

DOSTOEVSKY'S CONCEPTION OF LOVE

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DOSTOEVSKY'S CONCEPTION OF LOVE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With one foot resting in nineteenth-century Russia--where the light of English and Western European Romanticism scarcely penetrated-- and the other foot reaching across the years for a foothold in the twentieth century, the giant figure of Dostoevsky looms against the horizon of man's search for that greatness of mind and spirit which all true art and literature record. Critics have found it easy to fragment those aspects of Dostoevsky's fiction which support their particular beliefs and to ignore those which do not fit into their own organized systems of thought. He has been acclaimed as a social humanitarian, as a political prophet, as a psychologist, as a theologian, and as a philosopher. His novels contain an organization of life which is dramatic and includes characters who embody ideas;¹ but his beliefs can be understood best in the context of his fiction.

Considered in its broadest aspect, a religiously oriented system of thought can be found underlying Dostoevsky's fiction; it is derived

¹Eliseo Vivas, "The Two Dimensions of Reality in The Brothers Karamazov," Dostoevsky, A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood, New Jersey, 1962), p. 73.

from his conception of life as basically a choice between man's self-will as expressed in self-love, or love of God as exemplified by Christ. Man has been given the freedom to love the man-god or the God-in-man; through exercising his freedom of choice, man may participate in evil or good. Dostoevsky considers lack of love or love wrongly directed as the source of evil, just as selfless, Christ-like love is the ultimate good. One aspect of Dostoevsky's conception of love, an aspect which is related in part to experiences in his life, undergoes a change. Though Dostoevsky emphasizes in his fiction his idea of physical, sexual love as destructive and divisive--and this emphasis arises from a dichotomy in his own nature as well as from experiences in his life--in his last and greatest novel, The Brothers Karamazov, he achieves a more profound view of love between the sexes and relates it to his ideal of redemptive Christian love.

Dostoevsky is a poet in the meaning implied by Shelley, "that every author is necessarily a poet, because language itself is poetry."² He is a poet in that he gives experience a form and intelligibility, a primary organization which is necessary to life.³ Dostoevsky's belief is not a "purely intellectual, logically simple, structure: it is an extremely complex and internally heterogeneous mass of living insights--

²Percy B. Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry," Selected Poetry and Prose (New York, 1961), p. 484.

³Vivas, p. 73.

affective, moral, and intellectual--in tension, and ordered not after the manner of the philosopher but of the dramatist."⁴

A clearer idea of Dostoevskian love emerges when it is contrasted with the concept of love of Shelley, another "seeker" who wrestled with his demon of disbelief but who did not attain Dostoevsky's hosanna wrung from the tortured depths of doubt. To Shelley, love meant a total commitment of soul and sense; he saw it as a unifying power between man and nature, between groups of humanity, and between individuals.⁵ Idealistically, he sought a physical, emotional, and intellectual communion between the sexes, where the self was transcended and physical entities became fused in spirit.

Our breaths shall intermix, our bosoms bound,
 And our veins beat together; and our lips
 With other eloquence than words, eclipse
 The soul that burns between them, and the wells
 Which boil under our beings' inmost cells,
 The fountains of our deepest life, shall be
 Confused in passion's golden purity,

 We shall become the same, we shall be one
 Spirit with two frames, oh! wherefore two?⁶

Shelley's cry, "Wherefore two?" expresses the grief of the idealist who realizes that the ideal cannot transcend the real. His impassioned belief--

⁴Ibid., p. 72.

⁵Shelley, xii.

⁶Shelley, "Epipsychidion," Selected Poetry and Prose, pp. 202-203, ll. 560-574.

that poets are the trumpets singing to battle, the "mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present,"⁷ and the forces lifting man to union with All-Love--can be compared to Dostoevsky's concept of love to show a significant difference. Where Shelley sees a pantheistic All-Love as encompassing man and nature, Dostoevsky sees Christ-like love as the unifying element in life. Dostoevsky's belief, against which his rational intellect struggled all his life--and which he decided could be attained only through an act of faith, not reason--was that affirmation voiced by Father Zossima in The Brothers Karamazov:

Love a man even in his sin, for that is the semblance of Divine Love and is the highest love on earth. Love all God's creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it . . . Always decide to use humble love. If you resolve on that once for all, you may subdue the whole world. Loving humility is marvellously strong, the strongest of all things and there is nothing else like it.⁸

Dostoevsky carried this idea a step further. He thought that man's divided soul, all his laceration, insults, and injuries came from lack of love, which is, in essence, lack of belief in God. This premise is the unifying concept underlying Dostoevsky's lifetime struggle to understand man in relation to his world and his Creator; and it is mirrored in his fiction. It is the organic connection between Dostoevsky's artistic skill, his psychological perspicacity, and his metaphysical insight.⁹

⁷Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry," p. 490.

⁸Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov (New York, 1950), pp. 382-383.

⁹Vivas, p. 80.

Again, in contrast to Shelley, Dostoevsky sees physical or sexual love as widening rather than healing man's inner division.¹⁰ He sees love as never an end in itself, but as an index to the metaphysical duality underlying man's psychological split; man's self-will gives rise to an inner division which may lead to debauchery, and on to loss of human personality.¹¹ To Dostoevsky, this inner division in man must be overcome by his making a choice, rather than by his indulging in diffused, aimless sensuality which does become debauchery.¹²

In Dostoevsky's fiction there is no realization of happy, cheerful love, either between lovers, in the marriage bond, or in family life; his major contribution is, rather, to the understanding of the tragic side of love.¹³ Yet, in his novels--as in his life--there is a faint, almost imperceptible change in this attitude. By 1879, when The Brothers Karamazov began to appear, Dostoevsky had spent twelve years in a marriage which appears to have been physically satisfying and emotionally stable, though not the complementary "soul out of my soul" to which Shelley aspired fruitlessly. Perhaps, in the reciprocal love between Mitya and Grushenka, and the expression of Christ-like love which

¹⁰Nicholas Berdyaev, Dostoevsky (New York, 1957), p. 118.

¹¹Ibid., p. 123.

¹²Ibid., p. 126.

¹³Ibid., p. 127.

Alyosha makes through his life, may be found a reconciliation by Dostoevsky of the disparate elements of love. Perhaps the frenzy and passion which destroy the Natashas, Polinas, Svidrigailovs, Nastasyas, Aglairs, Rogozhins, Lizavetas, Daryas, and Katerina Ivanovnas are to be refined through suffering and purification into a unifying experience of Christ-like love. Alyosha's sequel was not written, so there can be no certainty of this; but Father Zossima's advice to him to leave the monastery, to go out into the world, to take a wife, to drink the wine of man's gladness, seems to hint that for Alyosha that union will be completed. For Alyosha, "The road is wide and straight and bright as crystal, and the sun is at the end of it."¹⁴ That sun could be the union of physical human love with divine Christ-like love.

In Dostoevsky's portrayal of the tragic side of love, the real nature of his creative genius can be seen in the first long novel of his post-Siberian period; he knows the human heart and life, not by experience and observation, but a priori. Gradually, the ideas on love which he develops in The Insulted and the Injured are deepened to reflect more and more his own struggle with "the eternal questions, of the existence of God and immortality" of which, Ivan says, the Russian boys were wont to talk in the taverns.¹⁵ This deepening development

¹⁴Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, p. 433.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 278.

finally coalesces in the unified expression of Dostoevsky's life and art
which is The Brothers Karamazov.

CHAPTER II

DOSTOEVSKIAN LOVE--AN ASPECT OF THE DICHOTOMY SEEN IN HIS LIFE AND REFLECTED IN HIS FICTION

Dostoevsky's conception of the dual nature of love is only one aspect of the basic duality which he saw in all life, in the very order of the world, creation and destruction, birth and death, good and evil, God and the Devil.¹ He saw this duality in Man--in his fluctuating between choices; in his struggle to bring his unconscious, non-rational will and his conscious, rational will into effective balance; and, in his ambivalence because of his being both good and evil at the same time.

Dostoevsky saw this duality in all emotions as well as in Life and Man. Every emotion contained within itself the germ of its opposite: love and hate, pleasure and suffering, pride and humiliation, attraction and repulsion. Dostoevsky regarded this duality as necessary in the order of the world. Just as without the freedom to choose evil there can be no good, so without thesis and antithesis, there can be no synthesis.²

¹Temira Pachmuss, F. M. Dostoevsky, Dualism and Synthesis of the Human Soul (Carbondale, 1963), pp. xiv-xv.

²Edward Hallett Carr, Dostoevsky, A New Biography (New York, 1931), p. 257.

Because of the paradoxical nature of freedom, evil is necessary in the world. True freedom must include evil as well as good, or the intrinsic nature of freedom is negated.³ Dostoevsky does not explain evil in terms of environment as do the Humanists; rather, he holds the view that evil comes about through the ambivalent, dual nature of man, who is at once both good and evil. Thus, man must accept personal responsibility for his actions and make choices between greater and lesser goods and evils.

It is a commonplace of criticism that Dostoevsky anticipates Freud. Where Dostoevsky is most original, where he antedates modern psychology as well as Freud, is in his equating the lower element or "double" with the subconscious mind;⁴ he frequently represents this disassociated subconscious self as an actual physical double.⁵ Where Freud identifies seeking with sex, Dostoevsky sees the love-hate polarity as not limited necessarily to sex. This polarity operates on both levels of consciousness with changes taking place on the unconscious level of the mind first. The lapse of time before the conscious mind adjusts is one cause of misery and suffering. Another cause is the fact that in man's inner being, it is possible for him both to love and to hate himself. Unless he predominantly approves of himself, he suffers in a

³Berdyayev, p. 80.

⁴Carr, p. 257.

⁵Ralph Tymms, Doubles in Literary Psychology (Cambridge, 1949), p. 7.

degree proportionate to his disapproval. According to Dostoevsky, it is possible unconsciously to despise life or the Creator. This generates self-hate or the death-wish, which may be directed outwardly in violence or inwardly in suicide.

Before Dostoevsky, hate had been recognized as an element of pathological love, but he reveals it as a part of all human love, operative throughout life. Dostoevsky's penetrating insight could be turned inward on his own wild, unrestrained, fluctuating emotions. Through a peculiar bifurcation of his character, it was possible for him to observe, with one side of his nature, the thoughts and feelings of the other.⁶ A basic duality can be seen in Dostoevsky's personality: between his emotional temperament and his analytic intellect, between his reactionary opinions and his revolutionary temper,⁷ between his reason and his faith. As Simmons says, "Although he searched for God all his life, reason and faith never ceased their struggle in his mind."⁸ Dostoevsky's objective observation of his own duality served him well in his writing, which was the means by which he recorded his observations and conclusions about the deepest questions of life and immortality, man and his relationship

⁶Carr, p. 101.

⁷Irving Howe, "Dostoevsky: the Politics of Salvation," Dostoevsky, A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood, New Jersey, 1962), pp. 57-58.

⁸Ernest Simmons, Dostoevsky, The Making of a Novelist (New York, 1940), p. 262.

to his God. Dostoevsky saw purity only in unity,⁹ and, yet, he felt it was scarcely in the nature of man to overcome this duality of life, of man himself, and of his emotions.

The duality of love Dostoevsky saw as only one aspect of life's fundamental duality; yet he saw physical love as divisive in its nature, and destructive of man's efforts toward achieving a unified personality and progressing in his struggle for purity and perfection. Like many philosophers, Dostoevsky seemed to resent woman's arousing certain responses in man--not just sexual, though those were present--but those emotional, mystical, subconscious responses from the Dionysian side of man as opposed to the more rational, orderly, Apollonian side of man's nature. From these ideas, from the dichotomy in his own nature, and from his own experiences with the women in his life, Dostoevsky evolved his ideas of two kinds of love: on the one hand, destructive sexual love--sweet and ruthless at the same time, the Russian's "classic dualistic idea of Eros"¹⁰ and, on the other hand, Agape, a love more in line with Christian-Pauline tradition.¹¹

This view of destructive sexual love has been explained in part as resulting from the failure of western European ideals of courtly love,

⁹Berdyayev, p. 116.

¹⁰Percy Westbrook, The Greatness of Man (New York, 1961), p. 90.

¹¹Ibid., p. 94.

knightly chivalry, and the idealization of women and chastity to reach Russia.¹² In any event, Dostoevsky stresses the love-death syndrome which has sexual love as the annihilation of self, like death, as did Mann later in Magic Mountain. The term "the little death" has come to refer to the sexual act itself; and Dostoevsky likewise thought and wrote of "death-dealing love."¹³ To him it was a "destroyer of the peace of the soul," and a "ravager of the emotions."¹⁴ The relative sexlessness of most of Dostoevsky's heroes testifies to his "evaluation of sex as inimical to spiritual life in the fullest manifestation."¹⁵

The second kind of love--the true love to Dostoevsky, and one which he had difficulty in associating with the love of man for woman--was "adhesiveness, that binding love of comrades, versus amativeness, the love of sexual attraction."¹⁶ This was the spiritual, Christian love which Dostoevsky saw as a positive force for bringing order out of chaos. This was exemplified to Dostoevsky by Christ; and he attempts to portray such love in the characters of Myshkin and Alyosha.

Dostoevsky's experiences with women in his life have been cited as one of the reasons for the removal of romance from his idea of sexual love.¹⁷ He wrote of his first wife, "Such love is like a disease."

¹²Berdyayev, p. 112.

¹³Ibid., p. 113.

¹⁴Westbrook, p. 93.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 96.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 97, quoting Whitman.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 90.

Dostoevsky seems to have experienced both kinds of humiliation to which a person may be subjected in a relationship between the sexes. With his first wife he seems to have felt inadequate sexually; with his mistress Suslova he seems to have felt adequate only sexually! In his predilection for women who scorned and humiliated him, such as his first wife, Maria Dmitrievna, and his great love, Polina Suslova, critics have seen a need on Dostoevsky's part for self-punishment,¹⁸ a desire to prostrate himself absolutely before the woman he loved.¹⁹ Whatever the reason, Dostoevsky gives a narrow view of women in his novels. In the main, he restricts himself to depicting two types, the "infernal" woman, the double--of which Nastasya Philippovna of The Idiot is a prime example-- and the meek, self-effacing type--the epitome of whom is Sonia in Crime and Punishment. As always, however, the Dostoevskian characterization penetrates the hidden layers of consciousness of the human psyche as well as reveals new values.

