850, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy i Pisem*, Leningrad, 1961, Part II, Vol. 1, p. 386.

One is reminded of his accusing Herzen of practising the Russian cult of wearing sheep's clothing at the time when the polemics about Bazarov were going on in 1862. *Smoke* was written in much the same spirit in 1867. Had Potugin been a painter, he would have wanted to paint an educated man who bows down before the peasant: "Heal me, Father Peasant; I am perishing of disease." Yet, in his turn, the peasant bows to the intellectual: "Teach me, Sir, since I am dying of ignorance!"[1]

Some of this, of course, is also directed against the West and shows that Turgenev was already receptive to Schopenhauer's mood in the 1860's. The histories both of Russia and Europe seemed to him pure illusion. That is why the argument as to whether Turgenev really loved Russia is rather pointless. In actual fact, he is a cosmopolitan, as he wrote to Viardot as early as 1850. "One's fatherland does not doubt have its claim; yet is not one's real fatherland where one has been treated most kindly and where head and heart feel most free?"[2] Turgenev was still talking in the same sense when he delivered his address on Pushkin in 1880. He came out against the Slavophile conception of national poetry and felt that to depict nationality in art is characteristic only of weak, immature, and enslaved peoples. He saw Goethe, Molière, and Shakespeare as national poets only in the sense that they, as universal artists and great geniuses, willy-nilly also gave expression to the spirit of their own people.[3] These are, in fact, Goethe's own views on nationality, which Bazarov echoed when he insisted that he was as good a Russian as any peasant.

In the aforementioned letter to Herzen of the year 1867,[4] Turgenev advanced the view that the Russian, if left to his own devices, will relapse into becoming an Old Believer. Only learning (enlightenment) can serve as a homoeopathic drug against this proclivity, and it must, of course, be Western, European learning and civilisation.

Still, and just like Herzen, Turgenev never felt entirely at home in Europe. Despite his defence of the West, he was as much of a Russian as Herzen, and like him believed in the distinctive character of the Russian people. One of his remarks of the year

[1] I. S. Turgenev, *Sobranie Sochinenıy*, Moscow, 1962, Vol. 10, pp. 300–8.

[2] A. Lukanina's recollections in N. L. Brodsky, ed., *I. S. Turgenev v vospominaniakh sovremennikov*, Moscow, 1924, I, p. 96.

[3] Letter to S. T. Aksakov, 25 May, 1856. *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy i Pisem*, Leningrad, 1961, Part II, Vol. 2, p. 356.

[4] I. S. Turgenev, "Sphinx," *Sobranie Sochineniy*, Moscow, 1962, Vol. 10, p. 34.

1878 is characteristic: The Russian is not so much of an individualist as the European; and Russian morals are different too: "We have more of a social sense which rests on a foundation of peace." "Yes, the Russian is more moral than the European: he has a stronger feeling for truth."[1] Turgenev's opinion of the *mir* was expressed in a letter to Aksakov's father in 1856. He said there that, in contrast to Constantine Aksakov, he could not see the alpha and omega of Russian life in the *mir*. The *mir* was a kind of primodial beginning, a form of organisation out of which the State grew but from which it does not derive. "A tree cannot exist without roots, yet it seems to me that Constantine Sergeyevich wanted to see the roots in the branches. Say what you will, he is destroying the right of personality, but I am and will continue to struggle on its behalf."[2]

Herzen's narodniks and even the Slavophiles could have been well satisfied with these views of Turgenev's. He did not, of course, believe that Europe was rotting away and saw the characteristic qualities of the Russian people without a trace of mysticism—not without some fantasy, as we see in the prose poem *Sphinx*, nor without love and passion for the dear "muzhik"; but Turgenev was perfectly aware that this very muzhik remained a sphinx: "It is not enough just to don your fur cap in order to become your Oedipus, Oh! you Russian Sphinx!"[3]

Turgenev's works, and his novels in particular, are well known, and hence it will suffice to comment on those books which characterise life in Russia during the reign of Alexander II. Beginning with *Rudin*, Turgenev began depicting the Russia of the post-Crimean years and the first stages of the peasant emancipation.[4]

Faithful to his "Hannibal's oath," he saw the root of all Russian evil in serfdom and an aristocracy founded upon that institution. He saw the abolition of serfdom as paving the way toward a new and different Russia. This Russia would have to have its Don Quixotes as well as its Hamlets. The old Russia naturally also had them, and that is why it became important to compare the new and old versions of these two basic types and to see how the old would be transformed into the new variety. In other words, it became necessary to depict the new Russian man.

[1] *Rudin*, 1855; *Nest of Noblemen*, 1858; *On the Eve*, 1859; *Fathers and Sons*, 1861, *Smoke*, 1867, *The Virgin Soil*, 1876.

[2] I. S Turgenev, *Rudin, Sobrane Sochineniy*, Moscow, 1961, Vol. 2, p. 95

[3] *Ibid*, p. 89.

[4] I S. Turgenev, *The Virgin Soil, Sobrane Sochineniy*, Moscow, 1961, Vol. 4, p 311.

If the new man was, above all, a utilitarian, a basically useful creature, whose theoretical and practical existence was dedicated to things useful, then, by the same token, the people of the older generation were anything but utilitarian. As Bazarov says, they were romantics; they were useful neither in theory nor in practice. In fact, they were downright useless. The new man was a democrat and the old one was an aristocrat for whom no one had any use.

Turgenev's first work dealt with these useless, or, as he says, superfluous people. *The Diary of a Superfluous Man* (1850) depicts precisely such a person in Chulkaturin: a type who exists entirely outside the realm of action. Yet it is worth noting that Chulkaturin becomes superfluous from natural causes: he is a thirty-year-old man doomed to die from a hereditary disease, and the "diary" records the thoughts of this individual who is literally dying day by day. Still, if his superfluousness has physiological grounds (whose historical and social origins are rooted in aristocratism), that of the other characters can be traced to psychological and ethical causes. Irrespective of how they all do become superfluous, however, all of them have Hamlet-like traits in various forms and degrees. *The Hamlet of the Shchigrovsky District* (1849) is above all a contemplative and analytical type who rightly says that there is nothing obvious, direct, or original about him. He represents the type of Russian Hegelian of the 1840's; he knew his Goethe and Schiller by heart, and remained entirely satisfied to live with his reminiscences, throughout the rest of his life. Decision-making based upon the assertion of his own will is something entirely foreign to him. He simply lives his life content to be pushed along by the engines of the old social order. Chulkaturin is more independent than that, as shown by his unnecessary scepticism. Then again there is Veretyev in the short story *Still Water* (1854), who is made to illustrate the weakness of reason and will power as against the power of elemental instincts. Two or three girls, a jug of wine, and what more need a person have! He loves Maria Pavlovna, and would do anything for her, at least verbally. Yet he runs off with the gypsy girls, and while Maria's suicide does disturb him for a while, he is soon cheered by wine and by his buddies. The best thing about Veretyev is that he is clearly aware of his "absolute uselessness."

Rudin also has his place in this collection of character studies. Turgenev conceived of him at the start of the liberal years of Alexander II's reign and, as with Turgenev's other characters, gave two aspects to his personality. There are elements both of

Hamlet and Don Quixote in him, although the former predominates, since Rudin happens likewise to be one of the Hegelians of the 1840's. In part, Turgenev is sketching himself as well as the people whom he knew. Thus, it is wrong to see the person of Bakunin in Rudin, though he may have had some of the latter's traits. Instead, his character is markedly Proteus-like, which is to say that he is incompletely formed and has something symbolic about him, so that he can stand for Bakunin, Herzen, or Turgenev at various times and in their various aspects. Turgenev himself stresses this immaturity and this split and multi-faceted personality when he lets Rudin's antagonist Lezhnev pass judgment on him, which, as it turns out, is a two-sided one. One part of it derives from the years when he knew him, the other from a later period, and it goes something like this:

Rudin is a spiritual invalid and if there were an old person's home for such people, he could well have spent his last years in such a place. As it is, he dies on the barricades in Paris on July 26, 1848, but not while defending them from assault. He climbs out on top with a red flag and a blunt sword after the battle is over and is shot down by a single soldier. This is suicide in the proper sense of the word. Rudin was perfectly aware of being superfluous but he did not have the courage to draw the sword upon himself. In fact, he foretold his own end quite accurately when he said that he would sacrifice himself to some foolishness in which he did not in the least believe. One can also describe it through one of his other sayings to the effect that he was destroyed by an empty phrase. At least it was an honest phrase, since there is in this Hegelian not only a piece of Don Quiote but even a part of Sancho Panza. He did believe in his own empty words and wanted to believe in them; he wished to impress not merely others but also himself, which is why he did have an effect on many other and less experienced listeners. Rudin despised the sceptic and knew that the capacity for action flows only from some kind of faith, which is why he was so unhappy to find himself being internally ground to pieces. As he is saying farewell to his friend Lezhnev he correctly remarks ". . . I have no perseverance! I never was able to build anything. That, my dear fellow, is an art, to build if you have no soil under your feet, when you must build your own foundation!"[1]

He is a negative person, though not entirely so. After all, the

[1] I. S. Turgenev, *The Virgin Soil, Sobranie Sochinenty*, Moscow, 1961, Vol 4, p. 231.

wholly positive Lezhnev remains on friendly terms with him essentially because Rudin does want to become one of the new men, but has simply not learned how to go about it.

Rudin clings to the notion of duty tenaciously but in vain, since he lacks the capacity to dedicate himself to someone or something completely. He develops a rather accurate theory about this in distinguishing between self-love and selfishness. Self-love is his Archimedes lever, strong enough to alter the earth's path, yet man must still tame and master this self-love so that he can dedicate himself to the common good. Selfishness is egotism; it is a force which kills; in fact, it is suicide. Rudin thus adapts to his own purposes the old English theory about egotism and altruism and the need to bring them into harmony for society's sake. Again, however, it remains no more than a theory which he is unable to act upon.

Rudin is one-sidedly intellectual. It is said of him that he reads only philosophical books, even though he never finishes any of them. He has the ability to abstract the broadest generalisations from everything he reads, sees, and hears, but he lacks all sense for the concrete issues of life. That is why he is economically and socially so dependent. He is a parasite who, lacking a livelihood of his own, has to live off other people. Still, he remains an aristocrat, all the more so since he feels superior to others.

A friend says of Rudin that he is a political type in the sense that he is a restless and dissatisfied Bakunin, very much like all the others of his time who had no idea how they should or ought to act politically. This was their horrible fate under Nicholas I, when absolutism tried to shackle the gentry to the soil every bit as much as the serfs. Turgenev tells us that all of Rudin's thoughts are directed toward the future. What, after all, could he have found in the actual Russia of the year 1848? The best Russians sought sanctuary in Europe at that time, including Turgenev himself, Herzen, and others. It was in that year of Rudin's death that Turgenev swore his Hannibal's oath, yet at the same time he also conceived the intention of leaving Russia forever! Rudin thus remained far removed from reality, and from Russian reality in particular. He was alien to Russia. Lezhnev says of him:

> "His misfortune is that he does not know his Russia and that is a misfortune indeed! Russia can well do without any of us but none of us can do without Russia. Woe to him who believes that he can, double woe to him who really can. Cosmopolitanism is

nonsense, a cosmopolitan is a zero, worse than a zero; without nationality, there can be no art, no truth, no life, simply nothing at all. Not even an ideal face lacks its distinctive physiognomy; only the empty face is without any physiognomy."[1]

This patriotic tirade has too much of a Slavophile ring to it, and Lezhnev tried to correct that in so far as he attempted to excuse Rudin for having become such a cosmopolite. However, he thought that it would have been going too far to try to discover how Russia came by such types as Rudin. What is more, they continued to appear even after Rudin was gone, and always for the same reasons. They might have taken on a somewhat different aspect with the passage of time, but essentially they always remained the same. When Turgenev thus comes to survey the later development of Russia he still continues to find its share of Rudins. Nezhdanov, in *The Virgin Soil,* also turns out to be a Rudin.

The plot of *The Virgin Soil* takes place twenty years after Rudin's story. Turgenev is depicting the great movement of the 1870's when the intellectuals went to the people in order to win the newly emancipated peasants over to ideas of social progress and reform. He describes the activities of various more or less secret societies and deals with an era when people were more or less becoming aware of their political goals. Nezhdanov, one of the principal characters and a direct descendant of Rudin's, is twenty-three years old. Thus, he was three when Rudin lost his life and could not have been much affected by the aftermath of the peasant emancipation.

Nezhdanov follows in Rudin's footsteps and arrives at much the same end, by shooting himself. In that sense he is stronger than Rudin because he, at least, has the courage to end his own life. He too cannot endure the endless lies; he cannot pretend to have faith in work into which he has been coerced. He cannot make himself believe in the things in which the new people like Marianna, Solomin, and the others believe. He simply was not one of the new men yet, nor any longer one of the old ones either. He is a transitional phenomenon, a "romanticiser of realism," as one of the Thersites-like figures, whom Turgenev employs throughout his works to replace the Greek choruses, calls him. In the same

[1] I. S. Turgenev, *The Virgin Soil, Sobranie Sochinenıy,* Moscow, 1961, Vol. 4, p 349 and p. 310

way one might look upon Rudin as someone trying to attain to a "realistic romanticism."

