SUBLIME POLITICS: THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF DOSTOEVSKY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explicate Dostoevsky's ideas on man's political problems by exploring his conception of truth, both as a world view and as a proper mode of being. It intends to show that Dostoevsky believed that a society as a whole would never genuinely improve until all men within that society learned to live as true Christians. He believed the political order to be completely dependent upon both the world view men adopt and their attitude in relation to that world view (i.e., mode of being); and felt that only through man's existential awareness of this proper Christian attitude and world view, and not through violent and coercive means, could there ever be a true moral revolution. The thesis concludes by showing that Dostoevsky's nationalism reflected his belief that Russia would be the world historical vehicle for this final Christian revolution.

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INTRODUCTION

> Thus we have the eastern ideal--first the spiritual communion of mankind in Jesus Christ, and thereafter, in consequence of the spiritual unity of all men in Christ and as an unchallenged deduction therefrom--a just state and social communion.
> [1]

Writing a thesis on the political thought of Dostoevsky is a different type of assignment than writing one on the thought of most political writers. The primary difference is that Dostoevsky was not, nor did he attempt to be, a systematic political thinker. All of his writings are in the form of articles, short stories and novels, and as a result are difficult to collate into one comprehensive form. Consequently, many different (though not necessarily incongruous) interpretations can be derived from his works with virtually equal justification. In fact, before the English translation of his Diary of a Writer, it was not uncommon to read certain authors who considered Dostoevsky to be the great atheist.[2] The point is that since Dostoevsky did not leave us an explicit comprehensive system of thought in his writings, it has been left up to his commentators to supply this comprehensive system. There is no one absolute right

way of interpreting Dostoevsky and the commentator must accept the fact that he is only interpreting his thought, although there are certain parameters within which he must remain if he is still to be considered a valid interpreter. It is with this spirit that this thesis is conceived. Also, the author does not by any means claim complete (or even partial) originality, though he does feel he is presenting a particular point of view which is at least as valid as most.

In writing on the political thought of any thinker, and especially when that thinker is as unsystematic as Dostoevsky, one must ask oneself the basic question of what in actuality constitutes political thinking. Whether or not a particular thinker is defined as a political thinker depends on the breadth of one's definition of the word political. If that which is considered political were narrowly confined to that subject matter which deals with the proper functioning and mechanics of constitutional government or with the measurable causal factors which lead to the breakdown (or dysfunction) of a political system etc., then Dostoevsky could be called many things, but a political thinker would not be one of them. But if one assumes (as this author does and as Dostoevsky did) that political problems are essentially the normative problems of how men ultimately should live together and the nature of ultimate truth, then Dostoevsky was a political thinker par excellence.

What must always be kept in mind is that Dostoevsky did not conceive of himself as either a political or a religious thinker, at least in the sense that politics is somehow separated from religion. For him the substance of politics was the ethical attitude (i.e., mode of being) that one must assume in light of the ultimate truth (i.e., the objective nature of the world outside of one's attitude toward it). Since the problems of the proper ethical attitude and the proper world view were essentially religious in nature, one could say that for Dostoevsky the problems of politics were essentially the problems of religion. As we can see from the opening quote, Dostoevsky did not conceive of the possibility of there ever being a political solution or ideal which could be divorced from religion. It is not that religion was merely prior to politics, it is that the problem of politics was defined in an essentially religious manner. Actually this is not very difficult to accept once we consider that his religious ideal was a free Christian brotherhood of man, one not unlike other political social ideals (Rousseau comes to mind) except that his was essentially Christian in nature. His unification of politics with religion is also more readily accepted once we realize what it means to refer to Dostoevsky as an absolutist thinker. For him there was one proper spirit or mode of being for all men in all types of endeavors. One could not live with the Christian spirit with one's friends and at the same time be a so-called "realist" when taking part in the activities of the political (in this sense public) arena. He did not view life as

compartmentalized in such a way, but rather he perceived life as a unified whole, with one proper mode of being, in light of one single absolute truth. Once man comes to a proper spiritual awareness, all his traditional political problems will disappear "as an unchallenged deduction therefrom." War, poverty, and man's general inhumanity to man would no longer be problems because all men would be filled with the spirit of Christian agape. In fact, he envisioned that the state as we know it would eventually disappear once mankind as a whole came to a realization of the truth. Therefore, the study of politics for Dostoevsky is above all the study of human consciousness and spirit, for the world will never change until all men individually change.

Actually, Dostoevsky was not alone in believing the foundation of politics to be essentially religious in nature. His earliest mentor and the leading socialist of his time, V. G. Belinskii, viewed politics in the same absolutist fashion, although he took a completely opposite stance from Dostoevsky. His first assumption as a revolutionary was that all transcendence must be denied. In other words, the critique of religion was the presupposition of all critiques.[3] Political thinkers thought in very absolutist ways in Dostoevsky's time, one's world view had to be established, and a first assumption had to be laid down as unassailable. For Dostoevsky this first assumption (from which any and all hope for a <u>moral</u> order on earth derived) was a faith in a transcendent/immanent loving God. For Belinskii, and virtually all other "socialist" thinkers of the time, the first

assumption was a faith in the denial of any transcendent form. From these two first assumptions can come very different ideas as to the solution for the problems of the world, and it is with these ideas that Dostoevsky spent the major portion of his adult life.

As mentioned, Dostoevsky, as a novelist and journalist, did not have aspirations to create one large comprehensive system of thought. Because of this, he left us with some apparent inconsistencies in his thinking and as a result he left us without answers (or with contradictory answers) to some vital political questions. Sometimes problems can be solved by inference, but other times these inferences just lead to further contradiction. Probably the most infamous of his incongruities was his bellicose war stance (as presented in the Diary of a Writer) combined with the ideal of radical Christian humility as idealized in the Brothers Karamazov.

But just because there is no one comprehensive system of thought presented by Dostoevsky, it does not mean there is not a wealth of political ideas that can be derived from his writings which are both consistent and intelligible. He definitely saw things in a particular light and he offered up his view as a solution to man's political and religious problems. What this thesis will try to do is to explicate Dostoevsky's conception of truth, both as a world view and as a proper mode of being. It will also show how Dostoevsky believed that from a proper world view, and from a proper

attitude in relation to that world view, (i.e., mode of being) comes the type of political and social order considered to be ideal. This thesis will also include a discussion of those means which are and are not acceptable in the establishment of the ideal social order and a discussion of Dostoevsky's ideas on Russia as the historical vehicle for the realization of that ideal. Chapter One will primarily discuss Dostoevsky's ideas on the necessity of God for any moral order. If He does not exist in fact (and in the hearts of men) then a meaningless and valueless world exists in His place, one headed only for ignorance and death. Chapter Two will discuss the glorious world view that can be sustained if one has a living faith in God, and the means (though possibly ambiguously put forth by Dostoevsky) by which one can attain to such a view by "Christianizing" one's being through continual redemption for all sins of all men. Chapter Three will concern itself with Dostoevsky's ideas on the attainment of universal brotherhood through an individual radical Christian humility (i.e., personal continual redemption for all sins of all men) and the nature of such a brotherhood once it has been established. Chapter Four will discuss Dostoevsky's rejection of violence as a <u>proper means</u> to a final Christian brotherhood, and Chapter Five will deal with Dostoevsky's belief in Russia as the messianic nation which will, by example, bring this new universal brotherhood to the world. The thesis will primarily be explicative rather than critical, except where explication becomes hindered due to

inconsistencies in Dostoevsky's thought. This happens primarily in Chapters Three and Four but also in Chapter Five. In virtually all cases these inconsistencies involve his belief in the place of violence in a Christian mode of being.

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1 Fyodor Dostoevsky, Diary of a Writer, trans. by Boris Brasol (New York: G. Braziller, 1954), p. 728.

2 J. Middleton Murry, Fyodor Dostoevsky (New York: Russell and Russell, 1966), This book is most typical of this belief.

3 Ellis Sandoz, Political Apocalypse (Baton Rouge: L.S.U. Press, 1971), p. 19.

CHAPTER I

THE NECESSITY OF GOD AND IMMORTALITY

> Here at last we have attained the height of the problem Dostoevsky dealt with. The question of God is the question of all his works: God, the root of all life, and the basis of the world...,the enigmatically unreal in all that is real, the unearthly, toward which all that is earthly aspires.
> [1]

> ...free thought and science will lead them to such straits and will bring them face to face with such marvels and insoluble mysteries, that some of them, the fierce and rebellious, will destroy themselves, others, the rebellious but weak, will destroy one another, while the rest, weak and unhappy will crawl fawning to our feet...
> [2]

Atheism and Suicide

Dostoevsky's foremost assumption was his acceptance of the idea that there could be no belief in the meaning of morality without a corresponding belief in a loving God and the immortality of the human consciousness. If God did not exist, but was merely a phantom in the minds of men, then the primary attribute of existence would be its meaninglessness. Dostoevsky was an extremist thinker and for him there could only exist either absolute value or absolute void.[3] He did not believe in the viability or inherent worth of a more vague moral middle ground. For him there was no such thing as an authentic experience of

morality, given an atheistic assumption. Those who believed otherwise were considered to be pathetically naive.[4] He was virtually compelled to accept God and immortality a priori before accepting life and the world.[5] Since he assumed all morality and meaning had to stem from God, he also assumed that an authentic atheist would perceive no meaning or morality in the universe. Therefore, the difference in world view between the authentic atheist and the man of true faith was not that great. Both accepted God as absolutely necessary if man is to have any meaning, but the atheist did not accept the idea that He actually exists. Hence, it is easy to see why Dostoevsky was able to express powerful nihilistic ideas as well as religious ones.

God, therefore, becomes absolutely essential for Dostoevsky in the creation of the ideal community of men. No final moral order could ever be established without the acceptance of God, for without Him there could never be a moral foundation. This chapter will attempt to show that Dostoevsky, because of his radical stance, believed that the absence of a faith in the living God could only lead to suicide or nihilistic egoism on the individual level, and to the "ants nest" and/or a power-perverted idolatry on the societal level.

Dostoevsky's ideas on suicide were unique, to say the least. For him it was a foregone conclusion that anyone who accepted the fact of personal death, given a Godless universe, would eventually commit suicide if they followed such an

experience to its ultimate conclusion. The major strength of Dostoevsky's dialectic concerning this idea is its existential persuasiveness rather than its logical necessity. His argument was a highly subjective one (which he admitted) and was based on the acceptance of experiential assumptions which not all men would consider valid. What follows is a short summary of Dostoevsky's argument concerning the necessity of suicide in a Godless world.

Without faith in God and the immortality of one's soul, "man's existence is unnatural, unthinkable, impossible."[6] In the experience of the realization of one's ultimate finite nature, one comes to the inevitable conclusion that man's existence on earth is an unendurable and utter absurdity. One's existence becomes flooded with the feeling of aimlessness and boredom, with suicide offering the only escape. The characters Svidrigalov, Smerdyakov and Stavrogin are embodiments of this idea. They are the "aware" atheists who realize "that only those men can consent to live who resemble the lower animals and who come nearest to the latter by reason of the limited development of their minds and their purely carnal wants."[7] A belief in the mortality of the human soul inevitably leads towards indifference "for everything that generates and nourishes life, that brings health, that annihilates decomposition and fetidness."[8]

Neither individuals nor body politics are able to live without a sublime idea and to Dostoevsky there was but one sublime idea from which all others are derived--that immortality is granted to mankind from an infinite and loving God.

Therefore, the "aware" atheist is not capable of being happy because he has denied the truth of that which is the source of the true experience of the sublime in existence. Without the sublime idea, man's life is seen as disgusting, abnormal and insufficient.

According to Dostoevsky, the "aware" atheist may at first attempt to deny this fact by accepting his own suffering and by ardently seeking some form of conciliation. The usual way this is manifested is the attempt by the atheist to serve mankind through the moral impetus of "love for mankind." This is a magnanimous thought and one full of suffering, but soon the atheist becomes frustrated, for such a man is inevitably drawn to the irresistible conviction that "the life of mankind--just as his own--is, substantially, a fleeting moment, and that on the morrow of the realization of 'harmony' (if one is to believe this dream can be realized) mankind will be reduced to the same zero even as he."[9] Once the atheist realizes this fact, his belief in the meaning of "love for mankind" loses it urgency. The comprehension of "no matter what happens, man will die anyway" at first stirs his love of mankind, that is, he desires justice for mankind as a whole in spite of death. But soon this existential rebellion turns into contempt. It does so because the "aware" atheistic man eventually must accept the fact that ultimately he is impotent in the face of man's suffering, i.e., he cannot forestall death forever. Man is not spiritually capable of continually loving man in full

realization of his suffering. As his suffering becomes more intolerable, his ability to sustain love becomes more difficult because it becomes too painful. The realization of one's utter impotence in bringing alleviation to suffering mankind, Dostoevsky asserts, "may convert in one's heart love for mankind into a hatred of it."[10] In other words, genuine love of mankind is "altogether impossible without the accompanying faith in the immortality of man's soul."[11] Love of mankind without a corresponding faith in God and immortality is only the seed for a future hatred.

Without faith in God and immortality, man's ties with the earth become severed. He no longer can find any reason to support the meaning of its existence. Following from this, the Dostoevskian argument states that suicide becomes an inevitable necessity for any man who "by his mental development has even slightly lifted himself above the level of cattle."[12]

As we can see, the importance of faith in God and immortality outweighed the importance of reason for Dostoevsky. Faith in God is prior to even the acceptance of life itself. With faith, in spite of the apparent contradiction, the experience of the truth of one's immortality actually ties man all the more strongly to earth. Faith in one's infinite life brings man to a comprehension of the full meaning of his destination here on earth. Without faith in his immortality, man divorces himself from the earth through the denial of its meaning, and this subsequent loss of the sublime felt at

least in the form of unconscious anguish, inevitably leads to suicide. As we know, Dostoevsky supported this belief in his novels through the creation of many suicidal characters, though probably the most representative of these is Stavrogin in The Possessed:

> The citizen of the Canton of Uri was dangling just by the door. On the table there was a scrap of paper with the words "accuse no one, I did it myself"...The strong silk cord with which Nikolai Stavrogin had hanged himself was lavishly smeared with soap. After the autopsy, all our medical experts rejected any possibility of insanity.
> 13

The political implications of Dostoevsky's ideas about suicide were meant to be damaging to all atheistic political groups of his era. What Dostoevsky implied was that, without a belief in God and immortality, there could be no moral community of conscious men, i.e., there could be no authentic atheistic moral community. Any political movement which begins with the denial of the existence of God (and therefore immortality), as virtually all socialist movements of his era did, is immediately seen to be made up of men of displaced awareness, men who have not even perceived the true nature of their own philosophical and religious stance. Dostoevsky's suicide thesis implies that the atheist, rather than having an existential awareness of what it means to say one's death is final, has instead made the idea of atheism something to be believed in itself. Virtually all of the atheist-socialists in the novel The Possessed,

outside of Verkhovensky and Stavrogin, reflect this Dostoevskian perception. Instead of experiencing the dread and emptiness that accompanies the realization of one's finite nature, the naive atheist-socialist has instead filled that void by making atheism a foundation for political ideas which take on religious characteristics to the believers.[14] The truly "aware" atheist will not find meaning in atheism, as Dostoevsky criticized the socialists for doing, but from the anguish of this understanding will subsequently commit suicide.

Generally speaking, the Russian socialist of Dostoevsky's time believed that the belief in God was a chain which needed to be broken before Russia could become a just and progressive society. Dostoevsky, on the other hand, believed that once faith in God was destroyed, the resulting experience made one realize that there is no solution to man's suffering once you assume a consciousness above the unconscious pursuit of survival, pleasure, and the act of procreation. Of course, the assumption here is that life has meaning and worth only in so far as there is a moral plane that exists independently of the material world. But if there is no God, there is no ultimate morality; therefore, there is no meaningful solution to man's suffering on earth without Him. Because the atheist-socialist did not seem concerned with this issue, and because they did not view death in the same dreadful, nihilistic manner as did Dostoevsky, he accused them of naiveté and claimed their social goal was not a

social harmony based on the idea of the beautiful and moral, but an ants nest based only on scientific reason.[15] Since Dostoevsky put forth the theory that man's anguish over death (both of self and of man in general) turns our love for man into contempt, anyone who would be capable of understanding the true nature of a higher moral order would also realize that in the absence of faith in God, such a high moral order becomes an impossibility.

Of course, this argument is a circular one; if one truly believes there is no God, one will not believe, according to Dostoevsky, in a higher moral order. If one is an atheist and believes in a higher moral order, he must be naive. He is naive because anyone who truly knows there is no God will also know there is no higher order. But, again, Dostoevsky's persuasiveness is not in his reason or logic, but in his presentation of a world view. Once one accepts the validity of his world view, one realizes that what appears like circular reasoning is actually explaining an existential phenomenon. Ultimately it is a matter of faith. If one founds all his moral beliefs on an existential faith in God, Dostoevsky's argument does become more than just a diatribe against atheists. Rather, it takes on a profundity of its own, given the acceptance of certain assumptions.