The equating of love and sex has been called a great contemporary error. Here, again, Dostoevsky is "at variance with his age in believing love and sex, as often as not, are adversaries rather than allies."²⁰ At the very least, they are facets of one another. Perhaps love's greatest achievement lies in its diminution, though not extinction, of sex.²¹

¹⁸Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁹Carr, p. 303.

²⁰Westbrook, p. 93.

²¹Ibid., pp. 93-94.

More explicitly, love diminishes the destructive potential of sex. It is only recently that sexual love has been thought of as predominantly blissful.²² Literature shows even the gods suffering: Jupiter was frustrated in many of his amours; Aphrodite, goddess of love, was herself cruel; Dido and Aeneas, Tristram and Isolde did not live happily ever after. Ovid wrote of the pangs of sexual desire:

Venus, why doublest thou my endlesse smart?
Was not one wench enough to grieve my hart?²³

For Dostoevsky, "love is exclusively dionysian, tearing the individual to pieces,"²⁴ and he shows predominantly this side of love in his fiction.

Yet, in Dostoevsky's fiction, as in his life, can be seen the struggle to reconcile the Dionysian elements of love--the impulsive releasing of self, those forces singing a "paean of untamed life"²⁵ and making a passionate affirmation of life--with the Apollonian elements of love--the moderate, self-disinterested, rational and socially directed concern for one's fellowman. To Dostoevsky, this could not be achieved without embodying these elements in the Christian concept of love. As Ivan says, "I could never understand how one can love one's neighbours.

²²Ibid., p. 90.

²³Ovid, "Amores II," Latin Poetry in Verse Translation, edited by L. R. Lind (Boston, 1957), p. 179, ll. 10-12.

²⁴Berdyayev, p. 111.

²⁵Charles Morris, Paths of Life (New York, 1942), p. 62.

It's just one's neighbours, to my mind, that one can't love, though one might love those at a distance. " Alyosha gives Dostoevsky's reply, "But yet there's a great deal of love in mankind, and almost Christ-like love."²⁶ In other words, to Dostoevsky it is only possible to love one's neighbor by loving that reflection of the divine in him, that part of him made in God's image. To achieve brotherly love then, it is necessary to believe in God and to believe that His Son was made man.

Along with the destroying, divisive side of love which Dostoevsky portrays in his fiction, gradually there emerges a foreshadowing of that kind of love released by suffering which is curative and redemptive-- that Chaucerian "bond of love" which establishes harmony among mankind and in all nature--and through this definition becomes God.²⁷

²⁶Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, p. 281.

²⁷Westbrook, p. 96.

CHAPTER III

THE INSULTED AND THE INJURED--A FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE DUALITY OF LOVE

Before Dostoevsky could give expression creatively to the ideal of redemptive Christian love, then gestating in his mind and heart, he first had to express his awareness of other aspects in his conception of love. The Insulted and the Injured contributes chiefly to an understanding of the dark side of love; it offers a first glimpse of Dostoevsky's perception of love's duality--its polarity of love and hate, its sadism and masochism, its cruelty and its suffering. This conception of love is related in part to experiences in Dostoevsky's life, and The Insulted and the Injured offers an illustration of this connection between Dostoevsky's personal life and his fiction.

Although the first drafts of the novel were written in 1855 at Semipalatinsk, it was published in installments beginning six years later in January, 1861.¹ In it can be seen for the first time characters--and ideas embodied in them--which continue to engross Dostoevsky's interest throughout his life and literary career. Natasha is the first of a line of

¹Robert Payne, Dostoevsky, A Human Portrait (New York, 1961), p. xiv.

heroines who are treacherous yet noble, who glory in suffering.² She is the forerunner of Nastasya Philippovna in The Idiot and Katerina Ivanovna in The Brothers Karamazov, as well as many others belonging to the sisterhood of the "infernal woman." Natasha exhibits the duality of love--its nature fluctuating between the poles of love and hate. In her love, Dostoevsky shows an appetite for cruelty; he shows the sexual impulse as alternately sadistic and masochistic; he shows diseased pride as inherent in self-humiliation as well as in imperiousness.³

The duality of love in The Insulted and the Injured is pointed up with Alyosha representing the passive, submissive side in an early foreshadowing of Prince Myshkin; Vanya has a more normal love for Natasha, but he shows the self-sacrificing principle when he attempts to further his rival's cause. Where Vanya tries to sublimate his passion for the ideal, Alyosha lets the ideal drive out sex. Dostoevsky shows in this early novel what he emphasizes again and again in his later, more controlled and disciplined fiction, that sexual love as ordinarily conceived is incompatible with altruistic ideals.⁴

Natasha shows a masochistic enjoyment of love when she describes Alyosha as "like a grown-up man, together with other men he was running after pretty girls, . . . he too went to Minnas! I . . . what bliss

²Ibid., p. 148.

³Carr, pp. 112-114.

⁴Ibid., p. 213.

I got out of that quarrel, and then forgiving him."⁵ Again, she says of him to Vanya, the repository of all confidences as are Myshkin and Alyosha in later novels, "Even torture from him is happiness to me now . . . I don't shrink from any torture from him! I should know it was at his hands I was suffering."⁶ She shows the sadistic pleasure of love in the following lines:

Natasha instinctively felt she would have mastery and dominion over him, that he would even be her victim. She had had a foretaste of the joys of loving passionately--torturing the man that she loved simply because she loved him, and that was why, perhaps, she . . . was the first to sacrifice herself.⁷

Dostoevsky's idea of happiness coming through suffering--this time, suffering because of love--can be seen in The Insulted and the Injured. Natasha says to Vanya, "We shall have to work out our future happiness by suffering:--Everything is purified by suffering."⁸ As Dostoevsky himself says, Nellie too seems to be enjoying "her own pain by this egoism of suffering . . . This aggravation of suffering and this revelling in it . . . is the enjoyment of many of the insulted and injured, oppressed by destiny and smarting under the sense of its injustice."⁹

Echoes of Dickens have been cited in The Insulted and the Injured,¹⁰ and Nellie, or Elena, does seem straight out of The Old Curiosity Shop:

⁵Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Insulted and the Injured (New York, 1955), p. 283.

⁶Ibid., p. 38.

⁷Ibid., pp. 40-41.

⁸Ibid., p. 75.

⁹Ibid., p. 264.

¹⁰Payne, p. 148.

but Nellie has a depth of characterization, a life-like ambivalence which Dickens never attained. In her self-laceration and in her wounded pride as a result of humiliation, Nellie, like Natasha, foreshadows that triumph of psychological insight, Nastasya Philippovna in The Idiot. Prince Valkonsky, though he seems an addendum rather than an integrated part of the novel, is a precursor of "the ferociously evil characters"¹¹ such as Svidrigailov in Crime and Punishment and Stavrogin in The Possessed, though each of these shows further refinements in Dostoevsky's deepening awareness of all the ramifications of evil.

Many resemblances can be found between Dostoevsky's mistress in real life, Polina Suslova, and Natasha, the heroine of The Insulted and the Injured, as well as Polina in his autobiographical short novel, The Gambler. The original conception of Natasha may antedate Dostoevsky's connection with Suslova, but the final characterization shows Suslova's definite influence on Dostoevsky's conception of love. As Payne says, Polina Suslova "seems to have modeled herself on Natasha of The Insulted and the Injured."¹² She was a student at St. Petersburg University, and had a story published in Dostoevsky's Time in 1861.¹³ She seems to have been Dostoevsky's occasional mistress from 1861 to 1863, when she

¹¹Ibid., p. 150.

¹²Ibid., p. 162.

¹³Ibid. All chronological data are taken from this source, and are based on the Russian "old style" calendar which is twelve days earlier than the Western calendar which was adopted February, 1918.

left for Paris. When he followed her there, she was in the throes of a love affair with a Spaniard who subsequently rejected her. The perversity and cruelty of her nature and the torture she inflicted on Dostoevsky are shown clearly in her journal where she describes how she made him travel abroad with her "like a brother," and cites instances where she delights in arousing his desire, then denying him.¹⁴ These aspects of Suslova's nature are reflected in Natasha's personality in the novel, for Dostoevsky, with his remarkable ability to look objectively at himself, seems to have understood this bizarre affair. He suggests that Suslova's love-hate feelings for him were the result of her hate for him as a man "who had first sinned against her and whom she never entirely possesses."¹⁵

This experience in real life with the duality of love, which he had met in a lesser degree in his first wife, Maria Dimitrievna, intensified the understanding which he shows in his characterization of Natasha. That same capacity in Dostoevsky which enabled him to sin without remorse in his affairs with Suslova and other women made it possible for him to forgive, unstintingly, sins against himself; and the "tenderness of pure pity" marked his deathbed watch by his first wife's side.¹⁶

Not until he married Anna Snitkina did Dostoevsky find a fairly normal love; and this second wife, though half his age, seems far more

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 165-175, quoting A. P. Suslova: Gedy blizosti s Dostoevskim, Moscow: Izdanie Sabashnikov; 1928.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 173.

¹⁶Carr, p. 115.

motherly than romantic. Their relationship seems to echo Natasha's statement to Vanya, "I decided that I didn't love him as an equal, as a woman usually loves a man. I loved him like . . . almost like a mother . . . I even fancy that there's no love in the world in which two love each other like equals."¹⁷ Though Anna mothered and managed Dostoevsky in the routine of their daily life, she maintained the same respect for his creative genius as she had when she came to him for her first stenographic position.¹⁸ Her maternal love for Dostoevsky, perhaps, offers a reason for as well as a refutation of Rosen's observation that maternal love in Dostoevsky's fiction is possessive. He notes one exception, Natasha in The Insulted and the Injured, and then he places her in an "eternal victim" category, showing that there really are not these two distinct types.¹⁹ Her lack of possessiveness is shown by her almost abnormal patience with and understanding of Dostoevsky's gambling craze and improvidence in money matters. The only things she ever seemed to resent were the importunities of the many relatives whom Dostoevsky supported. Gradually and peacefully, she gained a dominance over him in the details of their daily existence. The relationship seems

¹⁷Dostoevsky, The Insulted and the Injured, p. 281.

¹⁸Simmons, p. 173.

¹⁹Nathan Rosen, "Chaos and Dostoevsky's Women," Kenyon Review (Spring, 1958), p. 265.

delineated in the dialogue between Alyosha and Lise in The Brothers Karamazov where Lise asks,

"And, Alyosha, will you give in to me?" . . .

"I shall be delighted to, Lise, and certain to, only not in the most important things. Even if you don't agree with me, I shall do my duty in the most important things." ²⁰

Undoubtedly, Anna Snitkina made Dostoevsky happy by providing a haven where he could rest and recuperate from the struggles of his intellectual and creative life. Though Dostoevsky never knew the Shelleyan ideal, that supreme love between the sexes--"the bridal gift"²¹ which is a union of soul as well as body--apparently he achieved through Anna Snitkina, a prosaic young girl, a satisfying physical relationship and a stability which lessened his gambling fever and epileptic attacks, as well as contributed to his creative output. Dostoevsky makes the world of idea so real that it is difficult, and perhaps disappointing, to realize that he also lived the matter-of-fact, dull life which is revealed in his letters to Anna. His capacity for suffering seems indicative of an equally great capacity for transforming love. For Dostoevsky himself, though, this ideal was to be realized not so much in human, physical love between the sexes, but in Christ-like love for all mankind. This forgiving and compassionate love, a development of the salvation-through-suffering idea in The Insulted and the Injured, grows to full expression in Sonia in Crime and Punishment.

²⁰Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, p. 261.

²¹Berdyayev, p. 21.

CHAPTER IV

RASKOLNIKOV'S BURDEN OF LOVE

Out of Dostoevsky's experience of prison-life in Omsk grew his conception of Raskolnikov, a character seeking a new value, a truth beyond "the frontiers of good and evil as ordinarily conceived."¹ Raskolnikov's search leads him in the way of anti-Christ, the way of placing man's intellect above everything else, of worshipping the man-god instead of the God-in-man, and of choosing self-love rather than love of God. Dostoevsky is concerned with this question throughout his life, and it can be found restated in his novels by characters such as Kirillov in The Possessed and Ivan in The Brothers Karamazov. Raskolnikov, however, is the first instance of Dostoevsky's hero faced with the problem of seeking a rational new good; out of this dilemma also grows the character of Sonia, who represents Dostoevsky's solution.

Through his mystical-realistic approach to life and writing,² Dostoevsky makes, in Crime and Punishment, a unique contribution to the understanding of the depths of human nature. He accomplishes this through his rich, vertical characterization of Raskolnikov, and through

¹Carr, p. 193.

²Berdyayev, p. 27.

his original conception of the natures of crime and punishment. Dostoevsky's ambivalent view of man and the dichotomy in his own personality are reflected in the duality of the crime and the punishment of Raskolnikov. The shifts which the crime and the punishment make between idea and reality, the illumination of each by contrast and conflict with the other,³ and their interaction until their ultimate synthesis, all bring to the surface those parts of the human psyche which man keeps hidden underground, even from himself.

In Raskolnikov's merciless self-analysis and in his struggle to answer the "eternal why" of life, the duality of the multilayered meanings of the crime and the punishment can be seen. In this characterization Dostoevsky illuminates the depths of the subconscious, non-rational workings of the human mind where changes of character first take place. Raskolnikov is described as "exceptionally handsome, above average in height, slim, well-built, with beautiful dark eyes and dark brown hair,"⁴ yet he is recognized through the reader's acquaintance with his troubled thoughts, his wildly fluctuating moods, and his striving to come to terms with life.

³R. P. Blackmur, Eleven Essays in the European Novel (New York, 1964), pp. 130-131.

⁴Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, p. 4.

(Raskolnikov's intellect, which sets him apart, makes him seek self-perfection as well as self-assertion. The conflict between these two drives causes his bafflement of will and the consequent suffering he experiences. His dual nature is shown in his awareness of suffering--as in the dream of the drunken peasants beating the horse to death--and in his wish to impose his will or live "outside" the law by committing murder. He is unable to reconcile the misery in the world, such as the suffering of little children, with the existence of God. He persuades himself that by killing the pawnbroker, he will aid humanity, and thereby "adjust God's creation."⁵ He will gain money, free his mother and sister, as well as rid the world of a worthless individual. His failure to look within the purse shows the falsity of this. Raskolnikov's real motives--those of egoism and ambition--are seen in his assertion of self-will and his desire thereby to achieve the status of an individual.

