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A CRITICAL STUDY OF DOSTOYEVSKY -
Self, Chaos, and The Saving Feature
by
Joseph E. DeFlyer

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Carroll College in
partial fulfillment of the requirements
for a Bachelor of Arts
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Critical analysis of Dostoevsky usually verges upon philosophy. This is a difficult task, for Dostoevsky, like Shakespeare, presents human beings in all their complexity. He rarely takes sides in his artistic work, and his personal thought wavers between opposite opinions on many basic subjects. The oft-quoted statement from his notebook reads, "the psychologist. It is not true. I am only a man of sense; that is, I portray all that he saw in a complex spectrum of qualities which in the unchanging universe is as real as this totality of qualities is as abstract to that distillation to the most basic which lies at the heart of philosophy. We cannot meaningfully express the myriad of basic qualities of man by the use of one term or one set of terms.

Joseph F. Ward

Date May 2, 1966

PREFACE

Critical analysis of Dostoyevsky usually verges upon philosophy. This is a difficult task, for Dostoyevsky, like Shakespeare, presents human beings in all their complexity. He rarely takes sides in his artistic work, and his personal thought wavers between opposite opinions on many basic subjects. An oft-quoted statement from his notebook reads, "They call me a psychologist. It is not true. I am only a realist in the higher sense; that is, I portray all the depths of the human soul."

What he sees in these depths is a complex spectrum of qualities which in their totality represent the unchanging universal portion of man as man. But this totality of qualities is not susceptible to that distillation to the most basic which lies at the heart of philosophy. We cannot meaningfully express the myriad of basic qualities of man by the use of one term or one set of terms.

Furthermore, that reality found within man is always composed to some extent of conflicts between drives -- conflicts which are never fully resolved in the life of an individual. Often it is not a matter of simple conflict between two drives which we have mapped out and named, but a maze of qualities, drives, memories and reasoning processes all competing for the central position in the mind, the position from which the person will act. These are the raw materials with which Dostoyevsky dealt. Any attempt to encompass this ponderous weight of reality in a simple "theory" such as the search for God, the conflict between good and evil, freedom and control, or theism and atheism, is doomed to incompleteness. His view includes all these conflicts and many more; his view will always remain closer to reality than this type of commentary -- but then, this is to some extent the status quo position of all literary criticism. These works serve the purpose of giving us greater insight into the work by bringing the thought of the work closer to our experience, in simpler terms, or by comparing it with a system of philosophy which it is assumed the reader knows. This is worthwhile; the abuses come from reducing an author to a narrow set of ideas or using him for apologetic purposes, to support the author's own pet views. A person can quote a line of the Bible,
Shakespeare, or Dostoyevsky that will appear to support almost any view, but this does not mean that Christ, Shakespeare, or Dostoyevsky would actually have supported this view. These are obvious truths, but necessary to clarify when dealing with an artist of encompassing vision.
CHAPTER I
The Extremes

The way to gain access to a great writer, such as Dostoyevsky, is to employ a conflict or theme as a point of access to the substance of his art. Here, the point of contact with his thought is a conflict between the self as acting for itself and the self as acting for the good of an outside goal.

It is in many ways the conflict between Nietzsche's will to power and Christ's message of love. He presents a character or set of characters who embody these two ideals, and tests their mettle by putting them through a series of misfortunes or difficult situations. He has given us two examples of a human Christ-figure in Prince Myshkin and in Alyosha. In his notes, he has left definite references to the Prince as a Christ-figure. But Myshkin did not possess enough passion and self-interest to portray the average man's struggle to imitate the ideal of Christ. He is an epileptic, "cowed, fearful, humble, submissive, completely convinced that he is an idiot." He is a man "drunk with humility, incapable of any action not
intrinsically good to the point of being a defiance of evil.**

This last aspect of the Prince's character is over-ridden in the final work; it comes from Dostoyevsky's first conception of the story, in which the Prince and his evil adversary Rogozhin are one person, who is "so morbidly proud that he cannot avoid thinking of himself as a God."²

The conflict was originally to be an internal one; the Idiot was to feel an intense drive for dominance, and at the same time, he was to despise himself for his evil actions. He was to be capable of love, and yet conquered by a desire to rule by whatever means he could find. If he could dominate by no other means, he wanted to die on the cross or perform some heroic action which would make him superior to everyone. He was to be "A Christian, and at the same time he does not believe in God."³ Here we find the pattern of self-will which lies behind so many of Dostoyevsky's characters. Pride must find some outlet; the human being is basically a self-centered animal seeking to impose a certain order upon all that surrounds him.

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2. Ibid, Pg. 233.
3. Ibid, Pg. 239.
The individual ego must be satisfied; man cannot act strictly against himself except through a perversion of the human personality. But it requires a mighty effort of faith to perceive how action for an object outside oneself can be an action for oneself ultimately. The fact that if the individual recognizes only that the action is for his own good in the eyes of others, the beneficial effect of the action is lost. It becomes a case of what T.S. Eliot says is, "the greatest treason -- to do the right deed for the wrong reason"; it becomes a case of "spiritual pride."