Nezhdanov had no faith in his work among the people; he could not get close to the people or face them in the way the naïve and believing Slavophiles and narodniks could. He looks at a spokesman for the schismatics, and listens to this man's nonsense, knowing that he believes in what he is saying and that the crowd is ready to follow him. When he himself tries to speak to the people, he develops feelings of guilt. "Oh, where but to find faith!"[1]

Nezhdanov is a "Russian Hamlet," as Paklin refers to him. At one point, Nezhdanov himself calls out in an uneasy moment: "Ho, Hamlet, Prince of Denmark; how but to escape your shadow; how but to stop imitating you in everything, including your horrid indulgence in self-torment."[2] Nezhdanov is thus truly an example of Turgenev's dualism between Hamlet and Don Quixote. He believes himself to be melancholy and a contemplative soul who is being destroyed from within; he lacks self-confidence, balance, and the ability to act. "I cannot move forward, nor do I want to slide back, and to stand still is intolerable." His scepticism condemns him to endless and fruitless self-analysis and torment. "There are two people within me and one will not let the other live." "I am only half alive . . . I am a corpse."[3] And it was in this emotional state that Nezhdanov was supposed to concentrate on revolutionary agitation and to be preparing for revolution! "The devil take you! After all, what kind of revolutionary are you?"[4] He is supposed to be inciting the peasants with slogans such as "Away with taxes! Down with the landowners!" But instead, he goes off to his room to write poetry which he hides from the whole world. Before his death, he thinks of no one but Pushkin. "I could not humble myself," which is made to mean that he could not become as one with the common people. That is how he expressed it in his suicide note. The superfluous aristocrat (he is the illegitimate son of a prince) finds himself incapable of becoming a democrat. As Paklin tells him: "Well, old man, you are a revolutionary, but not a democrat."[5]

[1] I. S Turgenev, *The Virgin Soil, Sobranie Sochineniy*, Moscow, 1961, Vol 4, p. 231 [2] *Ibid.*, p. 155

[3] Andrey Kolosov is a character in a short story by that name. I S Turgenev, *Sobranie Sochineniy*, Moscow, 1961, Vol. 5, pp. 5–27.

[4] I. S. Turgenev, *On the Eve, Sobranie Sochineniy*, Moscow, 1961, Vol. 3, p. 45.

[5] I. S. Turgenev, *The Virgin Soil, Sobranie sochineniy*, Moscow, 1961, Vol. 4, p. 364

Democratisation is a hard task for the Russian aristocrat precisely because it means becoming one of the new men. It does not simply imply giving up the old aristocratic ways, but really to become a democrat in soul and spirit, and that proves difficult if not impossible for the Russian aristocrat. Try to imagine how a Paul Kirsanov would go about democratising himself and for what conceivable reason. You have a man here who spends a good part of his life grooming his finger nails, so much so that Bazarov remarks that they could well be placed on exhibit. Kirsanov had a European education, but then look at a real Russian aristocrat like Kallomeytsev in *The Virgin Soil* (even though he is a parvenu —for even a serf can have aristocratic proclivities) who chooses his motto to read "Roederer and Kant," who kisses the Metropolitan's hand, and who seems just a little too feudal even to the pure-blooded nobility of St. Petersburg. A liberal democrat like Sipyagin and many others were also tempted by the democratic idea, but none of these aristocrats ever actually became democrats. Paklin's remark about Nezhdanov's being a revolutionary but no democrat remains entirely true for all of them.

Turgenev paints a whole gallery of characters who would vaguely qualify as positivists by his own definition of the term, but not until we encounter Nezhdanov's antagonist Solomin are we introduced to a real democrat. Actually, it would be a rewarding exercise to analyse the activists among Turgenev's various characters and to group them according to their temperaments. Turgenev deals in active as well as passive types from the beginning, and not infrequently they are disagreeable and indeed impossible characters like Luchinov, for instance. Then there are others where there can be some doubt as to whether they have a grain of Don Quixote in their beings, for example, Andrey Kolosov.[1] It was only in the works dating from the 1850s that Turgenev became more clearly aware of the social and moral dualism between his Hamlet-like and Quixotic characters, and that he began to assign them political and social roles, whereas in his early attempts he had depicted people only within a private setting.

Turgenev's politically and socially active personalities turn out very much as he did himself. One sees the dichotomy between Slavophilism and Westernism in the person of Rudin. Lezhnev's theses are couched in Slavophile terms, but his is a very liberal

[1] I S Turgenev, *The Virgin Soil, Sobranie Sochineniy*, Moscow, 1961, Vol. 4, p. 275.

Slavophilism. Rudin and Lezhnev are aristocrats. Insarov (in *On the Eve*) is a wholly active type, but then he is a Bulgarian, and Turgenev allows him to have faith and a vigorous love for his oppressed people ("He is at one with his country").[1] Bazarov has a social sense toward the people, rather in the tradition of the narodniks, while Insarov's instincts are political. Solomin is a narodnik too, but he is also a democrat as well, and that not only by birth but by temperament. Turgenev never describes an aristocrat who evolves into a democrat.

At Nezhdanov's side and as his opposite; alongside the aristocrat and as his antagonist; in contrast to the person who "cuts himself down" and "gnaws himself to pieces," Turgenev depicts the nihilist Solomin, who becomes a second and revised edition of Bazarov. Turgenev had considered the various criticisms of Bazarov, and in Solomin set out to draw the positive new man of Russia's future.

He had been creating the Don Quixotes along with the Hamlets from the first. We have a whole gallery of the former in the *Hunter's Notebook*. In *Rudin*, Lezhnev is placed opposite Rudin and then there is Lavretsky in *The Nest of Noblemen*, Insarov in *On the Eve*, no less than the outspokenly programmatic types represented by Bazarov and Solomin.

Solomin has all the traits that Nezhdanov longs to have: he believes in himself and his work; he is energetic, truthful, a source of strength, a man who not only does not lie but does not paint people and things in the particular light in which he would like to see them, which is why he inspires total confidence around him. Bazarov had defined the real person as one about whom it is impossible to meditate: one has either to listen to him or hate him. Solomin is a real man in that sense: everybody listens to him and everybody accepts him as their leader.

Nezhdanov particularly admires his balanced nature; and the latter's relationship with him is also characteristic. Solomin is honestly interested in the unfortunate young man; he even likes him and treats him with a certain gentleness.

Where Nezhdanov has no more than "tiny" thoughts and feelings, Solomin's are powerful, if simple. People say of him that he is as clear and sensible as the day is bright and that he is as healthy as a fish. There is nothing decadent or degenerate about him: he is completely sound in mind and body. He does not talk

[1] I. S. Turgenev, *The Virgin Soil, Sobranie Sochinenıy*, Moscow, 1961, Vol. 4, p 224

much and likes to listen; his unobtrusive smile proclaims a forthright individual. Not even the lady of the salon, Sipyagina, can say that he is uncouth.

Solomin is practical. He is an experienced technician who has his factories running properly and who knows how to make a profit. There is nothing of the dilettante about him; his "cool" reason is wholly realistic, yet, despite all his realism, he remains an optimist to the marrow.

Solomin is the man of the future, and indeed Russia's saviour.

> "People like him are real people! You don't understand them right away but they are genuine, believe me! The future belongs to them. They are not heroes, nor even 'heroes of labour' about whom some strange American or Englishman wrote a book to teach us poor fellows something. These are strong people, somewhat colourless and most certainly of the people. And that is just what we need at present! Take a look at Solomin: sensible as the day is bright, and healthy as a fish. . . . Strange how it has been here in Russia up to now: if you were an alive person, with feelings, self-awareness, you were inevitably ill! But Solomin's heart suffers from the same things as ours do; he hates the same things we hate, but his nerves remain calm and his whole body obeys him just as it should. A real fellow, that! A man with ideals and without phrases; educated but of the people; clever but simple. Whom else would we be needing? . . ."[1]

Solomin knew how to be humble and to merge into the mass: he was, in fact, a man of the people. He was not an aristocrat by birth but the son of a church warden who wanted to go through the seminary but abandoned his studies there to devote himself to mathematics and mechanics. We are told nothing about the inner conflicts of his youth; in place of a teaching and priestly career, he simply switches over to mathematics and the natural sciences. A church warden's son who exchanges theology for natural science: that is certainly one of Turgenev's more subtle artistic strokes! (Actually, one finds quite a number of such subtleties in Turgenev's work.) And it seems quite as natural that Solomin should have two years of technical and business training in England, and that specifically in Manchester.

[1] I. S. Turgenev, *The Virgin Soil, Sobranie Sochineniy*, Moscow, 1961, Vol 4, p. 248.

His relationship to Nezhdanov, and the latter's revolutionary companions, as well as to revolution as such thus follows quite inevitably. He considers the existing Russian leaders to be incompetent to lead the country and its people. The aristocracy is incapable of preserving its landed property. In twenty or thirty years the land will belong to those who occupy it, irrespective of their origin, and mostly to those who can buy it up. What is more, the aristocrat is also incompetent as an entrepreneur: he is too much of a bureaucrat, and bureaucracy has certainly proved its incompetence all too well. But even the Russian bourgeois is still misbegotten himself; so far, he is nothing more than a usurious thief who handles his own fortune as though he were a robber. Meanwhile, the people slumber, and "it wouldn't be a bad thing" to awaken them.[1]

Yet, Solomin does not believe in revolution. He knew the leaders of the revolutionary movement in Petrograd and sympathised with them to a certain extent "because he was of the people."[2] He was even once a member of a propaganda circle. That is why he gave a welcome to Nezhdanov's people and did not hinder their activities. The only condition he insisted on was that they not agitate among his own workmen. Solomin knew that these revolutionaries would not win the people to their cause. The people stand behind the czar because they believe that he emancipated the peasant. Thus, it will be necessary to prepare the people for a long time and in quite different fashion. He accepts the aims of the revolutionaries but wants to arrive at them by an entirely different path. Meantime, he is prepared to wait. "There are two ways of waiting: to wait and do nothing, and to wait while getting on with the job."[3] The progressives have always begun from the top down, but we shall try it from the bottom up, says Solomin, and he actually tries to do just that. He founds a school for the factory workers as well as a small hospital, for all of which the proprietor has to provide the wherewithal after a prolonged dispute. Solomin thus turns out to be a socialist who organises his factory "along the lines" of an artel.

He substitutes creative revolutionary action for Nezhdanov's kind of revolution and love. And it is in this sense that Turgenev

[1] I. S. Turgenev, "Literaturnye i zhiteyskie vospominaniya," *Sobranie Sochineniy*, Moscow, 1962, Vol. 10. pp. 75–105.

[2] Letter to Herzen, 25/13 December, 1867, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy i Pisem*, Leningrad, 1964, Part II, Vol. 7, p. 13

[3] I S. Turgenev, *The Virgin Soil*, *Sobranie Sochineniy*, Moscow, 1961, Vol. 4, pp. 306–7.

himself also understands revolution to be synonymous with the words: science, progress, humanity, civilisation—the West (*Recollections of Belinsky*).[1]

It is clear that Solomin is a narodnik and a socialist. Yet, remember what Turgenev wrote to Herzen in a letter dated December, 1867, in opposition to the latter's Slavophile' 'trinity": the Zemstvo, the artel, and the mir. He was particularly contemptuous of the artel. "As far as the artel is concerned, I will never forget the expression of that petit bourgeois this past year when he was saying: 'Whoever hasn't learned about the artel, doesn't know what a noose is.' Heaven forbid lest the inhumanly exploitative principle upon which our artels are based should ever receive wider application in our country! 'We don't need him in the artel; true, he isn't a thief but he has no one to vouch for him and his health is not of the best. How on earth can he be helpful to us?' These are the words we hear at every turn. . . ."[2]

The objection might be raised that no one tells us that Turgenev really identified with Solomin. He accepted most of Bazarov's views, with the exception of his aesthetic barbarism, and thus he should have sympathised with Solomin all the more. Yet, Solomin's nature does remain alien to him. "What other kind of man could you want?" Does that not sound like a retort to Bazarov's detractors? Didn't Turgenev simply hold up a mirror to nature herself?

Turgenev's entire philosophy of history is contained in Solomin's conversation with Marianna about work: to counteract the disease of Russia's superfluous people, to combat drowsiness, boredom, and indolence no less than the enthusiasm of the advocates of violence, there is only one cure, and that is work.

> "What do you consider a beginning? Surely you don't want to build barricades and raise the flag: Hurrah! Long live the Republic! That is no woman's work! On the other hand you might teach a Lukeria something useful today. It won't be easy because she will not understand readily and she will avoid you; she will also think that she needn't know what you are trying to teach her. And two or three weeks later you will be sweating away with some other Lukeria, but in the meantime

[1] Letter to V. L. Kign, June 16, 1876. In Brodski, Nikolai Leontyevich, editor, *I. S Turgenev v vospominaniyakh sovremennikov i ego pis'makh*, Moscow, 1924, p 162

[2] I. S. Turgenev, "About *Fathers and Sons*," *Sobranie Sochinenıy*, Moscow, 1962, X, p. 138.

you will have washed some child, or taught him the alphabet, or you will have given medicine to a sick person. . . . There is your beginning!"

"But that is what Sisters of Mercy do, Vasily Fedotich. What is the use of all this then?" Marianna pointed to herself and round about with a vague gesture. "I dreamt of something else."

"Did you want to sacrifice yourself?"

Marianna's eyes glistened.

"Yes, yes, yes!"

"And Nezhdanov?"

"Marianna shrugged her shoulders.

"What of Nezhdanov? We shall go together . . . or I will go alone."

Solomin looked at her intently.

"Do you know what, Marianna . . . excuse the coarse expression . . . but, to my mind, combing the scurvy head of a gutter child is a sacrifice; a great sacrifice of which not many people are capable."

"I would not shirk that, Vassily Fedotich."

"I know you would not. You are capable of doing that and will do it, until something else turns up."

"But for that sort of thing I must learn of Tatyana!"

"Fine. Learn from her. You will be washing pots and plucking chickens. . . . And, who knows, maybe you will save your country in that way!"

"You are laughing at me, Vasily Fedotich."

Solomin shook his head slowly.

"My dear Marianna, believe me, I am not laughing at you. What I said was the simple truth. You are already, all you Russian women, more capable and higher than we men."

Marianna raised her eyes.

"I would like to live up to your idea of us, Solomin . . . and then I should be ready to die."

Solomin stood up.

"No, live! live! That's the main thing."[1]

"A good word is likewise a good deed."

This phrase which Lezhnev addresses to Rudin also applies to this remark of Solomin's. Turgenev defined the very substance of

[1] Friedrich Spielhagen (1829–1912), German militant representative of the school of the social novel. His books are all "Tendenzromane."

democracy brilliantly here as Russia's real path to salvation. Even though he calls his "New Country" the "nameless Russia" (the novel ends on this phrase of Paklin's), he is all the while thinking of the difference between democracy and revolution, and Solomin doesn't happen to believe in revolution.

