

ronist of the People's Will party by the name of Andrey Zhelyabov took part in the successful attempt on the life of Alexander II. He was caught and brought to trial, and this is what he had to say to the court: "I was baptized in the Orthodox Church but I reject Christianity, although I acknowledge the essential teaching of Jesus Christ. This essential teaching occupied an honored place among my moral incentives. I believe in the truth and righteous-ness of that teaching and I solemnly declare that faith without works is dead and that every true Christian ought to fight for the truth and for the rights of the oppressed and the weak, and even, if need be, to suffer for them. Such is my creed." Evidently the blood he shed did not weigh on Zhelyabov's conscience, for he went to his death on the gallows calm and impenitent. Raskolnikov, cheated of Zhelyabov's fate, goes to a Siberian prison in the same state of perplexity and outrage with which he undertook to carry out his "loathsome scheme." But, then, it was a hideous old harpy he killed, not the Czar of all the Russias.

Whatever the manifest theme of the novel, its latent theme is not that of crime as such or the criminal's innate need of punishment but the right to violent rebellion. It was the violence that Dostoevsky condemned, even as he was secretly drawn to it, fearing that if let loose it would tear down the authority both of heaven and earth, and Raskolnikov goes down to defeat to prove his creator right.

In its aspect as a polemic against the radical generation of the 1860's—whose obscurantist rationalism and notion of enlightened self-interest as the motive-force of human conduct Dostoevsky began satirizing in *Notes from the Underground*—the novel depends on the sleight-of-hand of substituting a meaningless crime for a meaningful one. But if that were all, *Crime and Punishment* would not be the masterpiece it undoubtedly is. The very substitution of one type of crime for another set problems for Dostoevsky which he solved brilliantly by plunging his hero into a condition of pathology which ostensibly has nothing to do with the "heroic" theory by means of which he justifies himself. In his article "On Crime" Raskolnikov wrote that the perpetration of a crime is always accompanied by illness, and that is an exact description of his own case, though he believes himself to be another kind of criminal altogether, one acting from rational calculation and in the interests of a higher idea; the irony of his self-deception is among the finest effects of the book. And it is astonishing how well Dostoevsky was able to preserve the unity of his protagonist's character, to present him as all of a piece in spite of the fact that we are dealing not with one but with several Raskolnikovs. There is Raskolnikov the altruist and there is Raskolnikov the egoist, "a despot by

nature"; there is the crypto-revolutionary Raskolnikov and there is the self-styled genius who demands power as his right and as the guaranty of his freedom; then of course there is the neurotic who acts out his illness through a murder intellectually rationalized but inexplicable except in terms of an unconscious drive. After all, he conceives an "insurmountable repulsion" to Alyona Ivanovna, the old moneylender, weeks before he elaborates his murderous plan. Dostoevsky confronted the hazard of these contradictions with unequalled mastery. His capacity to combine them creatively in a single brain and a single psyche, while staying off the danger of incoherence at one end and of specious reconciliation at the other, is the measure of the victory scored in this novel by the imaginative artist in him over the ruthless polemicist.

JOSEPH FRANK

The World of Raskolnikov†

Most Western criticism of Dostoevsky, when it is not searching his work for religious sustenance, approaches him from a psychological or biographical point of view. The overwhelming and immediate impression made by Dostoevsky's works on first reading is that of a passionate exploration of abnormal states of divided consciousness; and it has been only natural to assume that so masterly a portrayal of internal psychological conflict could only come from direct experience. Hence Dostoevsky's biography has been endlessly explored, analysed, and speculated about in the hope of uncovering some traumatic key to his creations.

Russian criticism since the Bolshevik Revolution has, of course, taken a different tack. It has tried to interpret him either in socio-psychological terms (he is a member of the "dispossessed and rootless petty-bourgeois intelligentsia," whose characters reflect all the abnormalities of this class), or it has engaged in genuine historical investigation and turned up numerous interesting relations between Dostoevsky's novels and the cultural history of his time. (In fairness, I should also mention the excellent stylistic researches of such critics as Leonid Grossman,¹ Yuri Tynyanov, and V. V. Vinogra-

† From *Encounter*, June 1966, pp. 30-35. Reprinted by permission of the author and *Encounter*. 1. See the passages from Grossman's essay, pp. 618-24 [Editor].

dov, which form the basis for our contemporary understanding of Dostoevsky's art.) Since Dostoevsky, however, is still the most brilliant and devastating opponent of the men who provide the foundation for present Soviet culture—not Marx and Engels, but the Russian radical tradition of Belinsky and Chernyshevsky—Soviet historical study of Dostoevsky is inevitably handicapped in scope and myopic in interpretation.