Dostoyevsky shared the findings of many others that Christ's ideal was a hard one for a modern man to follow; the picture of a modern-day saint was very obscure for one who knew the ignominious self-centered human being and knew how easily this attribute of self-centeredness could be perverted to abnormal manifestations. Many of Dostoyevsky's characters are portions of his own ego trying to assert themselves in some way, while somewhere in the background there is usually a contrasting figure acting through motives of Christian love. These are the two aspects of Dostoyevsky, chosen here to provide a vital point of contact with the substance of his art, which is a complex maze of various qualities and conflicts within and around characters.
"His fiction conforms in part to Freud's description of the psychological novel as one in which modern writers split up their ego into component egos through a process of self-observation and in this way personify in many heroes the conflicting trends in their own mental life." The Brothers Karamazov is a prime example of this, for each of the characters does represent a part of Dostoyevsky's own personality. But these characters also represent parts of any human person. In old Fyodor the sensual is in complete control; in Ivan, reason takes first place; Dimitri is sensual and highly emotional; Smerdyakov is reason without restraint, and Alyosha is doing his best to overcome his common heritage of the other Karamazov traits, which are human traits above all.

As never in the middle of any one of his books, his greatness that never can be explained by one idea or by his place in the novel.
But Dostoyevsky at his best never sacrifices the rich complexity of the human person in order to portray an idea or a certain aspect of human personality. The motivations of his characters are realistically complex; Raskolnikov is a fine example. He is primarily a man testing the idea of the über-mensch before Nietzsche invented the term, but he also has a long array of other thoughts before he commits the crime. He considers that he is doing society a favor by getting rid of a parasite who only takes and does not give; he thinks that he will go abroad and live happily with the money he will get, thereafter becoming a true humanitarian in service of society; he is poverty-stricken and ill; at times he is delirious, half-mad, and plainly irresponsible. The objective reasons why he committed the crime are ambiguous. Raskolnikov is capable of higher feelings also; when a tinge of love finally penetrates his lonely shell of self-centeredness, he shows the colors of a normal human being once more; he is not just a self-willed criminal or a fanatical student with strange ideas ... he is also a man capable of love, sorrow, repentance, and the whole spectrum of human emotions. The enigmatic Stavogrin is another example of complexity, a complexity which in this case is never solved. Stavogrin is a rich mixture of madness and greatness that never can be explained by one idea or by his place in the novel.
He is a bad character, yet as idol of the group, his actions appear great and good at times ... he is evil, but not all bad; Alyosha, on the other hand, is a type of Christ-figure, but he is not to be perfect; the plan of "The Life of a Great Sinner" is there in embryo form; Alyosha has pride, doubts, and the other usual human ailments. In a conversation with Lise, he very definitely brings up the question of whether or not he actually believes in God, and does not answer affirmatively. Prince Myshkin is a parallel; he feels compelled to go to Nastasaya even though he knows that trouble will result from that visit; he too feels the compulsions of evil within his soul.

In short, there are no simple characters in Dostoyevsky, as there are no stereo-typed characters in reality. He paints human beings in all their actual complexity, both in individual variations and in universal traits which find echoes in all of us. As Payne says, "We are all the brothers Karamazov." Each of Dostoyevsky's creations take their main qualities from that common pool of humanity in which we all share, and each character has his own balance of qualities built around an obscure "ego". but regardless of his type, he displays qualities essential to Dostoyevsky's view of human nature. Christ told us to become as little children, but it is doubtful if he meant...
CHAPTER III
Inner and Outer —
The Primary expressions of self-will

Few children appear in Dostoyevsky's works; there is, on one hand, the nameless little waif, terribly mistreated, that so often symbolizes man's inhumanity to man; there is, on the other hand, the generally grown-up type of child, appearing in The Brothers, of which Kolya Krasasotkin is an excellent example. He is frighteningly mature for a schoolboy, asserting himself and his knowledge wherever he goes, but seldom abusing the power he has over his schoolmates. He has assumed a definite role in life, at the center of his circle of schoolboys, and above the peasants in the market because of his extreme quick-wittedness. He can be looked upon as a miniature Socrates playing gadfly, or as an arbitrary little tyrant who unfairly exercises his intellectual power over others, or even as an adorably intelligent little chap with promise of future greatness ... but regardless of his type, he displays qualities essential to Dostoyevsky's view of human nature. Christ told us to become as little children, but it is doubtful if he meant
this type of child. Koyla is a small adult, without an adult's frustrations and anxieties. With his extremely acute mind, he can play the part of an impartial judge even for the "grown-ups," even such a one as Aloshya; that seems to be, in part, his purpose in the projected plan of the novel. However, his most outstanding quality as he first confronts the reader is his tremendous drive to find his own unique order of thought and to impose this order on his surroundings.

Koyla is a good primary example of this phenomenon because his order of thought and the order he is trying to impose on the world coincide. This is not always the case, as we shall see later. In Kolya's case, the order of thought he is developing serves as the pattern for how he relates the rest of the world to himself. The order of thought and the actual relation to the world are interdependent; as one changes, the other also changes. He is not yet set in his way of thought. But at any one moment, he is trying to impose his order of thought upon the world—and this is the interesting fact. In looking at how he is trying to impose his thought, we find that the key idea is dominance. Kolya has the position and ability to dominate in a rather positive, outgoing manner without being too despotic. That certainly is not the case with many of Dostoyevsky's other characters.
Let us look for a moment at several obvious degrees of dominance which inter-act in Dostoyevsky's thought and works. These degrees shall be a point of reference in dealing with actual characters from a slightly different point of view.