In one of his letters Turgenev counsels patience to the younger generation. Likewise, it is hardly necessary to point out that Solomin is more progressive than Bazarov in every respect. He is more manly and he actually carries out those things which Bazarov only hoped for. The affair of Bazarov's duel reveals the whole difference between the two. In theory, as Bazarov explains, duelling is nonsense, but in actuality he does go through with this aristocratic foolishness. Solomin, for his part, had bridged, or almost bridged, this gap between theory and practice.

Solomin shows the Russian woman that she has more courage and is of a higher order than Russia's men are. This might be taken as a Turgenev platitude, since almost every pleasant development in most books stems from the fact that the woman somehow "saves" the man. The opposite almost never happens.

Under the double standard which prevails, the most corrupted of men desires the purest of women. Higher ethical standards are generally expected of them. Thus far, therefore, Solomin's praise of them does not say much that is new. Yet, Turgenev depicts the women of that transitional period just as much as he does the men. In the sense that he is proclaiming the "*new* man" he is likewise thinking of the new woman.

One finds women of the people in all of Turgenev's works, whether girls or married, and they are usually described as being both courageous and kind. Still Turgenev deals with all of them rather incidentally, even when he wants to stress their good qualities. Thus, for instance, Tatyana, Marianna's teacher in *The Virgin Soil,* is shown as being an ideal woman of the people.

The woman question, so far as Turgenev is concerned, affects the aristocracy and the intelligentsia. The peasant man and the peasant woman are economically, socially, and culturally equal, and thus (for Turgenev) no problem exists. But, in society, the sexes have entirely different positions in all respects, and that in itself raises all manner of question. One must, of course, distinguish between the old and the newer generation: the former was not concerned with real issues of any kind. Man and wife often

went their own way, or the wife eventually became reconciled with her role and even found happiness in her housekeeping or her children. The fact is that the older generation quite manifestly lived in a polygamous condition, since the wives and daughters of the serfs literally belonged to their overlord. Turgenev describes this state of affairs more than once and does so both truthfully and accurately In *Fathers and Sons* the *mésalliance* of Kirsanov's father with the serf Fenechka is characteristic of the old order of things. And one should note that Turgenev describes the women who live under these conditions sympathetically, as for instance Fenechka herself. He depicts her as a passive, docile temperament, in contrast to Asya's mother (in *Asya*), who is an example of an aggressive wife.

As the new generation gravitates toward nihilism, nihilistic women emerge opposite the nihilistic men and it would thus be possible to examine a whole progression of such types in Turgenev's work. One might begin with Maria Pavlovna in the story *The Still Water* (1854). There follow Natalia (in *Rudin*), Asya, Helena (*On the Eve*), Lisa, Marianna, and Klara Milich.

Maria Pavlovna ends as a suicide. While Veretyev is pursuing gypsy girls, she jumps into the stream and is drowned because no one hears her cries for help. It is not a premeditated act but one which is undertaken in a moment of despair. Natalia, in *Rudin*, has already matured beyond this kind of despair. Her relationship with Rudin hardens her and she then marries the strong Lezhnev. Here, love is divested of sentimentality and old-fashioned romanticism. Asya and Helena are even more energetic and self-possessed. The former (in the story of the same name from the year 1857) is the illegitimate daughter of landlord and servant. She is a child of nature, dissatisfied with society and in revolt against it. Helena is Insarov's companion not only in love but also in his political work, which she carries on even after her husband's death. And Lisa can be compared with Marianna: she loves Lavretsky yet chooses a religious solution to the predicament in which she finds herself by becoming a nun. Marianna, meanwhile, starts out by loving Nezhdanov but, as she herself says, allows herself to be swayed by the forceful Solomin and becomes his wife. Nezhdanov himself is in favour of this union and gives it his blessing, but that does not alter the fact that Marianna was once in love with him. Lisa had only one great love in her life, and in that sense she is superior to Marianna, who entertains a more utilitarian view of love.

In describing the relationship between Marianna and Nezhdanov, Turgenev was dealing with so-called free love. She leaves her family for Nezhdanov and wants to become his wife, but he lacks the courage to marry her. As he does not believe in revolution, so he has no faith in his own love nor any confidence in himself. He simply believes in nothing whatever. On the other hand, Marianna believes in revolution as well as her own self and that is how she eventually meets Solomin.

In the beginning she is his wife in a legal sense only and only becomes so in fact later on, which makes for an interesting facet of so-called free love. The crucial thing about it is that the women no longer give themselves to the men blindly but by their own free choice and in full awareness of what they are doing. Klara Milich understands Aratov's chastity and values it. This kind of love, then, is no less moral than the older variety· morally it is actually of a higher order. Purity and chastity in woman is no longer sought merely through her innocence. She becomes man's equal and the double standard disappears.

I have said that Lisa's love was nobler because she loved only once and forever. Yet one must consider the circumstances and the people concerned if one is to be fair. Take Lavretsky, a good and chaste individual who develops a passion for the woman who becomes his wife but who soon leaves him. "I made a mistake; I was taken in by a beautiful exterior." Indeed, many marriages end in no more than this kind of experience and error. Does that make Lavretsky's second love for Lisa less pure and beautiful?

Turgenev shows the power of sensuality in a few words concerning Bazarov. The latter's love of Odintsova is also motivated by a beautiful exterior, just as in Lavretsky's case, and he knows it perfectly well, as we learn from his judgment of Odintsova's sister Katya. (The latter, as Bazarov knows, has "sentimental inclinations"; for instance, she loves Heine's melancholy verses, and so forth.) We are also told that Bazarov's love for Odintsova is mixed with hatred. And if one raises the issue of whether love and hate are not inherently related, then the question arises whether Turgenev was actually describing sensual love as such or only Bazarov's alone, since the connection between love and hate is surely an unnatural one.

Klara Milich is a feminine character out of Turgenev's later years. She is a strong, energetic, and proud woman and the incarnation of passion, yet outspokenly clean and chaste. And this is the woman who shyly declares her love for Aratov who,

in his artist's naïveté, does not comprehend what she is driving at. Klara poisons herself and Aratov dies of love for the dead Klara.

Klara is reminiscent of Pushkin's Tatyana, who also declared her love for a man. Yet what a contrast between her, who still had little self-awareness and remained dependent upon her parents, and Klara, who pursues her artistic career freely and independently! There is a half-century's difference between the two, crowded by all the experiences and events which have intervened. Pushkin's Tatyana loved Onegin and ended by marrying the old General, while Turgenev's Marianna is prepared to shoot just such a general. In fact, Turgenev proclaims such a revolutionary woman to be a saint in his prose poem *Threshold!*

Turgenev's feminine characters have been widely praised and it is generally said that he consistently refined and developed the Tatyana type. In fact, Turgenev not only welcomed the awakening of Russia's men with a sympathetic eye, but that of Russia's women as well, even though he personally continued in the older traditions dating from the era of serfdom. This explains why his women are more contrived than the men, but it does not mean that he did not understand the new women or failed to observe them closely. That is perhaps most evident from one of his minor nihilistic characters, the person of Mashurina in *The Virgin Soil.* She is a worker in Solomin's sense of the future democrat and emerges as one of Turgenev's most beautiful and noble characters. One can only fault her for smoking cigarettes, but then even Marianna affects this foolish masculine habit at the beginning. Mashurina leaves her aristocratic family and devotes herself to propaganda with complete faith and seriousness. She becomes an obstetric assistant, which in her day was the only path open to a female nihilist. Despite this and her frequent contact with men, she remains clean and chaste. How strong, and yet unobtrusive, is her unrequited love for Nezhdanov, and with what ease and dignity she gets along with Marianna. Mashurina's greatness is accentuated by her homeliness. She is one among the many and her external appearance does not direct attention to her. Yet Mikhailovsky finds her stupid and tasteless and reproaches Turgenev for praising chastity so highly.

Finally, one or two critical observations. I Turgenev does accord a position of equality to his nihilistic women, then one has to ask to what extent his women are also subject to his dualistic formula. Are women, and Turgenev's women in particular, also to be

divided into Hamlet and Don Quixote types? Surely they would have to be, yet Turgenev seems unaware of the logic of his theory. Almost all of his women believe after the fashion of Don Quixote, but this belief derives rather from their social position than their calling. Also, their faith is closely related to love of their men. Even the strongest women do not analyse the significance and extent of their faith; they simply subordinate themselves to the men. That holds particularly for Marianna and in that sense a Mashurina emerges as her superior. Nor are there any philosophical sceptics among Turgenev's women. Odintsova has an inclination in that direction, but she believes in money and in the comforts and quiet which money can buy. Klara Milich, we are told, does not believe in God, yet she is superstitious and does believe in omens and in fate. Her atheism doubtless stems from the struggles of an independent artistic temperament but we are given no particulars.

Another comment might relate to the treatment which Turgenev gives the subject of love. Love does occupy an important place for him; he is keen to observe its beginnings and to analyse the early stages of its development, but the rest does not interest him. In this he resembles most other writers in having a common failing. Marriage and its evolution are no less important as a subject both of sociological and artistic observation. Married couples and parents do appear in Turgenev's work and we are frequently given details, especially about the education of this or that character, but these are brief and summary reports rather than analyses. Above all, Turgenev fails to give us a full picture of his new people: how, for instance, do Solomin and Marianna go on to develop?

Finally it is necessary to be clear about the actual nature of love in Turgenev's work. Here one has to distinguish between the emotional and physiological components and to define the relationship between the two, but that would properly belong in a monograph about Turgenev. It is enough to say that Turgenev draws a sharp distinction between physical and spiritual love. He recognises the spiritual side of love, longs for it, and cherishes hope in it, while his approach to the sensual side is rather more realistic. He stresses friendship between men and women—both in and out of love—as he well might, since he himself had extensive experience in this respect stemming from his relationship with Mme Viardot, who once said of him that she served both in the role of his brother and his sister.

Turgenev's concept of love thus has a pronounced romantic and even decadent flavour about it.

Perhaps I may be allowed a few words about Turgenev as an artist. As such, he was not only divinely endowed; he also had an artistic temperament, through and through. What I mean by making this distinction will, perhaps, be clarified by comparing him with Dostoevsky. The latter was also a great writer but not a great artist. Turgenev was quite right when he said that his own points of departure were not ideas but ready-to-hand personalities (through whom, I may add, he illustrated various ideas), and it is here that he differed from Dostoevsky. Turgenev very rarely lost himself in details. Instead, he goes straight down to the basic characteristics of people, even though they may sometimes seem insubstantial. He often describes a person by telling you about that individual's voice. The classic example, perhaps, is Sophia. In order really to capture her personality he lets her talk; he does not simply want to see her but wants you to hear her voice. He not only gives you the cadence of a given voice: he describes a manner of speech almost as a modern phoneticist might. And how he does indeed succeed in capturing the music of human speech! Nor does that hold true for the human voice alone. In Turgenev, all of nature sings: the birds, the waters, and the breezes. Nature comes alive for him, whereas it remains completely dead in Dostoevsky. But then, Turgenev was a musician himself, who particularly loved Gluck, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert. Dostoevsky and Tolstoy both lack any musical sense, while Turgenev describes Pigasov simply by saying that he is indifferent to music.

Turgenev is also responsive to the graphic arts and one can easily see that he developed his stylistic skill not without making frequent comparisons between words and painting.

When I say developed, I do so to stress Turgenev's own views about working as an artist. He says in one of his letters that without working and working vigorously, every artist becomes a dilettante, or rather, an aristocrat in the sense of Turgenev's views about the social function of work.[1] He places great stress on technique and proficiency and regards flashes of brilliant originality as no more than actual signs of weakness. "No! Without truth, without education and freedom in the broadest sense—in one's relationship to one's own self, to one's ideas and systems of

[1] Of Pushkin: "He is above everything and more beautiful than anyone."

thought, even to one's own people, and to one's history—the true artist is quite unthinkable; he simply cannot breathe in any other atmosphere." That is what Turgenev wrote about *Fathers and Sons* in 1868–69.[1] Surely there are echoes here of a democratic philosophy of esthetics!

Turgenev calls himself a realist and proclaims his agreement with Bazarov on everything except esthetics. Thus, his positivism inevitably does have an effect on his art. When he characterises Solomin as a "sober" person, that sobriety was the very same quality for which Herzen had already been striving. In other words, realism and romanticism confronted each other as opposites not merely in philosophy and politics but in the realm of art as well. There is, of course, some question as to how strictly Turgenev understood his realism within a positivist framework, or could, indeed, do so, since he himself remained a romanticiser of realism.

As a realist, Turgenev was a descendant of the classicists just as Pushkin had been before him. He said of himself, and that with a certain pride, that he had gotten his education from the classics; that he was in their camp and intended to die there. During the debate among Russian pedagogues on the respective merits of classicism and realism, he took the position that each should enjoy parity with the other. Evidently, Turgenev understood the meaning of classicism very much as Goethe had done and correctly saw that classical antiquity was predisposed toward the natural sciences and a close observation of nature.

Nevertheless, it is also possible to see where even Turgenev fell short of his own lofty theory. True, he sees in pictures, concretely and with artistic force, yet he also rather easily and sometimes too precipitately succumbs to the temptation of falling back upon purely deductive constructions. In fact, these constant transitions from observation to construction are one of his hallmarks. In those of his works which deal with the philosophy of history, this may well be explained by his having lived outside of Russia, while still another category of faults may be traced to his social and political views. It is remarkable, for instance, that in *The Virgin Soil* he should remain quite unconcerned about the shortcomings in the Russian system of government. Occasional statements and sketches—otherwise excellent—are concerned with the higher echelons of the bureaucracy (e.g. Sipyagin). By their very liberalism, they help the nihilist cause, yet are simply

[1] Letter to N N Strakhov, May 18/30, 1871. F. M. Dostoevsky, *Pis'ma*, II, p. 365

not enough to really help explain nihilism or the condition of Russia at that time.