From Dostoevsky's viewpoint, the atheist's feverish struggle for the creation of a new harmonious order was one based on an incomplete understanding of the meaning of life. To him they not only did not have the true faith, they did

not even know what it meant not to have it. If they had understood they would have then realized that such a new harmony, if it were to be a true harmony of conscious men, could only be founded on the belief in God or realize that the pursuit of such a society would be futile, since ultimately "all men will be reduced to the same zero." He concluded that the atheist-socialists were not men who were pursuing a harmony based on the brotherhood of man in light of a higher knowledge, but were in fact unconsciously pursuing a "harmony" built only on the principles of the ants nest and utilitarian survival. Simply put, Dostoevsky believed that a true love for man could not be sustained in the face of eternal annihilation.

Atheism and Nihilistic Egoism

In spite of the suicidal inevitability that Dostoevsky seems to be expounding in his interpretation of a true understanding of atheism, there also exists in his works a different type of destructive reaction to the belief in no God. Rather than self destruction based on the experience of anguish, there is a tendency for some of his atheistic characters to live their life in the criminal pursuit of self interest. Dostoevsky taught that a Godless world meant there was no limit at all to man's nihilistic "freedom."[16] In other words, we are confronted with the idea that without God "all is permitted."

Two of the more interesting figures who embody this idea in Dostoevsky's works, and who cannot be characterized as naive atheistic idealists, are Raskolnikov in Crime and Punishment and Peter Verkhovensky in The Possessed. Rather than moving in the direction of suicide, or in the direction of what Dostoevsky would consider a naive attempt at a God-less moral order, they instead moved in the direction of a nihilistic pursuit of power. The personal reasonings (or lack of reasonings) behind their respective actions may have been different, but the basic message is the same in both of their characterizations. If there is no God, then no one has final say outside of the self. There is no ultimate purpose in any action outside of what the self makes of it. In action, Raskolnikov and Verkhovensky were two examples, or logical precursors, of Ivan's final "unification" of the nihilistic principle in his assertion that "all is permitted."

Raskolnikov was a young student who became fascinated with the idea that there was a certain elite of human beings throughout history, who through their special understanding were able to rise above the normal and petty moral order. These men were not bound in spirit by that which bound other men. They were free to act in the pursuit of their own desires without the pangs of guilt or remorse which prevented lesser men from rising above the herd. The man who could do this was an extraordinary man. The extra-

ordinary man was a man who

> ...has every right to commit any wrong or crime...laws, so to say, are not made for men such as them.
> 17

It was this kind of man Raskolnikov emulated and fancied himself becoming. He set out to prove that he too was above the law and with this thought in mind he planned and executed the double ax murder of an old woman landlord and her half-witted sister. Raskolnikov, of course, failed in his attempt at becoming a Napoleonic man. For a myriad of psychological reasons that Dostoevsky masterfully portrays, Raskolnikov falls far short of his projected goal. But that is less important, for purposes of explicating Dostoevsky's political thought in comparison with the significance of the conception of the idea in the first place.

One of the points Dostoevsky was trying to make was that in the absence of a living faith in God, man becomes spiritually isolated from his fellow man. In this spiritual isolation man becomes deadened to the significance of human life. As a result, given a certain kind of personality, such an isolation can lead to any kind of destruction, including destruction which is seen as serving the interests of the self. Translated into political action, we have the so-called Napoleonic principle in which man, in the egoistic pursuit of power over other men will stop short at no atrocity to achieve his given end.

But Dostoevsky is not only saying that man is capable of this type of action in the absence of a living faith, but is also saying that if there were no God, then such actions could only be capriciously condemned, i.e., there would be no ultimate moral reason for condemning such actions as wrong. For Dostoevsky this is part of the reason God is so necessary for man; for without Him, there is no basis for order outside of utilitarian principles, and such a condition would make men little better than the beasts.

Verkhovensky, though obviously a more shallow personality type than Raskolnikov, is also acting from similar assumptions, though for himself they are largely unconscious. He is the political activist whom Raskolnikov's Napoleonic principle foreshadows; he is the political man in action with no scruples. Though normally conceived of by critics as a Dostoevskian diatribe against revolutionaries, it is more proper to view him as a Dostoevskian embodiment of the nihilistic principle. Dostoevsky himself noted that Verkhovensky was not really patterned after any particular revolutionary but was created around the fact of a political murder by the terrorist Nechaev. Dostoevsky had read about the murder and thought the act so significant that he created the character of Verkhovensky in light of his own ideas on atheism and nihilism. In other words, Verkhovensky is not meant to be representative of the typical revolutionary (i.e., an idealist who hopes to create a new utopia either through violent or non-violent means) but is, from

Dostoevsky's framework, another example of what is possible in a Godless world, a possibility against which one has no moral defense.

It is clear that Dostoevsky did not consider all revolutionaries to be nihilists and to portray Verkhovensky as a Dostoevskian stereotype of all revolutionaries would be unfair.[18] In fact, Dostoevsky did have an acute awareness of the moral nature of many young radicals and he expresses this opinion in an early article of the Diary.[19] He felt these young men had an ultimate moral concern, even if he simultaneously felt them to be extremely misguided. Dostoevsky was actually critical of those who wished merely to silence them and have them quietly return to their studies in the universities. Their moral concern was commendable, but their ideas were inverted.

Verkhovensky, on the other hand, was not committed to any moral idea. His purpose in creating havoc was to secure power for himself and if he could not secure power, he was content to create havoc just the same. Born unwanted and left virtually deserted by his liberal Westernizing father, Stepan Trofomovitch, Verkhovensky seemed bent on getting back at a world which made him an alien in his own country. Unlike Lenin, he was not a man willing to sacrifice "three quarters of mankind" for a great historical goal,[20] although he would have been willing to do so for his own gain. Although his tactics may not have been contrary to revolutionary tactics (i.e., causing the breakdown of the unwanted

system of order through any means possible), in his particular case they were not intended to serve idealist ends. He even stunned Stavrogin with his admission that he was not a socialist at all, but a rogue whose only desire was to exercise his will. Verkhovensky was supposed to be less a portrayal of the Russian revolutionary than he was to be a symbol of what is "permitted" in a Godless world, an embodiment of atheistic implications. He shows that without God there is moral anarchy, and because of this a society which has begun to lose contact with God dwells in the midst of a potential powder keg.

Atheism and Idolatry

> And as man cannot bear to be without the miraculous, he will create new miracles of his own, and will worship deeds of sorcery and witchcraft.
> 21

For Dostoevsky, the moral and social structure of traditional Western society was founded on an existential relationship with God. If such a society loses or disowns its faith (and Dostoevsky saw both happening in his age) it is left suspended and without direction. Man is not capable of enduring such a moral vacuum and he psychologically seeks to escape the terror of this nothingness through the frantic search for a new order. Since Dostoevsky believed there could be no true order without a direct relationship with the living God, he leaves us to infer from his works that without God man is faced with either accepting the anarchy

of nihilism or the retreat into a totalitarian and idolatrous mode of existence in which a new order is defined for him.

The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor is, among other things, a symbolic representation of the psychological state of a society which has lost contact with God. The Inquisitor, from Dostoevsky's point of view, not only blinds man to the reality of God, but for man's own good, also blinds him to the reality of the implications of a Godless world. He prevents any existential realization of the foundationless moral ground of his social order in order to protect man from the dreadful effects of such a realization.

The Possessed also presents a similar psychological image of man in a Godless world. Man is seen as unable to endure a moral vacuum for any length of time. He searches for a new role, a subordinate position within a newly created order. Verkhovensky expresses this idea to Stavrogin when discussing the latter's future role as "the Prince who is in hiding." Of course, Verkhovensky's hope is that this new order will be centered around the idolatrous worship of the Prince." The Prince will step in to fill the vacuum of nothingness and the people will be glad to accept him as their leader in order to be free from the anguish and terror of nothingness.

> ...there'll be havoc everywhere--havoc such as the world has never before witnessed. Russia will be shrouded in mist and the earth will weep for its old gods--and it's then we shall use...the fairy-tale prince...We shall

> say he is in hiding...Oh what a marvelous legend we could let loose on them. The main point is that a new authority is coming and that's just what they'll be longing and crying for. What use can we have for socialism? It destroys the old authority without replacing it. But we will have authority--
> 22

In other words, man, without a true relationship with the living God, seeks another authority in order to escape from his position of disarray. In a Godless world there is either moral and social anarchy, or idolatry. Although idolatry is only a sublimated form of moral anarchy, man would rather choose idolatry than live in an orderless universe.

Dostoevsky believed that once man denied the reality of the living God, he must also repress the implications of such an admittance if he is to live in peace. If he fails to do so and if he fails to create a counter order to replace the God-centered one, then anarchy will continue to prevail. In The Possessed Dostoevsky portrays just such a situation. There were suicides, murders, and general mass confusion; chaos occurred, riots and killings were everyday happenings, and the irrational search for scapegoats became commonplace. Life became a nightmare, or as the political philosophers politely call it, a state of nature.

Once God is denied, man's potentiality for a truly meaningful existence is also denied. It becomes necessary for man to create an idolatrous counter order in the midst of nothingness, something which will both satisfy his need

for meaning and stem the tide of the violence of anarchy, for even without God man needs some kind of unifying symbol just for survival's sake. As in The Grand Inquisitor, the false symbol can even be referred to as "God." In The Possessed the great plan called for the deification of Stavrogin. In both stories the "saviors" were pretenders who nevertheless were to save man from a floundering existence.

With the creation of such a pretender (which need not be just an individual, i.e., it could be a state or system of ideas, etc.), man must accept as truth what in reality is an absurdity or he would again face the utter confusion and emptiness of existence. From Dostoevsky's viewpoint, either way man ultimately loses. The only way man could transcend this dilemma would be through an existential relationship with the true and living God. If such a relationship were not possible, that is, if God did not actually exist, then there could be no true salvation for mankind. God is necessary for man's salvation. In other words, if God did not exist, man would be living in an intrinsically meaningless and hopeless universe in which his only alternatives would be suicide, nihilistic egoism or idolatry.

Keeping Dostoevsky's idea of the necessity of God in mind, it becomes easy to see why he believed an awareness of "true" atheism to be "next-to-the-top rung of the ladder of perfect faith."[23] The authentic atheist, according to Dostoevsky, differs from the man of true faith only in that

he does not believe that God actually exists. But he shares the man of faith's world view that He is absolutely necessary if man is to truly live a meaningful, moral, and holy existence. For Dostoevsky, true atheism was not a form of belief, nor a counter faith in secular forms of politics; rather, it was a form of ultimate concern without any content.[24] Belief is only "an act of knowledge that has a low degree of evidence," while true atheism is an attitudinal stance of a total personality.[25] Belief or disbelief in any given idea does not necessarily imply ultimate concern, yet it is this stance of ultimate concern in a meaningless universe which Dostoevsky characterized as "true" atheism. Neither was "true" atheism the type practiced by most of the socialists and Westerners of his era. They created a secular (and therefore idolatrous) goal as their object of ultimate concern. They found meaning in that which Dostoevsky thought was intrinsically meaningless, and he believed they did not understand the implications of their own atheistic stance. Atheism, on the other hand, is absolute negative faith in God. That is, a "true" atheist believes ultimate meaning can only be derived from a God he is convinced does not exist. Therefore, "true" atheism, or negative faith, was the closest thing to true faith, for it was a form of ultimate concern about God, a "standing before" but without any God to "stand before."

In its most extreme form Dostoevsky believed the only true response to the acceptance of the fact of atheism would

lead to suicide, while only a repressed (and therefore limited) form of consciousness could consent to live without God. Given his belief that only a higher moral order can bring meaning into the world, and given the fact that only God can give that moral foundation, the "aware" atheist chooses death as the only alternative. On the other hand, those who are divorced from the living God without comprehending its true implications will choose either egoism or some form of totalitarian and idolatrous worship.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1 Eduard Thurneysan, Dostoevsky, trans. by Keith R. Crim (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964), p. 42.

2 Fyodor Dostoevsky, Brothers Karamazov, trans. by Constance Garnett (New York: Modern Library - College Editions, 1950), pp. 306-7

3 Janko Lavrin, Dostoevsky and His Creation (London: W. Collins Sons and Company, 1920), p. 96.

4 Dostoevsky, Diary, p. 226.

5 Lavrin, Dostoevsky, p. 148.

6 Dostoevsky, Diary, p. 538.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., p. 539.

9 Ibid., p. 540.

10 Ibid., p. 541.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Possessed, trans. by Andrew W. MacAndrew (New York: World Literature, 1962), p. 692.

14 Sandoz, Political Apocalypse, p. 143.

15 Dostoevsky, Diary, p. 6.

16 Paul Ramsey, "No Morality Without Immortality," Journal of Religion, XXXVI (April, 1956), p. 42.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I (continued)

17 Fyodor Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, ed. by George Gibian and trans. by Jessie Coulson (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1964), p. 248.

18 See Irving Howe, Politics and the Novel (New York: Horizon Press, 1957), p. 70. Howe makes the point, incorrectly, I believe, that Dostoevsky had no true understanding of the revolutionary mind.

19 Dostoevsky, Diary, p. 142.

20 Sandoz, Political Apocalypse, pp. 20-1.

21 Dostoevsky, Brothers Karamazov, p. 303.

22 Dostoevsky, The Possessed, p. 403.

23 Ibid., p. 412.

24 Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1957), p. 20. Tillich uses this idea in relation to his notion of skepticism. Skepticism is very similar to Dostoevsky's atheism in that both have ultimate concern without any concrete content. But Dostoevsky's atheist is far worse off than Tillich's skeptic because he knows what gives meaning, i.e., God, but believes He does not exist.

25 Ibid., p. 31.

CHAPTER II

NECESSITY OF THE SUBLIME AWARENESS

> Sin is smog, and the smog will disappear when the sun rises in its power. Sin is a transitory matter, but Christ is eternal. [1]

In the last chapter we discussed some nihilistic possibilities which can develop in the absence of a faith in the living God. This chapter will attempt to explicate the joyous life affirmation one can experience once one establishes a faith in God. It is through the sublime awareness that man will find a love for life, and in that love a solution to his problems. This understanding is the cornerstone on which Dostoevsky's ideal universal solidarity is based. This chapter will attempt to do four things. First it will attempt to show that, for Dostoevsky, even a joyous love for life is not capable of sustaining life without a corresponding faith in God. Secondly, it will attempt to describe the type of world view that is accrued from the life affirming experience of the sublime. Thirdly, it will try to show how through personal redemption and self awareness man can come to the experience of such a life affirming vision. Finally, it will state Dostoevsky's idea that in order for salvation to be more than just a solitary process, man must also redeem himself for the sins of others.

Life Affirmation and the Necessity of God

It is a generally accepted fact that the basis for Dostoevsky's own sublime, or mystical, experience was his disease of epilepsy. His descriptions of the disease itself correspond to his ideas about the mystical experience. Two of his major characters who have mystical experiences, Prince Myshkin of The Idiot and Kirilov of The Possessed, are associated with epilepsy, though the latter is only warned by Shatov that he may have the disease. Kirilov describes what the experience is like.

> There are seconds--they come five or six at a time--when you suddenly feel the presence of the eternal harmony in all its perfection...It is as though you were suddenly in contact with all of nature, and you say, 'yes, this is the truth.'
> 2

This mystical experience of harmony and unity was obviously very important to Dostoevsky, and although Kirilov was a tragic figure because of his simultaneous atheistic idea, we nevertheless learn much about Dostoevsky from the Kirilov characterization. Kirilov is an atheistic precursor to the finalization of the mystical idea in the character of Zossima.

Of course, following from the previous chapter, it was Kirilov's atheism which led to his eventual downfall from the ranks of Dostoevskian heroes. Despite his apparent unbounded love for life, Kirilov nevertheless killed himself.

It is evident that Dostoevsky believed that even the feeling of joy for life cannot by itself sustain life. As we know, for Dostoevsky only God is capable of giving final meaning to the universe. In other words, it is the mystical life affirmation combined with a living faith in God that is necessary to sustain a joyous existence. For in Kirilov, following from Dostoevsky's psychological interpretation of the nature of the "aware" atheist, there was an equal suffering which matched his joy for life. He referred to this suffering as the "pain of the fear of death." God, from Kirilov's point of view, was only a psychological illusion whom man created to counter the "pain of the fear of death." It was this pain that Kirilov hoped to destroy for all mankind through his suicide. He conceived of himself unselfishly as a martyr and hoped that through his renunciation of the illusion of God he would be able to show that man need not fear death anymore. After his own suicide, he believed that man would now be able to consent to live because he could see, by Kirilov's example, that there was no longer any reason to fear death. It would become merely a matter of indifference and man would now be able to accept the joyous vision that is life without needing to create the illusion of God.