A. Digression on the Degrees of Dominance

Certain persons choose to aim toward a more or less complete dominance or total and direct control of their immediate world. This is the drive that seeks despotic control here and now, (either on a very wide scale as represented by a man) living out Sartre's idea that a person should naturally tend to turn surrounding people into "en-soi" -- things, in order to manipulate them as desired. This degree of dominance is difficult to exercise and maintain; it takes a character of great strength to be this despotic, but it is compatible with, and satisfying for, the strongest will to power or will to dominate.

If a person, for some reason, does not have enough strength to maintain such a drive, perhaps it will be enough for that person to demand mutual concurrence to a certain set of rules. Often the leader of a group will demand this type of obedience from the members, as will the head of a family or a member of a religion. This type of dominance is not direct control, but appeal to a higher source of authority than the individual. This higher authority is pointed out as something that must be obeyed; often, the
person or persons pointing this fact out demand indirect obedience as representatives of this high authority. This situation does not provide the amount of satisfaction to the egotistic drive to dominate that direct control does, for it dominates by virtue of the status of the individual, not because of the inherent power of the individual himself.

The next step down on this scale is simple understanding of a certain set of rules or ideas, of reality in general, or of individuals -- this is necessary for the full expression of the prior two drives; by itself it provides some satisfaction, but very little emphasis upon the individual as a personal center of that certain amount of reality which one is capable of embracing by virtue of his position and ability. By understanding, a person may realize why he cannot dominate; this is a mild frustration, but satisfaction of the drive for dominance is also gained through understanding, for an individual is a personal center by the very fact that he understands regardless of whether or not he acts by that understanding.

The problem of "the double" is created when a person begins to separate the world he understands and his actual world, dominating in his dreams and remaining inactive or even submissive in reality. Submission to an order which the individual has not created and does not understand is destructive to that
individual as such. Complete submission without understanding is neurosis; usually a person either understands an existing order and adopts it as his own to some extent, or else retains some sphere of which he is a part. This gives a certain amount of order to the person's world, some of which is ordered around him as a personal center. The family, or some other small group for those incapable of sustaining family relations, is the last resort for an individual who can satisfy his drive toward dominance in no other way. This is also the most common manner in which an individual can relate himself to the world in a dominant way, in other words, as a personal center around whom things are ordered. But there are other ways to emphasize the individual as a personal center of a certain order. One of these is, paradoxically, to act for the greater good of what lies outside the personal center. This may be done with the intention of gaining the approval of other persons or of a transcendent power; in this case, it satisfies the same drive to dominate or to be a personal center, but does it in a far more intangible way; something called faith enters in here, faith in the idea that the individual will be reimbursed for his effort eventually—so that ultimately the person is still acting in order to dominate, in other words, to become a personal center through the approval of others, or to become part of that
select group which will receive rewards in an afterlife.

There is, however, another manner in which an individual acts for the greater good of what lies outside himself; it supposedly is possible to be motivated by love to act for the good of another even when such action may be injurious to the self. If such is the case, the drive to dominate is either satisfied by the unintended approval of others or of the transcendent power, or else this drive is frustrated and comes into conflict with the drive towards love.

Thus, we come back to a conflict we have seen before, the conflict between acting for the good of the self in an egotistic self-centered manner and acting for the good of something outside the self. This conflict seems to be present whenever the drive for dominance is frustrated, and usually enters the picture whenever love appears as well. It is one of the basic conflicts with which Dostoevsky deals.

S. Apology for the Digression

However, I must emphasize that I am not trying to force the meaning of Dostoevsky into the narrow and muddled confines of this digression; this is meant as a point of reference, not as a catalogue of types. Individual characters will display several of these degrees of dominance and several degrees of conflict intensity.
Now we shall return to textual comment upon Dostoyevsky in pursuit of other facets of this basic conflict.

The strongest expression of the desire to "order" all that is around the person is, again, total and direct control of a person's surroundings, the scope of which depends upon the person, on whether or not he has "bitten off more than he can chew." A person may not actually realize this degree of dominance, but the drive is still there. This drive is highly individualistic and even though a person cannot actually dominate, he still resists outside dominations of any sort. He is very touchy about this, in fact. The "underground man" is an example; he is trying to be absolutely independent, to have absolute freedom, but finds that this is impossible, especially when he acts so publicly superior and feels so terribly afraid of outside dominance that he acts even more superior.

Raskolnikov desires this type of dominance also, but fails. On the personal level, a short story entitled "A Gentle Creature" provides a striking example of a man trying to absolutely control another human being. An egotistic old pawnbroker marries an innocent but destitute young girl, then tries to form her as he likes. The events described are sadly realistic, leaving the reader with an impression of evil at work as he constantly mistreats her in the most subtle but tortuous way, for the supposed purpose of
making her into a good wife. Finally, she commits suicide, unable to live with a man so set on dominance that he wants to rob her of her innermost freedom, her freedom to keep her human dignity and to think as she chooses.