I can only hint at the extent to which it would be necessary to really analyse Turgenev's character, with its strength and weaknesses, as it reflects in his artistic achievement. I would simply say that his own pleasant mildness of temperament and his malleability are likewise mirrored in his characters and their destinies. But then, his softness does, as I say, have an agreeable quality about it. It shows with most telling effect in his relations with both literary friends and foes. It was easy to win Turgenev back, as shown by the breach and resumption of his friendship with Herzen, Nekrasov, Goncharov, and Dostoevsky. At the same time he was also strongly principled. There was, for instance, no reconciliation between him and Katkov at the Pushkin commemoration. Turgenev had given financial aid to the impoverished Bakunin and was, for that reason, sharply attacked by Katkov's newspaper, with the result that Turgenev twice refused to drink a toast with Katkov at the Pushkin ceremonies. Yet Turgenev was magnanimous. He was always ready to recognise other people's deserts and abilities as well as their achievements (Tolstoy's, for instance!). That is why one can forgive him such weaknesses as his fear of criticism, some literary vanity, etc. He remained true to his life's calling despite making many concessions and leaving himself open to reproaches which may be hard to overlook altogether.

We may now examine Turgenev's place in literature and in Russian literature specifically.

He was a student of world literature and was uniquely influenced by French and German writers. Frenchmen had a creative impact on him but more in respect of their political ideas than their artistic qualities. Perhaps it was Flaubert who influences him the most as an artist, but he remained impervious to French romantics like Victor Hugo, as well as realists such as Zola. On the whole, the French spirit remained alien to him despite close contact with his French contemporaries. He saw through to the worthlessness of Napoleon III and his regime, and the year 1870 did not bring him any closer to the French, despite his dislike of Prussian militarism. We can see from his correspondence with French writers at the time that he did not sympathise with the reasons for France's downfall.

As I emphasised at the start, Germany had a definite formative

influence on him, notably the philosophy of Hegel and Schopenhauer, as well as its literature and music. The caricatures of various German personalities in Turgenev's works *Torrents of Spring*, *The Unhappy One* [*Neschastnaya*], *The History of Lieutenant Yergunov*) have elicited a good deal of comment, all intended to stress his antipathy toward the Germans, but it is just as possible to find very fine character portrayals, such as Kislev in *Raufbold*, the musical Lemm in *The Nest of Noblemen* (and compare also the description of the Rhineland in *Asya*). There is, in other words, a difference between Germans in Russia, where their peculiar position makes them concerned merely with practical matters, and the spirit and culture of Germany itself. Turgenev is much in Goethe's debt, in a literary, artistic and philosophical sense. His *Faust* became a sort of starting point for Turgenev's own artistic endeavours. There is also no question that Turgenev knew the rest of German literature well. He refers, for instance to Spielhagen,[1] who was being read widely during the 1860's not merely in Germany but in Russia as well. He was certainly familiar with his "problematic characters," but then, Spielhagen himself points back to Goethe's *Faust*. Turgenev thus derived much in his own thinking from *Faust* rather than Spielhagen, as is quite evident from his novels and philosophical essays.

England influenced Turgenev principally through Shakespeare. He had already got over Byron as a young man, having found him to be too rich fare. When he tells of Solomin's English education, he sticks with the then conventional picture of an industrialised, practical England.

Turgenev's real roots, however, are in Russian literature. Pushkin, Gogol, Belinsky, Herzen: these were his teachers and models. Pushkin, it is true, had directed his attention toward Europe, but, as in Gogol's case, had recommended that he choose Russia as the subject of artistic work. Turgenev was highly compatible with Pushkin, and sensing that to be so, valued him highly. "He is above everything and more beautiful than anyone." So reads his judgment of him. Even so, he rated Goethe as a greater artist, even while trying to understand and overcome the more dubious aspects of *Faust*.

He regarded Tolstoy with deep admiration but also displayed a lively interest in his other contemporaries and their creative work. He learned from them and taught them something in turn. Goncharov had even suspected him—unkindly and unjustly—of

[1] Letter to M. A. Milyutina, February 22, 1875.

Dostoevsky was deeply disturbed by Turgenev's *Smoke*. At the Baden-Baden meeting in 1867 he told Turgenev to his face that the book ought to be burned and that he, Turgenev, hated Russia, its culture, etc. He even forgot himself to the extent of writing the editor of the *Russian Archive* about Turgenev's "criminal" views. This accusation stands comparison with the arguments put forth in *The Possessed* where Bazarov comes to be judged quite differently. Not only is the tone which Dostoevsky uses in *The Possessed* entirely unacceptable: the arguments advanced against Bazarov are made the stronger because they are voiced by the liberal dilettante Stephen Trofimovich, who discovers nothing but a confused mixture of Nozdrev (a character out of Gogol) and Byron, in Bazarov.

One might almost say that Turgenev personally is libelled in *The Possessed* in the figure of Karmazinov, just as crude fun is made there of his *Enough*. Even granted that the latter work's sentimental weakness invited criticism (Odoevsky, too, retorted by writing his *Not Enough*), the fact remains that Dostoevsky did go much too far once he had turned against liberalism and Westernism as uncompromisingly as he did in *The Possessed*.

In 1873, Dostoevsky proclaimed *Rudin* to be Turgenev's most Germanic work, yet at the same time, he considered *The Hunter's Notebook*, alongside Pushkin and Gogol, as a wholly Russian work whose main point would be unintelligible to a European. In 1876, he conceded that in Turgenev's *The Nest of Noblemen* and Gogol's *Oblomov* both writers had moved closer to the Russian folk. In 1877 he praised *The Virgin Soil* from an artistic viewpoint, even though he categorically repudiated the character of Solomin. As late as *The Brothers Karamazov* "the lady of little faith" is made to make fun of the ivy overhanging Bazarov's grave (they are actually flowers in Turgenev's book), which is supposed to be the way in which disbelief spreads its tenacles wide. In his Pushkin address, however, where he proclaimed Pushkin's Tatyana to be the perfect type of Russian woman, Dostoevsky also placed Turgenev's Lisa right along side of his ideal and accorded her second place only to Tatyana as the best positive type of Russian woman. When he descended from the platform after his talk, Turgenev extended his right hand to him: he had been deeply moved by Dostoevsky's talk, as had all the others present.

It was only later that Turgenev expressed some reservations about Dostoevsky's address. The gulf between them was simply too great and was most apparent in those of Dostoevsky's works

in which he attacked Turgenev directly and tried to destroy his position by literary means.

It also appears that Dostoevsky expressed himself rather more angrily in conversation and private correspondence than he did in *A Writer's Diary*. It matters little, of course, that he wrote to Strakhov in 1871 to the effect that Turgenev's artistic powers were weakening, but he also refers to him and Tolstoy as producing "a literature of the landlords." These and similar remarks were certainly not calculated to impress Turgenev favourably.

For his part, Turgenev's conduct toward Dostoevsky showed a greater degree of composure and balance from the start. Dostoevsky's strictures, and his attack in *The Possessed*, disturbed him far less than did the liberals' rejection of Bazarov and *The Virgin Soil*. Still, it would appear that Turgenev did succeed in wounding Dostoevsky deeply through his private judgment of him. He did not like the "hospital atmosphere" in Dostoevsky's books. He had a high regard for *The House of the Dead* and the first part of *Crime and Punishment*, but he likened Dostoevsky's later work to that of the Marquis de Sade and was inclined to agree with Mikhailovsky's judgment to the effect that Dostoevsky was a "gruesome genius."

What is certain is that Dostoevsky became progressively and thoroughly alienated from Turgenev. In the course of one literary evening he was reading the scene from *The Brothers Karamazov* where Dmitri tells Alyosha about the encounter with Katherine Ivanovna, and all his listeners were most impressed indeed. Turgenev was in the audience and rose to shake Dostoevsky's hand. The latter, however, refused to take his hand, and it was not until two years later, at the Pushkin commemoration, that he agreed to do so.

The later relationship between the two was coloured by minor unpleasantnesses which each caused the other. Dostoevsky had to borrow money from Turgenev, and so forth, yet the difference between their two temperaments and outlooks ran much deeper. In any case it is worth noting that if Turgenev was attacked in *The Possessed*, so was Tolstoy in *A Writer's Diary* and just as sharply. For that matter, Dostoevsky also turned against Belinsky, who had been his mentor during youth, as well as against Granovsky and all the other Westernisers of his day.

The dispute between Dostoevsky and Tolstoy was one of long standing, but became exacerbated by the disagreement between Granovsky and Herzen. Christianity versus positivism, mysticism

versus rationalism, religiosity versus liberalism: these were the clashing opposites. This conflict was made all the sharper by the fact that Dostoevsky and Turgenev actually agreed on a great many things and that Dostoevsky actually learned a great deal from Turgenev. The latter's analysis of the situation in Russia as well as of nihilism was, in fact, almost identical to that which Dostoevsky had to offer. Yet Turgenev draws rather different conclusions: their diagnosis of the disease is the same, as, in fact, is their remedy, but each compounds his own in rather different fashion.

The struggle between belief and disbelief is at the core of the analysis of the Russian situation as seen by both Turgenev an Dostoevsky. Turgenev's male and female Hamlets have lost their faith and are crying out for a new one no less loudly than Dostoevsky's Ivans. Both writers also present those of their characters who have regained their faith in much the same manner. The only difference is that Bazarov and Solomin, to an even greater degree, happen to believe in positivism while Dostoevsky's Alyosha receives his faith from the Russian monk. The issue is between Auguste Comte and Father Zosima, sharp and simple.

We also find the same antipathy toward scepticism and particularly toward indifference on the part of both Dostoevsky and Turgenev, with the sole difference that Turgenev remains faithful to Belinsky while Dostoevsky turns upon him. Turgenev understood that Belinsky and his intellectual progeny—including Bazarov and Solomin—were also believers and perhaps more fervent than Alyosha and Father Zosima. Moreover, it was precisely here that Dostoevsky demonstrated his own weakness: he took the new faith of the new men to be an absence of faith and thus fell victim to the same error as that committed by the theologians and disciples of the official church. Solomin, it develops, was actually never a non-believer. He did not experience an inner crisis and thus never became a Hamlet. He was simply a Don Quixote all along, except that he exchanged theology for positivism, and the seminary for a technical high school. Perhaps Turgenev ought to have done more to elucidate this transition, yet the fact remains that Solomin's faith is as firm as a rock. The point, of course, remains as to who believes in what and in whom.

"I remain indifferent to everything that is unnatural, I believe in no absolutes and no systems and I love liberty above all." Perhaps one should not take this declaration too literally so far as Turgenev's work is concerned, yet it does approximate his

creed. His positivism does not prevent him from defending faith against scepticism, nor from praying and paying visits to graves.

Strictly speaking, Turgenev's nihilists are not atheists. They might well have fallen back upon the authority of Comte in this matter, yet the fact remains that they were much less disturbed by the two fundamental questions relating to the transcendental good and immortality than Dostoevsky's nihilists turned out to be. Turgenev's positivism is tempered by Kant's emphasis on morality as against mere religiosity. Duty rather than faith is Turgenev's true imperative.

It is in this sense that Turgenev and Dostoevsky disagree on the substance of good and evil. Stated most succinctly, Dostoevsky views crime as an offence against God while Turgenev regards it as an offence against one's neighbour, a point on which he is in full agreement with Goethe. Turgenev's ethics are utilitarian and devoid of any metaphysical trimmings or exaggerations.

Here is where he gets his political and social demand for plan and simple work—"black" or dirty work as the Russians call it. It is this democratic, anti-revolutionary, and all-important message which Dostoevsky learned from none other than Turgenev.

The latter was a strong individualist, yet he recognised the responsibility of becoming part of the community and of subordinating oneself to it. He tried to surmount Faust's "apotheosis of personality," thus attempting to overcome the legacy of both Goethe and Bryon.

The unregenerate individualists among Turgenev's characters simply come to grief when faced with historical and social reality. Both Rudin and Nezhdanov end as suicides. These actually occur with some frequency in Turgenev, although he does not define the problem quite as sharply as Dostoevsky, even when the motive is much similar to Dostoevsky's as is the case in Nezhdanov's circumstances. The "superfluous men" end as suicides in any event, yet the logic of their doing so is still rather different from Dostoevsky's Kirilov. The issue with Turgenev's individualists does not centre on a conscious struggle against God, but revolves instead about a certain weakness which misjudges the self. It is not in vain that Nezhdanov says about himself that he is half dead already, that he is a living corpse. He has all the hallmarks of a decadent.

Turgenev fails to make a psychological connection between murder and suicide, which makes the suicides among his women all the more remarkable. The suicide of Klara Milich for instance

seems rather to belong to Dostoevsky, if only the latter had had a better understanding of Russian women. That is surely an area in which he was surpassed by Turgenev.

Both Turgenev and Dostoevsky depict nihilism as a mass phenomenon and as the consequence of a historical process. Here, however, Dostoevsky is rather more consistent and his historico-philosophical perspective differs from Turgenev's. The latter believes in progress; he always describes a given historical moment in his works, and we are made acutely aware that it is a transitional phase. He says himself that he tries to capture "the body and the pressure of time" (in Shakespeare's phrase), and to catch the rapidly changing nature of Russia's educated classes. On the other hand, Dostoevsky would have liked to find the embodiment of his ideal in the past. Whether he depicts various nihilists or monks, one is entirely unable to see any development in them. They are simply deviants from the norm, and from the ideal image. Turgenev is more historically-minded than Dostoevsky but he does not fall victim to mere chronicling, as is evident from the sequence of his works. For instance, *On the Eve* was conceived before *Rudin*, which would show that he was able to capture the contemporaneousness of two historically interchangeable types.

These various contrasts are apparent in many particulars in both of these writers and thinkers. Both depict semi-educated people. Turgenev, for his part, treats them precisely as a transitory phenomenon. In *Fathers and Sons*, there are, between Bazarov on the one hand and the representatives of the older Russia on the other, a whole gallery of semi-educated people, represented by Kirsanov, Bazarov's parents, and others. All of them are shown to be historically predetermined. Moreover, Turgenev describes this half-way condition rather precisely, particularly in the figure of Panshin. Meanwhile, for Dostoevsky it is not merely a fault to be half-educated: it is a sin which leads to nihilistic atheism, whereas Turgenev regards the semi-educated as no more than displaced persons.