Dostoevsky shows that alienation from environment, from other people, and from reality can culminate in violence which may be turned outwardly, as in the case of Raskolnikov, or inwardly, as in Svidrigailov's committing suicide. Svidrigailov is shown as carrying his self-assertion to self-deification, and, finally, to the dissolution of personality--the self-annihilation of suicide. Raskolnikov realizes that he has deluded himself in the motive for the crime. He admits to Sonia that he did it solely

⁵Pachmuss, p. 9.

to express his own will when he says, "I did the murder for myself alone" ⁶

Raskolnikov's duality is reflected in the duality of the crime, in its qualities of both good and evil. In its end result--the transformation of Raskolnikov--the crime perhaps could contain "good." Among its evils, the crime contains the subtle one of alienation. Raskolnikov has to depersonalize the old woman to murder her. He equates her with sin and greed, and perhaps, on a subconscious level, with the demands of his sister and mother. The unexpected murder of Lizaveta seems to show that in Dostoevsky's view one life is as valuable as another; the crime remains basically the same.

The crime causes a further loss of personality and more alienation. Raskolnikov cries to Sonia, "Did I murder the old woman? I murdered myself, not her! I crushed myself once and for all, forever!" ⁷ The immediate results of the crime show the interaction and the synthesis of the crime and the punishment, for these results are the very beginning of the punishment. The penalties exacted strike at the heart of Dostoevsky's belief in the intrinsic value of each individual. They echo his moral theory that a "spark of the Divine" exists in every human creature. ⁸ Conversely, Dostoevsky's characters also reflect his belief that everyone

⁶Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, p. 406.

⁷Ibid., p. 407.

⁸Berdyaev, p. 106.

has within himself the "universal destructive principle," even Myshkin, who wanted Rogozhin to become his murderer.⁹ Raskolnikov shows this when he virtually courts arrest, alternately encouraging and denying suspicion.

On a deeper level, the crime can be considered as sin itself; and the suffering created by faith, the punishment.¹⁰ With this theory carried to its logical conclusion, the crime could be the act of life itself, and to enter into the suffering of life, to become engage, entails submitting to suffering and thereby attaining wholeness or salvation.¹¹ The evil or sin in life is an "experience capable of enriching and raising"¹² and exists because of the paradoxical nature of freedom. The crime is, finally, freedom wrongly directed.¹³ The seeds of death are contained in freedom; thus, the crime becomes Raskolnikov's punishment!

Revolt has been called the "child of freedom,"¹⁴ and Raskolnikov carries his freedom to that point. On its simplest, external level, the punishment is exacted by the law--in Raskolnikov's case, eight years in prison. Even on this level Dostoevsky shows the duality of the punishment which is both feared and craved by Raskolnikov. He seems to welcome it as a relief from his mental torture. This is seen just before he kisses

⁹Pachmuss, p. 14.

¹⁰Blackmur, p. 123.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Berdyayev, p. 92.

¹³Ibid., p. 77.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 87.

the earth--"And the hopeless misery and anxiety of all that time . . . weighed so heavily upon him that he positively clutched at the chance of this new unmixed, complete sensation."¹⁵ The punishment, then, begins with the realization of the crime. It takes place beyond reason, in the province of the soul.¹⁶ The crime, therefore, engenders the guilt; the punishment lies in recognizing that guilt, and in the suffering caused by that knowledge.¹⁷ Purging oneself of sin and realizing the duality of the personality--that one is two selves, that the innocent self must accept the sins of the wilful self and must bring that self under submission--are necessary for redemption.

In its deepest sense, the punishment, like the crime, is not external but internal. In the curious interaction and synthesis of crime and punishment, the punishment may even precede the crime. It is characterized first by Raskolnikov's suffering from the frustration of his will or desires; and secondly, by his suffering from his refusal to accept such a fate. Only Sonia seems to accept her suffering without rebellion.¹⁸

Raskolnikov's struggle to conform his will, to adjust to reality, and his consequent change of character are accomplished through his

¹⁵ Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, p. 509.

¹⁶ Blackmur, pp. 130-131.

¹⁷ Berdyaev, p. 140.

¹⁸ Pachmuss, xv-xvi.

affinity with Sonia and his acceptance of the fundamental principle of "all-forgiving and all-embracing love."¹⁹ Raskolnikov is the first of Dostoevsky's heroes of whom it is suggested that he overcomes his duality and achieves the "synthesis of soul that will bring peace to his tortured spirit."²⁰ The greatest power in the world to Dostoevsky is this loving submissiveness as shown by Sonia and implied in Raskolnikov's change of character.²¹

In the synthesis of spirit by which Dostoevsky suggests that Raskolnikov's rebirth is effected, the role of love is of primary importance. Just as Dostoevsky reveals hidden facets of the human personality in Raskolnikov, he adds new aspects to his portrait of love in Crime and Punishment. In The Insulted and the Injured, Dostoevsky emphasizes the duality of love in Natasha, who is herself a "double"; he illustrates the dark side of love with its masochism, sadism, and with its hope of happiness to be achieved only through suffering. In Crime and Punishment, Dostoevsky continues in Svidrigailov the study of debauchery which he only suggests in Valkonsky in The Insulted and the Injured; Valkonsky's sensuality is intensified in Svidrigailov where "delight of the senses is as it were a stream of fire, but when it deteriorates into lechery the fire goes out and passion becomes as cold as ice."²² In Crime and Punishment

¹⁹Ibid., p. 190.

²⁰Ibid., p. 75.

²¹Blackmur, p. 134.

²²Berdyaev, p. 124.

he shows self-sacrificing, maternal love similar to Natasha's in the characters of Dounia and Pulcheria Alexandrovna; he suggests a normal, healthy love in Razumihin, though he never shows its fulfillment.

Razumihin offers an amusing sketch of the comforts or "featherbed aspect" of love when he recommends the charms of Raskolnikov's landlady to Zossimov.

There's the featherbed element here, brother, --and not only that! There's an attraction here--here you have the end of the world, an anchorage, a quiet haven, the navel of the earth, the three fishes that are the foundation of the world, the essence of pancakes, of savoury fish-pies, of the evening samovar, of soft sighs and warm shawls, and hot stoves to sleep on--as snug as though you were dead, and yet you are alive²³

(In Sonia, Dostoevsky adds a new dimension to his concept of love; he attempts to show in her character his ideal of human love and its redemptive power. She seems almost a personification of abstract love, yet Dostoevsky makes her come alive. Just as he infuses a glimpse of humanity into the most evil of his characters, so he makes Sonia believable as a feminine young girl. She, like Marya Timofyevna in The Possessed, is an innocent victim; and her characterization is based on a negation of self where most of Dostoevsky's characters are self-loving. Not only does Sonia represent compassionate and forgiving love, but through her existence "in and for another life" she also represents Dostoevsky's ideal of maternal love.²⁴

²³Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, p. 206.

²⁴L. A. Zander, Dostoevsky (London, 1948), p. 69.

Sonia's femininity is in decided contrast to Myshkin's asexuality; where he is neither masculine nor feminine, she is the essence of femininity in her gentleness, vulnerability, and meekness as well as in her fiercely protective love for her family. Dostoevsky is careful to avoid any hint of sexuality, however, in her characterization or in her relationship with Raskolnikov. Sonia's "having the yellow ticket" of a prostitute at once puts her beyond the reach of love as men ordinarily conceive it; then, her appearance is completely at variance with ideas of physical attractiveness at the time when Dostoevsky was writing. This can be seen readily by comparing Sonia's description with that of Grushenka in The Brothers Karamazov.

Under this rakishly tilted hat was a pale, frightened little face . . . Sonia was a small thin girl of eighteen with fair hair, rather pretty, with wonderful blue eyes. ²⁵

Her childlike quality is emphasized pointedly:

In spite of her eighteen years, she looked almost a little girl--almost a child. ²⁶

(Raskolnikov) gazed at that pale, thin, irregular, angular little face, those soft blue eyes, which could flash with such fire, such stern energy, that little body still shaking with indignation and anger ²⁷

Grushenka is described far differently:

She was very, very good-looking with that Russian beauty so passionately loved by many men. She had a full figure, with

²⁵Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, p. 24.

²⁶Ibid., p. 234.

²⁷Ibid., p. 318.

soft . . . noiseless movements, softened to a peculiar over-sweetness like her voice . . . that softness, that voluptuousness of her bodily movements, that catlike noiselessness . . . Her figure suggested the lines of the Venus of Milo, though already in somewhat exaggerated proportions.²⁸

Love pertaining to Sonia, then, would be something far different from the "storm of love" Mitya feels for Grushenka!

(Raskolnikov) bent down quickly and dropping to the ground, kissed her foot . . . Sonia drew back from him as from a madman . . . "I did not bow down to you, I bowed down to all the suffering of humanity," he said wildly . . . "It was not because of your dishonour and your sin . . . but because of your great suffering . . . Tell me," he went on . . . , "how this shame and degradation can exist in you side by side with other, opposite, holy feelings?"²⁹

These opposite, holy feelings interest Raskolnikov: "He understood that these feelings really were her secret treasure."³⁰ In reading to Raskolnikov the story of Lazarus rising from the dead, Sonia reveals not only her secret feelings, but the analogy which is the underlying meaning of the novel--a rebirth through faith; the love of sister for brother is translated through faith and divine love into a miracle of rebirth.

This rebirth is foreshadowed throughout the novel. In Raskolnikov's alienated state at the opening of the novel, love is a burden. He exhibits the same duality of response seen in Natasha in The Insulted and the Injured.

²⁸ Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, pp. 176-177.

²⁹ Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, pp. 315-316.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 320.

The letter from his mother is described as a torture to him: "Almost from the first, while he read the letter, Raskolnikov's face was wet with tears; but when he finished it, his face was pale and distorted and a bitter, wrathful, and malignant smile was on his lips."³¹

His mother writes,

Dounia is all excitement at the joyful thought of seeing you; she said one day in joke that she would be ready to marry Pyotr Petrovitch for that alone . . . Love Dounia your sister, Rodya; love her as she loves you and understand that she loves you beyond everything, more than herself. She is an angel, and you, Rodya, you are everything to us--our one hope, our one consolation. If only you are happy, we shall be happy.³²

This letter, laden with self-sacrificing love, calls to mind a similar letter to Eugène de Rastignac from his mother in Balzac's Père Goriot.

The lack of possessiveness in Pulcheria Alexandrovna's love can be noted in the scene where Raskolnikov tells her goodbye before he goes to confess his crime. His mother says,

"You thought I was going to cross-question you in the womanish way I used to; don't be anxious, I understand . . . it's not for me to keep nudging your elbow, asking you what you are thinking about . . . You mustn't spoil me, Rodya, you know; come when you can, but if you can't, it doesn't matter, I can wait. I shall know, anyway, that you are fond of me, that will be enough for me."³³

In a particular criticism, Dostoevsky's women have been divided into three categories: the possessive mother, who loves only an unheroic hero--and the example is given of Marfa Petrovna and Svidrigailov; the

³¹Ibid., p. 41.

³²Ibid., pp. 39-40.

³³Ibid., pp. 497-498.

eternal victim who can be meek or proud; and the virginal aristocrat who is proud, chaste, and child-like.³⁴ The division seems unsatisfactory since it is arbitrary and overlapping in many instances. For example, the "possessive mother" type is seen as invariably jealous with the notable exception of Natasha in The Insulted and the Injured. Granted that Natasha's love is more maternal--and this has been pointed out in the preceding chapter--still the dominating characteristic of her love is its duality, its fluctuating between the poles of love and hate. The letter from Pulcheria Alexandrovna, Raskolnikov's mother, shows her to be completely lacking in possessiveness.

It is with the second and third divisions that the greatest question of valid criticism arises. The meek, eternal victim is said to be from the lower classes; and the hero vacillates between her and the virginal aristocrat such as Sonia and Dounia in Crime and Punishment. The last two groups see the hero as heroic, or need to see him that way in order to love him; he loves only women who will bring out the noblest elements in his character.³⁵ The hero's tragedy is seen as lying in his inability to make an outward response to such women because of the crippling effect his theories and his humiliated pride have had.³⁶

³⁴Rosen, pp. 262-266.

³⁵Ibid., p. 262.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 274-275.

The female characters fall much more naturally into two general categories, according to their psychological make-up rather than their dramatic function. There are the meek, submissive, self-denying characters such as Sonia and Fulcheria Alexandrovna in Crime and Punishment; then there are the female doubles--the proud, haughty heroines who love, then hate--who, because of their own inner division, like the hero's dichotomy, are not capable in themselves of a healing love which might restore the hero to the necessary integration of his personality. The majority of the female characters in Dostoevsky suffer from the same "soul-sickness" as the male characters; they cannot serve as "light-bringers." The transformation of the hero's character can only come about inside himself and through his own efforts.

Raskolnikov reveals, in a long passage of erlebte Rede, that his sister Dounia's self-sacrifice in marrying Luzhin would be worse than a life such as Sonia's.

That's what it all amounts to; for her brother, for her mother, she will sell herself . . . Why for his sake we would not shrink even from Sonia's fate. Sonia Marmeladov, the eternal victim . . . and (it) may be worse, vile, baser, because in your case, Dounia, it's a bargain for luxuries after all, but with Sonia it's simply a question of starvation.³⁷

In Raskolnikov's alienated state of mind after the murder, "it seemed to him he had cut himself off from everyone and from everything"³⁸

³⁷Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, p. 45.

³⁸Ibid., p. 115.

Razumihin's caring for him during his illness and his friendly love seem a burden drawing Raskolnikov painfully back to reality. He cries,

"I'm sick to death of you all and I want to be alone . . . Can't you see that I don't want your benevolence? A strange desire you have to shower benefits on a man . . . who feels them a burden in fact! . . . How can I persuade you not to persecute me with your kindness? . . . Let me be, let me be!"³⁹

Zossimov watching and studying his patient . . . noticed in him no joy at the arrival of his mother and sister, but a sort of bitter, hidden determination to bear another hour or two of inevitable torture.⁴⁰

After they leave, the thought, "Yet in their absence I seemed to love them so much," flashed through his mind.⁴¹

Raskolnikov's duality is described in detail by Razumihin:

" . . . he is morose, gloomy, proud and haughty, and of late . . . he has been suspicious and fanciful. He has a noble nature and a kind heart. He does not like showing his feelings and would rather do a cruel thing than open his heart freely. Sometimes, though, he is not at all morbid, but simply cold and unhumanly callous; it's as though he were alternating between two characters . . . He never listens to what is said to him."⁴²

Though Dounia's actions throughout the novel reveal a singleness of heart and purpose, Dostoevsky indicates that a fuller development of her character would place her among the female doubles in his fiction. Razumihin notes that she has her brother's habit of not listening. He says, "Do you know, Avdotya Romanovna, you are awfully like your brother, in everything, indeed!"⁴³ Dostoevsky describes her as "pensive and

³⁹Ibid., p. 165.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 218.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 223.