In many places Dostoyevsky deals with the neuroses and frustrations resulting from an excessive drive to order the world and to dominate that world. These upsets are complex, for their beginnings can lie in neurosis and frustration; the drive is then intensified, resulting in more neurosis and frustration, and so on. The underground man is a prime example. Insofar as he is rational, he is contemptuous, proud, and desires to dominate according to an order he dictates arbitrarily. He is an extreme example of an attitude that is present at least potentially in all humans. A great deal of his bitter pride results from an excessive rationality which causes him to analyze all human motives to their last implications -- which leads him to believe man can act only for himself. He has no faith at all in a human being's ability to peacefully sustain himself in any order which is for the good of all and which thereby does not leave the individual an opportunity to dominate in some way. He has analyzed his own thoughts to such an extent that he is left only with this incessant desire to be a personal center dominating his surroundings. This is bad enough -- but he also finds
a strong tendency towards chaos -- towards meaningless dominance and towards destruction of any existing order, whether it be the dominance another person imposes upon the world, or whether it be the order of science, brotherhood, or "universal" rational ordering of the world. He discards as hypocrisy that order which we have yet to discuss, the order imposed upon the world by love. All order but that admittedly base self-dominance is discarded as bunk, and even this is shown to be ephemeral, for he says the drive towards chaos and destruction is too strong in the human being to stand any order for very long. He bears this out in his own egotistic irrational behavior. The striking thing about it is the question, 'What if he is only being completely honest, what if he is acting according to the deepest instincts of human nature? What if this is all that man acting honestly is capable of?' In this way, Notes sets the stage for The Grand Inquisitor; it is a bleak picture, for if it is true, we need look no further than human nature for the cause of an excessive drive to dominate, and neurosis, frustrations, and all the rest are merely human fate. Life will forever be a struggle between men to determine who will dominate, and who will submit while still trying to dominate in some way. In our digression upon the degrees of dominance, it was noted that any man ordinarily has some sphere in which he can be a personal
center, a sphere in which he is important -- which means, ultimately, a sphere in which he can dominate. It seems safe to take this as a human quality -- and it also seems safe to attribute such a belief to Dostoyevsky. In coming to this conclusion, however, we have touched upon several ideas without examining them. Is submission as much a part of human nature as dominance? If man desires freedom, what type of freedom can this be? And what is the place of the drive toward chaos and destruction? First, let us deal with the question of submission.

In The Grand Inquisitor, Dostoyevsky brings forth a view that Christ misjudged human nature, that humans are incapable of living a life of freedom and love; the old inquisitor has created an order in which the great masses do not think or act independently; their world and thoughts are ordered from above, and they obey without independent choice. He says that men are content to live this way, that they are happier living out the farce written by the powers that know and control. This appears to say that most men do not want the freedom to dominate on a large scale, that only those elite few who can see the truth actually need to dominate, and that the rest are content to be submissive. It can also be taken to mean that the old inquisitor and his cohorts have succeeded in fooling men, in training them not to want freedom, or that these rulers have
forced them into submission by threats of hell or other censure. The question arises whether or not men want the freedom to determine the direction and value of their individual acts by themselves. In looking at the rest of Dostoyevsky's writings, there seem to be no significant passages that depict a person submitting entirely unless it is through the process of faith and love. There seems to be no passage that depicts a free man of normal pride submitting to an external order without some sign of rebellion, at least a separate world of dreams where that person can dominate to some extent if that person can find no niche in reality in which he has some importance. Not even in creating feminine characters has Dostoyevsky created a person who submits out of any motive other than love -- and even this is a very rare event. Dostoyevsky apparently did not believe that human beings are basically submissive. His characters usually display a strong drive toward freedom in an area as great as their capability of exercising free choice and action. However, what does this drive toward freedom mean? Does it mean freedom without control, without order or restraint -- does it mean that man as Dostoyevsky saw man prefers chaos rather than acceptance of a restraining type of order?

Dostoyevsky recognizes a certain element in man which resists order of any kind. This element may be called the irrational, "nature," evil, or many other things, but it is always there, defying the understanding and upsetting any attempt to attain strict order in man's world. It is generally agreed that one of Dostoyevsky's strongest points was his penetration into, and masterful handling of, the irrational. He was one of the first "to present the human being not as a well-defined, consistent, intelligent creature, but as a complex of irrational conflicting impulses, shadowy velleities, obscure fears and desires...."

The sensual impulses are among the more tangible of the irrational tendencies; Dimitri and Fyodor K. provide classically executed portrayals of these impulses. Dimitri is shown to be prone to drunkenness and wild actions such as dragging the poor old man about by the beard and severely beating his own father. Dimitri likes to engage in a

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drunken orgy at the slightest excuse, engaging in reckless excess even when creating an orgy. The old man Fyodor has been called the most repulsive character in all literature, mainly because of his sensual excesses. He is a constant drinker, apparently stopping only to cheat someone or to engage in illicit intercourse. He is promiscuous with everything but his money; even "stinking Lizaveta" is a victim of his passion. The only time he tries to be rational is when he is devising ways to screw someone in some way or other. He is a masterful creation, not the world's greatest sinner, but quite irrational.

His son Dimitri almost matches him in uncontrolled sexual drive, but Dimitri is still human enough to find a noble solution in one woman whom he loves. Dimitri finds his salvation through his irrationality, though; he is, as Payne says, moved by mysterious forces beyond the bounds of logic, whether he is moved to evil or to love. Dimitri's dream of the cold steppe and the woman with the weeping babe is a strange and inspiring symbol of suffering and compassion; Dimitri keeps the weeping babe in his mind from then on, resolving that he will go to Siberia for the sake of the babe.