What we see, then, are two parallel types—two great contemporaries who each try to comprehend their epoch. Their lives are of almost identical duration (Turgenev—1818–1883; Dostoevsky—1821–1881). They were exposed to precisely the same Russian and foreign influences (Pushkin, Gogol, Belinsky, Herzen, etc.), even though in different fashions and degrees. One might thus think of Dostoevsky as perhaps being rather

more French and of Turgenev as more Germanic. Both were eye-witness observers of Russia during the 1860s and 1870s. Dostoevsky was just returning from Siberia when, following the emancipation of the serfs, Turgenev was embarking on his studies of the philosophy of Russian history. The problem of nihilism was put to Dostoevsky squarely in *Fathers and Sons*.

Dostoevsky learned much from Turgenev which is perhaps why he fought him so hard. Turgenev turned out to be his guilty conscience: Turgenev also remained faithful to Belinsky's ideal, while Dostoevsky, in rejecting it, was never able to surpass it.

CHAPTER XIX

THREE DECADENTS

(i) *Artsybashev*

DECADENCE in literature could well be illustrated on many writers, whether discussed here or not. Certainly one could select every probable and improbable example, and thereby demonstrate the various kinds and degrees of intellectual decay. If I select Artsybashev's *Sanin* for this purpose it is because the book enjoyed a certain vogue and because it sheds new light on the entire problem which, though perhaps no more significant than that to be found in other works, still has considerable relevance in terms of past and present literature. Another consideration is that *Sanin* and its message found some literal imitators among certain segments of the younger Russian generation. In any case, shortly after the publication of *Sanin* one began to hear complaints that students on various academic levels had started organising Saninesque "clubs of love." Now, however, it would appear—fortunately—that Saninism is pretty well dead among youth, and little wonder.

Artsybashev's Sanin proclaims himself to be a "new man." Yet one had already seen so many other "new people" who turned out in fact to be quite old that one was inclined to greet his claim with a certain scepticism. Actually, Sanin turned out to be quite an old person, or, to use his own phrase, an old stallion, while his women are equally old mares.

Sanin is an Epicurean, and never was there a coarser or more superficial one. It is not even possible to think of him as a hedonist, because all hedonists and Epicureans are more thoughtful than he is. Sanin preached a kind of unbridled hedonism, but he did so in the shabbiest possible language. What it boils down to is that man should satisfy all his natural needs and give himself unhesitatingly to every attainable pleasure.

How unbelievably and impossibly superficial it all is! Nor is his philosophical and historico-philosophical *credo* any less so, if, indeed, we can dignify his random expostulations by these terms. Sanin believes only in his own pleasurable and unpleasurable feelings and sensations (he doesn't care about those of others, since "I live for myself alone"), and whatever lies beyond or behind them he calls hypotheses, remaining completely unconcerned about the kind of hypotheses others construct for themselves.

Sanin and Saninism usher in a new epoch. Initially men lived like animals, and remained unconcerned about the consequences of their actions. Then ensued a time when men began to be aware of their actions and to ruminate on them, but they did so mistakenly: the importance of feeling was exaggerated, and this in turn led to asceticism. Men were afraid to live because they were constantly obsessed with the dilemma of whether what they were about to do was good or evil. Thus Sanin comes to the conclusion that a new epoch must conquer both the beast and asceticism, whereafter an age of free sensibility and untrammelled satisfaction of one's natural needs and desires will dawn. "The new man" does not know the difference between good and evil. He is unafraid of scarecrows which men themselves have erected. "A crime? What actually constitutes a crime?"

In a way this is a philosophy of sorts—after all, one cannot very well do without one—yet it is a negative philosophy which denies the entire past. It is a kind of philosophical nothingness, as Sanin defines it to poor Soloveychik. "Is everything really quite empty; is it true that nothing at all really exists?" And Sanin answers: "I don't believe that anything does."

Sanin tried to live as a Christian for a time, but he soon abandoned that, just as he abandoned all involvement in the political revolution of his day. Both appeared to him to be false and nothing but lies. Hence, he came to devote himself solely to attainable pleasures, which women afforded him and which he enjoyed at every possible opportunity. He said that "if young womanhood were to become extinct we would all be living as if in the grave."

The opportunities for indulging in pleasure were frequent, since Sanin's girls (they were not married women) are of the same mind as he is. All they think about is men, as he does of them. Obviously, there is no question here of anything really natural. What Sanin calls the satisfaction of natural needs is in fact the satisfaction of

entirely unnatural ones. Not only is the officer Zarudin an abnormal personality; Sanin himself views his own sister with lecherous intent, and this sister has equally perverse feelings toward him. When, after a long separation, Sanin is reunited with his own sister, the initial thing that occurs to him is to wonder who might be the first to enjoy her favours. And then, after her fall from virtue, she succumbs to Sanin's embraces in a way which can only be described as demi-monde in Prévost's sense of the word. It is, actually, quite disgusting to see the kind of women that Artsybashev describes. They regard their own bodies sinfully, read Charles Bradlaugh,[1] and thus transplant prostitution by both sexes into Russian society. All of these people are terribly vulgar, which goes not only for Zarudin but equally for Sanin himself, as one sees, for instance, in the episode where he is trying to prove to a fellow that he will find his sister just as physically pleasurable as though she were still a virgin. Only the coarsest kind of petty bourgeois could possibly act in this way to try to cover up the shame within his own family. In short, it so happens that Artsybashev's "new man" actually resorts to some very old methods indeed.

Sanin's artful way with women and his secret ways of watching girls bathing in the nude simply prove what I have said already. After his affair with Karsavina we are told—and there are many such phrases in *Sanin*—that they parted like brother and sister. Presumably, once the physical urges have been satisfied, a calm, brother-sister relationship ensues. This relationship is supposed to be an advance over animalism and asceticism, and presumed to create the new man. After this episode, should the reader still have the strength, he can proceed to read the banalities which Sanin serves up to his sister after his adventure.

Sanin is a decadent Bazarov. The latter's nihilism, which craves action, is transformed into a passive sexual nihilism by Sanin. The old *carpe diem* thus becomes sexual abnormality. Bazarov also wants to be positive in his love, and he stresses everything that is sensual. Still, he remains a "romantic," and obviously does not see man's sole role to be the physical love of woman. The characters in Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done?* feel very much the same way. Sanin knows Bazarov, Lopukhov,[2] and his various other predecessors, but in the end he learned much more from Stirner

[1] Charles Bradlaugh (1833–91), English free-thinker and radical Member of Parliament.

[2] Lopukhov is an idealistic character in Chernyshevsky's *What is to be Done?*

than he did from Rousseau. Zola's *The Human Beast* made a deeper impression on him than did his very superficial reading of Nietzsche (incidentally, his sister Lida is also a reader of Nietzsche). Sanin thus emerges as a polygamous Pozdnyshev. The latter brings on ascetic paroxysms in Tolstoy, even while Sanin rejects asceticism and, as he claims, animalism along with it. On the second point, at least, Sanin is perfectly right: animals certainly do not live a bit as he does, nor do they philosophise about their mating habits.

I have mentioned several of Artsybashev's European mentors, but I should also add Wilde and Wedekind (*Awakening Spring*). Yet one must be careful to differentiate between teachers and pupils. Wedekind is a descendant of the German Fausts and of the English and German Don Juans. He is also able to think clearly, and obviously learned more from his own teachers than Artsybashev did from his. Wedekind's sexual superman is reminiscent of his titanic predecessors. In his drama *The Censorship* Wedekind's Buridan[1] stands between beauty and holiness, woman and God, and confesses that he knows of no one in the whole wide world who deserves more pity than the poor fool who does not believe in God. He has lived half his life without art, yet without religion he could not live for one minute. So much for Wedekind. Of course, he is in search of religion simply in order to calm his troubled soul and nerves, and it is equally within the logic of decadence that he, the ultrarationalist, should debate religion with a Catholic priest in what he calls a "theodicy," in his sub-title. The polarity between beauty and holiness, women and God, is actually reduced to the clash between the king's confessor (decadent aristocrat that he is, he must naturally have a socially prominent spiritual adviser) and the loved one. She ends by jumping out of the window, and thus beauty is made to capitulate to holiness, the woman to God. "Oh God, how inscrutable you are!"

We find much of Artsybashev in this "theodicy," which in turn derives from Faust and Don Juan. "Everyone has his own God! . . . For me the line of a woman's back is the most important of things." The naked woman, so says the author of *Sanin* about Zarudin's and Voloshin's theodicy, banishes the entire world from their consciousness—it obliterates everything. Yet the same holds true for Sanin as well. He does not go back to Don Juan or Faust;

[1] Buridan is a littérateur in Frank Wedekind's (1864–1918) drama *Zensur* (*The Censorship*), written in 1909.

other authors currently in vogue are enough for him. He has certainly read the great Russian poets and thinkers, but has failed to learn anything from them. Instead, he appropriated ready-made formulae, combined them in various fashions, but was unable to put them to constructive use. After Lida's downfall Sanin talks with her about what should be done: an abortion, suicide, or marriage. Among these alternatives, marriage is the one chosen. However, Lida's seducer shoots himself, and Svarozhin and Soloveychik end in similar fashion. Svarozhin had in fact already wanted to kill himself once before, but only succeeds on the second try. In addition, if one recalls that Lida and Karsavina also contemplated suicide, one is led to conclude that five suicides in one novel are just about enough to serve as an illustration of Dostoevsky's thesis.

Murder, which is the other part of Dostoevsky's dualism, not surprisingly also has its place in *Sanin*. After all, Sanin provides the incentive for Zarudin's suicide, and he actually comes close to killing Soloveychik. The poor wretch comes to ask him, as a kind of authority, whether life is worth living, to which Sanin answers, "You are a corpse already, and if you don't mind my saying so, the best place for a corpse is in the grave." Mad men and idiots, so goes Sanin's diagnosis of his contemporaries, would slaughter each other if only they were allowed the least amount of freedom.

Murder and suicide: here is Dostoevsky's formula all over again. Sanin's judgment of the muzhiks is also very similar: they are repellent beasts, yet they live in fear of man-made scarecrows; they steadfastly expect miracles to happen, and that expectation keeps them alive. Tolstoy and Chekhov saw the muzhik's will to live in exactly the same light, even though the reasons for their findings were different in Sanin's case and theirs. Were one to ask how Sanin would be likely to meet his end, the answer could only be that after ruining his nervous system sufficiently—Artsybashev stresses the fact that his hero likes to drink—he would go mad and commit suicide, just as many of his disciples did. Thus do the "Clubs of Love" become transformed into "suicide clubs," and, indeed, free love can hardly end in any other way. People, as Sanin put it about himself, who live only for themselves live in total isolation, despite and precisely because of their notion of "love."

After Svarozhin's funeral Sanin addresses the young people. He wishes them in hell for their obtuseness and stupidity, and is fed up with their foolishness and sentimentality. The speech

involuntarily recalls Alyosha's speech to the young after Ilyushka's death and this makes Sanin a kind of vulgarised Ivan Karamazov. Ivan was not entirely sure that everything is allowed, and his predecessor Raskolnikov did not deny crime and punishment. It is only Sanin who summons sufficient strength to do away with good and evil altogether. "A crime? What is a crime?" As Sanin triumphs over Karsavina he emits a cry of joy as Indians are said to do when they have scalped someone. Ivan on the other hand feels the disease of the Karamazovs in his veins; he fears that his strength will only last into his thirtieth year, and that he will then have to fade into the background. By way of contrast, Sanin does not do much thinking anyway, and it hardly occurs to him to conserve his own strength.

Artistically *Sanin* lacks significance. The structure of the work does not give evidence of any great creative strength. Scene simply follows scene, and there is much repetition—for instance, that Indian-like cry recurs no less than three times. The amorous adventures resemble each other as one egg does another, and this is so because, although the settings may be different, all the people in *Sanin* essentially think alike and really are alike.

In turn, many of Artsybashev's other works resemble *Sanin*. *The Tale of the Old Public Prosecutor* is characteristic in its bloodthirsty romanticism.

Sanin attempts to depict the post-1905 scene. The failure of the revolution bred the Sanins of that day in the sense that the harsh reaction gave them no other way to express their individualism than through sexual excess. The book appeared only after the revolution of 1905, and its author gives it meaning by casting his hero as an unsuccessful revolutionary. We are, of course, never told exactly what role Sanin and his colleagues played in the revolution, nor what their revolutionary plans actually were. In fact, *Sanin* was conceived and written long before the revolution. Sanin himself quite clearly has in mind not the revolution of 1905 but the revolutionary movement which was endemic in Russia in that era. The setting of the novel in the provinces, which are pervaded by dullness and inertia and remain oblivious to the revolution, demonstrates this. The only revolutionary element in the book is the characterisation of Zarudin and the military establishment. These officers must, in the interests of humanity, be opposed and uprooted, which is actually the only revolutionary message which Artsybashev, rather unwittingly, conveys. However, one must admit that, viewed in a

more sympathetic light, *Sanin* depicts a class of people who experienced the nervous and spiritual strains of the revolution and who have thus become tired and numbed. It is a class of camp followers· the dissatisfied but weak bourgeoisie which uses the situation to give itself over to a passive hedonism with a bit of philosophy thrown in. Thus, Sanin can be viewed as a representative of society as a whole in that day only with considerable reservation. The novel was widely read, a fact encouraged by the confiscation of its later editions, but this by itself does not mean much. Literary interest in the book and critical comment on it did not go very deep, and it was clear that *Sanin* was nothing like what *Fathers and Sons* had been in a previous day. It failed to present a new and strong programme, notwithstanding some comments in the socialist press, which wanted to see more in it than there actually was to see. The abler and better known Russian socialist critics rightly rejected the work with considerable feeling.

The Sanin type of hero was in actuality anything but original or Russian. He was well known in both European and Russian literature; the influence of foreign decadence and pornography is so obvious that the fiasco which was the revolution of 1905 hardly comes through at all.