⁴²Ibid., p. 211.

⁴³Ibid., p. 212.

melancholy . . . remarkably good-looking; . . . tall, strikingly well-proportioned, strong and self-reliant . . . In face she resembled her brother, but she might be described as really beautiful. "⁴⁴ Pulcheria Alexandrovna underlines the psychological resemblance when she says, "Do you know, Dounia, I was looking at you two. You are the very portrait of him, and not so much in face as in soul. You are both melancholy, both morose and hot-tempered, both haughty, and both generous "⁴⁵ Instead of life with Luzhin--who is aptly characterized by his not wearing his exquisite pair of lavender gloves, but "carrying them in his hand for show, "⁴⁶ Dounia is fortunate enough to win Razumihin, the man of common-sense and reason. Dostoevsky pictures Razumihin as ridiculously in love, "gawky and awkward, shamefaced and red as a peony, with an utter crestfallen and ferocious expression. "⁴⁷ He stands in sharp contrast to Svidrigailov, whose pursuit of sensual love leads to diffused debauchery and culminates in an inability to love.

Though Dostoevsky's physical descriptions are not what is remembered best about a character, often they contain clues as to the inner personalities. Svidrigailov's description indicates his nature, the hot, passionate side of love combined with the icy extreme of sensuality, debauchery. "His eyes were blue and had a cold and thoughtful look;

⁴⁴Ibid. , p. 201.

⁴⁵Ibid. , p. 236.

⁴⁶Ibid. , p. 144.

⁴⁷Ibid. , p. 243.

his lips were crimson."⁴⁸ In The Idiot Dostoevsky studies in Rogozhin the extreme of passionate love which ends in madness; he is characterized by his burning, passionate eyes which haunt Myshkin,⁴⁹ and whose "glitter in the darkness"⁵⁰ is the only illumination in the dark horror of the night when he and Myshkin watch by Nastasya Philippovna's body.

In The Possessed Dostoevsky explores passion which has reached the limits of ability to feel any sensation. This is shown in Stavrogin, who is described as having peculiarly light and calm eyes, and "lips like coral," with something repellent about his beauty.⁵¹ "The light in his eyes seemed to die out . . . his eyes looked cold, and calm."⁵² In The Brothers Karamazov, hot eyes and lips characterize Grushenka in the scene where Rakitin brings Alyosha to call.⁵³ Dostoevsky seems to make the distinction in physical description between the heat and color of passion and the coldness of utter debauchery.

Svidrigailov fluctuates between both extremes. Marfa Petrovna's relationship with him has been described as maternal; but its sadistic

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 240.

⁴⁹ Dostoevsky, The Idiot, p. 224.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 223.

⁵¹ Dostoevsky, The Possessed, pp. 62-63.

⁵² Ibid., p. 223.

⁵³ Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, p. 416.

and masochistic element is revealed when Svidrigallov describes his beating Marfa Petrovna and her pleasure in retelling the Dounia episode.

"There are cases when women are very, very glad to be insulted in spite of all their show of indignation. There are instances of it with every one; human beings in general, indeed, greatly love to be insulted . . . But it's particularly so with women. One might even say it's their only amusement."⁵⁴

Svidrigallov describes further masochism in Marfa Petrovna's love when he tells Raskolnikov of the curious arrangement in his marriage.

"Marfa Petrovna gave me a free hand with the maid servants, but only with her secret knowledge . . . There was so much swinishness in my soul and honesty too, of a sort, as to tell her straight out that I couldn't be absolutely faithful to her. This confession drove her to frenzy, but yet she seemed to like my brutal frankness."⁵⁵

Through Svidrigallov's conversation, Dostoevsky shows a deep understanding of feminine psychology. Svidrigallov describes Dounia's interest in him:

"She did at last feel pity for me, pity for a lost soul. And if once a girl's heart is moved to pity, it's more dangerous than anything; she is bound to want to 'save him,' to . . . lift him up . . . well, we all know how far such dreams can go . . . I saw at once the bird was flying into the cage of herself . . ."⁵⁶

He notes Dounia's need for self-sacrifice in love when he says she is ". . . simply thirsting to face some torture for some one . . . Hang it all, why is she so handsome? . . . It began on my side with a

⁵⁴Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, p. 277.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 458.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 460.

most irresistible physical desire. Avdotya Romanovna is awfully chaste, incredibly and phenomenally so⁵⁷ Svidrigailov describes his resorting to "the most powerful weapon in the subjection of the female heart . . . the well-known resource--flattery . . . A vestal virgin might be seduced by flattery."⁵⁸ As he says, though, it all came to smoke. "There's hardly anything I take interest in. I'll confess frankly, I am very much bored . . . My only hope is in anatomy."⁵⁹ He says his passion for women is "founded indeed on nature . . . something present in the blood like an everburning ember, for ever setting one on fire and, maybe, not to be quickly extinguished, even with years."⁶⁰ He reaches the point of satiety where he is diverted only by discovering sensuality in innocence. In describing his fiancée of fifteen, he says, "Sometimes she steals a look at me that positively scorches me. Her face is like Raphael's Madonna."⁶¹

A similar relation is brought out in The Possessed between Stavrogin and Matryosha, the little girl he violates; another such depraved relationship is described by Dostoevsky in Crime and Punishment in Svidrigailov's dream just before he kills himself. In this dream, the child's sleeping face reveals "something shameless, provocative in that

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 460-461.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 461.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 278-279.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 456.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 465.

quite unchildish face; it was depravity, it was the face of a harlot, the shameless face of a French harlot. "62

Dostoevsky adds a touch of humanity to his characterization of Svidrigailov when Svidrigailov realizes that Dounia represents his last chance of escaping depravity. He cries,

"What do you want with Razumihin? I love you too. . . I love you beyond everything. Let me kiss the hem of your dress, let me, let me . . . The very rustle of it is too much for me. Tell me, 'do that,' and I'll do it. I will do the impossible . . . Do you know that you are killing me?"63

He seems very like Rogozhin in his madness of passion; then his self-control asserts itself and a hint of Stavrogin can be seen in his make-up.

Svidrigailov got up and came to himself. His still trembling lips slowly broke into an angry, mocking smile . . . A weight seemed to have rolled from his heart--perhaps not only the fear of death . . . ; it was the deliverance from another feeling, darker and more bitter which he could not himself have defined.

"Then you don't love me?" he asked softly. Dounia shook her head.

"And . . . and you can't? Never?" he whispered in despair. "Never!"

There followed a moment of terrible, dumb struggle in the heart of Svidrigailov. 64

His letting Dounia go is strikingly similar to a scene in The Brothers Karamazov where Mitya, too, triumphs over physical desire. Here, the scene marks a moment of self-knowledge for Svidrigailov; he realizes that the future holds no hope of redemptive love for him. In that moment,

⁶²Ibid., p. 493.

⁶³Ibid., p. 478.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 482.

perhaps, he realizes that he is faced with the conception of eternity which he describes to Raskolnikov.

"We always imagine eternity as something beyond our conception, something vast! Instead of all that, what if it's one little room, like a bathhouse in the country, black and grimy and spiders in every corner, and that's all eternity is?"

"Can it be you can imagine nothing juster and more comforting than that?" Raskolnikov cried with a feeling of anguish.

"Juster? And how can we tell? Perhaps that is just, and . . . it's what I would certainly have made it," answered Svidrigallov with a vague smile.⁶⁵

Raskolnikov's redemption by love is foreshadowed in two instances.

When he confesses the murder to Sonia--though he does not repent--he is touched by her all-forgiving, all-accepting, and non-judging love.

"There is no one--no one in the whole world now so unhappy as you!" she cried in a frenzy . . . A feeling long unfamiliar to him flooded his heart and softened it at once.⁶⁶ Raskolnikov's heart is touched a second time when he says goodbye to his mother: "Yes, he was glad, he was very glad that there was no one there, that he was alone with his mother. For the first time after all those awful months his heart was softened"⁶⁷ Though Sonia is cited often as the agent of Raskolnikov's regeneration, she does not seem to be a personification of godly love; rather, she represents human sympathy. She is Raskolnikov's contact with reality, though he is not able to accept the "burden" of her love for some length of time. "He looked at Sonia and felt how great was her

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 283-284.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 399.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 499.

love for him, and strange to say he felt it suddenly burdensome and painful to be so loved. "68

After a year and a half in prison, Raskolnikov still is alienated from his fellow prisoners and from Sonia.

It was wounded pride that made him ill . . . Perhaps it was just because of the strength of his desires that he had thought himself a man to whom more was permissible than to others . . . if only fate would have sent him repentance . . . But he did not repent of his crime. 69

Raskolnikov did not understand that the consciousness in himself of the falsity of his convictions "might be the promise of a future crisis, of a new view of life, and of his future resurrection. "70 His dream of the microbes making man worship his intellectual power underlines, as all dreams do in Dostoevskian fiction, the point of emphasis--that man's false pride, his self-love, and his elevation of intellectuality to the status of man-god, are those things which prevent his achieving salvation through the love of God-in-man.

When Sonia returns to visit the prison work group after her illness, Raskolnikov sees her in the distance. "Something stabbed him to the heart at that minute, . . . a vague restlessness excited and troubled him. "71 Both these feelings foreshadow the mystical transformation which is about to take place inside his heart.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 409.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 525.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 526.

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 529-530.

How it happened he did not know. But all at once something seemed to seize him and fling him at her feet . . . at the same moment she understood . . . she had no doubt that he loved her beyond everything and that at last the moment had come . . . They were renewed by love; the heart of each held infinite sources of life for the heart of the other . . . He had risen again and he knew it and felt it in all his being, while she--she only lived in his life.⁷²

Sonia herself does not bring about Raskolnikov's change; she, in infinite patience and love, only awaits the time when it shall happen in his heart. Dostoevsky shows this transformation, this Lazarus-like rebirth, taking place through the mystical gift of Christ-like love in the heart. He foreshadows this precious gift when he writes: "The candle-end was flickering out in the battered candlestick dimly lighting up in the poverty-stricken room the murderer and the harlot who had so strangely been reading together the eternal book."⁷³

Crime and Punishment has been acclaimed as demonstrating the failure of nihilism in private morality and as depicting the triumph of Christian love.⁷⁴ In its exemplification of the failure of Raskolnikov's superman theory and in its positing of the redemptive love cycle--sin, suffering, penitence, and expiation, Crime and Punishment points the way to The Idiot, where Dostoevsky broadens and deepens his study of love in its duality and in its expression of passive goodness.

⁷²Ibid., p. 531.

⁷³Ibid., pp. 320-321.

⁷⁴Louise Daunter, "Raskolnikov in Search of a Soul," Modern Fiction Studies, IV (Autumn, 1958), 199.

CHAPTER V

DOSTOEVSKY'S DUALITY OF LOVE AS

SEEN IN THE IDIOT

The Idiot, like all of Dostoevsky's great novels, stands as living testimony to the never-ending struggle in his mind between reason and faith, and to his insight into the dual, conflicting nature of man who embodies both good and evil, but whom Dostoevsky sees primarily as hungering for salvation and longing to "become unalterably a part of the glory of the universe, the apprehension of which is religion."¹ In The Idiot, Dostoevsky contrasts the two kinds of love which he sees as polarities in man's choice of a way of life. The spiritual Christlike love is shown by Myshkin in the episode where he tells of his love for the abandoned Marie. This scene demonstrates the curative power of love as well as its great redemptive power. Myshkin's love for Marie inspires the children's love for her; and it is implied that, through this love, her spirit is healed, though her body dies.² The love lives on, is immortal, though Marie has returned to the source of all love, which is God.

¹Rebecca West, "Redemption and Dostoevsky," New Republic, III (June 5, July 10, 1915), 249.

²Dostoevsky, The Idiot, pp. 63-71.

The idea of physical or sexual love as Dionysian and destroying can be seen in The Idiot, where its divisive power is pointed up even more powerfully by having Myshkin love Nastasya Philippovna and Aglaia at the same time. Nastasya Philippovna excites Rogozhin's sensuality and Myshkin's pity. These two emotions Dostoevsky saw as two aspects of love; both are destructive when carried to excess as they are in this novel. In Myshkin's pity Dostoevsky even saw an element of sensuality, as Myshkin carries pity to an extreme of self-will which is just as destructive of personality integration for him as for Nastasya Philippovna. Rogozhin says to Myshkin, speaking of Nastasya Philippovna, "One might almost believe that your pity is greater than my love." Myshkin replies, "Well, there's no distinguishing your love from hate."³

This love-hate polarity is shown also in Nastasya Philippovna's feeling for Rogozhin. Myshkin says to him, "Do you know she may love you now more than anyone, and in such a way that the more she torments you, the more she loves you? . . . woman is capable of torturing a man with her cruelty and mockery without the faintest twinge of conscience, because she'll think every time she looks at you: 'I'm tormenting him to death now, but I'll make up for it with my love later.'⁴

Diseased pride, which is shown by Dostoevsky as the result of the early humiliation of Nastasya Philippovna, shows up in her self-humiliation

³Ibid., p. 206.

⁴Ibid., p. 354.

as well as in her imperiousness.⁵ Myshkin says to Aglaia,

"Why I wanted to tell you all about it, and only you, I don't know. Perhaps because I really did love you very much. That unhappy woman is firmly convinced that she is the most fallen, most vicious creature in the whole world . . . She has tortured herself too much from the consciousness of her undeserved shame . . . Oh, she's crying out . . . that she was . . . the victim of a depraved and wicked man. But . . . she's the first to disbelieve it, and to believe with her whole conscience that she is . . . to blame . . . She ran away from me . . . simply to show me that she was a degraded creature. But the most awful thing is that perhaps she didn't even know herself that she only wanted to prove that to me, but ran away because she had an irresistible inner craving to do something shameful"⁶

Dostoevsky added a further dimension to the picture of destroying sexual love when he saw in it a desire to inflict pain. In an active form this is usually seen in the masculine desire to dominate, and in its passive form a desire to undergo pain as seen in the feminine desire for submission.⁷ A reversal of these roles is frequently found, however, in Dostoevskian fiction--as in The Idiot when Nastasya commands Ganya to burn the money. He withstands her commands on this point, but submits to all sorts of humiliation and ridicule at her hands. This same reversal of masculine and feminine roles is seen in Dostoevsky's own tumultuous love affair with Suslova. A conclusion could be drawn, perhaps, as to Dostoevsky's first wife and Suslova's being more dominant

⁵Carr, pp. 112-114.