Dreams appear throughout Dostoyevsky's works as mysterious and powerful explanations of deeper meanings. In The Possessed, the strangely mad and crippled Marya Timofeyevna relates a dreamlike tale of her baby that vanished and for
which she weeps, whether it was real or not. She speaks of
telling her fortune, which is closely related to later events -
she sees "a journey, a wicked man, treachery, a death-bed..."
She is mad, but her fantasies have great meaning without
being unbelievable. In The Brothers K., Liza also dreams of
a child, but one that is crucified and screaming in agony
while she is complacently eating pineapple compote and Alyosha,
in a feverish reaction, says that he, too, has had that dream.
The symbol of the innocent suffering child appears quite
often. In The Dream of a Ridiculous Man, the homeless suf-
fering waif is the provocation for a dream describing man's
irrational tendency toward evil; the dreamer corrupts a race
of innocent people on another planet -- and once introduced
to evil, they enjoy it and the suffering it brings about.
They forsake their former happy existence ordered by love in
favor of a very earthly existence imbued with chaos.
Dostoyevsky constantly dealt with evil, both in his
personal struggles and in the conflicts he creates in his
works. Evil is always present as an irrational tendency to-
ward chaos; usually its place is in the inner depths of man
himself, but at times he embodies it in devils to enable his
characters to engage in extended dialogue with personified
evil. The mad monk Father Ferapont sees devils in every
corner, but this is a gentle parody of the subject compared
to Ivan's confrontation with his devil. The actual presence
of this devil is not to be taken too seriously here, for
Ivan is suffering from 'brain fever' at the time; the intensity of his thought on how the tangible problem of evil can be reconciled with the intangible presence of a benevolent God leads him to hallucinations in which evil is personified as a shabby and cheap devil, the perfect instrument of self-torture for the cynical Ivan.

In The Possessed, Stavrogin is the satirical character with irrational tendencies. His strange behavior in the first chapters of the novel, partially explained by his strange sickness, sets the stage for his later blatantly evil actions; pulling Pyotr Pavlovitch by the nose and biting old Ivan Osipovitch's ear comes from the same sick and irrational impulses by which he 'leads his flock of swine into the sea' and becomes responsible for the death of Shatov.

Rogozhin from The Idiot is another irrational, highly passionate character who tends toward evil. His final and shocking murder of Nastasya is the logical culmination of his overdue passion for her, but there is only the most primitive sort of stark logic involved in his reasons for murdering her. Payne compares Rogozhin to a "murderous and tyrannical Iago," who is haunting "a gentle Don Quixote." The Prince, too, is irrational at times, going against what he feels to be best, and acting because of shadowy impulses toward good. The "Underground Man" makes many direct statements concerning the irrationality of man, how man would rather turn the tables on his fellows than live up to trust, and how man,
again, will destroy any order he is placed in ultimately - or else a strict order will destroy man, as he says a 2 + 2 civilization will, by carrying the restraints on freedom to excess. He says that man needs and will have a bit of chaos mixed with his order. Man is not predictable.

Dostoyevsky knew the nature of irrational man by looking into himself; but he came far from knowing everything of his interior states. Along with other irrational trends and conflicts, his epileptic fits were a constant source of mystery to him. He speaks of "mystical horror" or "mystical sadness" and a great sense of guilt following the attacks. Freud explained the epileptic attacks as a "symptom of his neurosis," which he thought was a strong Oedipus complex, resulting in suppressed guilt, which was released by an "affective" type of epileptic attack - as opposed to an organic type of attack. Dostoyevsky's attacks, according to Freud, were masochistic; in this type of attack, the super-ego takes on the sadistic qualities of the father, and the ego identifies with the father in a different way - the wish for the father's death (in order to replace the father) becomes symbolically actual in the ego, which punishes itself by imagining that since it wanted to be the father, it now is the father, and that the father is now dead -- which causes both a momentary great joy and severe self-punitive and defensive reactions. The mechanism of the epileptic attack is the means of the neurosis "to get rid by somatic means of
amounts of excitation which it cannot deal with psychically." The Brothers Karamazov with its strong theme of parricide is cited as background proof for the exaggerated Oedipus complex, and some traits of Fyodor Karamazov can be likened to the character of Dostoyevsky's father, who in the last period of his life, after the death of his wife, became very cruel, drunken and sensual, and was finally emasculated and killed by a revengeful group of his own peasants in return for his cruelty. On the other hand, "Between Fyodor Karamazov and the doctor there is no physical resemblance, nor any common ground of experience. The stern precise doctor who moved like clockwork is the antithesis of the garrulous old reprobate who kept innumerable mistresses, mocked at everything under the sun, and showed a devilish cunning." 2 On the other hand, we find his reaction to Karamazov.

It cannot be doubted, though, that his father's character and grotesquely cruel murder had an influence upon Dostoyevsky; it is one more glimpse into the depths from which Dostoyevsky drew the subjects of his art and thought. As for his strange disease of epilepsy, the least that can be said is that it and kindred "brain fevers," delirium, etc. always played an

Important role in his major works, often connected with the most mysterious events - Smershyakov the parricide and suicide was an epileptic, and apparently one whose mental states greatly influenced his physical fits. In all these examples of the irrational, the fore-going comments upon self-will and the drive for order and dominance play a vital role; the two facets interlock as parts of human nature, and cannot be entirely separated in reality. Neither can man be separated entirely from "Nature", that primitive order which connects man with his world in a way that lies beneath rationality and which defies logical analysis.

Dostoyevsky felt strong and mysterious ties with the earth and the forces of "Nature". On one hand, we find many references to "Mother Earth" as the source of life and renewal, and on the other hand, we find his reaction to Holbein's painting Christus im Grabe, which made a tremendous impression upon him.