Thus *Sanin* remains no more than an example of European and Russian decadence. Moreover, the decadence in *Sanin* is not only philosophical but moral and socio-political as well. From a philosophical standpoint there is nothing in *Sanin* except some rather poor repetitions of old concepts and views. Morally, however, the secuality characteristic of the work deserves closer attention. On the whole, the characters in *Sanin* are sexually raw; some of them are weak and effeminate, yet none of them is really clever. One finds perversity here as if it were still in its infancy. Nevertheless, every thought and action of Artsybashev's characters is somehow directed toward the sexual, something which is best shown in his women. What a contrast there is between someone like Tatyana on the one hand and Lida and Karsavina on the other! The only thing that can be said is that the Sanin-like animalism does occasionally preserve something of the natural in animals. There were in the modern Russia of that day a host of younger writers who specialised in writing about sexual excess and abnormality and took delight in dealing with all manner of perversity. The only difference between them, strictly speaking, was in whether their warped fantasies fed upon expensive aristocratic or the cheaper demi-monde of the bourgeoisie and commercial classes. The worst

among this group are the Jesuitical decadents who sanction perversion through a kind of religious hocus-pocus, as, for instance, Merezhkovsky does. The social and political significance of this kind of literature consists precisely in its rottenness and decadence. What is bad about this is that the rottenness comes to infect even the healthier elements. This is plain from Russian works of literature which show otherwise wholesome realists giving lurid and detailed descriptions of sexual experiences just in order to appear to be very realistic indeed. (Kuprin's quite perverse description of the multiple rape of a sea-sick woman might well serve as an example of this trend.)

I could have chosen worse examples of decadence in Russian literature than Artsybashev. I was not, however, inclined just to recite case histories from Krafft-Ebbing. Apart from that a healthy person can, after all, only stand so much of this kind of filth. Psychopathology as such is one thing, but art is something very different indeed.

(ii) *Andreyev*

ANDREYEV stands for a different type of decadence. He is aware of his disease and tries to fight it, or rather, to struggle against its causes. His revolt is nervous, weak, theatrical, yet honest. Frankly, I experience difficulty in finding my way through Andreyev. Reading him induces a kind of dizziness in me, and some effort is needed not to lose interest in what I read.

Andreyev was a pupil of Dostoevsky's. He was a populariser of Dostoevsky in the sense that he tried to publicise his ideas in terms acceptable to a later generation. He returned again and again to the problem which Dostoevsky attempted to elucidate when contrasting the brothers Ivan and Alyosha, namely, whether the world belongs to God or the Devil. Thus, Andreyev came to restate Ivan Karamazov's root question in *The Black Masks*, answering it through a host of symbols, and an attempt to metamorphose Dostoevsky's philosophy. Lorenzo, the Knight of the Holy Ghost, has qualms of conscience as he searches himself only to discover that the hymn intended in praise of God also offers up a tiny candle to the Devil. He tries to bury one-half of his being (Goethe's two souls, Turgenev's two persons in one breast), but discovers that he cannot live only the pure half of him. His jester comes to the rescue by reawakening that other half, so we once again have the whole of Lorenzo, yet he also goes insane in the

process. For, the strength of the jester lies in the fact that over and above his laughter, tears, and enthusiasm he also has the fire of life ("real life is fire"). Thus Dostoevsky's idiot and Turgenev's Don Quixote are used by Andreyev as counterfoils to Ivan and Hamlet. The fire consumes Lorenzo as well as his clown, no less than the Black Masks, those penetrating and disturbing thoughts which once had access to him and his castle. His wife, Francesca, must renounce the happiness of dying with her husband, since she feels the responsibilities of motherhood. . . . "I will tell your son, Lorenzo, how God called you to him, and he will bless your name."

We know our Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Turgenev, as well as Manfred and Cain, well enough not to be left in any doubt about the allegorical symbolism of the Black Masks, and yet the drama (Andreyev often uses this vehicle, much as Maeterlinck did) does not make agreeable reading. The symbols, the allegories, and the images are repelling to one who is familiar with the crystal clarity of his predecessors.

In *My Recollections*, Ivan's Euclidian mind reappears in the person of a philosophically-minded author. While Ivan, however, was only indirectly responsible for his father's death, Andreyev depicts a triple murderer who kills his father, his brother, and his sister, and, just as in Dostoevsky, the murderer is discovered only after such difficulty that the thoughtful reader is left in some doubt as to whether the "author" of these Recollections is in fact the actual murderer. It is in this fashion that Dostoevsky gets turned about. In line with modern psychiatric theory, the murderer is shown to be thoroughly perverse. Andreyev uses him to demonstrate that reason does consider, and indeed must consider, everything to be permissible: the erstwhile mathematician, who committed murder when he was seventeen, later declared everything to have been entirely logical, and tried to prove his innocence mathematically. And yet, he views the world and his own jail cell as being essentially harmonious. Just as Dostoevsky had done before him, Andreyev confronts us with the terrible alternative between murder and suicide. Andreyev, moreover, speaks from personal experience more than Dostoevsky did since he had in fact unsuccessfully tried to kill himself during a period of physical and spiritual despondency. In his Sergey Petrovich we are told about Kirilov's theory of suicide (*The Devil*): the instant in which a man decides upon suicide he finds himself on a higher pinnacle than every genius, because he has finally and ultimately overcome

his own ego. This "I" Andreyev ecstatically calls the "purest and most beautiful in the world—the courageous, free, and immortal human I!" One phrase or epithet more or less hardly matters in Andreyev. After all, Andreyev's Ivan has read his Nietsche, and is wholly entranced by the all-powerful superman. Yet inevitably, Ivans' scepticism also comes to the surface and leaves Andreyev somewhat at a loss. The courageous, free, and immortal "I" breaks its skull against a stone wall in the course of its titanic struggle, or yet again, the superman is made to sit in jail squinting through its bars at a harmonious world, which is in fact centered in his cell and indeed within himself.

There are a host of older and more recent writers speaking through Andreyev, including, of course, Nietsche, Ibsen, Maeterlinck, Zola, de Maupassant, no less than Gorky, Chekhov, Turgenev, and Tolstoy. Here, perhaps, lie the weakness and dependence of decadence. If one reads Andreyev attentively, and even if one becomes accustomed to his exaggerations, it becomes easy to see how very little he has to contribute that is new.

Andreyev overstates almost everything. The hanging of one man does not satisfy him; he has to have seven of them which would make it seem that his debilitated nervous system required more robust fare. That, perhaps, is why he piles effect upon effect even though the events he recounts are made to occur with a certain naiveté.

The fact that he borrows images and ideas does not, of course, make him a plagiarist. On the contrary, he is actually reliving Dostoevsky's problems, which is why he is restating them. Björnson's *Beyond our Strength*[1] reappears in the guise of Father Fiveysky: the dedicated priest perishes when he finds himself unable to bring the dying wife back to life. Yet Björnson is more restrained in his approach: his believing Nordic pastor simply wants to heal his pious wife. Turgenev's Bulgarian Insarov reappears as a Serb, but what is merely suggested by Turgenev becomes very explicit in Andreyev. The Serbian patriot is made to triumph over the Russian's cosmopolitan inclinations toward Europe.

Dostoevsky returns to his various problems again and again in his carefully constructed and thought-out works, and Andreyev

[1] Björnstjerne Björnson (1832–1910), Norwegian poet and playwright, wrote the drama *Over Aevne* (*Beyond our Strength*) in 1883, and Part II in 1895 Father Fiveysky appears in a short story named *The Life of Father Fiveysky*.

too inclines to repeat his theses over and over, yet does so with a rather light touch. Throughout, he was reworking the self-same subjects by employing new effects: *Savva, Judas, The Black Masks, Toward the Stars, Man's Life, My Recollections*—there is just too much good material here for such a young writer. And, while Andreyev did struggle within himself, it remains difficult to believe that he actually came to grips with the world. All too frequently he fell victim to his own rather artificial symbolism. His symbols, allegories, and images were seldom chosen with felicity. Consider, for instance, *The Red Laugh:* I doubt that one can talk about a powerful image when that laugh is actually covered with blood and when the author expects one to comprehend that the tremendous blood-letting during the Russo-Japanese War would bring those who were made mad by it to respond with a horrible and lugubrious laugh. The whole thing is simply too contrived!

Andreyev's weakness is also evidenced in his many and hastily-written sketches, which also seem too affected and contrived, and too frequently appear right in the middle of a long narrative, or even a sermon.

It is even worse that Andreyev should have on occasion been so horribly sentimental. Thus, in the most unlikely of circumstances, a professional thief on his way to do a job finds a half-frozen dog, and out of sheer gentleness and love of animals is made to forget his errand entirely.

Andreyev sees the whole of life to be nothing but chaos and darkness. His entire world is sheer chaos. Psychologically—we have here echoes of Nietsche and Schopenhauer—the inner life is a constant struggle between the subconscious and animalistic on the one hand and reason on the other. And the outcome is always a victory for the chaotic, the dark, and the intuitive. Nevertheless, even this kind of struggle is waged so as to reach some degree of order and light, and it would further seem that Andreyev was not averse to helping reason gain its victory. Yet his mentors, as well as the experiences gained in the Russia of his day, seem to prevent this. An unhappy war and a futile and unsuccessful revolution: this Russian chaos becomes elevated into cosmic chaos.

Amid this universal chaos, moral chaos prevails of necessity. In *Darkness,* a revolutionary escapes from his pursuers after just having hurled a bomb into a brothel; and there is the innocent clean young man who gets into an argument with a prostitute who

is offended by his very cleanliness. "What right have you to be good if I am bad?" she asks, and in the end this clean youth comes to agree with her and admits that he should be "ashamed that he is good."

Yes, there is chaos. It engulfs a high school student who wants to take his revenge for having contracted syphilis, and does so by murdering a prostitute, a type who is significantly made to play a very large role in this world of darkness.

Andreyev's philosophical weaknesses can also be demonstrated in his *Judas*. I am not exaggerating when I say that while reading it I experienced a kind of spiritual seasickness. It has a beautiful and interesting theme, yet how that theme is handled! Andreyev's particular flaw appears often to lie in the fact that he fails to choose interesting subjects (actually, this particular theme dealing with exaggerated notions about the character of Judas had already been treated by Merezhkovsky) and that while he shows certain insights he is unable to grasp the whole. What he does here is to place Judas above good and evil, an attempt which is doomed to failure, and which results in the fact that all we are left with is a legalistic discourse concerned with the extenuating circumstances. Jesus' actual betrayers (and Andreyev does not hesitate to play upon the double-edged meaning of the word) turn out to be the other apostles. It is they who have actually driven him to his death, by having acted without sensitivity and with cowardice. Likewise the crowds who had only a short while before hailed him with cries of hosanna are also his real betrayers. Andreyev concludes that "good people" are deemed to be so merely because their good actions and thoughts remain unseen; yet, if we look at such a person with just a little love quite carefully and really examine him, we find that his falsity, pettiness, and dishonesty come to the surface like pus from an open wound.

Andreyev delights in using such unpleasant allegories and images, and he delights in them even in cases where they do nothing to shed real light on the issues—which is another of his faults. The metaphysics in *Judas* are weaker still. Andreyev tries to whitewash Judas's betrayal by taking refuge in the concept of predestination and supposing that the betrayal and Jesus' subsequent suffering were somehow an inescapable necessity. Yet the fact that the conduct of the other apostles and the crowds would then also have had to be predestined never occurs to Andreyev at all.

Obviously, his argument is an anachronism, just as the whole of

Judas is an anachronism. He does little more than polemicise with a two-thousand-year-old judgment of Judas, and indeed with Judas himself. An example of this would be the repetition of the Pauline doctrine (which actually antedates Paul) regarding the role of the apostles.

Judas, although he is a liar and a thief, is described as a man in search of beauty to which he can pay homage, and that is why he is said to discover Jesus; Andreyev hardly needs to mention the search for good, because the *quid pro quo* would be too blatantly obvious.

I would suppose that this brief characterisation of Judas should suffice to demonstrate the weakness of Andreyev's philosophical framework and the inadequacy of its presentation. The whole work has nothing to say except that the "other" people are always dirty dogs. "Yes, they are dogs," are Judas's last words before he hangs himself (Judas's suicide has, of course, to be justified as well: and thus we are told that he does not hang himself out of despair but rather in order to join Jesus calmly and proudly and to return with him when the millennium arrives). One can only imagine that Jesus's death and his betrayal by the crowds and others might have been suggested to Andreyev by the suppression and betrayal of the Russian Revolution of 1905.

Cosmic, psychic, and moral chaos are associated by Andreyev with the city and urban life; the culture and civilisation of the city give birth to this chaos, and lead to degeneracy, the decadence of family life and of middle-class society as a whole. The apostles who failed to comprehend Jesus' message are in fact none other than the bourgeoisie.

(iii) *Chekhov*

I AM aware that there will be considerable objection to my placing Chekhov in the ranks of Russia's decadent modern writers. Still, I do so after considerable reflection and after having weighed all the possible objections which might be raised. Chekhov exemplified the modern soul, which is very frequently and characteristically decadent. He also displays certain signs of weakness which, in his case, are not only intellectual but physical as well. The life histories of the majority of decadents, perhaps of all of them, suggests that their natural vitality has somehow been sapped. There are indications that many of them either have an

inherited or acquired proclivity toward some physical disability. Often this results from sexual irregularities or some other abnormal practices. Chekhov himself died of tuberculosis, and it is interesting to note that literary historians date the beginning of his second creative period from the year 1888, since he had contracted the disease in 1887. His characters during the later period became ever greater weaklings as he himself became progressively more ill, reflecting his own declining vitality. I think too that one can say without contradiction that his characters resemble a Bazarov who, unlike Turgenev's rendering of him, fails to meet a sudden and unexpected death but is taken ill gradually and, like a physician or physiologist, consciously anticipates his impending death. Chekhov was adequately trained in physiology and psychiatry to be able to observe the nervous and psychic states of neurasthenics with interest and sympathy, and being physically debilitated himself, developed a keen sensitivity to the whole range of pathological symptoms and feelings.

Chekhov combats pettiness and everything that is ordinary; one could say that he attacks the bourgeois if one were to define the bourgeois in Gorky's sense. Yet Chekhov had a good eye for the weaknesses of all types of men, and the result is unfailingly the same: zero plus zero equals zero. The most educated turn out in the end to be inhabitants of insane asylums (*Ward No. 6*). Every now and again—and here he is true to his literary tradition—he also depicts a brave woman who is able to resist pressure and is not as beaten down as are the men for the good reason that she hardly enjoys the same opportunities as do the men.