⁶Dostoevsky, The Idiot, p. 421.

⁷Carr, pp. 258-259.

influences than was his second wife, Anna Snitkina, for he always associated sexual love with suffering.

A reversal of the masculine and feminine roles is seen in The Idiot with Myshkin and Aglaia also. Aglaia's role is more the teaser than the torturer, however, for she is acting out of caprice where Nastasya Philippovna is reacting from humiliated pride and self-laceration. An example of Aglaia's teasing attempt to dominate Myshkin is the scene where she sends him the hedgehog, apologizes, then asks him in front of her family if he is not asking for her hand!⁸ This is shown further after their reconciliation. Next day "Aglaia quarrelled with Myshkin again, and things went on like that for several days. For hours together she would jeer at Myshkin and make him almost a laughingstock."⁹

Dostoevsky had great difficulty in relating his ethical ideal to sex. Russian religion worships Mary as Mother-Goddess rather than as the incarnation of virginity as do the Latin churches.¹⁰ Dostoevskian heroines often as not are the "pure prostitute" such as Sonia or the "innocent harlot" such as one side of Nastasya Philippovna's dual nature is shown to be. His ideals of self-sacrifice, self-effacement, and altruism could not be conformed to sex, which he saw as absolutely egoistic.¹¹

⁸Dostoevsky, The Idiot, p. 498.

⁹Ibid., p. 503.

¹⁰Carr, p. 212.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 213-214.

To Dostoevsky, persons incapable of selfless love could participate freely in sexual relationship. Such affairs to him were the "only source of almost every sin of our human race."¹²

Myshkin represents a serious effort on Dostoevsky's part to "portray a true representation of the primitive Christian ideal." He embodies Russian smirenje, which is translated as humility but carries cognitive ideas of renunciation and spiritual peace.¹³ Dostoevsky believed that Jesus' two great commandments, to love God and to love thy neighbor, were concerned with states of feeling, as were most of the Beatitudes. They stressed states of mind; even the peacemakers represent a negative form of action.¹⁴ Today, in the western Christian world, there is more tolerance of feelings and opinions than of actions. This is in direct contrast to Christ's teachings where sinful actions were shown as more venial than sinful thoughts. The Pharisees were condemned while the woman taken in adultery was told to go and sin no more.¹⁵ This tolerance can be seen also in the story of the Prodigal Son, whose excess was considered more pardonable than his brother's envy.

Dostoevsky's belief in the necessity for evil's existing along with good can be seen in Myshkin's failure as a force for positive good.

¹²Westbrook, p. 89, quoting Dostoevsky's "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man."

¹³Carr, pp. 209-210.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 209.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 209-211.

Lacking a knowledge of evil from his own nature, Myshkin through his very magnanimity, his eagerness to grant humanity--a personal human dignity--to everyone, by a curious inversion deprives them of their right to sin, to be evil if they choose. When Myshkin tells Ganya that he is just an ordinary man, only weak perhaps, Ganya replies, "You haven't even given me credit for being a first rate scoundrel . . . You offended me more than Epanchin, who . . . in the simplicity of his heart . . . believes me capable of selling my wife."¹⁶ And again, when Aglaia tells Myshkin, "It's very brutal to look on and judge a man's soul, as you judge Ippolit. You have no tenderness, nothing but truth, and so you judge unjustly."¹⁷ Tolerance, then, is an indifference to moral conduct. Myshkin begins to be resented by others because of his acting as if their conduct is of no significance--that is, that they are less than human.

Though mainly a meek character, Myshkin exhibits a duality of personality in some of his humanizing traits, of which a dawning love for Aglaia is one. This dichotomy in his nature is echoed even more strongly in the very real duality of Nastasya Philippovna and Aglaia. The portrait of Nastasya Philippovna indicates her duality. "He was now even more struck by the face which was extraordinary from its beauty and from something else in it. There was a look of unbounded pride and contempt, almost hatred in that face, and at the same time something confiding,

¹⁶Dostoevsky, The Idiot, pp. 118-119.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 413.

something wonderfully simple-hearted. The contrast of these two elements roused a feeling almost of compassion. "¹⁸

General Epanchin speaks of Aglaia, his daughter, to Myshkin, "Generosity and every brilliant quality of mind and heart she has, but capricious, mocking--in fact, a little devil. "¹⁹ Yet she is capable of a fierce, idealistic love for Myshkin, who personifies for her the "gentle knight," as when she says, "There's no one here, no one, who's worth your little finger, nor your mind, nor your heart! You are more honorable than any of them, nobler, better, kinder, cleverer than any of them! . . . Why do you humble yourself and put yourself below them?"²⁰ An acute appraisal of Aglaia is given by Varya to Ganya, "She'd refuse the most eligible suitor and run off delighted with some student to starve in a garret . . . You've never been able to understand how interesting you'd have become in her eyes, if you'd been able to bear our surroundings with pride and fortitude. "²¹

In the Myshkin-Nastasya-Aglaia relationship, sex is minimized. Myshkin is shown primarily as "sexually innocent rather than impotent,"²² though Myshkin himself casts some ambiguity on this when he says, "Owing to my illness, I know nothing of women. "²³ Myshkin's feeling of

¹⁸Ibid., p. 76.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 347.

²⁰Ibid., p. 332.

²¹Ibid., p. 457.

²²Carr, p. 214.

²³Dostoevsky, The Idiot, p. 13.

pity for Nastasya, of wanting to serve the higher, altruistic need she has for him, puts an end to the developing, human love he has for Aglaia. This love is hinted at when he writes to Aglaia, "I need you--I need you very much . . . I have a great desire that you should be happy."²⁴ This is shown further in "But everything had flown out of his head except the one fact, that she was sitting beside him, and that he was looking at her, and it made no difference to him at that moment what she talked about."²⁵

Madame Epanchin alone sees through Myshkin early in the novel; and, though loving him, she realizes the danger in him because of his incompleteness, his isolation from humanity, the common soil of man. This is shown where she thinks,

"There is no doubt that the mere fact that he will come and see Aglaia again without hindrance, that he was allowed to talk to her, sit with her, walk with her was the utmost bliss to him; and who knows, perhaps he would have been satisfied with that for the rest of his life. (It was just this contentment that Lizaveta Prokofyevna secretly dreaded; she understood him; she dreaded many things in secret which she could not have put into words herself.)"²⁶

She goes on to say later, "As a suitor he's out of the question . . . (but) I'd be ready to turn out all those people who were here last night and to keep him. That's what I think of him."²⁷

Yevgeny Pavlovitch adds the final diagnosis after Myshkin has remained with Nastasya Philippovna to the disillusionment and ultimate

²⁴Ibid., p. 182.

²⁵Ibid., p. 345.

²⁶Ibid., p. 502.

²⁷Ibid., p. 538.

downfall of Aglaia,

"But you ought to have understood how intense and much in earnest the girl was . . . in her feeling for you. She did not care to share you with another woman and . . . you could desert and shatter a treasure like that! . . . It was only your head, not your heart, that was involved, an illusion, a fantasy, a mirage, and only the scared jealousy of an utterly inexperienced girl would have taken it for anything serious."²⁸

Finally, he says, "Aglaia Ivanovna loved you like a woman, like a human being, not like an abstract spirit. Do you know what, my poor prince, the most likely thing is that you've never loved either of them."²⁹

This estimate is never quite proved, for Dostoevsky does not resolve this ambiguity as well as many others throughout The Idiot. This vagueness adds to the intensity and excitement of the novel as do the six major scandals which reveal--mainly in dramatic immediacy of dialogue--the true natures of the characters as they are exposed under stress. Such devices engage the full commitment of the imagination without which no reader ever enters the Dostoevskian, murky world where identities waver and change, values shift, and one is sucked up into a powerful vortex of suffering, laceration, exposure, and enlightenment. The reader is transported thereby to a new world--unreal, and yet, strangely, more real, and even closer to that light emanating from the heavens. Though Myshkin fails, he points the way to a more positive expression of the Dostoevskian ideal in Alyosha Karamazov. Until then, Prince S. has the

²⁸Ibid., pp. 562-563.

²⁹Ibid., p. 567.

last word, "Dear prince, . . . it's not easy to reach paradise on earth, but you reckon on finding it; paradise is a difficult matter, prince, much more difficult than it seems to your good heart."³⁰

³⁰Ibid., p. 330.

CHAPTER VI

BY LOVE POSSESSED

In The Possessed Dostoevsky shows ambivalent love on an individual or parental-familial level, on a group or sociopolitical level, and on an ontological or idealogical-metaphysical level. On these three levels he shows there is a choice between the dual aspects of love--between, on one hand, the way of self-love, the man-god, anti-Christ and on the other, the way of love of God, seeking God-in-man through Christ. On the first level, the father-son relationship between Stepan Trofimovitch Verkovensky and Pyotr Verkovensky illustrates some of the chain reactions resulting from choices. Where Turgenev in Fathers and Sons emphasizes the chasm between the generations of the fathers and sons--the old and the new--Dostoevsky analyzes psychological damage from lack of security and affection in the formative years. He examines the evils resulting from such lacks and from even greater perversions of parental love. By making Stepan Trofimovitch, the intellectual liberal, the father of Pyotr, the catalyst who forces the underground emotions of the community to the surface and changes disorder into chaos, Dostoevsky implies that the nihilism of the forties is the logical offspring of the sixties.¹ Pyotr is

¹Howe, p. 65.

portrayed as more monster than radical, a portrayal which seems to justify criticism that Dostoevsky confused revolutionary terrorists with nihilists.²

Dostoevsky had first-hand experience of the distance between fulsome talk and action, as well as the monomania of the would-be participants in political actions.³ His early feelings of radicalism were not so much changed as overlaid with accretions of reaction. He always believed that intellectuals fall into the error of socialism through being isolated from the people.⁴ This can be seen in his characterization of Stepan Trofimovitch, who has no actual knowledge of the Russian peasant until his quixotic journey at the end of the novel. This journey is another illustration of Dostoevsky's interest in the Don Quixote legend, just as was Agiaia's calling Myshkin her "gentle knight" in The Idiot.

In The Possessed, Dostoevsky attempts to show that salvation comes about from a rebirth of character through union with the people who symbolize Mother Russia and the earth. This union is to come about from seeking God-in-man; it involves the mystical experiencing of Christ-like love for others. In Stepan Trofimovitch's death-bed scene, this supposed rebirth is achieved through his feeling love for Sofya Mayveyevna, the Bible-woman, who provides another example of the holy and transforming

²Simmons, p. 279.

³Howe, p. 60.

⁴Ibid., p. 61.

power of the Meek Woman. Perhaps Dostoevsky himself realizes that he is straining the characterization of Stepan, for he has Varvara Petrovna tell the priest, "You will have to confess him again in another hour! That's the sort of man he is."⁵

Though Dostoevsky lampoons him unmercifully, Stepan Trofimovitch is the character through whom Dostoevsky explains the metaphor of Pushkin and the text from St. Luke found at the beginning of The Possessed. Stepan tells Sofya Mayveyevna that Russia is represented in the passage in St. Luke where the devils of chaos and destruction are exorcised from the sick man, enter into the swine, and are then destroyed by drowning; and

"those devils . . . are all the sores, all the foul contagions, all the impurities, all the devils great and small that have multiplied in that great invalid, our beloved Russia, in the course of ages and ages" . . . (after the devils have come forth) "We shall cast ourselves down, possessed and raving . . . into the sea . . . But the sick man (Russia) will be healed and will sit at the feet of Jesus."⁶

In The Possessed there is an almost overwhelming multitude of detail--characters, plots, and sub-plots. It is Dostoevsky's most formless and didactic novel. Ideas and threads of action are picked up, put down, or woven forcibly into a pattern to express beliefs Dostoevsky cherished. Some characters, such as Stepan Trofimovitch, are too vivid

⁵F. M. Dostoevsky, The Possessed, translated by Constance Garrett (New York, 1961), p. 675.

⁶Ibid., p. 668.

and too alive in their own right to be forced. This is why Stepan's belief in the peasants and his conversion at the end of the novel do not quite seem plausible; and Varvara Petrovna's summation of his character appears just. Skvoreshniki, the name of the Stavrogins' summer home, means "birdcage"; and in the birdcage of life, Stavrogin and Stepan Trofimovitch represent the destructive momentum of life and the hopeful, immortal continuum of it.⁷ They are equivalences; each possesses the other.

Stepan, vague, impractical, sentimentally liberal, is at once ridiculous and wholly lovable. He is a brilliantly drawn satire or caricature of an idealist who in real life was named Granovsky,⁸ and he joins the list of "laughter-through-tears" characters such as Marmeladov in Crime and Punishment and Snegiryov in The Brothers Karamazov.⁹ Stepan does not suffer so much as they from a predilection for drink--perhaps through the unceasing vigilance of Varvara Petrovna! Through Stepan, Dostoevsky voices his credo:

"What is far more essential for man than personal happiness is to know and to believe at every instant that there is somewhere a perfect and serene happiness for all men and for everything. The one

⁷R. P. Blackmur, "In the Birdcage, Notes on The Possessed of Dostoevsky," Hudson Review, I (Spring, 1948), 26.

⁸Carr, p. 220.

⁹Ronald Hingley, The Undiscovered Dostoevsky (London, 1962), p. 125.

essential condition of human existence is that man should always be able to bow down before something infinitely great. If men are deprived of the infinitely great they will not go on living and will die of despair. The Infinite and the Eternal are as essential for man as the little planet on which he dwells."¹⁰

Though lovable in himself, Stepan fails in his responsibilities as a parent just as he fails to make a choice between loves or ways of life until he is dying. His son, Pyotr, says to him,

"And does it matter to you whether I'm your son or not?" . . . turning to me again, "He's never spent a penny on me all his life; till I was sixteen he didn't know me at all; afterwards he robbed me here, and now he cries out that his heart has been aching over me all his life, and carries on before me like an actor."¹¹

Dostoevsky does not spell out so clearly Stepan's influence on his pupils as he does his influence on his son. At the very least, Stepan missed his opportunity with Stavrogin, who perhaps was impervious to any influence. Stavrogin lacks the essential knowledge of human limits of behavior; he suffers from acedia, torpor of spirit, which puts him below good and evil. He is not beyond good and evil, for the word "beyond" implies a Schopenhauerian resolution of desires.¹²

This acedia or torpor can be seen clearly in the scene between Stavrogin and Lizaveta at dawn just after their night together. Stavrogin realizes that not accepting Lizaveta's "sacrifice" would be more cruel

¹⁰Dostoevsky, The Possessed, p. 677.