The picture haunted Dostoyevsky. It was for him the most majestic and terrifying of all paintings of Christ. When he saw it for the first time he was spellbound, with the look of terror on his face which could be seen just before an epileptic attack. To Anna, who took refuge in another room and scarcely dared to look at the painting, he said afterward: "Such a painting can make one lose one's faith."4

The idea that the painting "could make one lose one's faith" comes from the ghastly appearance of the dead Christ.

"This is the Christ who will not rise again, or if he does, it is only by a miracle so great that in the process the entire earth will be shattered and reformed." The great irrational principle which Dostoyevsky saw expressed in this painting represented a mysterious but definite force for him, almost the antithesis of "mother earth"; though largely indefinable, it is the mysterious force behind the processes of death and decay. It is a very real principle in the world. Later, Dostoyevsky discusses the painting and this force through the words of Hippolyte in The Idiot:

There still is a look of suffering on his face, as though the agony were still present, and nothing has been spared. It is altogether natural, and any dead body - one who had died in great suffering - might look like this.

I know that the early church laid it down that Christ suffered actually and not symbolically. His body on the cross suffered according to the laws of nature. In the painting the face is terribly mangled and swollen, with bruises which are bleeding, the eyes wide open and squinting, the whites having a dead and glassy appearance. But what is strange above all is that when one gazes upon the dead and tortured body, one finds oneself asking a peculiar question: If this dead body were seen by the disciples, by the future apostles, by the women who followed Him and stood by the Cross, by all those who believed in Him and worshipped Him, how could they have believed as they gazed upon Him that He would rise again?

And so we are gripped by the thought, whether we like it or not, that there is no way to overcome the laws of nature or the horror of death. If He

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5 Ibid.
could not overcome them, how can they ever be overcome? During His lifetime He overcame all nature, and Nature obeyed Him, and He said Talitha Cumi, and the maid rose from the dead, and He said Lazarus, come forth, and the dead man rose from the dead at His summons. But when we look at the painting we see nature as some enormous, implacable and dumb beast or, to put it even more correctly, however strange it may seem, as some huge mechanical engine of modern days which has senselessly seized and crushed and swallowed up a great and precious Being, a Being worth all of nature and her laws, worth the entire earth, which was perhaps created merely for the sake of His coming.

There is in that painting an expression of blind, dumb, eternal unreasoning power, and all men and everything in the world is subordinate to that power. No one who gazes at the painting can escape the knowledge of this power. 6

The force which Dostoyevsky saw expressed in this painting is one of the basic influences on his thought. He saw this force within man as well as in the world - he saw the drive toward order and dominance in the individual most acutely, but knew that man and the world contained too much of this massive dumb force called Nature to ever sustain a harmonious and universal order built upon the principle of self-interest and self-domination alone, though he also realized that the fierce drive of the individual to impose his unique order on the world would always have to be taken into account when dealing with man. He saw the possibility of a principle beyond self-interest, saw and believed in Christ's message of love, but when confronted

6 The Idiot, Part III, Chapter 6.
by such a fierce expression of that "blind, dumb, eternal unreasoning power" which is also a principle in man and the world, his faith was inevitably shaken. The questions raised are obvious: Is such a Being as Christ actually possible? Is man capable of following such a message as Christ's? And how can there be justice in a world ruled by the dumb implacable force of Nature?

The power of Nature was well borne out by Dostoyevsky's investigation of man. He saw within man a great impenetrable layer of irrationality, a covered but genuine spirit of destruction, a hidden love of chaos and evil. The figure of Pyotr Verkhovensky is an extreme expression of this side of human nature. Destruction for destruction's sake is his creed:

One or two generations of debauchery are essential now still man turns into a filthy, cowardly, cruel, vicious reptile. That's what we need! And what's more, a little 'flesh and blood' that we may grow accustomed to it.... We will proclaim destruction!.... Why, why has this idea such a fascination? But we must get a little exercise; we must.... We'll set fires. We'll set legends going.... And then the uprising! There's going to be such an upheaval as the world has never seen before! Russia will be plunged into darkness, and the earth will weep for the old gods!.... Our party does not consist only of those who commit murder and arson,.... a teacher who laughs with children at their God and at their cradle is on our side.... The schoolboys who murder a peasant for the sake of sensation are ours....?

In The House of the Dead, Dostoyevsky speaks of "people

The Possessed, Part III, Chapter 3.
who are greedy for blood like tigers." He says that once a man has tasted unlimited power over others the taste turns to a mania, controlling the person; "Blood and power intoxicate; from then comes the most exquisite brutality and lust." This is a perversion of the desire to personally impose order and to dominate; with blood, the urge becomes irrational. But the above quoted spirit of destruction, though irrational also, is different. It is a desire to eradicate all order, regardless of its origin; it contains a basic disgust with humanity and civilization, and prefers nothingness to the present order of things, which it considers cheap, ignoble, and worthless. What answer is possible in the face of such tendencies? What is there for the more noble spirit of man to feed upon in the midst of such an overwhelming maze of conflicting irrational drives toward chaos? Dostoyevsky's answer lies in the message of Christ that man should find life by love. This is the other side of Dostoyevsky, the side that gives light and dimension to the dark flat world of self-will and chaotic nature.