Chekhov's repertoire was very broad indeed. One finds in his work types drawn from all social strata and classes, including, of course, a great variety of intellectuals—professors, theologians, teachers, writers, and journalists. Chekhov gave a very detailed account of the disintegration of the great landed aristocracy and the rise of the merchant and the bourgeois. He disparaged the city and urban life and conditions. Life in town was too complicated for him, and he had a horror of the nervous hustle and bustle which the city invariably occasions. He preferred the quiet simplicity of rural living and actually took refuge in the Crimea himself. Chekhov did, however, also describe the atmosphere of the 1880's and 1890's, an atmosphere which was both apprehensive and oppressive, and which was made so by the pressures which official reaction exerted on the educated elements in society. He described the mood of those who had chosen or who had been com-

pelled to come to terms with that reaction. His shorter sketches depict the utter colourlessness of the small and insignificant men of those days. His works went through many editions, precisely because they were found to be so popular.

These sketches, and above all the *feuilletons* which appeared in a variety of newspapers (Chekhov had began his literary career in 1879) have something good-naturedly humorous about them. His humour, however, had a peculiar quality and a large measure of irony—an irony directed against his own self. This irony never truly cut to the bone, but occasionally it did cut quite deeply enough.

Chekhov was not a partisan. In a letter to the lyric poet Pleshcheyev dated 1888 he wrote: "I am not a liberal nor a conservative nor a gradualist nor a monk nor an indifferentist. I should like only to be a free artist."[1] Yet Chekhov did not seek freedom actively since he found it simply too difficult to make decisions.

Chekhov was a sceptic. He was not only sceptical in respect of religion, but in a more fundamental sense; he was afraid to believe lest he be disappointed. This doubting attitude comes through in his realism, which seeks to get to the core of a man and his motives, and which, when called to examine the external manifestations of action or intent, demands to know what the real motive forces behind them might be.

Despite his deeply-felt scepticism, Chekhov knew perfectly well what value faith has for man. "I think that man must believe, or that he must seek belief, else his life can be nothing but empty . . ." says Masha in *The Three Sisters*. This, perhaps, is why he essentially preferred the muzhik to the intellectual, even though he was capable of depicting that muzhik without the least of illusions. He simply supposed that the muzhik had a sound inner core, that he had an honest and naïve faith in the truth, whereas he, Chekhov the individual, has lost that kind of faith himself.

The learned liberal professor in *A Boring Story* admits that he lacks a "comprehensive idea." "Every feeling and every idea I have exists in isolation and in all my opinions about the world of learning, the theatre, literature, or my students, . . . not even the shrewdest of analysts could find an over-all conception, or something like the God of a truly living person. And if that does not

[1] Letter to Pleshcheyev, October 4, 1888. *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenıy ı Pısem*, Moscow, 1949, XIV, p. 177. Alexey Pleshcheyev (1825–93) was a poet who was arrested together with Dostoevsky in 1849 and set free in 1856

exist, then nothing at all exists."[1] Man is, then, only a plaything tossed about by external forces, since he simply lacks whatever is higher and stronger than these external forces. Yet the professor does cling to his learning. He wants to believe in science to his dying day and wants to believe that man can conquer nature and himself through science. Yet even this faith in science does not give him the strength to act like a man and according to his true conscience.

It is characteristic that Chekhov often dealt with these educated weaklings. He was evidently thinking of the important role which the Russian teacher was called upon to play, and that was why he showed such an exceptional interest both in professors and teachers. Chekhov's longing for the calm life was also evident in his approach to metaphysical and religious problems. He was quite familiar with the several schools of thought which various Russian writers and philosophers subscribed to but he preferred to think these problems through in his own way, and what emerged from his labour was a kind of homoeopathic philosophy. It seemed to say that it is not worth while to be unduly concerned with these types of problems at all since man has troubles enough with his daily life and its difficulties. Thus Dostoevsky's metaphysics and religion remain a riddle to him, because as a positivist he demands positive solutions. That is why he was able to write: "Our present-day culture is the beginning of an undertaking in the name of a tremendous future. It is an undertaking which may take tens of thousands of years to make it possible for mankind, albeit in a very distant future, to perceive the true nature of the real God. That is, mankind will no longer guess; it will not search like Dostoevsky; but it will know clearly, as it knows that two times two is four."[2] Thus, Chekhov turned out to be a believer in Ivan's Euclidian rationalism precisely in order to preserve his own peace of mind. Whereas the majority among the decadents continued to cling to Dostoevsky's mysticism, Chekhov prescribed mathematics to them instead. He himself remained satisfied with a positivistic agnosticism. "I fail to understand!"[3] That is how Ivanov concludes one of his own self-examinations: he does not understand himself or life or people, even the world.

[1] *A Boring Story* (*Skuchnaya istoriya*), A. P Chekhov, *Povesti i rasskazy*, Moscow, 1959, II, p. 377. Chekhov's word for "comprehensive" or "over-all" is *obshchii*.

[2] Letter to S P Dyagilev, December 30, 1902. *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenny i Pisem*, Moscow, 1950, XIX, p. 407.

[3] *Ivanov*, end of Act II, as well as in Act III.

"With bowed head and heavy heart, tired, over-worked, broken, without faith, love, or aim, I stumble like a shadow among people, and do not know who I am, why I live, or what I really want!"[1] Thus metaphysical agnosticism also becomes moral agnosticism. This curious weakness, this "ability to tire oneself out," as Chekhov rather characteristically called it, is depicted in the drama *Ivanov*. This weak, melancholy mood, the feeling of cold boredom and of dissatisfaction and surfeit with life, is a peculiar kind of moral over-exertion. A person like this is a hero during his twenties, but he is already exhausted in his thirties. True, he yearns for a new life and for a rebirth, yet he is no longer able either to live anew or to be born anew. Under the best of circumstances, which is to say, if he still has any kind of a lively conscience, he departs this world on his own accord.

Ivanov's suicide is representative of this attitude. He shoots himself in front of his bride, his closest relatives, and the guests assembled at the wedding. He needs the exhilaration of being in the midst of people whom he really blames for his wasted life. He departs this life because he is quite alone and because he loves no one; he has an honest and genuine compassion for people, yet he does not know real and genuine love.

Chekhov's moral agnosticism also found political and social application: he could not genuinely make himself believe in progress. At any rate he was unable to communicate the idea of progress in his work. The notion of progress was for him more in the nature of a logical conclusion since he does tell us in *The Three Sisters* that perhaps in two or three hundred years, perhaps in a thousand, life will be beautiful and men happy. Today, however, it seems that there are no happy people, but only those who seek happiness.

Chekhov remained politically undecided even when the signs pointed to the impending storm.[2] Despite his own belief in progress one finds in him only a kind of academic interest in the socialism which has been resolutely striving for progress. Yet Chekhov, like all the other Russian writers, was perfectly aware that every Russian, and the intellectuals in particular, would have to work, that his own generation was born of parents who had looked down upon work. In fact, he came close to believing

[1] Ivanov in his last long speech at the end of Act IV.

[2] Here as elsewhere, when Masaryk wrote of "impending storm," we must remember that he was thinking of the Revolution of 1905, although his words were prophetic of the late revolutions.

that happiness consists precisely in working for a future generation.

Obviously Chekhov was not impressed by slogans. "Here is a gifted person! He writes so grippingly, in such a human way, and with such facility! He tells his wife that she is stupid in front of other people and his servants' quarters are so damp that every one of his maids has been taken ill with rheumatism."[1] This characterisation of him by Gorky was truly apposite to many another democrat, and very well explains his aversion to politics.

Chekhov was blamed for his political indecision, yet I think quite unnecessarily so. One simply cannot alter people like him. Moreover, that indecision was not so enervating as to have entirely suppressed his longing for "all-encompassing ideas." He did not discourage Gorky and the others who were brought up on him. The socialists even gave him credit for helping their cause by having destroyed the utopianism of the Narodniks. I myself can bear witness to the fact that Struve considered the publication of Chekhov's *The Peasants* (1879) as the rebirth of Russian literature. Mikhailovsky, of course, reproached Chekhov not only for indecision but outright indifference. Chekhov simply does not care whether he describes a man or merely that man's shadow, or a little box or even a suicide. Allegedly Mikhailovsky knew of no sadder spectacle than the decline of Chekhov's talent. Yet Mikhailovsky still felt impelled to praise *A Boring Story* in the very same paragraph. Little wonder: the old professor, a physician like Chekhov himself, makes his confession with such fervour that even a Tolstoy would have had to be satisfied.

[1] Gorky's remarks on Chekhov are part of Gorky's reminiscences. *Sobranie Sochinenny*, Moscow, 1950, V, p 424.

CHAPTER XX

GORKY[1]

LITERATURE must revolutionise men and make people out of them. It must also serve to spread both love and hate, although most authors are actually satisfied to receive public recognition, and to continue living with their aesthetic sensibilities. Crassness is thus by no means confined to the bourgeois, or the reading public, but affects writers as well. They enjoy art in a crude and thoughtless manner, very much as a cow chews its cud. "You are told that life is hopelessly dark, that it drips with blood, and you begin to see that your own life is terribly banal and boring; and even if you are shown the horror of death which lurks behind this banal façade, you are not likely to disturb your lazy quiescence, and will still remain interested in only one thing: whether it is all told in a pretty way. Æstheticians who are wallowing in filth! One could only hope that you would drown in it just a little faster!" For Gorky, on the other hand, the role of the poet is to depict life as an heroic epic, as a battle for truth and justice, freedom and beauty, and that is precisely why he hopes to unsettle everyone who reads him. This attitude toward life as Gorky arrived at it constitutes a criticism of the whole of Russian literature, both explicitly and implicitly. He blames it all for having been an apologia for bitterness, because it describes the Russian people and its suffering with no more than sentimentality. Russian literature in Gorky's eyes is bourgeois literature, and the word bourgeois stands for everything he despised most. The bourgeois contrived to enslave both art and poetry, and made them the instruments of its own pettiness. Beauty for the bourgeois is nothing but a selfish attempt to reconcile the oppressor with the

[1] It ought to be noted that T. G Masaryk wrote this chapter before the 1917 Revolution. The opinions expressed in it are, therefore, based on Gorky's work up to that time without revisions which might have taken into account Gorky's works from then until 1936

oppressed. Only a free people will enjoy genuine art, since real beauty can exist only in an atmosphere of genuine freedom. The bourgeois lacks pathos. He is at best a lyric; cleverness but not greatness is the hallmark of bourgeois art.

Gorky is not afraid to condemn his predecessors, even the greatest among them. This is little wonder. He surely remembered that Griboedov imparted some of his thoughts to the Decembrists, yet Pushkin, who was a revolutionary in early life, already began turning his back. Lermontov, on the other hand, deserves Gorky's strictures rather less than does Pushkin, or even Gogol, whose retreat actually succeeded in breaking the whole inner man. Meanwhile, Turgenev remained an ambivalent liberal his whole life long, both in his politics and in his religion. He pointed up the weakness of the hero on the barricades, and urged youth on to productive labour, yet secretly he still admired the brave nihilist. Gorky was particularly bitter about Nekrasov, because, precisely at the time when the heroes of the *People's Will* (*Narodnaya Volya*) movement were being cut down without help from any quarter, he found nothing better to do than to preach dedication, that is to say, a hopeless kind of "good night" to the people. Gorky agreed with Tolstoy's struggle against ecclesiastical belief, but he rejects his doctrine of non-resistance to evil; nor can he find it in himself to accept Dostoevsky's address in commemoration of Pushkin.

Gorky did accord recognition to some of his forgotten and little-praised predecessors, including Sleptsov[1] and Pomyalovsky.[2] Their respective fates, especially that of Pomyalovsky, were certainly calculated to win the sympathy even of a mendicant friar. Both, very much like Gorky's Matvey, started out from a religious environment (Pomyalovsky was a student of theology), but they came to reject religion as a matter of conviction, and went over to the side of the people in the struggle against reaction. Pomyalovsky described so-called "bourgeois happiness" in hues which Gorky later reproduced in richer tones. Gorky longed for a society in which there would be no more heroes, nor the great mass either. He thus surmounted the idea of Titanism in so far as it had come to exist in Russian literature. As a poet and thinker he stood with the proletariat: not the brave "I" but the victorious

[1] Vasily Sleptsov (1836–78) was a radical novelist of peasant life, best known for the short novel *Hard Times* (1865), a satire on liberals of the 1860s.

[2] Nikolay Pomyalovsky (1835–63), realistic novelist best known for the novels *Bourgeois Happiness* (1861), *Molotov* (1861), and *Seminary Sketches* (1862–3). He died of alcoholism.

"we" would create a new God and a new society. Gorky was entirely consistent in his outlook: he was impressed by neither Byron nor Goethe, but rather by Shakespeare, the great poet of ethical positivism, the first great expositor of modern life, who did not counter questions with further questions, but rather gave answers instead.

Gorky's view of education and his evaluation of a Kant, Spinoza, and Beethoven, inevitably determined his view of native Russian literature. Literature as philosophy was for him simply incapable of comprehending the fullness of life and its purpose. "All it does is to move pieces of furniture around and flatter itself that a function which it owes to the world and the people has been discharged very well indeed." These are the words with which the embittered Teterev taunts the old bourgeois Bessemenov when he learns that his son has taken up art.[1] Yet, is it true that all of them, beginning with Pushkin and on down to Gorky's own teachers, really did nothing except to rearrange furniture?

Gorky once paid a call on Tolstoy, and we are told that both men talked very frankly. Tolstoy conceded that Gorky had found living souls among the dispossessed, very much as Dostoevsky had done among criminals. He objected, however, that Gorky was imagining too much. On the other hand, Gorky summed up his visit with Tolstoy by saying that it was "a little bit like Finland; not quite native soil, not entirely foreign, simply something cold."[2]

Tolstoy's love of the muzhik must obviously have been to Gorky's liking. Indeed, Tolstoy once remarked that there was something of the muzhik in Gorky. Their common love of the truth and belief in the saving powers of reason formed a strong bond between the two men, each of whom had also renounced ecclesiastical dogma and the established church. Both were distrustful of official philosophy and literature. Gorky, however, was unable to agree with Tolstoy's teaching on non-resistance to evil: he advocated not only a moral but also a political revolution. Nor did Gorky accept Tolstoy's view of women or his views on relations between the sexes. It also happened that Tolstoy was constantly preoccupied with death as a religious problem, while Gorky strove to understand life more than death. In fact, their whole outlook on life was radically different. Tolstoy for his part was inclined to turn his back on life and on the present; he preached a return to the gospels and erected his own personal

[1] In *The Petty Bourgeois* (1901).
[2] Posse, V. A., *Moi zhiznennyi put'*, Leningrad, 1929, p. 186.

image of Christ. Gorky meantime also turned his back on the present, yet, unlike Tolstoy, he refused to return to the past or even to the gospels. Instead, he rejected the present in the name of a vibrant and joyous future. Actually, however, Gorky had a keener awareness of the present than did Tolstoy. The latter expected a radical revolution whereby love would transform man's combative nature, while Gorky sought to channel the energies of that self-same combative individual into new directions and toward new goals. He rejected the very concept of retreat and called instead for an advance which would overcome all existing obstacles.