¹¹Ibid., p. 325.

¹²Howe, p. 62.

than letting her, as he puts it, ruin herself "so grotesquely and so stupidly."¹³ He makes an attempt to play a love scene to convince her that her sacrifice is worth the price, but she is not deceived. She says, "Do you know, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, since I've been with you I've discovered that you are very generous to me and it's just that I can't endure from you."¹⁴ She had fallen into the trap of which Svidrigailov spoke, the hope that she might lift up a man by his love for her. When Lizaveta realizes that Stavrogin is incapable of love, that he has "something awful, loathsome, some bloodshed" on his conscience, she refuses to accept less than love. ". . . 'I won't be your nurse, though, of course, you need one as much as any crippled creature."¹⁵ Stavrogin cries in despair,

"Torture me, punish me, vent your spite on me . . . You have the full right. I knew I did not love you and yet I ruined you! Yes, I accepted the moment for my own; I had a hope . . . I've had it a long time . . . my last hope . . . I could not resist the radiance that flooded my heart when you came to me yesterday, of yourself, alone, of your own accord. I suddenly believed"¹⁶

His despair when he realizes that he is not to know the saving power of redemptive love is like that of Svidrigailov in Crime and Punishment; each knows that he is at the end, the terminal point of his life, beyond which there is nothing left, no depths of depravity and no hope of transforming love.

¹³Dostoevsky, The Possessed, p. 541.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 540.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 542.

¹⁶Ibid.

In her recklessness, her imperiousness, and her pride--all of which are shown in the scene with Stavrogin--Lizaveta is one of the strong-willed, passionate new women in The Possessed, who want to exert power and influence. Among the group is Varvara Petrovna, a wealthy would-be leader of society, and Yulia Mihailovna, wife of the new governor. These women choose the destructive path of self-love in contrast to the behavior of such personifications of the Meek character as Darya and Marya Timofyevna. Varvara Petrovna, though the mother of Stavrogin and foster mother of Darya, can best be studied through her relationship with Stepan Trofimovitch, a relationship which points up all the duality of love heretofore observed in Dostoevsky's fiction. She is described as a "female Maecenas who is invariably guided only by highest considerations"; and she and Stepan Trofimovitch are "ready to fly at one another . . . and yet they cannot separate."¹⁷ She did not answer his letters which came sometimes at the rate of two a day, and she never alluded to them.

By degrees she broke him in so completely that at last he did not himself dare to allude to what had happened the day before, and only glanced into her eyes at times . . . No doubt Varvara Petrovna did very often hate him. But . . . he had become for her a son, her creation, even . . . her invention. An inexhaustible love for him lay concealed in her heart in the midst of continual hatred, jealousy, and contempt.¹⁸

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 33-34.

In return for this love and solicitude she exacted a great deal from him. The curious relationship between the two has been likened to that between matriarchal Russia and her errant liberalism, quarrelsome yet loving.¹⁹ Varvara Petrovna in some respects--her irascible temper, her domineering tendencies, yet her strong-mindedness, her directness, and her generosity--seems a sister to Madame Epanchin. This ambivalent character is developed further in The Possessed in order to show what effect her lack of influence for the good has on her son, her foster-daughter, her "dear and good friend" Stepan Trofimovitch, and on the circle of people to whom she is social leader before the advent of the new governor and his wife. By inference at least, Dostoevsky shows that her desire for influence and power and her indifference to the real political issues cause her to be a force for the disorder which in turn becomes chaos.

The relationship between Yulia Mihallovna and her husband, Andrey von Lembke, the new governor, illustrates the duality of love and the misuse of power which lead to disorder and contribute to Pyotr Verkovensky's efforts to bring about destruction. Through her vanity, ignorance, and pretentiousness, which in turn are abetted by both the power of her position and of her money, she stirs up malice on all levels of the community. Through the resultant undermining of von Lembke's

¹⁹Howe, p. 68.

self-respect and, finally, his sanity, Dostoevsky points out the weakness of an autocracy as much as he delineates the evils of a revolution:

Before coming to us Yulia Mihailovna worked hard at moulding her husband. . . She cherished designs, she positively desired to rule the province, dreamed of becoming at once the centre of a circle, adopted political sympathies.²⁰

I will observe, anticipating events, that had it not been for Yulia Mihailovna's obstinacy and self-conceit, probably nothing of all the mischief these wretched people succeeded in bringing about amongst us would have happened. She was responsible for a great deal.²¹

There is evidence that she is based on an actual character who was the wife of the governor of St. Petersburg and a friend of Pushkin and Gogol; she typifies "the humanitarian female busybody on the edge of radical movements."²² Von Lembke himself provides the final summary of Yulia Mihailovna's destructive influence when he says to her,

"You, Madam, for the sake of your own dignity, ought to have thought of your husband and to have stood up for his intelligence even if he were a man of poor abilities (and I'm by no means a man of poor abilities!), and yet it's your doing that every one here despises me, it was you put them all up to it!" He shouted that he would annihilate the woman question, that he would eradicate every trace of it.²³

Throughout The Possessed can be found such remarks or asides which show Dostoevsky's strong antipathy for the possessed "new woman" who neglects the responsibilities of home and family, and fancies herself emancipated. He pokes sly fun at the ladies taking part in the

²⁰ Dostoevsky, The Possessed, p. 229.

²¹ Ibid., p. 335.

²² Simmons, p. 254.

²³ Dostoevsky, The Possessed, p. 457.

meeting at the Virginskys'. One of them, the sister of Madame Virginsky, is "a maiden lady of thirty . . . a silent and malevolent creature, with flaxen hair and no eyebrows, who shared her sister's progressive ideas and was an object of terror to Virginsky himself in domestic life."²⁴ Virginsky's sister, the Nihilist girl student, is a completely ludicrous yet pathetic character, who seems poised perpetually on the edge of her chair with her petition in hand and the same speech ever on her lips, "I wanted to make a statement to the meeting concerning the sufferings of the students and their protest"²⁵ A poor major is made indignant by her posturing and advises,

"Remember you are a young lady and you ought to behave modestly; . . . these women, these flighty windmills . . . Without men they'll perish like flies . . . All their woman question is only lack of originality. I assure you that all this woman question has been invented for them by men in foolishness and to their own hurt. There's not the slightest variety in them . . . I fly to embrace her, and at the second word she tells me there's no God."²⁶

Another example is found in the remarks made at the Fete by the General when he describes Russian girls to Yulia Mihailovna, "These rosebuds are charming for two years when they are young . . . then they broaden out and are spoilt forever . . . producing in their husbands that deplorable indifference which does so much to promote the woman movement"²⁷ This, perhaps, is Dostoevsky's facetious reason for women's restlessness

²⁴Ibid., p. 407.

²⁵Ibid., p. 416.

²⁶Ibid., p. 414.

²⁷Ibid., p. 524.

in seeking new fields for exerting their influence and power. At this time Dostoevsky and Turgenev were bitter rivals, as shown by the brilliant and perhaps unfair satirization Dostoevsky makes of Turgenev in The Possessed in the character of Karmazinov as a lisping Westernizer who sympathizes with the radicals out of vanity rather than conviction.²⁸ In spite of this rivalry, Dostoevsky's view of the emancipated woman is similar to Turgenev's sarcastic portrait in Fathers and Sons of Evdokia Kukshina, "émancipée in the true sense of the word, a woman in the vanguard."²⁹

Although lightly sketched in, the dual nature of love can be found in individual relationships such as that between Matryosha, the little girl violated by Stavrogin, and her mother.

Her mother loved her but often beat her and, from sheer force of habit, shouted at her loudly, the way women do, over everything . . . The mother did not like it that her daughter failed to reproach her . . . flew into a frenzy, because she had beaten her unjustly the first time, tore switches from the besom broom and whipped the girl until there were welts on her³⁰

Matryosha herself exhibits duality in her feeling for Stavrogin, which is reminiscent of Nastasya Philippovna's feeling toward Totsky. Along with injured pride, humiliation, and the feeling of degradation is the secret

²⁸Carr, p. 224.

²⁹Ivan Turgenev, Fathers and Sons, translated by Bernard Guerney (New York, 1950), p. 87.

³⁰Dostoevsky, The Possessed, p. 709.

fear that she herself shares the blame and, therefore, is shamefully wicked and depraved.

The contrast between the loves of Lizaveta and Darya for Stavrogin serves as an excellent illustration of Dostoevsky's concept of the two distinct types of women as well as the dual nature of love. Lizaveta is described by Dostoevsky through the narrator:

She seemed proud and at times even arrogant. I don't know whether she succeeded in being kind, but I know that she wanted to, and made terrible efforts to force herself to be a little kind. There were, no doubt, many fine impulses and the very best elements in her character, but everything in her seemed perpetually seeking its balance and unable to find it; everything was in chaos, in agitation, in uneasiness.³¹

Lizaveta's love fluctuates between love and hate, and shows the proud and imperious nature of the "infernal" woman. There are passages in The Possessed similar to those in The Idiot which describe the tormentor Nastasya Philippovna as well as the teaser Aglaia. Mavriky Nikolaevitch says to Stavrogin of Lizaveta,

"Under her persistent, sincere, and intense hatred for you love is flashing out at every moment . . . and madness . . . the sincerest infinite love and . . . madness! On the contrary, behind the love she feels for me, which is sincere too, every moment there are flashes of hatred . . . the most intense hatred! I could never have fancied all these transitions . . . before."³²

Darya's meek, all-suffering, all-accepting love is consistent with the characterization of the Meek. Her love is accepted with scornful

³¹Ibid., p. 127.

³²Ibid., p. 400.

disdain by Stavrogin when he sneers that "she will come even after the shop," that is, even if he would pay the convict Fedka "like a shopkeeper" for the murder of Kebyadkin and Marya Timofyevna.³³ Stavrogin says to Darya, "I'm so vile and loathsome, Dasha, that I might really send for you, "at the latter end," as you say. And in spite of your sanity you'll come. Why will you be your own ruin?" She replies, "I know that at the end I shall be the only one left you, and . . . I'm waiting for that."³⁴

Since Stavrogin is the completely alienated man, he does not feel any regenerating influence or spiritual renewal from all-forgiving love as Raskolnikov finally does from the "burden" of Sonya's love. This could be because Dasha is not so pure in heart as Sonya; or it could be because she is not so fully shown as a victim. The hint Dostoevsky gives that her pregnancy is the reason for Varvara Petrovna's arranging a marriage for her with Stepan Trofimovitch is never developed further, but it indicates his possible intention to show Dasha as one of his "insulted and injured" characters. The contrast between Dasha's and Lizaveta's love for Stavrogin is shown best, however, when Lizaveta remarks to Stavrogin, "Appeal to Dashenka; she will go with you anywhere you like . . . Poor little spaniel! Does she know that even in Switzerland you had fixed on her for your old age?"³⁵

³³Ibid., p. 311.

³⁴Ibid., p. 310.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 542-543.

In Dostoevsky's concept of the dual natures of love, and in his exemplification of two distinct types of women, the passionate, strong, "infernal" type seems to overshadow the meek and humble types such as Sofya Semyonovna (Sonia) Marmeladov, Sofya Andreyevna (mother of the Raw Youth), Sofya Matveyevna (the Bible woman), and Sofya Ivanovna (mother of Alyosha). It is significant that to this series of feminine characters Dostoevsky gives the name of Wisdom.³⁶ In addition to wisdom, all these women represent meekness and sacrifice--what must have been the very essence of femininity to Dostoevsky, as well as motherhood--"life in another and for another."³⁷ Marya Timofeyevna is at the opposite pole from the revolutionaries; she is one of the "fools of Christ" who foreshadow the coming of God's kingdom [and the dominance of that love which is God-in-man], while the revolutionaries are trying to bring about the kingdom of man.³⁸ Just as Dasha in The Possessed belongs to this group, so in a very special way does the cripple, Marya Timofeyevna. She voices the mystical-prophetic thoughts of Dostoevsky concerning the holiness of the great, damp Mother-Earth, and of the bond between the conscious love of the spirit which reflects the divine and the impersonal love of all creation, which includes matter.³⁹

³⁶Zander, p. 67.

³⁷Ibid., p. 69.

³⁸Payne, p. 271.

³⁹Zander, pp. 41-51.

To live between opposing poles we're bidden:
 Both ringing laughter and low stifled sobs
 Make up the music of the universe.⁴⁰

Madame Shatova exhibits a love-hate duality toward Stavrogin and her husband Shatov. In the scene where she returns to Shatov to bear Stavrogin's child, Dostoevsky captures something of the very essence of love, both in its humbler aspects--when, in the midst of the scramble for kopecks, matches, and tea, Marie Shatov begins to realize she loves her husband--and in its ennobling aspects as Shatov "listened to her timidly with a look of new life and unwonted radiance on his face. This strong, rugged man, all bristles on the surface, was suddenly all softness and shining gladness."⁴¹ The baby's birth reveals the redemptive and transfiguring power of love when Marie "would not let him leave her; she insisted on his sitting by her pillow . . . Everything seemed transformed. Shatov . . . talked of how they would now begin 'a new life' for good, of the existence of God, of the goodness of all men."⁴² The knowledge of Shatov's fate hangs broodingly over this scene; it builds the tragic intensity to a painful pitch. Shatov suddenly has much to live for, just when the forces of his destruction are gathering by the grotto in the forest. At this moment, Virginia Woolf's point seems well-taken--that reading Dostoevsky leads to exhaustion from too strong emotion; it

⁴⁰Zander, quoting Vladimir Solovyov, p. 51.

⁴¹Dostoevsky, The Possessed, p. 584.

⁴²Ibid., p. 610.

plunges one into a world of screaming doubt, questioning pain, and even despair!⁴³ It is noteworthy that with all his dissection of pain and suffering, Dostoevsky never discusses how Shatov feels when his wife betrays him; it is as if that is a subject Dostoevsky cannot bear to discuss.

The socio-political level of the community contains a cross-section of people--the lowest level of riff-raff such as Fedka the convict; the laboring people, typified by the factory workers; the pseudo-intellectuals, including both Stepan Trofimovitch and Karmazinov; the so-called "high society"; the fringe of beatniks; and the isolated individuals making up the conspiracy. All these characters are possessed or bedeviled in varying degrees by their inner duality. Some who claim to be reformers actually are monomaniacs in the name of humanitarianism; they are men of pride who reject God and assume His nature.⁴⁴ They all seem motivated by self-love and a desire to express this self-love in action.