Of course Kirilov, rather than appearing as a martyr, instead impresses the reader as being insane. This becomes clear when the reader realizes that few in the world were ever going to know about his suicide, let alone understand

his reasons for committing such an act. While imagining himself as a public martyr, in reality he was a private tragedy dying with only the petty demon Verkhovensky nearby. The one atheist in Dostoevsky's novels who was able to love life was not even capable of remaining alive, precisely because of his atheistic idea. What is important to keep in mind in this chapter, therefore, is that in spite of the necessity of achieving a sublime or mystical love for life in the thought of Dostoevsky, such a love by itself is not sufficient. For a final life affirmation to be attained God is necessary to counter the "pain of the fear of death." If He does not exist, then we have only the nihilism described in its various forms in the preceding chapter.

Dostoevsky has also shown the importance of God for life affirmation in other places. Besides Kirilov, Dostoevsky has presented six different variations of the mystical or sublime awareness. Gibson calls them "variations on the earthly paradise."[5] Each one of them, though slightly different from each other, emphasizes that happiness and goodness belong to the world and people are capable of living in order to cherish each other. But five of the visions remain only ideas, i.e., they are not living realities. Only Zossima (and Dolgoruky of the Raw Youth, whose vision is "deficient" in another way), who experienced a sublime life affirmation in conjunction with a faith in God and the immortality of the human soul, was

able to be a living embodiment of such a vision.[6] All the other variations, though similar in content to the finalization of this theme in Zossima, are incomplete. For Stavrogin, the vision takes place in a dream and becomes unattainable in reality because of his guilt over the death of the girl Matryosha. For Dolgoruky of the Raw Youth, it remains only a personal experience without reference to the universalism of the Zossima ideal. For Versilov, also of the Raw Youth, it is at best only "an intellectual diversion and a wishful forecast of the best that can happen in a godless world."[7] In Ivan's poem, the "Geological Cataclysm" (which he is reminded of through his conversations with the devil), the vision is only the product of a self appointed man-God, and because of his own atheistic assumptions this vision shamed himself in his own eyes. In the Dream of the Ridiculous Man the vision is also just a dream, although it was one which if it did not lead to a living embodiment, at least led to action based on the dream. Of these five visions, none but Dolgoruky's had God as a central figure, and only two of them, Ivan's and the ridiculous man's, had the universal aspirations of Zossima. What we find in the characterizations of Zossima is the linkage of the three requirements that make the experience of the sublime a complete experience, a joy and love for life, faith in God, and (as shall be emphasized more fully in the next chapter) the realization that such an experience is for all men to share together.

To deny God is to deny the actual source of love and life. To deny the actual transcendent source is to destroy systematically the reality of the vision. The experience either becomes situated in emptiness, as symbolized by Kirilov, or it becomes only an idea, as it does in all but the case of Dolgoruky. God and eternity, on the other hand, are not ideas, but are living realities.[8] Only Zossima, of the persons discussed here, appears to have a full understanding of this fact.

Sublime World View

Before we continue, it is important to emphasize again why the experience of the sublime aspect of reality is so important for the political thought of Dostoevsky. Before society can change, its individual members must change. This is not an idle statement when discussing Dostoevsky's thought, but rather a central one. For Dostoevsky, the individual attitude, or mode of being, is paramount and all subsequent actions, including political ones, are merely reflections of this attitude. The discussion of mode of being becomes doubly important for Dostoevsky's political ideas when we realize his ideal state cannot be reached until all people individually and freely choose to come together in one Christian brotherhood. In other words, one's mode of being is not just one aspect of his political thought but in fact is the central aspect. If politics is ever to become idealized according to the Dostoevskian "system", man's

consciousness must change and it is to that new consciousness that Dostoevsky devotes most of his attention.[10]

So far this chapter has discussed the importance of the sublime mode of awareness which results in joyous life affirmation and the importance of faith in God in conjunction with that awareness. The focus will now be on the specific world view which such an experience leads to.

For Dostoevsky, the world is endowed with an ultimate holiness. It derives its holiness from the fact that God, through the person of Jesus Christ, entered the world.[11] The holiness of the world is, therefore, not an ideal, as in the dreams of Stavrogin, Versilov, Ivan, etc., but is an actuality.[12] Life itself is a mystery, a truth of "paramount importance" and for Dostoevsky this mystery was conceived by God in love. All beings are endowed with the same holiness that the world as a totality is endowed with. The individual Christian, in community with his fellow Christians, is believed to form the sacred heart of this entire creation, all of which undergoes the same regenerative process of redemption.[13] All animals of the earth, all plants, and the physical universe itself are "already" in mystical harmony with the All, singing praises to God.

> It was a bright, warm still July night,
> a cool mist rose from the broad river.
> We could hear the splash of a fish, the
> birds were still, all was hushed and
> beautiful, everything praying to God.[14]

Dostoevsky had a vision of life in which all was paradise already. All man had to do was Christianize his being in order to realize this fact. All aspects of life, even the torments of natural disasters, even the fact of natural death itself, are part of the beauty that was conceived by God. Everything is in harmony and every animal knows its place "instinctively." The reality of the world is seen to exist beyond its mere materiality.[15] The transcendent presence becomes an ordering process.[16]

> ...we talked of the beauty of this world of God's and of the great mystery of it. Every blade of grass, every insect, ant and golden bee, all so marvelously know their path. Though they have not the intelligence, they bear witness to the mystery of God and continually accomplish it themselves.
> [17]

It is the very beauty of the world which convinces Zossima, and Dostoevsky, of its ultimate justice, for it is this holy beauty which gives the world its intrinsic worth.[18] Its lack of concern with the reality of beauty was one of Dostoevsky's major criticisms of much of the political activity of his time. One of the themes of the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor is the bankruptcy of life that ensues when men seek after "bread" at the expense of beauty. Before a material solution can be found, man must learn to cultivate the awareness of beauty within himself and others.[19] It is the beauty, wonder and holiness of life itself that man must learn to tune his body and consciousness into with a heightened awareness. All that

exists outside of the free man, with his knowledge of good and evil, is automatically perfect and sinless. Man alone must learn to become harmonious with life.[20] Man must throw away his dogmatism and learn the living faith of life and come to a realization of an ecstatic world sensation.[21]

Upon such an experience of the sublime in existence, one is immediately enamored with a thorough love for life. In speaking of animals as an aspect of holy creation, Dostoevsky went so far as to say that even they will respond to a love freely given; and actually tells the story, through the words of Zossima, of a great monk who pitied the hunger of a grizzly bear. He went to feed the bear and said, "Go along, Christ be with you." The bear walked "away meekly and obediently, doing no harm."

The point of the tale, beyond the intended literalness of the story, is twofold. First of all, as we shall emphasize in Chapter Three, active love is perceived to be a force which can reach beyond itself and effect change in others. In other words, Christian love is considered to be an active social force. Secondly, the story tells us that one's expression of active love in union with the eternal must take preference over the individualized self. One can show no fear in the face of the eternal, for fear is a sign of lack of faith. One does not have faith that his individual earthly life will be protected (for one must learn to welcome and even cherish natural death), but rather one must learn to have faith in being part of the eternal cosmic

unity called life. One cannot compromise the eternal for that which is not, for to do so constitutes pride.

How to Attain to the Sublime World View

How is man to attain to an experience of the holy, sublime, harmonious and beautiful? Unfortunately, Dostoevsky appears to be relatively vague about this question.[22] While constantly extolling man to come to a vision of the holy and beautiful in creation, he never explicates either a precise or particular means for an individual to come to a realization. Though he does attempt to offer a Christian solution to the problem through the notion of redemption, often times in his works the hero who attains to his life affirming vision seems to do so, not by his own effort, but by a miracle, i.e., something outside his own will and effort.[23] They often are overcome by an experience rather than achieving the vision as the culmination of conscious and dedicated effort. The most obvious examples of this are Myshkin, Kirilov, Zossima, and Alyosha. It is as if the final realization of the ecstatic world sensation can be realized only through the grace of God.[24] But even if this were totally the case, it is nevertheless evident that man must attempt to seek the truth anyway, for the experience of the holy and harmonious in the presence of God is the ultimate human value.[25]

Dostoevsky does, however, give his readers some ideas about how to seek enlightenment. In order to find salvation, one must first realize that it cannot be sought or conceived of in an intellectual manner. One must learn that

faith is prior to reason and that reason must learn to trust the faith of the heart and to accept its judgments.[26] In this sense Dostoevsky was radically anti-reason. Man simply has not the intellectual ability to understand why things ultimately are as they are. He must learn to leave his Euclidean mind behind and realize that without faith there can be no peaks of human experience.[27] Man must learn to see himself in a different manner. He has to realize that he is the representative of God in existence and that he is His instrument in the unfolding drama of human history.[28]

Man is also that being within whom God makes himself known. But this is only a possibility, and not a necessity, for man is endowed with freedom with which he can use either to accept or reject the truth. It is the rejection of God and the life affirming vision that constitutes man's prideful and sinful nature. His sin is his inability to seek the sublime and harmonious in life and his inability and lack of desire to attain to Christian love. "Sin is smog, and the smog will disappear when the sun rises in its power..." Because of man's inherent quality of freedom, he is not capable of acting in a purely instinctive manner, as do the animals, for to do so would make him cease to be a man in its denial of conscious freedom. Man is the only creature blessed with the freedom to sin, and because of this he must learn how to accept what his own blind and egoistic self may deny. Through his rejection of the primacy of the living life of joy, in favor of the life of the body without the spirit, man has become

sinful.

Man must learn to come to an awareness of this rejection within himself, for the ability to say yes to all of life entails a knowledge of what sin is and what it is not. Sin is any act (including thought) which serves to perpetuate the repression of the eternal harmony. It is not a matter of the simple breaking of certain laws which seem to be hanging abstractly in space disconnected from all that is living. While this may be sin and while it might even be necessary for these laws to be there as symbolic of the meaning of existence, they do not constitute an absolute of themselves and for all time. The laws of the metaphysician are not structured in the same sense as the laws of the logician. To Dostoevsky, in order for any moral law to be considered truthful, it must ultimately be grounded in actuality.[29] The power of morality is based not on man-made law, but stands in the very nature of man himself.[30] The whole notion of redemption is based on this assumption. Characters, such as Raskolnikov, bear witness to Dostoevsky's notion that sin and guilt are expiated by an existential faith in conscience. A sin can rarely be absolutized into specific acts, but rather is absolute in the sense that any act which does not spring from a sincere concern with the Good is considered to be sinful.

Dostoevsky believed that the expiation of sin and guilt was one of the most difficult acts anyone could perform. It takes an intense knowledge of the self and also takes

the conscious giving up of false pride in the face of one's contrition. One must be able to feel openly without shame and be able to overcome the restrictions of the human will which, like Stavrogin, can only negate. Atonement involves no less than an actual awakening of the heart from a slumber that in many cases is close to death. Between this side of life, with its waking sleep aspects of security, and the other side of life, in which the idea of the joyous union with life transcends the idea and becomes living fact, exists the psychological barrier of man's need to free himself from his guilt.

In his novels Dostoevsky often shows the man who has committed the great sin purging his guilt and attaining, if not the experience of unity, at least an awareness of what such a unity entails. The major example of this is Raskolnikov in the novel Crime and Punishment. It has sometimes been suggested by critics that Dostoevsky even means to say that the great crime must be committed by men in order to find the way to salvation. Actually this is not true--all men have committed at least sins of denial by ignoring the needs of others--for each man has a knowledge of his own sins within himself and most of them would certainly not be considered the great crime. Nevertheless, certain sins are worse than others and they become progressively worse in the intensity of their denial of life. Often, fantastic crimes such as murder are the only ones which will finally awaken a person from his slumber and alert him

to the intensity of the wrong he has committed. It does take the "great" crime for some to realize the need for redemption. Dostoevsky's technique of the "great" crime is also used to bring the reader to the same experiential situation in which his "great" criminals are placed, and makes it easier for the reader to grasp his own need for redemption.

Dostoevsky also shows that the "great" crime is not a prerequisite for salvation, and the example of Zossima is a case in point. Zossima realized the means to salvation simply after slapping a servant. What is important to realize is that to be unable to love and to perceive the holy and sublime in life means you already are in the state of sin, and this fact will be reflected in all that you do.

It is necessary for Dostoevsky to show what the expiation of sin can involve. Zossima tells the story of an extremely successful businessman who also had an awareness of the truth of the living God. As a youth this man had committed a murder in a fit of jealousy, but the only remorse he had felt was that the object of his devotion was no longer there. His life had been successful since the murder; he was well known throughout the community for his philanthropic work and had two children by a recently married wife. Suddenly, after many years of being able to ignore the guilt of his act, he began to feel intense feelings of regret, and his life was becoming

one long series of depressions. He no longer felt he had the right to love his wife and children because he was harboring the secret of his murder. He knew what was happening and he knew he would somehow have to atone for his sin in order to be able to shed his guilt. If he could not, he would have to resolve himself to living the rest of his life repressing the guilt and ignoring the fact that he would never be able to live the life of active love. The advice that Zossima gives is that he must confess the sin by realizing and facing the facts of its dimensions without flinching. What this entailed for the businessman was simply to have the strength to look honestly at himself; in a sense the rest would come automatically. The criminal needs to make a public confession in order to become one with his community of fellow men. As with Raskolnikov, it does not matter what the authorities are concerned with, because it is a moral obligation to present oneself as one is. One's everyday self must die to itself; it must annihilate itself and give itself up altogether, undividedly and unconditionally, to everything and everyone.[31] To be able to look inside oneself and clearly face what has caused one guilt, and subsequently to be able to ask forgiveness and to forgive oneself, is the message that Dostoevsky wishes to impart.

> Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it dies it bringeth forth great fruit.[32]

One must experience, accept, and endure the pain of remorse for confession to matter. To be true to life one must make the fact known; to do otherwise is to deny what you are to those around you. To live life in full one must not harbor any secrets. But to take this last step into accepting what you have in the past repressed, one must have faith. One must believe that what one is doing is endowed with ultimate meaning. Dostoevsky says that only a faith in the living God can enable man to do this. For without God everything is permitted, including a rejection of the Good. The point about faith for Dostoevsky is that it is existential and not doctrinal.[33] This means that one does not concentrate all his energies on a belief that to him is abstract, and in reality divorced from the self. Rather, it is an experiential faith that literally requires a leap into life itself. It is at the core of one's heart that this decision of being must be made. For Dostoevsky the goal of this faith is union with God and it is the goal of all Christian life. It is a process which is begun in the here and now, and is "one made possible by man's participation in the divine energies which manifest in creation what is knowable of the essentially unknowable Triune God."[34] It is at the psychological point where one is capable of expiating one's sin that a decision between faith in life versus rejection back into comfort must be made. The rejection makes all that was once seen as potentially real to appear to be merely figments of the

imagination. The decision of faith is so difficult because it is so total, and because it demands total responsibility on the part of the individual.

The point of the story of the businessman is that his confession would have made the worldly life of his family miserable, due to the public knowledge of the event. But still the primacy of the truth must be served. The logic of this is sound because worldly comfort without knowledge of the eternal is ultimately worthless. To Dostoevsky, the living example this man had shown his family was infinitely more valuable than any worldly recognition of which his family may have been deprived. What matters is that he has set an example of strength and joy that must be followed, for the truth is never dependent on worldly riches or worldly justice. That which is beautiful and holy can never be sacrificed for that which is simply utilitarian. Worldly necessities are only aspects of the greater whole. Without an understanding of the truth they are in fact worthless.

The businessman almost did not have the strength; he almost killed Zossima in complete denial of the holy. But because he was sincerely trying, "grace" saved him. "Seek and ye shall find" is what the mystical Christian learns to understand according to Dostoevsky.

Once the Christian finds himself to be the "man within the man" he is considered part of the waking holy. He is in tune with the eternal. Without the eternal, life is only of the mind and of the body; what is missing is the soul.

Dostoevsky believed the modern educated man killed his capacity for active love because of his denial of the soul. The redeemed man, endowed with mind, body and heart, is cleansed of his unseen guilts and is now capable of living his life anew.

The Need to be Responsible "For All and Everything"

In order for redemption to be more than just a solitary process, man must also learn to redeem himself for the sins of others. One's expiation of one's personal sins is not the final and last step for an individual. Each man is responsible in the ultimate sense toward his brother. For Dostoevsky, according to Zossima's radical formula of Christian agape, life is one continual redemptive process. Man must continually realize that he is responsible for other people being blinded to the sublime and holy. As we shall explore more fully in the next chapter, it is this radical Christian stance that becomes a necessary link in the Dostoevskian ideal and which finally expresses itself through a Christian solidarity. It is this acceptance of universal guilt which is essential for Dostoevsky's moral order; without it his notion of salvation remains only a solitary affair.