There is no doubt, however, that Gorky was the very opposite of Dostoevsky. The contrast between the two becomes all the clearer the more one suspects that at first sight Gorky might seem to be agreeing with Dostoevsky's fundamental position. Certainly, Gorky indicated agreement that doubt concerning the existence of God would eventually lead to despair and to a flight from life. This is what happens to Matvey in *The Confession*, but the same process is also described in Gorky's earlier works. "Someone who can believe in nothing at all is unable to live, and is doomed to destruction," is what Tatyana says in *The Petty Bourgeois* when she becomes dissatisfied with her post as an elementary school teacher, even though she had freely chosen to become one. She attempts suicide, but her resolve is weak and the attempt comes to nothing. The same path is chosen by Raysa,[1] who, even though she has murdered her exploiter, is unable to find her place in life. Gorky himself, in fact, in a moment of despair, put a bullet through his head, and was saved only by the surgeon's art.

Suicide is a frequent phenomenon in Gorky's work. Recall, for instance, the servant Platon, who is in love with his mistress and shoots himself because the class distinction between them is unbridgeable and because she makes fun of his naïve devotion.[2] Or take the case of Ilya, who, as he finally admits himself, strives to attain the real thing but, like a small piece of wood driven along by a fast-moving stream, never manages to reach shore. In the end society and fate make a murderer of him. Chance, says Ilya, envelops man and leads him wherever it chooses, very much as the police used to be able to do with a juvenile offender. Man is simply drawn into a net by the threads of fate. In the end Ilya

[1] In *The Life of an Unnecessary Man* (*Zhizn' nenuzhnogo cheloveka*), finished in 1907.

[2] In *The Story of Philip Vasilievich* (*Rasskaz Filippa Vasil'evicha*), 1905.

confesses to the murder with the utmost calm, and breaks his skull against a stone wall as he is led off to jail. In his final moments he says, quite coolly, "I do not believe in God."[1]

Thus, in a psychological sense atheism and despair manifest themselves in much the same way in Gorky and Dostoevsky; yet religiously and ethically there is a substantial difference between them. Gorky, like Dostoevsky, is in search of God, yet Gorky's God is a very different being from Dostoevsky's. In a literal sense Dostoevsky desperately tried to forget his Feuerbach and Belinsky in a Russian monastery. Gorky, on the other hand, forgot about the monastery, and through Feuerbach, Belinsky, and Herzen discovered a new God in socialism. Dostoevsky equated socialism with atheism and death, whereas Gorky discovered in socialism not only his God, but life, and rebirth. Dostoevsky sought to bring about the brotherhood of man. He preached the gospel of Everyman, but expected Everyman to be led by the Russian monk. Gorky, meanwhile, also sought universality, a world citizenship created by the strong shoulders of the working masses, the proletariat, but he rejected the monk entirely, as he saw in all servants of the Church nothing but God's spies.

Dostoevsky's and Gorky's views of life are also radically different. Dostoevsky, sentenced to death, pardoned, and sent to Siberian exile, became, under the tremendous strain of this experience, a preacher of the Gospels and eventually a defender of ecclesiastical Caesaro-papism. It was part of his personal tragedy, moreover, that, like his Grand Inquisitor, he was quite unable to believe either in his God or in the gospels. Thus, Dostoevsky's genius fell victim to scholasticism and Jesuitism. Gorky did not know either fear or sorrow, which is the child of fear. He tore the web of scholasticism, Jesuitical complacency, and bourgeois cleverness apart. He attacked its philosophy, literature, and politics without hesitation or fear. For all his religiosity, Gorky was never entrapped by the Church's scholasticism; unlike Dostoevsky, he remained a sort of naïve "idiot." Thus we find Dostoevsky surmounted in Gorky: after all, the urban bourgeoisie consists not only of the bureaucracy, complacently satisfied with its environment, but also of "a Jesuitical business sense."

Gorky's antagonism toward Dostoevsky also determined his attitude toward decadence. Dostoevsky felt decadence gnawing at his entrails, and that is why he clung to life and the God of life so fervently, and prayed for immortality. Gorky desired life no

[1] In *The Three* (*Troe*), written late in 1900 and January 1901.

less, but he wanted a new life, and, as he said when commenting on the Messina disaster, wished to "awaken a proud defiance of life" in his weaker contemporaries. Gorky, in fact, did not simply desire a proud sense of life. He felt such a life pulsating in his own veins.

In a literary sense Gorky grew up with the younger generation of writers and was in fact on close personal terms with it, as shown by his feeling for Andreyev. He had learned a good deal from Chekhov, while the literary historian will also find many elements that Gorky has in common with the younger generation, some of which also marked the more decadent writers—as, for instance, tiny vignettes, a predilection for aphorisms, new words, and so forth. Yet it was precisely Gorky who was in the forefront of the fight against decadence, so much so that some reproached him with actual fanaticism on the subject. Yet, he repudiated the "new art" root and branch. Andreyev's heroes, for instance, are feeble and weak, undecided, and really rather small. Or, recall *Savva* and his ridiculous attack on the holy picture in the monastery: see how feeble his decadent fist turns out to be. His great struggle with God ends up in a piece of crude mischievousness. Gorky for his part, overcame his own fears and found his faith, which led him into the fighting ranks of the proletariat, because he discovered that the God of the Church, the God of the weak and the stupid, had delivered mankind into the hands of the police. In short, Gorky discovered that the struggle for God must also be waged on the political plane.

Gorky fought decadence not just philosophically and politically but ethically as well, as a human being. Being a strong revolutionary individual Gorky was also a moral one: he remained clean and unspoiled. He erred and sometimes stumbled, but he never sank into the mire of the "new art," as he so contemptuously called it. Thus, the relationship between man and wife must be a moral one for Matvey if the two are not to end by despising each other. Thus too, a strong man's love is also clean and chaste, and marriage becomes something genuinely holy. Matvey's first important experience occurs when he sees a prostitute and comes to understand what she represents. "For the first time in my life," he says, "I changed my ideas about life completely." Gorky understood the moral and psychic misery of man as embodied in the person of a prostitute. He saw prostitution and all other moral offences as resulting from surfeit and satiation, and as the work of those few who enjoy affluence. He saw the fight against the

bourgeoisie as being caused not only by hunger, but as something made necessary by disgust and fear at the prospect of moral infection.

The word "gorky" means "bitter," and it is significant that the first great and conscious Russian democratic artist chose this pseudonym quite deliberately.

> "Then follows a group of poets, building a new heaven, in which to behold the God of Love.
>
> Forward, forward, you bitter ones, in the blowing tempests, we draw near, blessing and healing, with clear-voiced cittern."

This is how Gottfried Keller understood the relationship of art and poetry, politics and revolution, while Gorky himself no longer found it possible to believe in Goethe's saying about the political song. Gorky's début and the years of his apprenticeship fell in a period when there was lively discussion of the Russian question between the Marxists and the Narodniks. Yet, though Gorky joined the Marxist side, this did not necessarily mean that he had sold himself to Marx. This I do not think needs to be proved anew, since it is so very self-evident. I should only wish to make one point, and that relates to Gorky as an artist.

We discover not only from his philosophy but from his literary art that Gorky was a self-taught and self-made man. Nor did he need to complain about his lack of formal training, since the Russian secondary schools and universities of his day did not offer a decent education. Moreover, the fact that he lacked degrees and certificates, which were then as much in vogue in Russia as they were in our own country, did not inhibit the Academy from electing him to membership. True, the Academy soon expelled him again, but he still remained in good company, since both Korolenko and Chekhov immediately withdrew as well. Not even Tolstoy went through a complete university education, and it is a fact that all Russians of any stature were actually self-taught in varying degrees. Surely, formal schooling hardly guarantees depth of thought or feeling.

There are two Gorkys, the young and the old one. At the beginning he stormed with all the vitality within him against a society which humiliated him and made a mendicant of him. He lay about him with all his naïve strength, and the blows fell upon the guilty and the innocent alike, simply because Gorky had not yet worked out his plan of battle. Yet, as the struggle continued,

Gorky was more and more compelled to think and thus became, so to speak, his own chief of the general staff. When the revolution broke out in the spring of 1905 Gorky, commencing on January 9th, entered the ranks of its leading officers. Readers will recall his detention in the fortress of Peter and Paul and his subsequent liberation. They will also recall his war like manifestoes against czarism and his journey through America, which was supposed to assist the revolution; and finally, they will recall that this agitator now came to live abroad. Exile, too, did something useful for Gorky, as he had a kind of love-hate relationship toward Russia, very similar to that of many of his predecessors. Like them he was unable, however, to resolve the problem arising from the contrast between Russia and Europe. He was not impressed by either Europe or America, nor did he like France, turning against her as he did against everything else which did not strike him as being good.

There is some debate as to whether the naïve or the philosophical Gorky was the better poet. Gorky's philosophical development is quite easy to follow. We see how the erstwhile mendicant progressed from his Russian mentors on toward Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Rousseau, and how he later became a disciple of Feuerbach and Marxist. Moreover, one must admit the logic of Gorky's philosophical development. his philosophy was never proved wrong by the experiences of his own life. In actual fact Gorky really began to philosophise from the start: he never understood philosophy as book-learning, but very much as a part of life itself.

Gorky's philosophical aspirations, his effort to comprehend the nature of human society did, perhaps, on occasion become a little too obtrusive, but that only redounds to the credit of a self-taught individual. He discovered many things which had, of course, been discovered by others before him, but he rejoiced in the opportunity to pass his discoveries on to others. His forthright honesty reconciles us to the preachments with which he sometimes burdened his works. Nor should we forget that Tolstoy and Dostoevsky both had done the same thing before him. Gorky, moreover, was perfectly aware of the dangers of excessive rhetoric, and as several of his characters say, he did not want to preach but only to recount.

Recently it has become difficult to draw clear lines of demarcation between artists, journalists, and politicians. Gorky certainly often judged hastily and impulsively, and yet, despite these faults,

he was the most forceful among the younger generation of writers, and a worthy heir to his predecessors. He was a great literary force and a great poetic thinker, who was original and saw things in his own characteristic way, even if these same things had been observed by others before him.

The fair critic will surely distinguish between Gorky's early and his mature works. In *Makar Chudra*, the Moravian landowner who pursues the gypsy girl is very much of an unrealistic, wooden figure, while the gypsy Chudra is made to talk like a college professor; and one finds other and similar weaknesses. Still, Gorky's creative powers developed very early, as, for instance, in his vivid descriptions of scenery, and the simplicity of his prose in *Izerqil*. He not only thought deeply but felt deeply, just as he asked that truly learned men do. He himself was a whole man.

The result of this was that Gorky's mind and eyes also saw the whole man. He did not produce a great work on the scale of *The Brothers Karamazov* or *Faust*, yet his minor pieces and his dramatic portrayals are anything but small, since they are expressions both of a great idea and a great heart. This modern man, already accustomed to the telegram, succeeded in expressing himself artistically in telegraphic fashion.

Gorky's restraint and moderation was also clear in the time of the 1905 Revolution. His friends chose shocking details of the revolution as their subject-matter, as, for instance, Teleshev did in his *Police Inspector* and Skitalets in *The Court Martial*. Gorky also wrote a few such sketches, including *The Prison* and *Bokuyomov*. Yet his most important works (*The Barbarians*, *Children of the Sun*, *The Summer-folk*) were devoted to an analysis of wisdom and learning, and dedicated to groping for a deeper understanding of the revolutionary drama and the creation of a new God.

Gorky succeeded as no one else in effecting a return to Rousseauesque forthrightness and simplicity, not only in an external but also in an inner and organic sense. He did, of course, have Tolstoy as his teacher here, but it was precisely in this respect that he actually surpassed Tolstoy. Here, indeed, is his major artistic and ethical achievement; he not only went beyond Dostoevsky and the Decadents, but actually made an advance on Tolstoy. He did not, of course, resolve his major problem. Neither in Russia nor elsewhere were there only beggars, prostitutes, and "people of the past" (*byvshie lyudi*). Is it really true that all men, all Russians, have to fight and struggle constantly? Is it really impossible to adopt Shakespeare's positivism in our own day?

"Everyone, good people, everyone lives for a better future! That is why we must value every person . . . even though we may not know who he is, why he was born, and what he knows. There is a chance that his birth will be of tremendous use and benefit to us." Note that the old Luka says *everyone*, and that is why Gorky still had a great task to be accomplished.[1]

[1] It is a pity we have no comments by Masaryk on the long and circuitous development of Gorky, in political and literary matters, from 1910 until his death in 1936.

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'Confronted by the abyss into which humanity has fallen, should we not take stock and examine our consciences? There is no other way to do so, in my opinion, than to follow the long adventure of humanity. Only universal history, by comparing all civilizations, can cause some sort of philosophy of history to become apparent, and thus lead to sociological, scientific and moral conclusions. It alone is capable, by revealing to us that neither our country nor our race nor our age has achieved a civilization in all ways superior to all that has gone before, of eradicating those prejudices of religion, race and language, of political, social or mystical ideologies, that have not ceased to drive men into vain massacres and to degrade, by hatred, all ideals, even the noblest and those which have no other aim than the triumph of tolerance and love. Universal history also is alone able, by developing before our eyes the great cycles of human evolution, to make us understand at what point in evolution we are today. That, I think, is the essential question. For it is on knowledge of the necessities and possibilities of our time that the value of future peace depends.'

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