This desire can be seen clearly in the group of conspirators whom Dostoevsky pictures as wild, erratic, and unreliable individuals who are isolated from society. Among them are Virginsky, the pure enthusiast and "latest apostle of advanced ideas"; Liputin, gossip, slanderer, yet a sincere reformer; Shigalov, "caricature of the doctrinaire"; Lyamshin, jester, buffoon; and Tolkatchenko, a mere cipher --all were as familiar to

⁴³Virginia Woolf, Granite and Rainbow (London, 1958), pp. 129-130.

⁴⁴Westbrook, p. 142.

Dostoevsky as the fingers of his right hand.⁴⁵ They were part of him and his experience in his real-life conspiracy. One of his major contributions to the study of political activity is his revelation of the muddle and confusion underlying ideology's precision and order.⁴⁶ He shows that the conspirators really have no motive; all is false, just as the Nechaev conspiracy was based on fraud.⁴⁷

Leadership of this muddled group of conspirators is exerted through the mysterious force of personality shown by Pyotr Stepanovitch Verkovensky and Nikolay Vseyevolodovitch Stavrogin. Mystical power of personality is seen in many of Dostoevsky's characters such as Myshkin and Alyosha, Nastasya Philippovna and Grushenka. Where Myshkin's influence was passive, Stavrogin's is positive; he is the influencer. Where Raskolnikov vacillates between the two polarities of influence or choices of love represented by Sonya and Svidrigailov, Stavrogin's influence is centripetal.⁴⁸ In Dostoevsky, contact with characters such as these "crystallizes emotions into motive; they can create or obliterate personality in followers or victims."⁴⁹ Pyotr wants to create destruction and to make Stavrogin the leader of the conspiracy, even make him Ivan,

⁴⁵ Howe, pp. 66-68.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 67.

⁴⁷ Blackmur, "In the Birdcage," p. 19.

⁴⁸ Hingley, p. 158.

⁴⁹ Blackmur, "In the Birdcage," p. 19.

the Tsarevitch. Stavrogin remains a mystery through Dostoevsky's conscious ambiguity. He is the Great Sinner of whom Shatov says, "You married from a passion for martyrdom, from a craving for remorse, through moral sensuality."⁵⁰ Stavrogin commits the worst sin conceivable to the imagination when he violates a child. He does not repent. This is shown clearly when Stavrogin says in his confession, "I am sorry neither for the crime, nor for her, nor for her death"⁵¹ Since he despises the people who would be his judges in the event of the publication of his sin, his confession is merely a further expression of self-will, another shocking insult in the same spirit as his biting the ear of the governor.

Stavrogin does seem to seek a burden as Shatov tells him.⁵² Dostoevsky reemphasizes this when he says through the narrator, "The basic idea of the document is the terrible, undisputed need for penalties, the need for a cross, for universal punishment."⁵³ Indeed, Stavrogin's name from stavros, or "cross" implies this. The confession seems to be his last attempt to feel something, anything at all, which would explain why he keeps bringing back up into his consciousness the vision of the child Matryosha shaking her fist at him. He has formulated his beliefs when he says,

⁵⁰Dostoevsky, The Possessed, p. 272. ⁵¹Ibid., p. 722.

⁵²Ibid., p. 307.

⁵³Ibid., p. 707.

"I do not know and do not feel good and evil and not only have I lost the sense for them, but also there is no good and evil (and I found this pleasant) but only prejudice; that I could be free from all prejudice but that once I reached this freedom, I would be lost."⁵⁴

That Stavrogin reaches a void of perfect freedom, which lies beyond choices and beyond love, is confirmed by his suicide.

"There will be a new man, happy and proud. For whom it will be the same to live or not to live, he will be the new man. He who will conquer pain and terror will himself be a god . . . No, not in a future eternal life, but in eternal life here. There are moments, you reach moments, and time suddenly stands still . . . He will come, and his name will be the man-God."⁵⁵

Kirillov commits suicide also, but from far different reasons than those of Stavrogin. Kirillov carries Raskolnikov's ethical theory of the superman into the realm of religion; Ivan Karamazov in The Brothers Karamazov continues the further development of these same ideas.⁵⁶ In Kirillov and Shatov, the dual sides of Dostoevsky's own questioning nature are shown, as well as the metaphysical problem of Stavrogin. Both Kirillov and Shatov try radicalism and capitalism, and are driven into indifference and hatred respectively.⁵⁷ Kirillov seeks the man-god, and Shatov seeks the God-in-man--thus is seen the duality of love operating on the ideological-metaphysical level. To Kirillov is given Dostoevsky's

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 717.

⁵⁵Morris, p. 181, quoting Kirillov in Dostoevsky's The Possessed.

⁵⁶Carr, pp. 229-230.

⁵⁷Howe, p. 63.

"most intimate sickness"; to Shatov, his "most cherished idea."⁵⁸

Which love is the answer--the ultimate in self-love which becomes the man-god, the Anti-christ, or the love of God-in-man which through Christ brings man into union with All-Love or God? Where Kirillov carries his self-love into solipsism, Shatov, alone of the possessed, seems near redemption. Characteristically, Dostoevsky shows that in a character who has investigated capitalism, embraced radicalism, and then become disenchanted and alienated when he realizes that Stavrogin's revolution is godless. Again, characteristically, Dostoevsky humanizes Shatov through his spiritual rebirth, shown at the birth of his wife's child. He is redeemed by the death of his self and pride into the mystical communion of love between himself and Marie on the personal level, between himself and the Almighty on the level of the eternal. Shatov, the one wholly sympathetic character, "the repentant nihilist," who even looks like Dostoevsky, seems to represent Dostoevsky's self-idealization.⁵⁹ Shatov not only shows the redemptive, healing, cleansing power of love, but points up Dostoevsky's belief in the necessity for suffering in love.

To love, Dostoevsky adds the concept of morality which is that love "implemented by a concern for the fullest possible satisfaction of the

⁵⁸Blackmur, "In the Birdcage," p. 19.

⁵⁹Carr, p. 222.

interest of the loved objects; without an attempt to secure this satisfaction, love is passionate or compassionate, or sentimental, but not moral. ⁶⁰ This morality may extend from love or concern for certain individuals, specific social groups, all men, and all living beings. ⁶¹ Dostoevsky's ideal of love is found when the duality of love is resolved into the singleness of purpose of the first great commandment and summary of the Law given by Christ: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. ⁶² Dostoevsky's ideal of love also embodies the peculiarly Christian concepts of dedication, purification, and transformation of the self. Personal salvation lies in a change of heart; and it is necessary and sufficient for redemption. ⁶³

In The Possessed when Shatov cries desperately, 'I believe in Russia . . . I believe in her orthodoxy . . . I believe in the body of Christ . . . I believe that the new advent will take place in Russia . . . I . . . I will believe in God, ⁶⁴ Dostoevsky is showing God-seeking man turning away from sensuality and self-will to Christ-like love. Through his suffering, his guilt, his expiation, Shatov strives for universal love

⁶⁰ Morris, p. 20.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² The Book of Common Prayer (New York, 1944), p. 69.

⁶³ Morris, pp. 126-128.

⁶⁴ Dostoevsky, The Possessed, p. 270.

directed outwardly--the Christian ideal. Stavrogin's fate is Dostoevsky's refutation of the belief that freedom from all law is to be desired. Rather, freedom would better be "the fusion of the conscious will or partial individual law, with those universal, eternal, unconscious ones, which run through all Time, pervade history, prove immortality, give moral purpose to the entire objective world, and the last dignity to human life."⁶⁵

The Possessed as a whole is Dostoevsky's rejection of any concept of "wholesale sociopolitical organization of man including his very soul"; it is Dostoevsky's rejection of the concept that "man and society can be creatively transformed by any ideology except (by) man's inner transformation, through faith, friendship, mutual aid, and love."⁶⁶ It is in the heart of Mitya that Dostoevsky shows this transformation in

The Brothers Karamazov.

⁶⁵Westbrook, p. 46, quoting Walt Whitman's "Freedom."

⁶⁶Westbrook, p. 166.

CHAPTER VII

SYNTHESIS IN THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV

"In the past it was only those infernal curves of hers that tortured me, but now I've taken all her soul into my soul and through her I've become a man myself. "

Mitya to Alyosha¹

"If you are penitent, you love. And if you love you are of God. All things are atoned for, all things are saved by love . . . Love is such a priceless treasure that you can redeem the whole world by it, and expiate not only your own sins but the sins of others. "

Father Zossima²

The above quotations substantiate the point of this thesis: though The Brothers Karamazov embodies all the elements of physical love heretofore seen in other fiction of Dostoevsky, a significant change can be observed in the love of Mitya and Grushenka. First, and familiar to readers of Dostoevsky, is physical love: the self-love which leads to sensuality and progresses on to debauchery; the love-hate duality which arises from the syndrome of humiliated pride and self-laceration--torture of self and loved object; and the self-love which leads to extremes of self-will, on to madness or disintegration of personality. Secondly, Dostoevsky'

¹F. M. Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov (New York, 1950), p. 723.

²Ibid., pp. 64-65.

recurrent idea of Christ-like redemptive love is present; and there is a suggestion that, finally, there will be a union of the redemptive love with a more profound realization of physical love.

Alyosha says,

"My brothers are destroying themselves . . . my father too. And they are destroying others with them. It's 'the primitive force of the Karamazovs' . . . a crude, unbridled, earthly force. Does the spirit of God move above that force? Even I don't know. I only know that I, too, am a Karamazov" ³

The self-love which leads to sensuality and debauchery is shown clearly in Fyodor Karamazov. His sensuality is not the icy depravity of Svidrigailov and Stavrogin, but a depravity seemingly arising from a combination of the Karamazov lust for life and a consciousness of his own inferiority. Fyodor's buffoonery reflects his humiliated pride; it is a form of self-laceration and torture:

He longed to revenge himself on everyone for his own unseemliness. He suddenly recalled how he had once in the past been asked, "Why do you hate so and so, so much?" And he had answered them, with his shameless impudence, "I'll tell you. He had done me no harm. But I played him a dirty trick, and ever since I have hated him." ⁴

These qualities of love of life and vitality found in varying forms in Alyosha, Ivan, and Mitya are "merged and debased in Fyodor Karamazov and degraded and lacerated" in Smerdyakov, the fourth brother. ⁵

³Ibid., p. 262.

⁴Ibid., pp. 98-99.

⁵Blackmur, Eleven Essays in the European Novel, p. 188.

Mitya's pride of body, Ivan's pride of intellect, and Alyosha's pride of humility are not strong motives separately, but together they interact to create the storm in which Smerdyakov, the lackey of thought, commits the actual murder.⁶ All the brothers are guilty and none is guilty; "the murder is anonymous and communal and our own."⁷

Lise is an example of the same self-will expressed in sensuality and masochism as is shown by her conversation with Alyosha--

"I wanted to tell you of a longing I have. I should like some one to torture me, marry me and then torture me, deceive me and go away. I don't want to be happy . . . I want disorder. I keep wanting to set fire to the house."⁸

As soon as Alyosha had gone, Lise unbolted the door, opened it a little, put her finger in the crack and slammed the door with all her might, pinching her finger. Ten seconds after, releasing her finger, she walked softly, slowly to her chair . . . looked intently at her blackened finger and at the blood that oozed from under the nail. Her lips were quivering and she kept whispering rapidly to herself: "I am a wretch, wretch, wretch, wretch!"⁹

Ivan says of Lise when Alyosha delivers her note,

"Ah, from that little demon!" he laughed maliciously, and without opening the envelope, he tore it into bits and threw it in the air . . . "She's not sixteen yet, I believe, and already offering herself," ~~he said contemptuously~~ . . . "How do you mean, offering herself?" exclaimed Alyosha. "As wanton women offer themselves, to be sure."¹⁰

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 198, quoting Thomas Mann.

⁸Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, p. 706.

⁹Ibid., p. 712.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 730.

Though it changes later, Mitya's love has a similar wanton, sensual basis. Mitya is in conversation with Alyosha in the age-blackened summerhouse,

"I love no one but you! . . . No one but you and one 'jade' I have fallen in love with to my ruin. But being in love doesn't mean loving. You may still be in love with a woman and yet hate her . . . Have you ever dreamt of falling down a precipice into a pit? . . . It's not enjoyment though, but ecstasy."¹¹

Then he quotes from Schiller's "Ode to Joy," and ends with the words,

To angels--vision of God's throne,
To insects--sensual lust.¹²

"I am that insect, brother (to whom God gave 'sensual lust') . . . All we Karamazovs are such insects, and, angel as you are, that insect lives in you, too, and will stir up a tempest in your blood . . . Yes, man is broad, too broad indeed. I'd have him narrower . . ."¹³

Mitya describes Grushenka to Alyosha as "A rogue who has an eye for men. She told me once she'd devour you one day."¹⁴ He says she is a

"merciless cheat and swindler. I went to beat her, and I stayed. The storm broke, --it struck me down like the plague . . . I tell you that rogue, Grushenka, has a supple curve all over her body. You can see it in her little foot, even in her little toe . . . I'll be (even) the porter at her gate."¹⁵

Grushenka's debauchery arises from the humiliation of her pride by her first lover. It leads to her self-laceration and her torture of various

¹¹ Ibid., p. 123.

¹² Ibid., p. 127.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 129.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 140.

men in her life as well as of Katerina Ivanovna in the hand-kissing episode. The universality of the Karamazov traits are shown in Grushenka's possessing many of them--sensuality, greed, passion, hate, cruelty, perversity, and rebelliousness. Most of these characteristics are shown in the scene with Katerina Ivanovna which culminates in Grushenka's cruel statement, "You may be left to remember that you kissed my hand, but I didn't kiss yours."¹⁶ Fyodor says to Alyosha, "That's her way, everything by contraries."¹⁷ Rakitin tells Alyosha that she "has been begging me to bring you along. 'I'll pull off his caesock,' she says."¹⁸ Grushenka's bad traits, like those of Mitya, are tempered with good. As she says, ". . . though I am bad, I did give away an onion."¹⁹ In a folk story she tells, a single good deed is represented by a single onion given by an old woman to a beggar. By this onion, the angel can pull the wicked old woman from the lake of fire to paradise.²⁰ During the novel Grushenka, as well as Mitya, grows, and at the conclusion she is capable of a generous and selfless love for Mitya.