> Do not say "sin is mighty, wickedness is mighty, evil environment is mighty, and we are lonely and helpless, and evil environment is wearing us away and hindering our good work from being done." Fly from that dejection children! There is only one means of salvation, then take yourself and make yourself responsible

> for all men's sins, that is your truth, you know friends, as soon as you make yourself responsible for everything and for all men, you shall see at once that it really is so, and that you are to blame for everyone and for all things. But throwing your indolence and impotence on others you will end by sharing the pride of Satan and murmuring against God.
> 35

It is up to the man who has gained knowledge of himself and who has acquired faith in life to try literally to save the world. For Dostoevsky, the truth of such a philosophy is that it does not preach an abstract truth of justice or morality. Rather, it calls for man to look inside himself and not flinch at what he sees. The man of knowledge loves all of life and this necessitates his trying to bring the same love out of others.

> Work without ceasing. If you remember in the night as you go to sleep, "I have not done what I ought to have done," rise up and do it. If the people around you are spiteful and callous and will not hear you, fall down before them and beg their forgiveness; for in truth you are to blame for their not wanting to hear you. And if you cannot speak to them in their bitterness, serve them in silence and humility, never losing hope. If all men abandon you and even drive you away by force, then when you are left alone fall on the earth and kiss it, water it with your tears and it will bring forth fruit even though no one has heard you in your solitude. Believe to the end, even if all men went astray and you were the only one faithful, bring your offering even then and praise God in your loneliness. And if two of you are together, there is a whole world, a world of living love. Embrace each other tenderly and praise God, for if only in you two, His truth has been fulfilled.
> 36

The political connotations of such an expression by Dostoevsky are dynamically and totally revolutionary. It is revolutionary because it is calling man to make a total commitment to self perfection. It is asking man to give up his comfort, to give up all aspects of himself that take part in the rejection and blanketing of life. It is a philosophy that is asking man to trade in what he owns in exchange for what he can be. It is a philosophy which states that the first real political act of man is an act of self repentance and redemption. To Dostoevsky, this ideal, which he believed mankind to be ultimately striving toward, was really the highest form of realism.

Dostoevsky's ideal of self perfection includes man's responsibility for establishing a genuine community of men. Self perfection is never reached in isolation but only by establishing a harmonious relationship with others. Self perfection includes radical humility and universal responsibility; without these notions man would not go beyond himself to seek salvation for others. The securing of the proper Christian attitude, i.e., acceptance of the fact that we really are to "blame for all and everything," is the very means by which man will be able to come together in Christian communion. A true Christian will blame himself for the fact that all men are not brothers sharing in God's vision and it is this situation he will spend his lifetime trying to rectify. It is to the explication of the idea that "each are responsible for all

and everything that we shall turn our attention in the next chapter.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER II

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2 Dostoevsky, The Possessed, p. 609.

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28 Ibid., p. 243.

29 Murry, Dostoevsky, p. 105.

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CHAPTER III

RADICAL HUMILITY AND CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD

> (The final Christian goal) is a fellowship with respect for national individualities, for their preservation, for the maintenance of complete liberty of men, with the indication of what liberty comprises, i.e., loving communion, guaranteed by deeds, by the living example, by the factual deed of brotherhood, and not under the threat of the guillotine, not by the means of chopping off millions of heads.
> [1]

The Personal Acceptance of Guilt for All Man's Sins as a Means to the Ideal Christian Order

The previous chapter has tried to show the type of vision and faith experience that Dostoevsky believed to be essential to leading a full, holy, and truthful life. But the most important aspect of that vision, at least as far as political theory is concerned, is the societal implications that the author of that vision intended to portray. While Dostoevsky does give his readers a very good general picture of what he viewed the ideal society to be and how it should be attained, as this chapter will attempt to show, he nevertheless failed to iron out some of the final details and intricacies of his social ideal. He was not clear or consistent with respect to certain obvious problems--the most

conspicuous one being the problem of how the Christian idealist should deal with violence, both political and otherwise, in his midst. While his Brothers Karamazov does seem to lean toward a Christian pacifist ideal, it is difficult to ignore various opinions expressed by him in the Diary of a Writer, which seem to run counter to the stand presented in the novel. In other words, much of his proposed free Christian brotherhood seems contradicted in the Diary by what appears to be only a narrow kind of political chauvinism. Although ideally politics is only a function of the religious attitude throughout all his works, including the Diary, often his actual political stance appears not to be derived from his religious ideal.

The preceding chapter focused primarily on Dostoevsky's ideas concerning the individual experience of the holy in creation. But the religious/political ideal was never seen to be something that was intended only for individuals standing alone amidst a mass of other individuals. Rather, the final religious/political expression was to be a shared experience of worship within a community.[2] The religious community of man freely coming together in a common faith and worship experience may not ordinarily be understood to have a direct and final connection with a political ideal. But it is precisely this connection that Dostoevsky wishes to convey as essential to any political community. In the modern West the concept of the religious

community is usually conceived of as something that should exist separately from the political order. Since the time of the Reformation this has been viewed as a protection of the individual's (or individual community's) rights. This was primarily a reaction to the relatively totalitarian mode of organization practiced by the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages. The point here is that it is a relatively alien notion in the post-reformation West to have a religious community as the ideal for the final political expression of the social order. When asked to name an intellectual figure in the West who corresponds roughly in thought to Dostoevsky's Christian ideal, one is hard pressed to find a name.

But Dostoevsky's stance is not hard to understand once we understand what it means to refer to him as an absolutist thinker. He could not accept a certain mode of being in one type of human endeavor and then another mode of being in another type of human activity. All human activity should be pervaded by one spirit, in his case the Christian stance of radical humility and active love in light of the holy in creation. For Dostoevsky, the state was not a separate entity of its own that could operate under different principles because of its unique position relative to men. Rather the state was made up only of men and its activities could not be considered essentially different from any other human activity. He had only contempt for the notion of "realist" politics and bitterly criticized

the West on this issue, with the brunt of the criticism being heaped upon the Catholic Church.[3] In order for politics to escape the "realist" trap, the individual men who made political decisions in the name of the state would have to begin acting in an idealistic manner. In other words, the ultimate political solution must start with the individual mode of being. There is no "external" political solution to the troubles of the world, only an "internal" one.[4]

Therefore, when speaking of the final political ideal, we must begin by speaking of the proper mode of being that ideally all people must engage. We have already spoken of the "objective" mystical or sublime vision and the means to attain to such an awareness in the previous chapter. We can now concentrate more fully on the relationships that man must begin to form with his fellow man, i.e., the "subjective" ideal which is illuminated by the joyous acceptance of the "objective" beauty and holiness of the world, and which is reflected in the idea that "each are responsible for all and everything."

Dostoevsky's ideal of the final goal for mankind was the creation of a universal free Christian brotherhood. Of course such an ideal was not going to come about merely by proclaiming it as an ideal, rather men were going to have to actively pursue it. It must begin with men who understand what it really means to be a Christian and who are

willing to seek for the purging of egoistic pride from the human heart. Dostoevsky believed that the biggest obstacle to a brotherhood of man was pride, or the reverse side of pride, humiliation. Man develops false pride as a defense against being humiliated, and thus, traps himself in a vicious circle of hurt and be hurt. The active Christian idealist must first devote his attention to the breaking of this barrier between men.

This theme is recurrent in Dostoevsky's writings and it is in the characters of Zossima and Alyosha that he is most successful in creating the type of individual who is capable of transcending the "vicious circle." The primary and essential characteristics of Zossima and Alyosha are a radical Christian humility and an active love. They are living embodiments of Zossima's exhortation that "each are responsible for all and everything" and both willingly took to heart the belief that all men share guilt with all other men for all sin. In the modern world of science and "realistic" politics, it is hard to imagine perceiving such a mode of being as an influential social force. But Dostoevsky believed it to be the ultimate social force and the only chance man had to attain to a brotherhood.[5] He followed the dictum that humiliation damns while humility sanctifies,[6] and from that assumption we can better understand Zossima's belief in the idea of universal guilt.[7]

Once one internalizes the humble assumption that <u>in fact</u> we all are equally guilty for all sins, then the subtle

humiliating force of moralism can never enter any situation. Moralism, as embodied in the character of Father Ferapont, is that attitude which, however subtly it may be hidden from the self, assumes a moral superiority over the next individual.[8] This is why Myshkin fails as a character where Alyosha succeeds, i.e., lurking behind his apparent benevolence was an aristocratic assumption of moral superiority.

In this context, another idea that men had to avoid besides moralism was determinism. While moralism implies that sin is the moral responsibility solely of the perpetrator, determinism claims that in reality there is no sin. Dostoevsky was a vehement opposer of such ideas and devoted a large portion of his Letters from the Underworld in satirical refutation of the followers of Cernyshevsky. Determinism, like moralism, was also seen to be an obstacle preventing the future establishment of a free brotherhood of man. If one operates under the assumption that ideal social behavior can be brought about through certain environmental factors, then one immediately precludes that essential fact about man which a free brotherhood assumes, i.e., his freedom. Dostoevsky had very little sympathy for deterministic philosophies of any kind precisely for this reason.

In his critique of the Russian criminal system, both in the Diary and his novels, Dostoevsky brings up the problem of moralism and determinism. In his opinion, the Russian criminal system seemed to vacilate between the two positions without

being able to transcend them or focus on the proper attitude. His critique of moralism as a proper mode to judge a criminal (or sinner) is clearly expressed in the trials of Raskolnikov and Dmitri, especially the latter. The emphasis from the prosecution's standpoint was, in both cases, on the sole guilt of the suspect. In modern Western individualistic society (if not all societies), it is usually assumed (except by the determinists) that when an individual commits a crime, the responsibility and guilt for that crime is his alone. But it is precisely this type of attitude which Dostoevsky saw as mistaken. In his "each are responsible for all and everything" formula, there is the assumption that there is much more to a criminal act than merely the finalization of that act. Crime and sin are often in the heart but only sometimes do they get expressed in action. Putting it in rationalistic form, his argument states that although the criminal is guilty, he is not solely guilty. If each one of us in our hearts truly lived a life of active love and Christian humility, then maybe the individual who committed the crime might not have found cause to do so in the first place. In other words, Dostoevsky meant to say that it is the prideful attitude which is the basis for the "segregation" between men. To take the attitude that one is morally superior to another because another has sinned serves only to perpetuate that "segregation." It is necessary to keep in mind that Dostoevsky's social ideal was a Christian brotherhood, and his number one priority was the eradicating of all obstacles which prevented such an ideal from occurring. In the personal

acceptance of guilt and responsibility for all sin, he believed that man would solve the segregating problem of moralism, as well as tear down all other barriers. Once a man learns to share equally all guilt, he will be able to move closer to others in a true spirit of agape. Once one assumes his own moral superiority in relation to another individual, the possibility of ever becoming as a brother to that individual is dismissed. Judging others morally inferior to oneself leads only to the perpetuation of the vicious circle of hurt and be hurt, and a brotherhood of man becomes an impossibility. The assumption is, of course, that each are finally saved only when all men are saved.

The other trap the criminal system fell prey to in Russia was its reliance on deterministic interpretations of crime. We see this clearly in the defense attorney's case for Dmitri's "innocence" and in articles from Dostoevsky's Diary.[9] Dostoevsky often complained about the attitudes of juries and defense lawyers in criminal cases. Either they would explain away crime by way of environmental causal explanations or they would claim that given the circumstances certain acts were understandable, even justifiable. But this type of reaction to the equally disasterous attitude of moralism was not what Dostoevsky had in mind either.

The point is that a sin is still a sin (or a crime is still a crime) and to say that no one is guilty is as false

as heaping all the guilt onto a single individual. In reality all men are guilty for mankind's present state. Man, both individually and as a unit, is guilty of the fact that God's paradise has been ignored. He shares guilt with his ancestors and his progeny for the failure to establish the final faith community in love. In order for man to begin rectifying this situation he must come to a realization of his own guilt. His act of redemption will be the tearing down of walls between men in a feeling of assumed brotherhood. Only through the true acceptance of shared guilt by all men, for all sin, in all its manifestations, can mankind move closer together and ultimately transcend sin altogether. It is this attitude only which is capable of tearing down barriers between all men, and without which a final Christian brotherhood becomes an impossibility.

Dostoevsky was intuitively aware of how difficult it would be to destroy this barrier between men. Men are always on the defensive against other men, always fearing some form of humiliation. In order to protect himself, he builds up internal defenses which become almost second nature to him. Realizing this, an active Christian must never give up nor ever become discouraged. An example of just what kind of attitude is necessary for the active Christian can be shown through the character of Alyosha. Alyosha's main activity is to give impulse toward the final Christian realization of a brotherhood of man.[10] He changes the world through a Christian mode of being, not through overt political

actions. The Christian revolution will not be one directed at external structures, but will be an invisible one which will transcend civilization's forms.[11] From the outside it may appear that no significant change is being made, but relationships between all people will become radically changed for the better precisely because of people like Alyosha. Dostoevsky's hope was that such a change was occurring in Russia and would eventually spread throughout the whole world.

Dostoevsky called Alyosha a person "who carries within himself the heart of the universal, while the rest of the men of his epoch have for some reason been temporarily torn from it, as if by a gust of wind..."[12] Alyosha is remarkable because he is a young man who is almost completely devoid of false pride or moralism. He seems almost incapable of not being open with all people, and this openness reflects both a firmness and gentleness of heart. He never morally condemns others, nor has he need for the defense mechanism which insists on the humiliation of others in order to restore one's own injured ego. His selflessness is so disarming to those around him that they are sometimes wary, fearing that maybe beneath it all he feels a moral superiority and that the guise of humility really protects a gargantuan ego. But Alyosha is no Stavrogin fantasizing about his great moral idea, but rather is a sincere and open individual.

An example of the disarmingness of Alyosha's personality and of the difficulties that Dostoevsky perceived in the breaking of the "vicious circle" can be shown in the chapter entitled "And in the Open Air," in which Alyosha is trying to persuade Illusha's father to take some money on behalf of Katrina Ivanovna. The Captain does not wish to take the money because he feels it is really an insult and only an attempt to buy off his honor. Alyosha's response is given purely, and he tries to show that man must learn to trust other men as their equals and to transcend any fear of humiliation.

> She told me to persuade you to take these two hundred roubles from her, as from a sister, knowing that you are in such need. No one will know of it, it can give no rise to unjust slander. There are two hundred roubles, and I swear you must take them unless--unless all men are to be enemies on earth. But there are brothers on earth ...You have a generous heart...you must see that, you must.
> 13

It is this kind of spirit, as typified by Alyosha, that man must learn to internalize in all endeavors for any final political solution to come about. It cannot be repeated too often that for Dostoevsky, the solving of man's political probems begins in the developing of the proper attitude among men. There can be no separation of certain types of endeavors from this proper Christian attitude. Agape was seen by Dostoevsky to be a social force and men like Alyosha would hopefully spread the word by their example.

The assumption, of course, is that active love breeds active love and self redemption, and that the perception of the sublime awareness can also be spread by such actions.

Ideally, once all men were to attain to the proper Christian spirit, the final community of men would transcend sin and guilt and be an existential union of worship in which God and mankind are joined together in one mystical union.[14] The walls that exist between men, and between man and God would be broken down. Man would come together in a free solidarity.[15] which no longer would be hindered by moral law, such as that practiced by Zossima's nemesis Ferapont. In fact, Dostoevsky viewed all law with suspicion, not in the sense of the symbolic meaning it may have meant to portray, but in the sense of its coercive force.[16] What will remain will be a free community of men, integrated by Christian agape, with a living comprehension of the holy paradise that is earth, and an existential faith in the divine principle of the Universe.

As is evident by now, Dostoevsky's conception of the final political/religious solution had little to do with greater material comforts, or even material necessity. But he ignores all notions of material welfare only in so far as he considers them secondary to the Christian experience. Obviously he was aware that man needs food and shelter to stay alive, but these necessities of themselves cannot be considered worthy political goals. First man must concentrate on his spiritual nature, or that essence which is

particularly human. To be concerned solely with that which is transitory is to be venial at best and it is to ignore that aspect of man which differentiates him from the animal.

Dostoevsky not only believed that man should seek the Christian ideal, but he also believed, as any true Christian does, that "the Church in the end must undoubtedly become the kingdom ruling over all the earth; of that we have the divine promise."[17] The Church, of course, represents the final community of worship. In other words, Dostoevsky had some prophetic ideas. It is this optimistic theme which pervades the whole of the Brothers Karamazov, and the book appropriately ends on such a note with "the boys" and Alyosha discussing eternity. The Christian ideal will be shared by all and for all time.

> 'Karamazov!' cried Kalya, 'can it be true that what's taught us in religion, that we shall rise from the dead and shall live and see each other again, all, Illusha too?'
> 'Certainly we shall rise again, certainly we shall see each other and shall tell each other with joy and gladness all that has happened.'
> 18

Coercive Power of the Ideal Christian Order

We have mentioned so far that the Christian ideal will be a Christian solidarity and that in order to attain to this final order, man must first break the "vicious circle" of hurt by accepting a radical humility which claims no

one morally superior to anyone else. This humility is epitomized by Zossima's remark that "each are responsible for all and everything." But the question still remains as to what the coercive authority of society would be when the final Christian solidarity (i.e., the Church) rules over all the earth. It is here that Dostoevsky becomes a little ambiguous and the reader is less certain as to the exact nature of society's coercive power.