Without accepting the theoretical premises of the Soviet approach to Dostoevsky, I believe, nonetheless, that the Russians are right in stressing the social and cultural dimensions of his work. For the exclusive Western emphasis on psychology and personal biography as a means of access to Dostoevsky's mind and art is unquestionably very limiting and very falsifying. I should probably argue the same in the case of any writer; but since my subject at the moment is not critical method, I shall only say that, of all the great modern writers, this type of biographical criticism seems to me least illuminating as regards Dostoevsky.

If Dostoevsky has one claim to fame, it is certainly as a great *ideological novelist*—perhaps not the greatest, for that would involve comparisons with *Stendhal* and *Cervantes*, but at least the greatest in the 19th century. And if his status as such is so generally accepted, it must be because his creative imagination was stimulated primarily by the problems of his society and his time rather than by his personal problems and private dilemmas. Or, to put the point the other way round, he was always able to project these private dilemmas in terms that linked up with the sharp conflict of attitudes and values occurring in the Russia of his time.

This is the reason why psychology in Dostoevsky's novels, vivid and unforgettable though it may be, is invariably only an instrumental or tool used for a thematic purpose that is ultimately moral, ethical and ideological in import—ideological in the sense that all moral values are connected in Dostoevsky's sensibility with the future destiny of Russian life and culture. More particularly, he saw all moral and ethical issues in the light of the inner psychological problems posed for the Russian intelligentsia by the necessity of assimilating (and living by) alien Western European ideas. Dostoevsky's extensive journalism of the early 1860s (most of which has not yet been translated) or, more accessibly, his travel-articles about Europe, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* (1863), contain a whole history of Russian culture conceived in terms of this inner struggle. We cannot take even the first step towards understanding his major aim as a novelist, if we do not realise that he wished to

The World of Raskolnikov · 569

portray the new types and modalities of this perennial Russian inner struggle springing up all around him in the turbulent and evolving Russia of the 1860s and 1870s.

It is from this point of view that we must take very seriously Dostoevsky's claim to "realism" for his novels—a claim which, in my opinion, is entirely justified. But let us be clear about the nature of this "realism" and the nature of Dostoevsky's imagination. He knew very well that he was not a "realist" in the sense of getting the normal, middle range of private and social experience on the page. This was why he spoke of his bent for "fantastic realism", but what he meant by this term was something very clear and very specific. He meant that the process of his creation would invariably start from some doctrine that he found prevalent among the Russian radical intelligentsia. It was there in black-and-white in the magazines or novels everybody was reading, and in this sense was perfectly "real"—particularly since Dostoevsky believed in the reality of ideas. But then he would take this doctrine and imagine its most extreme consequences if it were really to be put into practice and carried through in all its implications; and this was where his psychological gifts came in to aid him in dramatising the "fantasy" of this idea relentlessly translated into life.

Dostoevsky was perfectly well aware that the extremism he depicted in such a character as Raskolnikov was not at all the way in which the vast majority of the radical intelligentsia would hold the doctrines in question, or the way in which it would affect their lives. But then, the people who accepted the theories of Leibniz in the 18th century bore little resemblance in real life to Dr. Pangloss and his pupil *Candide*. Nonetheless, we cannot deny that *Candide* dramatises a "real" fact of 18th-century culture. (It is suggestive that among the unfinished projects that Dostoevsky left at the time of his death was that of writing a Russian *Candide*.) Exactly the same relation obtains between the theories of Dostoevsky's protagonists, the acts to which their theories drive them, and the Russian culture of their time. Indeed, I think the best way to define Dostoevsky's particular uniqueness as a novelist is to call him a writer whose imagination naturally inclined to the *conte philosophique*, but who, happening to be born in the century of the realistic novel, possessed enough psychological genius to give his characters verisimilitude and to fuse one *genre* with the other. This, by the way, is one reason for the often-noted resemblance between *Notes from Underground* and *Le neveu de Rameau*,² aside from the fact that

1. Voltaire's philosophical tale of 1759.

18th-century mechanical materialism was as important in the Russia of the 1860s as it had been in the France of Diderot.