Katerina Ivanovna shows neither sensuality nor greed, but exhibits a passionate, impulsive, and self-loving nature. Her pride was humiliated when Mitya gave her the money to save her father; she hates

¹⁶Ibid., p. 181.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 206.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 91.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 423.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 423-424.

him because he humbled her. Mitya himself recognizes this duality when he tells Alyosha,

"Would you believe it, it has never happened to me with any other woman, not one, to look at her at such a moment with hatred. But, on my oath, I looked at her for three seconds, or five perhaps, with fearful hatred --that hate which is only a hair's breadth from love, from the maddest love."²¹

In a triumph over his "Karamazov idea," Mitya spares her, and she hates him for it. "She loves her own virtue, not me," Mitya tells Alyosha.²²

As Katerina Ivanovna herself says to Alyosha, "I don't even know whether I still love him. I feel pity for him, and that is a poor sign of love. If I loved him, if I still loved him, perhaps I shouldn't be sorry for him now, but should hate him."²³ She goes on in the same scene, however, and in her determination to sacrifice herself shows a self-lacerating pride along with her torturing of Mitya and of Ivan. Alyosha tells her,

"You're torturing Ivan, simply because you love him--and torturing him, because you love Dmitri through self-laceration--with an unreal love--because you've persuaded yourself."²⁴

Ivan replies,

" . . . believe me, Katerina Ivanovna, you really love him. [Dmitri] And the more he insults you, the more you love him--that's your 'laceration.' You love him just as he is; you love him for insulting you. If he reformed, you'd give him up at once and cease to love him . . . But you need him so as to contemplate

²¹Ibid., p. 135.

²²Ibid., p. 138.

²³Ibid., p. 222.

²⁴Ibid., p. 227.

continually your heroic fidelity and to reproach him for infidelity. And it all comes from your pride. Oh, there's a great deal of humiliation and self-abasement about it, but it all comes from pride²⁵

Katerina Ivanovna's subsequent actions at the trial, first trying to save Mitya, then damning him with the letter written when he was drunk, prove that Ivan's statement is true. Her apparent generosity with money to Mitya really is a temptation to him and an opportunity for her to glory in her own humiliation--to punish him by her virtuous forgiveness. She is shown as a strong, self-willed, proud character, of "an infernal nature, too, and . . . a woman of great wrath."²⁶ All these qualities have been seen before in the distorted loves of Natasha, Polina, Nastasya Philippovna, and Lizaveta, but they are shown most vividly in Katerina Ivanovna's duality of love.

Just as Fyodor Karamazov and Katerina Ivanovna react out of humiliation of pride--self-laceration, so does Captain Snegiryov. Alyosha places him among the

" . . . people of deep feeling who have been somehow crushed. Buffoonery in them is a form of resentful irony against those to whom they daren't speak the truth, from having been for years humiliated and intimidated by them . . . that sort of buffoonery is sometimes tragic in the extreme."²⁷

Captain Snegiryov's buffoonery is tragic retaliation from self-pity;²⁸ he is

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 601.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 651.

²⁸ Blackmur, p. 189.

another in the list of insulted and injured characters. Where he reacts with buffoonery, his son Iusha responds "with sickness at injustice and a mighty anger."²⁹ Again and again, Dostoevsky shows the disruptive aspect of humiliation, particularly in its generation of pride.³⁰ Often the injured vanity or pride which is an expression of insecurity and shame takes its revenge through love.³¹

Ivan, who cannot love his fellow-man apart from God, says to Alyosha, "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."³² He reiterates, "It's not God that I don't accept, Alyosha, only I most respectfully return Him the ticket."³³ Ivan is unable to reconcile God's love with a world where little children suffer. He is struggling against the worst evil to Dostoevsky--a belief in the self-sufficiency of the intellect.³⁴ Like Dostoevsky, Ivan is split through, "torn between love and contempt, pride and submission, reason and faith, teleology and extremist pessimism."³⁵ The prose poem, "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor," which Ivan tells to Alyosha, is proof of Dostoevsky's statement in his notebook that "It is not

²⁹Ibid., p. 197.

³⁰Westbrook, p. 65.

³¹Vivas, p. 75.

³²Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, p. 279.

³³Ibid., p. 291.

³⁴Vivas, p. 83.

³⁵Philip Rahv, "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor," Partisan Review, XXI (May-June, 1954), 253.

as a child that I believe in Christ and profess His teaching; my hosanna has burst through a purging flame of doubts."³⁶ Christ is silent throughout the Grand Inquisitor's argument. The kiss he gives to the Grand Inquisitor refutes the argument, and expresses "the religious answer to atheism--silence and forgiveness."³⁷ As Alyosha leaves, he kisses Ivan, and thus shows his forgiveness of Ivan's atheism. "That's plagiarism," cries Ivan, highly delighted. "You stole that from my poem"³⁸

Ivan's self-love expressed by his self-will and belief in the man-god is reminiscent of the dilemmas of Shatov and Kirillov. Ivan seems to represent a union of their two aspects of man's conflict. Ivan's dichotomy is even more apparent because it is given concrete form. Ivan tells his "paltry, pitiful devil,"³⁹

"You are my hallucination. You are the incarnation of myself, but only of one side of me . . . of my thoughts and feelings, but only the nastiest and stupidest of them."⁴⁰

The devil aptly describes Ivan's suffering when he says,

³⁶V. V. Zenkovsky, "Dostoevsky's Religious and Philosophical Views," Dostoevsky, A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood, New Jersey, 1962), p. 130.

³⁷René Wellek, "Sketch of the History of Dostoevsky Criticism," Dostoevsky, A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood, New Jersey, 1962), p. 12.

³⁸Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, p. 313.

³⁹Ibid., p. 835.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 775.

"But hesitation, suspense, conflict between belief and disbelief is such torture to a conscientious man, such as you are, that it's better to hang oneself at once."⁴¹

Continuing the argument, the devil, "that indispensable minus," says,

"We only need to destroy the idea of God in men . . . and the old conception of the universe will fall of itself . . . Man will be lifted up with a spirit of divine Titanic pride and the man-god will appear . . . Love will be sufficient only for a moment of life, but the very consciousness of its momentariness will intensify its fire, which now is dissipated in dreams of eternal love beyond the grave."⁴²

This idea (which first was introduced by Dostoevsky in Raskolnikov) that "all things are lawful"⁴³ Ivan passes on to the lackey of thought, Smerdyakov, whose personality is captured by the words, "In his childhood he was very fond of hanging cats and burying them with great ceremony."⁴⁴ As Smerdyakov tells Ivan, "You are the only real murderer in the whole affair, and I am not the real murderer, though I did kill him. You are the rightful murderer."⁴⁵ Ivan's cry at the trial, "Who of us does not desire his father's death?"⁴⁶ is a recognition of universal guilt and echoes Dostoevsky's belief that parricide is the symptom of highest social decay.⁴⁷

⁴¹Ibid., p. 784.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 788-789.

⁴³Ibid., p. 789.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 147.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 762.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 834.

⁴⁷Wellek, p. 9.

Ivan, whose self-love and intellectual pride cause him to rebel, does not take the necessary first step toward spiritual rebirth.⁴⁸ He falls ill with brain fever, and his fate, like that of Katerina Ivanovna, remains ambiguous. Through the example of Ivan, Dostoevsky shows that the great burden of free choice given to man in his worship causes his most painful suffering; yet in this challenge can be found the strength of Christianity. How much greater is love and allegiance which is freely given! Ivan's sterility shows Dostoevsky's belief that God cannot be followed through reason alone. He must be followed by Alyosha's way of faith and Christlike love.

Just as all the brothers share in the Karamazov thirst for life, all are guilty of some part in the crime. Alyosha is strong enough not to be debauched by his brothers, but he fails to help them. Where Ivan accepts God but not His world, Alyosha accepts both God and His world.⁴⁹ In contrast to Prince Myshkin,

Alyosha's heart could not endure uncertainty, because his love was always of an active character. He was incapable of a passive love. If he loved anyone, he set to work at once to help him . . . !⁵⁰

Alyosha has the gift of making others love him; and he serves as a mediative

⁴⁸Westbrook, pp. 70-71.

⁴⁹Blackmur, p. 206.

⁵⁰Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, p. 221.

force, the bridge between evil and good Karamazov traits, between guilt and retribution. Dostoevsky shows, through Father Zossima's advice, that for Alyosha going into the world and exhibiting Christ's love is the answer. Thus, Alyosha is Dostoevsky's strongest personification of the Christlike redemptive love which he depicts earlier in Sonya Marmeladov and Myshkin.

Alyosha's greatest temptation to disbelieve comes when Father Zossima's body begins to putrefy. In Alyosha's ultimately being able to accept the fact that there will be no miracle--that his "saint" must conform to physical laws, [✓]Dostoevsky seems to be reiterating the point made indirectly by Christ in "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" when he does not agree to use miracle, mystery, and authority to insure man's happiness. Even truth must not be coercive. ⁵¹ Christ is silent in the legend; if the truths of religion are self-evidently triumphant, where then is faith's test? ⁵² Man must have free choice between self-love and love of God, between evil and good. Through Alyosha, Dostoevsky affords a glimpse of Heaven; through Ivan and Mitya he gives a glimpse of Hell. ⁵³ It is, perhaps, a simplification, but for Dostoevsky, Hell seems

⁵¹Austin Warren, "The Tragic Freedom of Man," American Review, IV (November, 1934-March, 1935), 493.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Richard B. Sewall, "The Tragic World of the Karamazovs," Tragic Themes in Western Literature, edited by Cleanth Brooks (New Haven, 1955), p. 108.

the inability to love in the highest, fullest meaning of the word.

Mitya is "all action, the action of unmitigated and unmeditated love."⁵⁴ He reacts with love to suffering; his self and pride die into love.⁵⁵

Dostoevsky suggests this syndrome in Shatov's experiencing redemptive love; but here, in Mitya's spiritual change--as underlined in his dream, Mitya "grows, suffers, and in an Aeschylean sense, learns--lives out to a certain degree the old tragic paradox of victory in defeat."⁵⁶

Mitya's moral rebirth points up Dostoevsky's belief that the way to salvation lies only through a personal knowledge of sin in man's own nature, and a victory over it. In this way, Dostoevsky takes the problem of evil from man's external world and places it inside his heart. Dostoevsky believes that "will and the criminal act were only self-evident variations of a fundamental metaphysical principle."⁵⁷ As Mitya tells Alyosha, "God and the devil are fighting, and the battlefield is the human heart."⁵⁸

The change in Mitya's love is indicated as he speeds along the road to Mokree,

⁵⁴Blackmur, p. 203.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 72.

⁵⁶Sewall, p. 123.

⁵⁷René Fueloep-Miller, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Insight, Faith, and Prophecy (London and New York, 1950), p. 69.

⁵⁸Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, p. 127.

She's with him, he thought, now I shall see what she looks like with him, her first love, and that's all I want. Never had this woman, who was such a fateful influence in his life, aroused such love in his breast, such new and unknown feeling, surprising even to himself, a feeling tender to devoutness, to self-effacement before her!⁵⁹ [Italics added.]

He seems to relate this new love to love of God, rather than to the "heels up in the mire" love he experienced before. He breathes a Job-like prayer,

I love Thee, O Lord. I am a wretch, but I love Thee. If Thou sendest me to hell, I shall love Thee there, and from there I shall cry out that I love Thee for ever and ever . . . But let me love to the end . . . for I love the queen of my soul . . . I love her and I cannot help loving her. Thou seest my whole heart⁶⁰

Mitya's dream during the preliminary investigation, the dream of the starving, half-frozen babe, brings on

a passion of pity, such as he had never known before, . . . rising in his heart, and he wanted to cry, . . . he wanted to do something for them all, so that the babe should weep no more, so that the dark-faced, dried-up mother should not weep, that no one should shed tears from that moment, and he wanted to do it at once, at once, regardless of all obstacles, with all the recklessness of the Karamazovs.⁶¹

Mitya says to the policemen as they carry him away from Mokree,

"Gentlemen, we're all cruel, we're all monsters, we all make men weep, and mothers, and babes at the breast, but of all I am the lowest reptile! I've sworn to amend . . . I accept the torture of accusation and my public shame, I want to suffer and by suffering, I shall be purified . . . but . . . I am not guilty of my father's blood. I accept my punishment, not because I killed him, but because I really meant to kill him, and perhaps I really might have killed him"⁶²

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 498.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 500-501.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 616.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 617-618.

In his argument to the jury, Fetyukovitch says that people like Mitya, who are

passionate and fierce on the surface, . . . are painfully capable of loving woman, for instance, and with a spiritual and elevated love.⁶³ [Italics added.]

Grushenka, that other "fierce heart," attains this spiritual love; it is evident when Alyosha sees her just before the trial:

She was very much changed . . . But to Alyosha her face was even more attractive than before, . . . A look of firmness and intelligent purpose had developed in her face. There were signs of spiritual transformation in her, and a steadfast, fine, and humble determination that nothing could shake could be discerned in her . . . There was scarcely a trace of her former frivolity.⁶⁴ [Italics added.]

She too transfers personal love for an individual to love for all people. Maximov tells her that he does not deserve her kindness as he is a worthless creature. She replies, "Ech, every one is of use, Mazimushka, and how can we tell who's of most use?"⁶⁵ Grushenka's reply seems to answer Raskolnikov's question--as well as Alyosha's to Ivan--when he asks, "Brother, has any man a right to look at other men and decide which is worthy to live?"⁶⁶ Even Madame Hohlakov, another Dostoevskian example of the posturing emancipated woman, says of Grushenka, "They say she has become a saint, though it's rather late in the day."⁶⁷

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 901-902.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 685.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 688.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 170.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 696.

Mitya and Grushenka's change of character through their inner experience of selfless, redemptive love for one outside themselves is shown clearly by Dostoevsky. They are able to translate their human, physical love into a love for all mankind and for the Eternal Being. Alyosha's only external victory is with the group of boys "whose role is parallel-in-embryo to the world of the Karamazovs" ⁶⁸ Kolya, a combination of Ivan and Alyosha, goes from Descartes' Cogito ergo sum to Zossima's "I am and I love"; ⁶⁹ the boys become brothers through the influence of Alyosha. In the intended sequel to The Brothers Karamazov, Alyosha, or perhaps Kolya, would attain that union of man and God in all-forgiving, universal love, that ideal toward which Dostoevsky struggled throughout his life and which he embodies in his fiction.

⁶⁸ Sewall, p. 125.

⁶⁹ This idea was reached independently of Sewall.

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