First of all it must be realized that the final Christian solidarity will be a universal one. Despite Dostoevsky's great reputation as a nationalist, his ideal of a final order was one that transcended national boundaries. It is not that he believed in the viability of one world state or one world culture, but he did believe that the ultimate goal of man, to establish a Christian mode of being, would be shared throughout the world. In other words, that which is essential in man overrides any differences that may result from cultural dissimilarities. It is this universal brotherhood which he considered to be the final establishment of an ecumenical Church on earth.

For Dostoevsky, all men will be finally saved "through the universal communion in the name of Christ."[19] The Church would ultimately preclude all national prejudices; and the state, if it were to exist at all, would have no coercive authority but would only exist for organizational purposes. The Church would have all coercive authority

and in the end the "earthly state should become nothing else but a Church, rejecting every purpose incongruous with the aims of the Church."[20]

It is important to realize that from Dostoevsky's viewpoint there was a tremendous difference between the Church and state being one, and the Church standing alone as the final authority. His final goal was that the "state should end by being worthy to become only the Church and nothing else."[21] When the state exists as something other than the Church, it means that a separate coercive authority exists which claims the right to restrict a person's freedom given certain circumstances. Apparently, if the Church's principles ruled the world, there would be little or no restriction of human activity in the physically forcible sense, and what restrictions there would be would have as its end only the Christian redemption of the individual. "If there were none but the ecclesiastical court, the Church would not even now sentence a criminal to prison or to death. Crime and the way of regarding it would inevitably change..."[22] Of course, the Church would retain authority, but such authority would be of a religious nature. "If everything became the Church, the Church would exclude all the criminal and disobedient, and would not cut off their heads."[23] There would be another supposedly stronger coercive force than the fear of death or prison which would act on all sinners and criminals. This force would be the fear of being excluded from the Church of Christ. In the

old system, in which Church and state are separated, the criminal falsely feels that he has only sinned against the state and not the Church or community. "'I steal,' he says, but I don't go against the Church. I am not an enemy of Christ.'"[24] In the new system he will come to see that crime is in reality a sin against the Church. When the Church takes the place of the state, it will be difficult for the criminal, according to the Dostoevskian ideal, to put himself in opposition to a Church that is worldwide. He will not make the mistake of thinking himself right in the face of universal opinion which says otherwise. Therefore, it will be a function of the Church to renounce the "pagan attitude" of mechanically cutting off its tainted member for the preservation of society and to "completely and honestly adopt the idea of the regeneration of mankind."[25] Dostoevsky viewed the old form of treating criminals as not meaningful in any sense. The simple cutting off of a member of society does not lead to an existential realization of the proper mode of being. The only thing that does do this, as we have seen, is the recognition of sin by conscience. The new world order, as far as it is responsible toward its individual members, must be able to instill within its members sensitivity and insight so that each person will recognize in himself that which is sinful. Dostoevsky saw the hypersensitive Christian conscience as the only true and effectual deterent of sin.[26] "It is only by recognizing his wrong-doing as a son of a Christian society--

that is, of the Church--that he recognizes his sin against society--that is, against the Church."[27]

The problem that still remains here is that Dostoevsky does not specifically state how the Church would go about regenerating its individual members (though one would assume that all men would be the regenerators), nor does he discuss what type of action is justified in pursuing this end. In taking Zossima's speech in his drawing room as the final say on this issue, the reader is still not certain whether there will be "Christian anarchy"or if the Church, for the benefit of the individual, will forcibly restrain the individual transgressor in order that she may have him in her grasp. Ivan, in his discussion of ecclesiastical courts, appears to lean toward "Christian anarchy" and Zossima seems to be in agreement. But at one point Zossima says that "if society, as a Church, had jurisdiction, then it would know whom to bring back from exclusion and to reunite with itself."[28] At first glance it might appear that the statement has as its underlying assumption the belief that the Church does have a right to exclude physically transgressors from society, otherwise she could never bring them "back from exclusion." But the reader is uncertain as to exactly what Zossima means by the word exclusion. Seeing it as a follow up of the way Ivan uses the word, it can be easily seen to mean only spiritual, and not physical, exclusion.

In a sense this is a very important point. If society is allowed to force criminals to be excluded from itself

and not reunite them until they have come to the same type of religious understanding that the dominant society has, then that comes very close to proclaiming a totalitarian society as the ideal one. Dostoevsky never would have looked at it this way, because when speaking of the universal Church, he was operating under the assumption that all men already believe in the religious attitude of the dominant society. Therefore, the criminal would only have to realize that his particular transgression was wrong given his own religious assumptions. He would not have to change his world view. It was easy for Dostoevsky to make this assumption because he wrote in a Russia which he perceived to be nearly unanimously Orthodox. The point is that in speaking of the ideal order he assumed that all already were of one mind. But, nevertheless, it seems that "Christian anarchy" would be more consistent with the notion of free brotherhood, precisely because of the fact that man must remain spiritually free, even if that freedom is used to reject the truth. If a Church, as society, were in principle to exclude transgressors until they came around to the same view as the dominant force, they would be practicing a type of spiritual coercion which Dostoevsky vehemently criticized in revolutionary groups and the Catholic Church. It, therefore, would appear unlikely that physical exclusion is considered acceptable in the ideal Christian order according to Dostoevsky, though we cannot be sure.

But this raises another problem: How specifically does the Church go about regenerating the criminal and what would society, as Church, do with that murderer who chose not to be regenerated? This question is not answered in the Brothers Karamazov or anywhere else, and it is because of this that one author states that "his eschatology was symbolic of the hope of universal redemption, not a practical political catechism."[29] Calling his final ideal only symbolic of his hope for universal redemption solved the problem of the murderer by simply stating that Dostoevsky never really believed that such a final order could ever be established. This may very well be so, but it is hard to accept this given the fact that the whole of the Diary specifically states the hope for the final Christian realization on earth. This author believes that Dostoevsky definitely entertained the hope for such a result on earth, but that some of the more extreme implications of such a stance were not taken into consideration by him. Thus, the problem of what to do with a murderer was not thought out by Dostoevsky because he believed that given the virtual universality of a Christian mode of being, such acts would not even be considered.

Of course, this argument is necessary only if it is assumed that physical exclusion of the type practiced in the old order was considered prohibited when the Church rules in the future. As mentioned, given the ambiguity of Zossima and Ivan's language, this is an assumption that we cannot

be certain of. But whatever type of coercive authority Dostoevsky viewed as permissible in the ideal Christian state, he did pronounce a new way of viewing the transgressor within a society. A criminal is nothing other than a sinner against the Church, or Christian society (i.e., himself, man, God and creation) and the only just way of handling the situation is to help him to an existential awareness of his own transgression, through the instrument of the human conscience.

Dostoevsky was extremely optimistic as to the ultimate viability of such a system, yet also understood that such a system lay more in the future than in the present.

> What was said here just now is true too, that is, that if the jurisdiction of the Church were introduced in practice in its full force, that is, if the whole of society were changed into the Church, not only the judgments of the Church would have influence on the reformation of the criminal such as it never has now, but possibly also the crimes themselves would be incredibly diminished...It is true, said Zossima with a smile, that Christian society now is not ready, and is only now resting on some seven righteous men, but as they are never lacking, it will continue still unshaken in expectation of its complete transformation from a society almost heathen in character into a single universal and all-powerful Church.
> 30

Proper Attitude toward the Present Political Order

If "Christian society now is not ready" the question remains as to what one's actions and attitudes should be in relation to the present state, in light of the final ideal.

While Dostoevsky never explicates specifically what one's actions or attitudes toward the present state should be, he does leave us some room to infer. He also presents some inconsistencies.

It appears that, ultimately, Dostoevsky viewed institutional political forms as almost irrelevant. Therefore, one's attitude toward political forms, of themselves, present or future, would be almost one of indifference. What this means is that one's actions, if they are to lead ultimately to a final Christian society, should not be overly concerned with either propagating or negating various political forms. Political institutions can be viewed as an extraneous superstructure which, unfortunately, men take too seriously. There is only one way to perceive any government, and that is to realize that it is made up of men. Whether or not the Church, as society, exists in fact, one must operate under the assumption that it does. A state does not make political decisions, men do, and such men should be treated just like other men. When it comes, the final realization of the ideal will not be a result of coercive political force, but will result from the changes within men themselves. Therefore, the active Christian must first concern himself with teaching men how to be Christian and not worry about destroying or creating various political structures. The assumption, of course, is that once such a mode of being is internalized throughout mankind, that which is distasteful in political forms will disappear

of themselves.

The question still remains as to what specific actions are justified, or not justified, given the fact that the state often commits evil. Dostoevsky only partially answers this question in the character of Alyosha. We are confronted with a mode of being that is presented as an ideal, which, if imitated, will lead to the final realization of Christian society. But Alyosha is rarely confronted with the most difficult of moral decisions and, in ignoring this, Dostoevsky does not really let us know how to live in a state which does perform violent acts on its members. We know he is against violent means as a way to attain utopia[31] (as we shall see more fully in the following chapter), but we are not certain as to the defensive place of violence in an evil world. The only time Alyosha is confronted with a very difficult moral question, he fails to give the proper Christian answer.

> 'At him!' yells the general, and he set the whole pack of hounds on the child. The hounds catch him, and tear him to pieces before his mother's eyes!...I believe the general was afterwards declared incapable of administering his estates. Well--what did he deserve? To be shot? To be shot for the satisfaction of our moral feelings? Speak Alyosha! 'To be shot' murmured Alyosha.[32]

How, then, should an individual act in a state that perpetrates evil upon its members? From the Brothers Karamazov

the answer seems at first to be that one should strive to be the ideal Christian in the midst of what is horrible, and therefore one should not negate, but merely live the affirmative life of a Christian. This humility formula seems acceptable in most instances but somehow seems inadequate when dealing with violent acts against oneself or one's community. Is one allowed to defend oneself or one's people through the killing of others? If yes, how is this justified in conjunction with the ideal Christian formula "each are responsible for all and everything?" If no, how is one to rationalize the evil not resisted? What does one do with "the general?" Or more specifically, how does one stop him? These are some basic questions that Dostoevsky does not come to terms with in the Brothers Karamazov. Zossima himself risked his own life in a "duel" before he would consent to kill another. He would have permitted another to kill him before he would consent to kill another person. It is equally as difficult to imagine Alyosha killing another in order to defend himself. To do so seems inconsistent with the proper Christian spirit. But what about protecting another from the violent onslaught of a person like "the general," or a ruler like Stalin? If one lives with a world view as we have tried to describe, killing seems unjustified at all costs. But there do seem to be situations in which not killing results in an evil worse than if a killing were committed. It is unfortunate that Alyosha was not confronted with

such decisions, for his, and Zossima's, apparent radical pacifism was not tested in the ultimate of situations.

The political and moral ramifications of radical pacifism are potentially devastating. Any group of men willing to use violence in the coercion of others could dominate a pacifist people. Of course, a response to such a critique could be that such induced slavery would be trivial in comparison to the shared truth that those who supposedly are enslaved share. But it also means that mass political murder would have to be tolerated. Yet in reading the Brothers Karamazov, one does get the definite impression that radical pacifism is part of the ideal Christian mode of being, though one is never certain because Dostoevsky does not explicate all the moral possibilities. Still it seems justifiable to conclude that the Brothers Karamazov accepts pacifism, though it is seen to be a risk. But it is a risk founded in an existential faith that makes such a risk comparatively irrelevant.

In spite of the fact that the Brothers Karamazov seems to lean toward an acceptance of radical pacifism as a proper aspect of the Christian mode of being, in the Diary Dostoevsky apparently takes an entirely opposite stand. While still praising universal Christian brotherhood as the final evolution of man, his tone is less humble and his means seemingly less Christian. Assuming that his interpretation of the war situation with Turkey was correct,[33] Dostoevsky staunchly defended the right of

a community to go to war to defend itself, especially when the community was a standard bearer of the truth.[34] His arguments seem similar to the standard arguments of all nations, i.e., violence, at least in terms of self defense (but not aggrandizement) is justified. But even if he felt his war position was not inconsistent with the major theme of the Brothers Karamazov, Dostoevsky did not show us why this was so. While we have seen that radical pacifism creates a problem which a belief in the right of self defense solves, it is up to Dostoevsky to explain how such a war view can be justified given the ideal of radical humility typified by the statement "each are responsible for all and everything." Because Dostoevsky does not do this, he leaves us with apparently contradictory ideas. Subsequently, we do not have a consistent and thorough moral map from Dostoevsky, which otherwise would have answered the question of what actions are permissible in a state which commits evil upon its members. Rather than one answer he left us with two.

In closing this chapter we see that Dostoevsky left us some general principles which, if followed, would lead us to a final Christian order. He also described, in a general manner, what that order would be like. Finally, he left us some hints as to how men should regard the present imperfect state, in light of the final ideal. We have also seen that despite what he did leave us, there was also much that he left unsaid.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1 Dostoevsky, Diary, p. 582.

2 Gibson, Religion of Dostoevsky, p. 53.

3 Ibid., p. 255.

4 Ivanov, Freedom and the Tragic Life, p. 166.

5 Westbrook, Greatness of Man, p. 104.

6 Andre Gide, Dostoevsky, trans. by Louise Varese (New York: New Directions Paperback, 1961), p. 81.

7 Cf. Hannah Arendt,"Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility," in Guilt: Man and Society, ed. by Roger W. Smith (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1971), pp. 255-67. See also Karl Jaspers, The Question of German Guilt, trans. by E. B. Ashton (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961).

8 Gibson, Religion of Dostoevsky, p. 55.

9 Dostoevsky, Diary, p. 53.

10 Ivanov, Freedom and the Tragic Life, p. 53.

11 Ibid., p. 154.

12 Dostoevsky, Brothers Karamazov, Preface.

13 Ibid., p. 246.

14 Gibson, Religion of Dostoevsky, p. 53.

15 Ibid.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III (continued)

16 Ibid.

17 Dostoevsky, Brothers Karamazov, p. 69.

18 Ibid., p. 940.

19 Dostoevsky, Diary, p. 1029.

20 Dostoevsky, Brothers Karamazov, p. 70.

21 Ibid., p. 71.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., p. 72.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., p. 73.

29 Sandoz, Political Apocalypse, p. 235.

30 Dostoevsky, Brothers Karamazov, p. 74.

31 Sandoz, Political Apocalypse, p. 145.

32 Dostoevsky, Brothers Karamazov, p. 288.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III (continued)

33 For our purpose, it only matters that Dostoevsky thought he was correct.

34 Dostoevsky, Diary, p. 666.

CHAPTER IV

REJECTION OF VIOLENCE AS A MEANS TO THE IDEAL CHRISTIAN ORDER

> ...our destiny is universality acquired not by the sword but by the force of brotherhood and our brotherly longing for fellowship of men.[1]

Christian Means as Christian Ends

The problem of evil in history and the acceptable Christian ways of eradicating it are a definite concern to Dostoevsky in his consideration of a proper mode of political action. Of all the issues one could write about concerning the thought of Dostoevsky, it is the question of violence and its role in the establishment of an ideal political order which appears most open to possible counter interpretations. The question for this chapter is: to what degree did Dostoevsky sanction the use of violence and coercive force in the establishment of the ideal Christian order? It is very easy to take some of Dostoevsky's arguments concerning Russia's war policy and interpret them to mean that he did conceive of violence as a viable means in the establishment of the final order. Yet this author would have to disagree with such a conclusion. For even in his most rabid war pronouncements, he never justified violent worldwide coercive measures as a means to invoke his particular vision of the ideal world.

He always justified the war in terms of defense and continued to maintain that the Christian vision could only be spread by example and love. It was precisely this type of violent action which he attributed to revolutionary groups and the Catholic Church and was a primary reason why he was so critical of them. So however one might try to draw opposite conclusions concerning Dostoevsky's ideas on the place of violence in the establishment of the final peace on earth, as an idealist Dostoevsky always vehemently opposed such arguments. It will be the purpose of this chapter to explore some of the reasons violence was rejected as a means to a Christian finalization; to explore the argument, as embodied in Ivan, for the acceptance of violence and coercion; and to point out how Dostoevsky left us with still more inconsistencies and ambiguities concerning his thoughts on the place of violence in a Christian mode of being.

From a Dostoevskian viewpoint, as we have seen from the last chapter, the final world order is reached when the Church, or a Christian brotherhood of man, rules over all the earth. This will finally occur when all individual men freely come together in love and in common worship of a loving God. As can easily be seen, the initial problem is that if man, with his inherent freedom, never decides freely to choose to come together in love and common worship, then the ideal order can never be established on earth. In other words, as long as men are permitted to deny the Good,

the Good will never come about until all men individually decide that it should come about. Yet it is this position that Dostoevsky optimistically supports and from which he criticizes all violent utopian schemes. Not only, then, did Dostoevsky criticize the goals of the revolutionary groups of his time, but he also criticized the means by which they sought to obtain them. He assumed that the Kingdom of God could not be built by force of empire, but only by faith, hope and love through the redeeming grace of Christ.[2] There can be no coercion for the sake of the Good and no earthly power to force subjugation in its name.[3] To Dostoevsky, it was the external Christian who only held to the word (but in reality is not regenerated internally), who is the one likely to propagate the faith by force. This critique of coercion was the major force behind the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor,[4] and was also a dominant theme behind the story of The Possessed.