CHAPTER V
Inner and Outer - Love and Redemption

Christ was a constant source of inspiration to Dostoyevsky. In a letter written soon after he was released from prison, he states that Christ is the finest possible ideal:

And yet God sometimes sends me moments of complete serenity. It is in such moments that I have composed in my mind a profession of faith, in which everything in clear and holy. This profession of faith is very simple. This is what it is: to believe that there is nothing finer, deeper, more lovely, more reasonable, braver, and more perfect than Christ; and, not only there is nothing, but, I tell myself with a jealous love, there cannot be anything. More than that: if anyone had told me that Christ is outside truth, and if it had really been established that truth is outside Christ, I should have preferred to stay with Christ rather than with truth.8

This inspiration and faith, however, was not arrived at without many moments of uncertainty and disbelief. It is the opinion of many writers that even toward the end of his life Dostoyevsky still wavered in his beliefs, still vacillated between positions and he experienced the ravages of inner conflicts. At times he was an Ivan "wrestling with his angel", at other times a Zosima confirmed in his faith. These ideas are only conjectures, however; we also know that he died with the sacraments of the orthodox church, preaching

Christian messages to his family. At the very least, he believed in Christ as the most worthy pattern for human beings to follow. One doubt connected with this belief, however, is the question, raised very explicitly in "The Grand Inquisitor", of whether or not man is capable of living the ideal of Christ, and how natural or how strenuous such a life actually is. In dealing with this question, Dostoyevsky created several earthly images of Christ.

Prince Myshkin, the "fool" of Christ, is referred to in the notebooks for The Idiot several times simply as Christ - the intention is unmistakably to use him as a symbolic Christ. He is a man somewhat remote from ordinary life; he has been out of circulation in a sanatorium for two years, and it seems he has never engaged in normal worldly pursuits. He has an epileptic-like disease, is always a dreamer, and even at the beginning of the book he seems a slight bit mad. Dostoyevsky apparently felt these traits to be necessary for the portrayal of a human replica of Christ. In ways, the Prince can be said to be masochistic; he is in direct contrast to Luzhin who says in Crime and Punishment. "Love yourself before everyone else, for everything in the world is based on self-interest." The Prince is preoccupied with the good of others; self-abnegation is one of his prime characteristics he suffers abuse from many, but does nothing about it. He forgives all, looking only for the good in men, loving all
regardless of their sins. This, of course, drives him to a state very close to insanity. This is perhaps the most haunting aspect of the whole book. The Prince has planted many seeds of good, but has also been the indirect cause of much evil while he was trying to do good. Also, practically no one in the book recognizes him for what he is—to them, he is still a fool—and that explains his strange actions. He takes the guilt of all upon his shoulders, and forgives all, but is not appreciated for it and goes mad doing it.

This is not a pattern possible for man in general. The Prince remains remote from the great mass of men.

Alyosha is a more human attempt at portraying goodness. He has inherited the Karamazov passions, and moves in society tinged with all sorts of perversions. He is young, and innocent in many ways, but sincere in his attempt to love and attain goodness. He does no wrong and even accomplishes quite a bit of good, but this is not fulfilling his potential. He has left the realm of worldly events and has retired into the seclusion of a monastery, away from ordinary life and men; this is not the best he can do:

In trying to evade temptations and suffering, Alyosha misses the whole purpose of earthly life. Father Zosima, sending him into the world, explains to him, "Life will bring you many misfortunes, but you will find your happiness in them, and you will bless life." For the sake of suffering Alyosha must leave the monastery. From his own experience in life, he must come to realize that he is guilty of the sins and suffering of others, as Father
Zosima advises him; he must understand and shoulder the responsibility for their failings, and finally become their teacher.

When he properly accepts his burden in the world of common men, Alyosha may become a true saint, a convincing specimen of human goodness modeled upon Christ. Dostoyevsky's projected plan for the novel was to fulfill Zosima's prophecy - Alyosha was to fall, suffer, and rise again as a full and strong Saint.

Zosima himself had been in the world, had engaged in normal worldly functions till he realized that there was greater meaning to life. After refusing to shoot his opponent in a duel because he realized it was only false pride that led to the duel in the first place, Zosima turns to the path of 'holiness and penance' - and does a great deal of good in his lifetime, though it is within a monastery and partially away from the world. Zosima is supposedly justified in retiring into relative seclusion, for he has suffered and realized his guilt. He wants to help others; he wants to order the world according to the principle of love, which includes very few set rules, leaving other human beings free to think and act as they choose. He does not want to dominate personally, but to live his life as an example of goodness, to be a normal man in the world but to spread the seeds of love wherever he goes. He has realized the example of Christ, and in becoming a true saint, to dwell in a different sort of coil. He sees injustice in the world, and in the love that is in him, he seeks to help others.

love wherever he goes. He has realized the example of Christ, and is apparently living up to it.

The question arises whether Zossima's life and message is Dostoyevsky's last answer to man's nature and destiny. It seems unlikely that it is except in an ideal way. Zossima is an exceptional man, another relatively ideal being whose nature enables him to better live the precepts of Christ than the average man.

Ivan is a different sort of man. He sees injustice in the world and in man, symbolized for him by the suffering of the innocent, especially children. His question is how can a God be the author of sin and suffering; he thinks if a God is the author of these things, it is better to deny God or to destroy himself. He declares that he must have justice, here and now where he can see it; he does not protest because he hates the idea of God, but because he feels that men have been wronged in being brought into their present state of existence. He loves humanity - but he sees individuals as very unworthy and base - it is a paradox that has him trapped, and he finds no way out of it until he sees his own guilt - but immediately after that, he lapses into an attack of "brain fever." His fate is uncertain, but we do see that he has discovered that understanding the order of things is not necessary for action, if there is faith in what a person is acting for. Even though there are mysteries that will never be solved, a man can still act by the principle of love for men. But this can never be done in isolation and can never
be understood by the cold force of the lonely intellect.