There are difficulties which arise when one does proclaim the ends of a social movement as prior to the means by which those ends are achieved. Once one proclaims a given end of utmost importance, and likewise believes in a cold, logical pursuit of that utopia, almost anything will be permitted in light of that given end. As in the personal case of Raskolnikov, the great idea commanded all attention and service, even if one had to kill in order to remain faithful to it. To Dostoevsky, men fell victim to this type of attitude when they become abstracted from life

itself and caught up in the pursuit of that ideal at the expense of living it.

It is this type of attitude which Camus satirizes in a kind of black humor, though tragic manner, in his play Caligula. Camus portrays the absurd consequences that an isolated logic can imply when it is carried to the extreme. The main character of the play, Caligula, responds to his subordinate's claim that the Treasury is of utmost importance:

> Now, listen well, you fool! If the Treasury has paramount importance, human life has none. That should be obvious to you. People who think like you are bound to admit the logic of my edict, and since money is the only thing that counts, we should set no value on their lives or anyone elses. I have the power to enforce my will. Presently you will see what logic is going to cost you. I shall eliminate contradictors. If necessary, I'll begin with you.[5]

One's initial reaction to such a statement is that the man is obviously just being sadistic and that he is using his superior mind and will to torment those around him by turning their own presuppositions against them. One would probably be correct in that type of interpretation, but not all logical demands which appear just as brutal can be considered in that manner. On the contrary, Caligula shows the potential horror that can be justified in the logical pursuit of an end that is considered to be of "paramount importance." Despite its sadistic and absurdist overtones, it nevertheless lays out the

possibilities; and after reading a quote by a real and heroically sincere revolutionary, V. I. Lenin, one realizes that Camus was being no more extreme in his expression of the potentialities of a revolutionary logic driven to the extreme, than was Lenin, an actual successful leader of the revolutionary thrust in Russia. Lenin stated in the first months after the Bolshevik coup d'etat:

> Why should we be squeamish about the sacrifices to our righteous cause?... It does not matter if three-fourths of mankind is destroyed; all that counts is that ultimately the last quarter should become Communist... Later centuries will justify the cruelties to which circumstances have forced us. Then everything will be understood, everything.
> 6

As we can see, the reality takes logic further than even Camus' imagination can take us. When logic is carried out to such an absurd extent, one's personality is forged in dedication to a principle and all must be fit into the logical scheme. It is more than the pursuit of a mere logical idea, it is a dedication that is pushed on by a passionate will. In the case of Caligula, his idea is pushed on by a deep bitterness; in the case of Lenin we see all being justified by History for the sake of a glorious future. One is tempted to make the statement that leaders of this type are men who either believe more than anyone else or disbelieve more than anyone else, for their certainty is one that does not hesitate.

Dostoevsky rarely accused revolutionary idealists of being evil men. We have already mentioned that Dostoevsky felt many of the young revolutionaries to be of a sincere and honest nature. He thought of those in the revolutionary movement as misguided idealists, who literally lived in the pursuit of an idealistic end. So when Shigalov in The Possessed refused to take part in the murder scene, the reader finds out that it is not because he has shown compassion for Shatov, but rather because the murder did not fit into his particular system. Shigalov, too, is an example of an attempt to parody this type of mind. He is the ultimate believer in the correctness and necessity of his goals; and he, therefore, never questions the means by which they are pursued. For men such as he, morality is a consideration only when discussing ends, but never when discussing means. For idealistic goals to remain the ultimate good, a certain passion and slightly mad will is needed to sustain it. For logic to be king, life has to be sacrificed in subordination to it, and it is this which Dostoevsky could not sanction.

If the Good cannot be forcibly obtained, then by necessity there is much evil in the world that the Christian must accept.[7] He also knows that the world is far from being ready freely to choose to come together in light of the Christian truth. In spite of Dostoevsky's declared hopes of the Christian communion coming about soon, at least in the Slavic world, Zossima's more sombre remark concerning

the fact that there are only "seven righteous men in all of Russia" is more reflective of Christian realism. The world will continue to exist and, for a while at least, evil will continue to exist right along with it. But the true active Christian cannot commit violent or evil acts in the pursuit of creating a system in which evil is eliminated. Yet either way the Christian seems to lose. If he does nothing, the evil remains; and if he uses violence, he becomes the perpetrator of evil. The solution lies in somehow trying to eradicate the evil while avoiding all pitfalls that merely would add to the dilemma.

For a Christian, the same ideals must be followed in the pursuit of a given ideal as in the mode of being of the ideal itself.[8] The Dostoevskian assumption is that when one kills from a Christian commitment, he is in fact already denying that commitment. For a Christian, considerations of agape should supercede all other considerations.[9] If the Christian does not kill, it often appears that everything will go on the same; yet if he does kill, he destroys the very foundation that the future of his ideal is set upon.

Men can never deify the future by sacrificing individual men for the future's revival. If he does so, then the Christian is acting in a paradoxical manner. That which begins as a protest against suffering, ends by promoting the very suffering he has vowed to eradicate. The danger is that the utopian ideal will become an end in itself beyond and above the values of humanity. The Grand

Inquisitor has renounced any eternal value in the name of historical harmony only. For the Christian, the only absolute principle is that of agape which, when it becomes universal, will lead to that utopia which violent action tries to bring about through coercion. But for Dostoevsky, utopia could never be brought about by force.[10] For him, the ideal future can only be brought about by living the ideal in the present. Before there can be universal brotherhood, all men must, in fact, become as brothers. Coercion can never change the internal relations between men and can only succeed in bringing about, as in The Grand Inquisitor, the huddled fear of Seville. For Dostoevsky, Christian love set limits to human behavior; he therefore rejected murder and, subsequently, revolutionary action as proper Christian vehicles. It was in this sense that Dostoevsky believed that there was no final political solution outside of the religious internal solution to man's dilemma.[11] A Christian is not historically oriented in the sense that he gives ultimate meaning to a final historical condition beyond what that condition means to individual men. A political revolutionary works against the past for the future, while a Christian works in the present out of love for God and his fellow man.[12]

Therefore, the Christian must to some extent accept the existence of suffering in the world as inevitable, that is, until the final realization of the Christian community.

In the theories of Shigalov and the Grand Inquisitor, the assumption is that one must coerce people in order to remove suffering from the world. But Christianity is concerned with the spiritual revolution and accepts the inevitability of evil in the world, while at the same time rejecting it as contrary to the will of God. In order for men to ever reach a Christian ideal, they must have the freedom to reject it, or that very ideal becomes an impossibility. The type of coercion practiced by all revolutionary and totalitarian groups runs counter to this idea.

The only question that remains is to what degree did Christians have to accept evil according to Dostoevsky? To put it in a simple and straightforward form, would a Christian be allowed to kill in order to prevent the murder of a child, if killing were the only possible way? While such a question may seem like a simple moral problem, its solution is very basic to what Dostoevsky considered the proper mode of being for a Christian. If the answer were yes, then from that first step one could draw up a whole system justifying violence in the defense of human life. Such a justification would have obvious political ramifications, especially when the state is the initiator of the violence.

But such specific questions are not answered by Dostoevsky. While violence for the sake of defense is an issue in the Diary, it is not in the Brothers Karamazov, and

it is the latter book in which a Christian mode of being is explicitly presented. If Dostoevsky did consider violence as having some place in the Christian mode of being, he never gave an explicit justification for it in terms of agape.

But since we can be sure that Dostoevsky always criticized the use of violence in the creation of the ideal order, it means that given the nature of the world, there will at least be some evil which the Christian must tolerate. Until the final Christian realization becomes fact, man's freedom will always lead to certain iniquities or horrors--unless freedom of action and thought are totally annulled through the creation of a totalitarian state. By the very nature of God's world, man is free to commit evil. It is this fact which Ivan Karamazov cannot accept. He views the world as meaningless in its essence and opts instead for the totalitarian state of the Inquisitor. Rather than the non-violent means of Zossima or Alyosha, Ivan chooses violent coercion, both in the establishment and operation of the final world order.

Ivan's Rebellion

> There's a book here in which I read about the trial of a Jew, who took a child of four years old and cut off the fingers from both hands, and then crucified him on the wall, hammered nails into him and crucified him, and afterwards, when he was tried, he said that the child died soon, within four hours. That was soon! He said that the child moaned, kept on moaning and he stood admiring him...

> Sometimes I imagine that it was I who crucified him. He would hang there moaning and I would sit opposite him eating pineapple compote. I am awfully fond of pineapple compote. Do you like it?
> 13
>
> It's not that I don't accept God, you must understand, it's the world created by Him I don't and cannot accept. Let me make it plain. I believe like a child that suffering will be healed and made up for, that all the humiliating absurdity of human contradictions will vanish like a pitiful mirage, like the despicable fabrication of the impotent and infinitely small Euclidian mind of man, that in the world's finale, at the moment of eternal harmony, something so precious will come to pass that it will suffice for all hearts, for the comforting of all resentments...(it will make possible the justification) of all that has happened with men--but though all that may come to pass, I don't accept it. I won't accept it.
> 14

Within Ivan Karamazov, the metaphysical star of Dostoevsky's Brothers Karamazov, one finds an embodiment of the struggle between the search for ultimate reality and the demands of earthly "bread." Through him we see all the salient issues that have to do with the ultimate justification of seeking truth, and what this truth must necessarily entail. The solving of his dilemma will be one of either accepting the beatific vision of harmony or rejecting it in the name of justice on earth. Or to put it even more simply, it is a question of accepting God or accepting the goals and tenets of a socialist revolution. It is in Ivan that we see Dostoevsky's true

understanding of the issues on a much deeper plane than most of the socialists of his era understood. In Ivan we have a rejection, not of the dogmatic assertion of God, but rather of the universal harmony and bliss of his creation at the end of time. Ivan is actually torn between the acceptance or rejection of a Christian mode of being with full understanding and knowledge, because he feels the price that man has to pay is too high. He bases his defense, not on man who has a free choice to accept or reject and suffer the consequences, but on the suffering of innocent children who by the very nature of freedom are destined to suffer by man's choice of evil. Ivan rejects the very meaning of God's creation and dedicates himself to a new order in which the innocents will not be forced to suffer. For him the basic question is: How can one find meaning in a creation in which innocents are treated so cruelly?

Ellis Sandoz gives his interpretation of Ivan's rebellion in his book Political Apocalypse. He describes Ivan as being endowed with feeling, a sympathy of a grandiose and all embracing kind of idealism and nobility of soul. What he lacks is faith in the significance of existence as given. It is not that he rejects God, but instead he challenges him by denying the order of His creation and His revelation in Christ.[15] What is fantastic about this rejection and makes it so much more powerful than any so-called normal rejection is that he does so with full

knowledge of what he is rejecting. Ivan's rebellion is not just against earthly authority, but it is a revolt against what IS. In a way it is a pride that borders on insanity and Dostoevsky means to show this by Ivan's mental breakdown before and after Dmitri's trial. Ivan accepts the divinity and is even moved by the encounter, and yet "he adhers to his idea."

Salvation is a process of becoming divine,[16] yet Ivan still rejects it in the name of a more just system. He rejects it because built into the basic harmony of the universe is the freedom of man. This freedom means that man can choose to ignore and escape from the implications of a joyous affirmation of life. The implication man fears the most is the full acceptance of his own physical death as part of the harmony of life. He rejects all of life in the attempt to find security in an isolated personal life. In his rejection, which is ultimately a free choice, man loses his awareness and can be seduced by ideas, money, comfort, sex, cruelty and anything else which will help keep his awareness of the rejection repressed. As a result, man, in his blindness and freedom, sometimes commits cruelties against innocent children. By the very nature of the universe and by the very nature of man's freedom, this is "allowed" to happen. It is in defense of these innocent children, whom Ivan claims should not have to suffer, that he bases his whole rebellion against God. Because men are weak, they continue to perpetrate evil on each other in an

endless round of ignoring the Good. Ivan can accept the fact that free men suffer at each other's hand. Generally speaking he does not consider such suffering to be a case of divine injustice for he believes man has denied himself salvation through his own free will; i.e., if man suffers, he does so because of his own sin. But Ivan cannot accept the fact that the children must suffer for the sins of adults, for it is the children who are free of all sin.

> If they, (the children) too, suffer horribly on earth, they must suffer for their fathers' sins; they must be punished for their fathers who have eaten the apple: this reasoning is of the other world and is incomprehensible for the heart of man here on earth. The innocent must not suffer for another man's sins and especially such innocents!
> 17

> I say nothing of the grown up people, they have eaten the apple, damn them and the devil take them all! But these little ones!
> 18

Since the ultimate truth and harmony is based on the free acquiescence of the self to life and all its manifestations, it follows that everything must be freely accepted, even the death of oneself. One can only live life, says Dostoevsky, by loving, accepting and forgiving. Ivan can accept the fact that men suffer because they have knowledge of good and evil, but he asks, why must the children suffer? What have they to do with the knowledge of good and evil? If man must be free in order to take

part in the eternal harmony, then Ivan claims that it is not worth it. Says Ivan to Alyosha,

> Imagine that you are creating a fabric of human destiny with the object of making men happy in the end, giving them peace and rest at last, but that it was essential and inevitable to torture to death only one tiny creature--that baby beating its breast with its fist, for instance--and to found that edifice on its unavenged tears, would you consent to be the architect on those conditions? Tell me, and tell me the truth. No I wouldn't consent, said Alyosha softly.[19]

Ivan could not accept the fact that man's place in the eternal scheme of things had to include the possibility of evil being done to the innocents. Ivan could never justify this, even if at the end of creation all sinners and those sinned against stand up and embrace, rejoicing in the revealed word of God. He will not accept the terms of existence if it is dependent on such precepts.

Ivan did not believe that divine harmony was capable of reconciling man's injustice to man, and so in the absence of eternal harmony, man is forced back to a purely temporal solution: the ecclesiastical justice of the Grand Inquisitor. The enforced harmony of the state takes over from divine harmony.[20]

In his Legend Ivan renounces the Christian goal of spreading brotherhood through active love (as embodied in Alyosha) and chooses instead a totalitarian world order to put man into line. Though at the expense of man's freedom and salvation, the price is not too high.

God's world is already absurd to Ivan. His solution, apparently, will at least lead to the eradication of evil done to innocents; in that sense it is better than the world God offered man. Man is too weak to handle the responsibility of his freedom, so Ivan does the world a favor by taking that freedom away from him.

Of course, Dostoevsky rejects Ivan's solution. He does so not by argumentation or explanation (for those are the tools of the rational mind), rather he rejects it in favor of faith in God's creation and a deep love for man. He rejects it in favor of trying to make all men as brothers, freely choosing to expiate their sins by sharing in the guilt of mankind's past offenses and by coming together in Christian love. Dostoevsky's response to Ivan is faith and love, thus Christ's kiss to the Inquisitor mirrored by Alyosha's kiss to Ivan. In that kiss we have Dostoevsky's affirmation of faith in the "internal" Christian revolution. Faith in God and the meaning of his universe makes Ivan's solution untenable.

Violence and Self Defense

This chapter has tried to discuss the type of actions that Dostoevsky considered wrong in the pursuit of the Christian ideal and also the rationalistic moralistic argument, as embodied in Ivan, that denies the validity of that stance. It has tried to show that Dostoevsky believed

violence and murder to be wrong when used in the pursuit of the ideal order. But, unfortunately, this still does not answer all the questions concerning what Dostoevsky considered to be the proper Christian parameters for political action. So far I have been operating under the assumption that the active pursuit of a stated moral end, and self defense (individually or communally) in the face of evil, are two completely separate types of activities. I have made this separation because Dostoevsky apparently made the same separation--Dostoevsky vehemently supported Russia's involvement in a war with Turkey as an example of self defense for a truth-bearing people, but he vehemently opposed the idea that a nation (particularly Russia) had a right to coerce people through violence in order to establish a certain moral order.

The problem is that the two types of activities are not as completely separated as they might first seem. But before the argument is continued it must be stated that it would not be necessary in the first place if it were not for Dostoevsky's war policy. We have already stated that it seemed incongruous with the type of Christian mode of being pronounced in the Brothers Karamazov. We have also stated in the previous chapter that the radical pacifism that appeared to be idealized in the Brothers Karamazov would lead to problems that would be solved if killing in self defense could be accepted as

justifiable. But this is not an issue in the Brothers Karamazov and the only time it becomes an issue for Dostoevsky is in the Diary. The problem is that the two modes of being are not put in synchronization, and upon reading the Diary and the Brothers Karamazov, the reader is left confused as to the place of violence, if any, in a Christian mode of being. In this chapter I have discussed Dostoevsky's critique of violent modes of being to reach a utopian end, ignoring his declared "defensive" war policy under the assumption that defensive acts of violence are different from those which seek a change in the political system. But besides the ambiguity that already exists in Dostoevsky's thought concerning the place of violence in self defense, we now have the added ambiguity which results from the fact that defensive measures cannot always be so clearly separated from "offensive" ones. For example, if a dictator, such as Stalin, were to decide to eradicate half of Russia, wouldn't the only defense be the active violent overthrowing of his regime in the name of a higher moral standard? We would have the problem of calling a revolution a defensive act. We can look to Dostoevsky and find completely opposite answers as to the proper solution to the problem of a Stalin-type bloodbath. On the one hand, we can look to his war policy as a precedent for the use of violence; yet on the other hand, we can look to Zossima and the many pronouncements in the Diary as precedent for denouncing the use of violence

in the name of a higher moral order.

Dostoevsky could have solved this problem by stating exactly when violence was permissible and why. Instead he simultaneously declared it impermissible in the ideal of Zossima and in his pronouncements against coercion as a viable means to utopia, while at the same time declaring that "war is not always a scourge, sometimes it is salvation."[21] We can only conclude that Dostoevsky never clearly thought out (either that or never accepted) the various ramifications of the Christian mode of being he idealized in the Brothers Karamazov, nor did he clearly think out the ramifications of declaring a war policy justifiable while also claiming that morality and brotherhood can never be coercively established.

Unfortunately there is no final statement that can be made about Dostoevsky's ideas on the place of violence and coercion in a Christian mode of being. He never specifies in a consistent fashion when, if ever, it is permissible. The reader is left to draw various conclusions from varying images. We know he believed that violence could never be used to establish his Christian ideal, but implied in any defense against violence is the assumption that one is fighting for, if only out of necessity, the establishment of a higher moral order. Things would have been simpler for the student of Dostoevsky if Dostoevsky were against the Russian-Turkish war, as was Tolstoi. Then the logical step could easily be

made from the Brothers Karamazov that radical Christian pacifism is necessarily part of the Christian mode of being. Though the ramifications would be obvious, at least it would have been comprehensible given the fact of Christ. From that we could clearly see why coercion and violence could never be justified. But this is not the case, and the student is left without a comprehensible moral system. He is left trying to decipher what appears to be a peculiar code--only to come up empty handed.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1 Dostoevsky, Diary, p. 979.

2 Sandoz, Political Apocalypse, p. 161.

3 Ibid., p. 162.

4 Ibid., The whole book is dedicated to this idea.

5 Albert Camus, Caligula and Three Other Plays, trans. by Stuart Gilbert (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), p. 12.

6 Sandoz, Political Apocalypse, pp. 21-22.

7 Garrett Green, A Kingdom Not of this World, Stanford Honors Essay in Humanities No. VIII, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), pp. 3-9.

8 Ibid., p. 10.

9 Ibid., p. 15.

10 Dostoevsky, Diary, p. 563.

11 Green, Kingdom, p. 27.

12 Ibid., p. 28.

13 Dostoevsky, Brothers Karamazov, p. 710.

14 Ibid., pp. 279-81.

15 Sandoz, Political Apocalypse, p. 53.

16 Ibid., p. 145.

NOTE TO CHAPTER IV (continued)

17 Dostoevsky, Brothers Karamazov, p. 282.

18 Ibid., p. 287.

19 Ibid., p. 291.

20 Peace, Dostoevsky, p. 270.

21 Dostoevsky, Diary, p. 666.

Chapter V

RUSSIA; THE HISTORICAL SAVIOR

> We should become convinced that the genuine social truth resides in no one else but our people, that their idea, their spirit contains the living urge of universal communion of men.
> 1

Five Themes from the 'Diary of a Writer'

In spite of Dostoevsky's apparent uncertainty and confusion about the place of violence in a Christian mode of being, he tries to justify the Russian-Turkish war through his belief that the Russian people were the standard bearers of the Christian truth. Dostoevsky not only believed that man should seek the Christian ideal and that ultimately it would be attained on this earth, but he also believed that Russia, in union with her Slavic brothers, would be the historical link to the final Christian realization of mankind. This theme was a dominant one throughout his works. It is the prophetic message that lies "hidden" in The Possessed, and it is the overt message that is written on virtually every page of the Diary of a Writer.

When writing about the political thought of Dostoevsky, one cannot exclude the messianic aspect of his message. One cannot extract what one likes from his thought and then

explain away the rest in a footnote. It is often the case that a critic will expound on Dostoevsky's ideas, while barely acknowledging his belief in Russia as the carrier of the world ideal.[2] He is often seen as a Christian idealist who unfortunately happened to get carried away by a nationalistic fervor. But if one is going to consider all aspects of his political thinking, it is impossible to ignore his ideas on Russia's special role in the universal scheme of things. By discounting his nationalism, one is ignoring one of his most passionate themes, and by doing so one perceives only an altered vision of Dostoevsky's thought. It is for this reason that I have devoted a chapter to his nationalistic beliefs, and see them not as an anomaly but rather as an integral part of his thought.

There are six major themes which are dominant throughout the Diary, his most representative nationalistic work.[3] The first theme stresses Russia's particular place in history as a peaceful server of mankind and her messianic duty as the unifier and leader of the world. The second theme emphasizes Russia's internal consensus and inward unification as opposed to Europe's dissension and corrosion. The third theme concerns itself with the peculiar Russian ability for universal consciousness; while the fourth theme calls for the Russian intelligentsia to turn from its Western ways and once again reunite with the common people. The fifth theme deals with Dostoevsky's particular

anti-Western attitude; and the sixth theme points out the need for a Pan-Slavic union, including Russian control of Constantinople.

It should be relatively clear by now how Dostoevsky felt about the importance of religion for the life of a people. What may not be as clear is the historical importance Dostoevsky placed in Russia's action or being as a nation. Russia was the bed of Orthodoxy, and therefore, the bearer of the "new word." But unlike some other nationalistic beliefs in the greatness of one's own nation, Dostoevsky did not believe Russia's truth could either be segregated from other nations or forced upon them through violence. It was by the very nature of her truth that such attitudes were precluded. Russia sought not to conquer the world, but only brotherly communion with all other nations.

> ...Not only shall we not seize and take away anything from Europe, but the fact itself that we shall greatly strengthen ourselves (through the alliance of love and brotherhood) will, finally, enable us not to draw the sword...but to reveal an example of sincere peace.
> 4

In proclaiming Russia's power and defending her action against the Turks, Dostoevsky points out that Russia's desires as a nation were not political, but rather religious in nature. Europe feared Russia as a nation because she had consistently misunderstood her intentions. Russia's first and primary interest was to serve man in the true spirit of

Christian brotherhood. Russia's messianism is taught by example and not by the sword.[5] Her most important interest as a nation was this religious and universal quest for communion of all men, for just as the solution to a nation's political problems is solved through a Christian mode of being, so also are the world's political problems.[6]

> We shall be the first to announce to the world that we seek to achieve our own welfare, not through the suppression of national individualities alien to us, but on the contrary, that we perceive our welfare in the freest and most independent development of all other nations and in brotherly communion with them.
> [7]

Russia will be the first to reach out her hands toward Europe and she "shall maintain spiritual intercourse with them, teaching them and learning from them, up to the time when mankind, as a grand and beautiful tree, having attained full maturity and universal brotherhood with the fellowship of all peoples, shades with itself the happy earth."[8]

The reason Europe should never fear Russia as an enemy is that Russia was already at peace with herself. Outside of the small intelligentsia, Russia already had a true political unity.[9] She, therefore, did not need to sublimate an inner confusion toward a falsely proclaimed external enemy. From Dostoevsky's eyes, the Christian ideal and vision had so permeated the Russian spirit that

he conceived of Russia as the most democratic and unified of all nations. Because he conceived her demos to be contented, as opposed to Europe's unsatisfied proletarians, Russia was destined to prove stronger than any other nation in Europe. Europe, because of her lack of true religious spirit, will be destroyed, but not by the Russia she unjustly fears. Rather by the

> unsatisfied democratic tendencies of an enormous portion of their lower class subjects--their proletarians and paupers...In Russia this cannot happen, our demos is content and, as time goes on, it will grow even more content because everything tends toward this condition...And, therefore, there will remain on the continent but one colossus--Russia.
> [10]

Russia is not only the light of the world, but the rest of the world (most specifically Europe), through its failure to understand the true nature of the proper spirit of man, will collapse of its own accord.

Of course, Russia does not rejoice at such prospects, for her final happiness is dependent on the happiness of the rest of the world. Only in Russia is there a universal consciousness. Dostoevsky believed that one of the ways this was reflected was the fact that only Russia was able to understand the art of all other nations, while her art was not truly understood in other parts of the world.[11] The most universal of artists in this homeland of universalists was Pushkin--to Dostoevsky a prophet who first

understood Russia's historical mission. It was he above all others who realized "the fact that the conception of the universality of man is the principle personal characteristic and designation of a Russian."[12] Pushkin was the universal genius who realized that the ultimate goal of Russian life was to seek harmony with all men. He was representattive of the Russian faculty for universalism.

Pushkin was also the first to realize that the intelligentsia in Russia had gone astray by looking toward Europe for her spiritual leadership when the truth lay within her bosom. It was in the Russian peasant's unquestioning and uncynical faith that truth lay. It was the responsibility of the intelligentsia to shake their pride and to bow down to the people in symbolic acquiescence to their humble yet ultimate truth. As early as 1860, with the publication of Time, his ideas of the peasant as the life-giving force was evident.[13] He believed that once one was uprooted from the soil, as was the intelligentsia, one became only a parody of oneself.[14] For Dostoevsky, all of Russia's internal problems could be traced to the intelligentsia's divorcing itself from the truth of the common people. In his novels, Stavrogin and Ivan are two characters who epitomize the disease Dostoevsky felt was most endemic to the intelligentsia. To this wayward class Dostoevsky pleads, "believe in the people's spirit, await salvation from it alone, and you will be saved."[15]

At first it might seem that such nationalistic proclamations by Dostoevsky are really nothing more than remarks of a most chauvinistic kind. While this is partially true, it does not tell the whole story. From his way of thinking, being a staunch Russian "nationalist" really meant nothing more than being a universalist. A true Russian, such as Zossima and Alyosha, seeks after the brotherhood of all men with faith in Jesus Christ and a living vision of the paradise that is earth. In his ideal he is anything but a chauvinist, although in his perception of who alone was the guardian of this ideal one must conclude that he was overly optimistic as to Russia's place in the universal scheme of things. Though he sometimes seems more concerned with how great Russia is because of her universalism, rather than universalism itself, still, as an ideal, he never abandons the notion of universal brotherhood.

While criticizing the intelligentsia, Dostoevsky did not conclude that they had nothing to offer Russia. While the people were the bearers of the "new word" it was the intelligentsia who perceived their mission of renewing humanity. Each class had something to give to the other and it was only in the separation of these two classes that Russia lacked absolute unity. To his dying day, especially in the famed Pushkin speech, Dostoevsky called for the reconciliation of the two classes. But before this could occur the intelligentsia would have to abandon all

rationalistic theories of the West and return to the truth of her people. Rationalism, when taken to the extreme, leads only to cynicism, doubt, and separation from God.[16] Socialists, and all "Western" thinkers, who believed that a material world of comfort and plenty could be created, were not wrong because of what they included in their ideals, but were wrong because of what they excluded. In denying anything transcendent, Dostoevsky believed they denied that which led to an existential comprehension of the divine and sublime in life. By being mundane, rationalism, and more specifically the utilitarian philosophies, denied the source of all truth; and by denying the source, denied all beauty and human harmony which were consequences of faith in a loving God. When a society has an ideal which denies the transcendent/immanent God, it can at best live only in mechanical efficiency, and no true brotherhood could be achieved.

Dostoevsky sometimes criticized Russian intellectuals' interpretations of "Western" theories even more severely than those theories themselves. What the West put forth seriously as scientific hypotheses (eg., Darwin's theory of evolution) Russia took as final dogmas. It is important to realize that Dostoevsky was not against rationalistic or scientific thought per se. What he criticized was science's oft assumed stance that it had a final say as to the nature of all things. Reason was never superior

to faith, more specifically the faith of the Russian people; and once the intelligentsia realized that the faith of the Russian people was superior to reason, Russia would finally be able to serve its messianic ideal.

Nationalism and 'The Possessed'

The Possessed is the novel most concerned with Russia's special position in relation to the rest of the world. It can be interpreted on several different levels. On one level it can be seen as a pamphlet against the radical spirit in Russia. While this is one way of viewing the book, it is not altogether fair to see Dostoevsky as just a petty parodist of the revolutionary mind. Dostoevsky, in reality, was far more sympathetic to the revolutionary spirit than The Possessed might indicate.[17] On another level, the novel can be viewed as a book which means to show all the nihilistic possiblilites which seem unassailable once one has denied the existence of God. Finally, The Possessed can be seen as a symbolic prophetic statement as to the historical destiny of Russia.[18] It is this level which is most relevant to our discussion of Dostoevsky's nationalism.

The key to the interpretation of The Possessed as a symbolic prophetic statement concerning the historical destiny of Russia lies in the Biblical quote that appears throughout the book:

> And there was there a herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter in

> them. And he suffered them. Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine; and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and were choked. When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country. Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.
>
> 19

Of course, the sick man is Russia and the devils are the false ideas that threaten to destroy her. But Russia will not be destroyed. Like the sick man in the Bible, "the Great Idea and the Great Will" protects her from above and eventually the sick man, Russia, "will recover and sit at the feet of Jesus." The Possessed also means to predict that Russia will weather the invasion of atheistic and nihilistic ideas, and in the end her faith will be pure--she will serve as the spiritual leader for mankind.

There is one section of The Possessed that does not represent Dostoevsky's nationalistic ideas--that dealing with the character of Shatov. It is sometimes assumed that Shatov speaks for Dostoevsky when he airs his opinions to Stavrogin at the former's home. But in studying closely what Shatov has to say, one finds that his brand of nationalism is far more extreme and chauvinistic than Dostoevsky's stated universalism. Putting it another way, if Dostoevsky did at one time subscribe to the ideas put forth by Shatov, then he changed his mind over the next eight years in his Diary of a Writer.

Shatov believed that each nation has its own God, because God is a synthesis of the entire history of a nation. The objective of all national movements is the search for God. Each nation has its own idea of good and evil which cannot be distinguished by reason alone, but must be interpreted from the culture and tradition of the nation. Once nationhood breaks down, good and evil become impossible to distinguish because the very distinguishing measure of good and evil, nationhood, is in disarray. A nation is a nation only as long as it believes only in its own God. Great nations also believe they can save the whole world.

While there is an obvious similarity between the nationalistic ideas of Shatov and the ideas of Dostoevsky, there is a decided difference in emphasis between them. Shatov emphasizes the culture and tradition of a nation as causal factors. By going so far as to define God as a synthesis of the personality of an entire nation, Shatov succumbs to the most blatant kind of relativism. Stavrogin's criticism of Shatov strikes home when he accuses Shatov of "boiling God down to a mere national attribute." With Shatov, the nation that is greatest actually creates the image of God; which is to say patriotic nationalism is prior to religious faith.

Dostoevsky's ideas differ in two respects. First, he did not define God as the synthesis of a nation's personality, rather he did just the opposite. The nation's personality is a function of its true perception of the meaning of a

transcendent and loving God. Secondly, Dostoevsky praised the greatness of Russia, not as a nation that needs to conquer other nations by means of her superior stance in relation to the rest of the world, but as a nation which alone realized that nationalistic traits should never serve as a wall between two peoples. In other words, he perceived an essence of man that transcended both the culture and tradition of a nation and enabled all men to be brothers in spite of cultural differences. In contradistinction to Shatov, Dostoevsky did not see culture and tradition as the ultimate measure of a people. Dostoevsky was a universalist and his universalism was based on the belief in man's intrinsic capability of perceiving through faith the divine nature in all things. It just so happens that Russia was, to Dostoevsky, the only nation to understand the universal nature of all things. As an ideal, Dostoevsky did not proclaim that all people believe in Russia's truth; the reason being that it was not Russia's truth to begin with, but universal truth. Russia was a great nation because she stayed true to the Orthodox spirit by keeping a living image of Christ in her midst. Russia did not create the truth, as Shatov implies, but instead merely stands true before its light.