Ivan's story is a small tragedy in itself; Ivan suffers but gains knowledge and strength by doing so. Whether he finds belief or not is uncertain.

Dimitri is perhaps the most interesting case of redemption of all the brothers, for in Dimitri we see the full force of violent nature at work. He vacillates between gross sensuality and the highest principle of personal honor, between action directed to achieve the greatest good, and mean acts of vanity; between outbursts of violent irrational temper and a morose sentimental guilt. He is a remarkable picture of a highly passionate man, at times a man who feels the truth of a situation deeply and reacts with love and compassion. He plainly states he is willing to suffer for all, for he is guilty of all - he says he will go to Siberia for the sake of his vision of suffering humanity - "for the sake of the babe," who cries in its mother's arms on the cold steppe. He is sincere - but the question that Dostoyevsky put to us long before still arises. Is he capable of being good? Can he overcome nature and himself by love? The question is unanswered, but we are left with hope - If the dead Christ rose, then Dimitri.... and the rest is up to the Dimitris in the world.

Redemption from self-will and chaos is possible; we cannot help but gain this from Dostoyevsky's thought. The
way is best laid out in The Brothers Karamazov, called "the fifth gospel" by T. E. Lawrence; this way includes the realization of common and individual guilt for the evil and suffering in the world, which leads us to accept suffering and to forgive - to forgive all, and to love all, with compassion for their suffering. This order is reversible and subject to variations in degree; we may love and by loving learn to forgive and accept suffering, because of our guilt in hurting the thing loved - it is a spiraling type of order, not imposed upon individuals, but planted, like a seed below a wide trellis; which, if watered, will naturally choose to sprout and climb the trellis. But "to love" is still intangible, and still very hard to do, no matter what we think it means:

To love the perfect man, the new Adam, as Christ preached him is easy. What is difficult is to love those whom one cannot respect. The Grand Inquisitor pities humanity precisely because it is so miserable, so abject in its weakness, in its moral squalor and meanness. His 'love' is utterly different from Christ's love of mankind, yet in its own way it is heroic.

The Grand Inquisitor still has a point, one which Dostoyevsky felt deeply. The old man says that he used to be proud, that he once felt proud to be among the elect, the saints of God, but that he came to his senses, renounced pride, and turned back to lead the masses, in order to make

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them happy by absolving them of the responsibility of exercising that terrible inner freedom, given by Christ, which causes them so much suffering. Is he justified? Dostoyevsky does not say. He gives the opposite argument in Zosima's story, but who can say whether he thought the Grand Inquisitor was completely wrong? The best we can say is that Dostoyevsky was a firm believer in the justice of giving men freedom, especially moral freedom; (His views on government cannot be taken as ultimate). He repeated more than once the idea that the suffering resulting from freedom of choice is helpful in finding oneself and in cultivating love. It seems that ultimately we must leave other persons free to build their own order in the moral sphere, or else we steal their most precious freedom. We should inspire others to satisfy their drives according to the principle of love - with which excessive dominance conflicts. Love is founded upon a different part of man's being than self-will; love is an intangible element built upon will and faith, a peculiar "mode of thought".

It is a transgression of the subject. In this state of mind we recognize the other Ego not as our object, but as another subject. It is therefore, not a mere peripheral extension of the bounds of individual consciousness, but a complete inversion of its normal system of coordinates.

The authenticity of this transvaluation is demonstrated primarily in one's inner life: in the experience of true love (which is the only real cognition, for the very reason that it is bound up with absolute faith in the reality of the beloved); and, more generally,
in the self-surrender or self-renunciation with which the pathos of love is informed.

The spiritual penetration finds its expression in the unconditional acceptance with our full will and thought of the other - existence - in "Thou art". If this acceptance of the other -existence is complete; if, with and in this acceptance, the whole substance of my own existence is rendered null and void (exinanitio), then the other-existence ceases to be an alien "Thou"; instead, the "Thou" becomes another description of my "Ego". "Thou art" then no longer means "Thou art recognized by me as existing", but "I experience thy existence as my own, and in thy 1l existence I again find myself existing. Es ergo Sum."

If we overlook the tendency toward a loss of individuality expressed by this author, I think that the statement comes very close to the substance of love, based on the ultimate common ground of human makeup. This is love, and love is the final message.

CHAPTER VI
Conclusion

The conflicts expressed in Dostoevsky are legion; the points of contact brought forth here barely scratch their surface. Dostoevsky vacillated between positions for much of his life, and comprehensive statements of his position are at least partially false. The importance of self-will, the drive to order and dominate, was always in his mind, as was the chaos of unreasoning nature with all the strange convolutions of human action which these facets can produce; the ideas of love, suffering, and redemption were not fully arrived at or completely expressed until late in his life; even then, these last aspects are wrapped in a very realistic complexity. He was, again, a "realist in a higher sense", dealing with ultimate issues in their natural contexts - which are far from simple or single. Dostoevsky is a difficult artist to properly analyze, but any amount of effort which is expended upon him is amply rewarded.
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