One Final Theme from the 'Diary'

There is still one theme of Dostoevsky's Diary that we have yet to cover and that is his belief in the necessity

of a Pan-Slavic union. Despite Dostoevsky's continued insistence on Russia as being in the service of mankind, and despite his desire to accomplish Russia's glorious ends in a peaceful and exemplary manner only, Dostoevsky, nevertheless, was an ardent supporter of the revolt of the Balkan Slavs who had risen against their Turkish oppressors. Great support was spreading for the Serbian forces throughout Russia. Collections were being taken up for the victims of the war and many men were joining in the fight itself. From Dostoevsky's point of view, the war had world historical significance. He believed that the spirit that swept Russia during the war was indicative of her unification in Christ. He did not view the war in political terms, but saw it as a great religious struggle. He even believed the war was causing the gap to close between the masses and the intelligentsia.[20] This Pan-Slav movement was proof of the fact that deep within the spirit of the nation there was a thirst for suffering and good cause.[21] The war was supported so strongly because the Russian people intuitively understood the importance of protecting Orthodoxy and thereby achieving a union of all Orthodox Christians. Such an intuition was strong indication that a new era was dawning in which Russia would be the guiding light of the world.

The war was an extraordinary moral stimulus to Dostoevsky, in spite of everything else he had written which seemed to go directly counter to it:

> Lasting peace always generates cruelty, cowardice and coarse fat egoism, and chiefly--intellectual stagnation. It is only the exploiters of the people who grow fat in times of long peace... such a war merely clears the air contaminated with soot, cures the soul, chases away cowardice and indolence, sets forth and proclaims a firm aim, launches and clarifies the idea which this or that nation must put into effect.
> 22

It is hard to imagine that an author of universal brotherhood, and the man who wrote so vehemently against forced union, could also proclaim so passionately the benefits of war. It must, nevertheless, be understood that Dostoevsky never perceived the war as a coercive spreading of the Orthodox faith. Rather, he believed that the war was necessary for the protection of the Pan-Slav-Orthodox union, which once established would provide the first step toward uniting mankind in Christ. As mentioned in Chapter Three, such an argument may not seem consistent with the Christian mode of being as presented in the Brother Karamazov, but at least it does not go to the extreme of declaring it righteous to coerce people into the faith. Dostoevsky believed that once the Pan-Slav union was established, the world would see an example "not of a political federation based on self interest, but a true confraternity of peoples."[23]

Dostoevsky believed the war would lead to a whole realignment of world powers--from this war would spring a European war. His logic was that France, seeing that Russia had her hands full in the east, would be influenced by the

Jesuits into attacking Germany, supposedly Russia's ally.[24] France would be defeated, and then the Pope, being the power monger that he was, would make common cause with the masses and their leaders. "He will come before the people walking barefoot, hand Christ over to the socialists, sanctioning the use of force, and offer to head the rebels."[25] We have already described in the first chapter Dostoevsky's psychological interpretation of what the masses will do when all order is torn asunder: they will accept any leadership offered them at first chance, for anything will be seen as better than living in a state of anarchy. This is the essence of the Western way of politics, especially as conceived by the Catholic Church. Europe stands torn apart, threatened by the anti-Christ; Russia stands alone, a symbol and an embodiment of unification in Christ. Her demos is content because she alone lives in the light of the Christian spirit.

After Russia has won the war, she also will have to concern herself with the problem of the acquisition of Constantinople. What he criticizes as evil in the Catholic Church seems to be what he proclaims as proper for Russia. To quote Avraham Yarmolinsky:

> This apostle of humility championed an arrant Messianism and, in preaching Christian brotherhood, bristled like the veriest jingo. D. H. Lawrence said of him that while "professing love, all love," his nose was "sharp with hate" and his running "shadowy and rat-like." This is an apt description of the man revealed at his worst, in the Diary.

> The very writing is so often evasive, slippery, unctious, snarling.[26]

While this remark by Yarmolinsky may be understandable, it must also be kept in mind that Dostoevsky felt that such a war was for a glorious end, not only for Russia, but for the whole world. Despite how incongruous it may have been, Dostoevsky still did not envision the taking of Constantinople as a coercive spreading of the Russian faith. However one might scrutinize his own particular judgment of the matter, he envisioned the taking of Constantinople as merely the final political/religious consolidation of an Orthodox communion that already existed and which was being threatened by political oppression from an alien government. It was only a protecting of a religious community which once finally consolidated would then stand as the spiritual and moral example for the rest of the world. Coercion was never conceded by Dostoevsky to be the way to world brotherhood.

Nevertheless, Dostoevsky's major fault in his war pronouncements was not that he was stating a means so drastically different than other idealist nationalistic or revolutionary groups in the past, but that it seemed to go against his own self-proclaimed morally high standards. With this note in mind, we end this chapter with a quote from Sigmund Freud which seems more conclusive and sympathetic than Yarmolinsky's:

Dostoevsky threw away the chance of becoming a teacher and liberator of mankind and made himself one with its gaolers...The greatness of his intelligence and the strength of his love for mankind might have opened to him another, an apostolic, way of life..
27

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

1 Dostoevsky, Diary, p. 582.

2 Sandoz is particularly guilty of this. See Political Apoclypse, p. 144.

3 Arthur Koenig, "Dostoevsky's Testament," South Atlantic Quarterly, Vol. 53, 1954.

4 Dostoevsky, Diary, p. 667.

5 Westbrook, Greatness of Man, p. 157.

6 Dostoevsky, Diary, p.556.

7 Ibid., p. 667.

8 Ibid., p. 668.

9 Ibid., p. 283.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., p. 74.

12 Ibid., p. 342.

13 Hans Kohn, Prophets and Peoples (New York: Macmillan Company, 1952), p. 140.

14 Ibid.

15 Dostoevsky, Diary, p. 960.

16 Kohn, Prophets, p. 145.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V (continued)

17 Dostoevsky, Diary, p. 142.

18 Eugenii Soloviev, Dostoevsky: His Life and Literary Activity, trans. C. J. Hogarth (London: George Allen Press, 1916), p. 232.

19 Dostoevsky, The Possessed, p. 670.

20 Avraham Yarmolinsky, Dostoevsky; Works and Days (New York: Funk and Wagnells, 1971), p. 342.

21 Ibid.

22 Dostoevsky, Diary, pp. 669-70.

23 Yarmolinsky, Dostoevsky, p. 343.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., p. 344.

27 Sigmund Freud, "Dostoevsky and Parricide," in Guilt: Man and Society, ed. by Roger W. Smith (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1971), p. 64.

CONCLUSION

> Man would sooner have the void for purpose than be void of purpose.
> [1]

One feels the necessity of trying to justify why the study of a man long dead is a worthwhile activity, even if only potentially so. When asked why doing a thesis on Dostoevsky is a significant activity (as I have often been asked), one is forced to stop and think about one's own motives, feelings, and beliefs. It is not an exaggeration to say that one really has to question the whole meaning and direction of one's life in order to answer such a question honestly. It does not do the question justice to proclaim one's "interest" and "enjoyment" in dissecting, interpreting and imagining the author's particular world view. While perhaps such an answer can be justified from a truly authentic perspective, it is often just a romantic glorification of the "scholarly" way of life. Scholarship, even good scholarship, is not ipso facto a meaningful activity. It can be and often is merely a type of sublimated activity which is not substantially different from more "common" pursuits. The question, therefore, as to why it is worthwhile to read Dostoevsky has to be answered on a different plane than one which claims to derive pleasure and curiosity from impassioned scholarship. An author, such as Dostoevsky, who

promulgates with fire the need for authentic living, must be confronted on his own terms. It does not matter that at times his writing may have been overzealous, bigoted, absolutist, or parochial; for one must still confront him directly in order to come to a proper understanding of his works.

Nor should one worry about the degree of authenticity of Dostoevsky's own life. It is virtually impossible to judge or perceive the soul of any man through his works alone even when that man's work seeks to reach us on an authentic plane of existence. While this may appear paradoxical, it really is not; it is always possible to write from memory alone. One can even be close to true being, be aware of it in an extraordinarily clear way, yet live what amounts to an objectified life in the It-world.[2] It is for this reason that it is virtually hopeless, if not entirely irrelevant, to question whether the man Fyodor Dostoevsky was in fact the authentic man of vision represented in his works. Beside the fact that we can never know the soul of a man, except possibly in direct relation with him (in Buber's sense of the word)[3], it is not important to know such an intimate fact when confronting his perception of truthful being, for it is his ideas, his claim to the truth, that we as human beings must confront and resolve. In other words, our responsibility lies not in our creating the true biography of Fyodor Dostoevsky, but in creating and judging our own "biography" through the confrontation with ideas that claim to speak about absolute meaning and truth.

When answering the question about the importance or relevance of reading Dostoevsky, knowing that the time spent will hardly help advance one within the superstructure of the busy and hectic modern world, one gives the answer that applies to all great philosophers, theologians, artists and poets, i.e., one should read Dostoevsky in order to confront the issues of a meaningful life.

But how specifically does Dostoevsky speak to us, that is, what do his ideas say to us; in what way do they confront our being to make us turn away from a hectic, frenzied, ridiculous, and often hateful way of life? Does he in fact speak to the unridiculous man in us all, the man of quiet and clear-sightedness, the man of vision?

It is true that when looking at his philosophy in its totality, one feels oppressed by the idea of actually internalizing the whole of it. Certainly his ideas on Russian nationalism and his ideas on creating, through conquest, an Orthodox bastion against the rest of the world are too subjective and extreme to be taken seriously. Nevertheless, this does not preclude taking seriously his concern about man's search for purpose and meaning in life. He believed that man would never find true peace until he learned how to accept responsibility for his own and others' inability to confront the Holy in existence. Through an existential love of self and others, achieved through a cultivation of Christian humility, man will find God and, subsequently

a justification for all existence. God becomes the ultimate and only justification for a meaningful existence, without Whom all will dissipate into various idolatrous forms of sublimated nihilism, a reflection of that fear which Dostoevsky and Nietzsche saw, along with the modern existentialists, buried so deeply in man--the fear of the void. Dostoevsky tried to forestall the atheistic movement of his times, which included not only the rejection of God, but the denial of any kind of transcendent reality. With this denial he feared not just the loss of man's contact with the true and the Holy, but also the resulting political and psychological cataclysms that would occur when man began trying to fill that void which was sure to follow.

Man is the being who seeks meaning; yet at the root of his everyday psyche, or that aspect of the self disconnected from the true ground of being, is an anxiety and restlessness which hints at its own incompleteness. Once any transcendent sense of the Holy is denied, man seeks refuge in the It-world, or the world of objects, in order to escape the perceived void. Dostoevsky interpreted certain types of political movements as indicative of such an existential fear. The antagonists of both The Possessed and The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor, as I have shown, played on this sense of fear in order to pursue their own particular brand of nihilism. In interpreting the types of mass reaction that could occur once all transcendent meaning was existentially denied (even if not linguistically denied), Dostoevsky's works were prophetic for the twentieth century,

as the occasional "success" of fascist regimes indicates. His two antichrist characters, Verkhovensky and the Inquisitor, attempted to replace God by falsifying man's sense of mystery through the creation of an awe inspiring charismatic figure. Although their success or failure depended in part on their ability to deceive, it depended more on their "constituents'" own sense of being. It would be wrong to assume that Dostoevsky would have considered man's acceptance of such "leaders" merely a result of treacherous trickery. Rather, man becomes susceptible to such traps through his own denial of the transcendent presence and it is his own lack of courage in the face of such a denial which makes him seek escape from his new found "freedom." In other words, man becomes a dupe to charismatic figures when he has lost his sense of relation with God and yet is unable to accept a world without Him; as a result, he is willing to become a political and spiritual slave in order to create new meaning in his life.

Dostoevsky also realized that the search for charismatic leaders would not be the only political form by which man would seek to relieve himself of the emptiness of his self-created void. Dostoevsky's critique of political ideologies reveals how intellectual systems can also perform a similar function. Just as faith in a charismatic leader serves to define one's sense of meaning and predetermine one's actions, so does faith in a system of ideas. Dostoevsky critiqued the content of the various

atheist-socialist ideologies and also accused them of bad faith even in relation to their own stated world view. Not only did he view their rejection of God in favor of crass materialism as ridiculous, but he believed they ignored the existential implications of their own philosophy. Rather than realizing the moral vacuum that would be created once materialism was accepted as a philosophy, they sought comfort in it as a dogmatic guideline for living. Dostoevsky would have agreed with Nietzsche's ironical dictum in reference to such ideologues: "man would sooner have the void for purpose, than be void of purpose."

Dostoevsky's critique of ideological systems and the tyrannical, Godless, charismatic leader obviously speaks to man in the twentieth century. It is a century characterized by a proliferation of extremist political movements of both the ideological and charismatic type, and by its marked turn toward a belief in materialist philosophies. To Dostoevsky, such phenomena were a sign of man's lack of connectedness with his universe. Man's fanatical response becomes more intense as his sense of hopelessness becomes more profound. But the twentieth century has also created a variation of these types of phenomena that Dostoevsky did not foresee, but which is, nevertheless, a reflection of the same sense of emptiness and meaninglessness. Robert Lifton has made the point that along with the loss of boundaries due to the breakdown of traditional beliefs, images, and ideas, the advent of the mass media has transformed modern man into a being who is an ever changing "protean man."[4] Modern man, Lifton suggests, has the tendency to thrust himself into successive,

often contradictory roles with which he is able to identify almost implicitly. Protean man differs from nineteenth century man in that he is faced with a continual bombardment of various images which causes him to shift and countershift his ideological and psychological identification. Although Lifton appears sympathetic to the idea of protean man, this author views his perceptive diagnosis of twentieth century man as a further indication of the tendency of man to seek refuge in ideological certainty in the absence of his ability to seek true relation. Protean man's committments are temporary, but deeply passionate and searching. He is symptomatic of man's disconnection and fear of the void; he is adrift, but desperately seeks meaning.

Although Dostoevsky focused his critique of man's spiritual denial of himself, his fellow man, nature, and God, primarily in terms of ideological and charismatic political movements, he would not have considered such responses as the only mode of denial. This is mentioned primarily because the modern industrial West, especially America, often praises itself for its relative lack of political extremism (forgetting, somehow, two world wars, two Asian wars, an extended cold war, and an inconceivable proliferation of nuclear weapons). Western industrial man will pride himself on his belief in a "pragmatism" which has produced the highest standard of living in history. He has defined meaning in terms of his ability to progress toward the creation of bigger and better material conveniences. While his way of life may not be characterized as highly ideological, it is characterized by an extreme form of possessive individualism. Although perceiving himself

as having transcended all ideological considerations, modern Western man has, nevertheless, trapped himself in the objectified It-world as much as any political fanatic. The fanatic objectifies the world by making certain narrow political goals, ideas or commands absolute; the possessive individual objectifies the world through the continual thrust toward acquisition. The compulsive pursuit of pleasures, possessions and security is, like the political fanatics' search for certainty, the result of a sublimated anxiety, at its root irrational and escapist, even if justified in so-called pragmatic terms. It too reflects a loss of God and a subsequent sense of the void.

Dostoevsky's thought attempts to counter the effects of nihilistic political movements and the philosophy of possessive individualism. He attempts to give a psycho-religious interpretation of such phenomena and to offer a truer form of being. He speaks to all men who find themselves feeling trapped, unwhole, and who at bottom sense the possibility of a fuller realization of self and other. He states his conviction that man is capable of beholding a truer vision of the world. He calls for man to enter into existential relation with the world, rather than trying merely to categorize, conquer and possess. In the words of Martin Buber, he desires all to say Thou to the universe. He calls for a true solidarity of men and for an existential relationship with God. His work speaks to us in that it tries to present the image of the unified self, present

always to itself and other. Once one faces the fear of emptiness, the expected void gives way to the ground of Holy Being and to a sense of true solidarity. The character Zossima bears witness to this Dostoevskian faith; and through Dostoevsky's exhortation to cultivate Christian humility, the novelist claims to offer the way to true being.

We conclude by asking once again why one should read Dostoevsky and we answer that one should read him because in his works there exists the representation of man's struggle with his true destiny, as the portrayal of such characters as Stavrogin, Ivan, Alyosha and Zossima indicate. His work demands that we confront his conception of true being-in-the-world and by doing so to confront our own spiritual and psychological being, even if our conclusions are not always the same as his. Although they are not always the same, the confrontation of different ideas concerning the meaning of life and death will always result in positive effects as long as one is honest to oneself.

All this praise of Dostoevsky's writings must include a warning not to take the works themselves too seriously. No man's writings are a panacea or an absolute source book for truth. The idea of truth, even an accurate representation of how one can and ought to be is still only an idea, i.e., an object of the mind. A great writer can make a man look to himself and his world in order to try to grasp the meaning of his own life, but no amount of reading, as Dostoevsky supremely knew, can be a substitute for personal decision. Each

person must make the choice of leaving behind his irrational, enslaved and possessive way of life. He must decide to take a path less worn without fear of losing the safety and security of a world of money, prestige or false identification. Great art, such as Dostoevsky's, can point toward the way, but it is we who must decide whether we shall take the road toward a more authentic, moral way of life.

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

1 Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals, trans. by Francis Golffing (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1956), p. 299.

2 Martin Buber, I and Thou, trans. by Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), see pp. 3-11 for original introduction to the term.

3 Ibid.

4 Robert Jay Lifton, Boundaries, (New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 37-63.

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