I should now like to apply this general view of Dostoevsky to some of the problems involved in the interpretation of his first great novel, *Crime and Punishment*. If Dostoevsky invariably began with some doctrine of the Russian radical intelligentsia, what was his starting-point in this case? An answer to this question will, I believe, not only provide an entry into the book, but also explain why *Crime and Punishment* emerged when it did in Dostoevsky's development. Ordinarily, this novel is linked with his prison-term in Siberia, first because of his use of this setting in the Epilogue, and secondly because this period was supposed to have focused his attention on the problem of crime and the psychology of the criminal. None of this needs to be denied; but if this were the whole story, it is impossible not to wonder why Dostoevsky did not write *Crime and Punishment* when he came out of imprisonment and wrote so many other things instead. The truth is that the novel as we know it could not have been conceived before 1865 because the situation of Russian culture that Dostoevsky could imagine as Raskolnikov had not existed before that time.

If we look at Russian culture in the early and mid-1860s—and this means, for our purposes, the doctrines of the radical intelligentsia—we can easily spot the "reality" that is incarnated in Raskolnikov. In the first place, all the radical intelligentsia were convinced that the theories of English Utilitarianism solved all the problems of ethics and personal conduct. This has caused a great deal of confusion because only in Russia do we find this peculiar blend of French Utopian Socialism, with its belief in the possibility of a future world of love and moral perfection, held conjointly with a view of human nature stemming from the egoistic individualism of Bentham and Mill. Even more, the Russian radicals believed in the doctrine of what they called "rational egoism" with their usual passionate extremism and fanaticism. To find anything similar to their belief in abstract reason as an infallible guide to the complexities of the moral life, we should have to go back to William Godwin. And I bring in Godwin's name here both because he had a direct influence in Russian through N. G. Chernyshevsky, the intellectual mentor of the radicals in the early 1860s, and also because the Russian cultural situation at this time closely parallels that of England in the period of the French Revolution.

2. Diderot's tale in dialogue, *Rameau's Nephew*, written 1762-79 and published in 1823.

Like Godwin, the Russians also strove to develop an ethics which—in the graphic words of Hazlitt's *The Spirit of the Age*—tried "to pass the Arctic Circle and Frozen Regions, where the understanding is no longer warmed by the affections. . . ." And no better commentary has ever been written on *Crime and Punishment* than the passage in *The Prelude* where Wordsworth explains how abstract reason dupes itself in its dialectic with the irrational:

This was the time, when, all things tending fast
To depravation, speculative schemes—
That promised to abstract the hopes of Man
Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth
For ever in a purer element—
Found ready welcome. Tempting region that
For Zeal to enter and refresh herself,
Where passions had the privilege to work,
And never hear the sound of their own names.

The last two lines of this passage define the theme of *Crime and Punishment* with far more exactitude than the mountain of critical literature on Dostoevsky. Indeed, if we are to understand the position of Dostoevsky and his intellectual allies (Apollon Grigoriev and Nikolai Strakhov) as they confronted the Russian radicals of the 1860s, we can do no better than to take as a guide the reaction of the first generation of English Romantics to the French Revolution. Moreover, if Godwin stimulated the radicals, then the works of Carlyle, who was an especial favourite of Apollon Grigoriev, furnished sustenance for the anti-radical camp.

Thus it is by no means accidental that we find Raskolnikov's crime planned on the basis of a Utilitarian calculus: this was the very essence of the matter for Dostoevsky. And we see too that, exactly like Godwin, Raskolnikov believes that his reason can overcome the most fundamental and deeply rooted human feelings. Godwin argued, it will be recalled, that reason would (or should) persuade him to leave his mother or sister burning in a fire and rescue Fénelon instead because, as he writes in *Political Justice*, "the illustrious Bishop of Cambrai was of more worth" to humanity. Whatever a Freudian might think of this argument, Godwin believed that it followed with impeccable logic from a Utilitarian calculus taking as its ultimate standard the universal good of humanity. Raskolnikov's conviction that he would be able to commit a perfect crime is based, we should notice, on exactly the same type of reasoning.

Ordinary criminals, Raskolnikov had theorised, rob and steal out of need or viciousness; and they break down at the moment of the

crime, leaving all sorts of clues scattered about, because they inwardly accept the justice and validity of the law they are breaking. The irrational forces of their conscience interfere with the rational lucidity of their action. But, he was convinced, nothing of the kind would happen to him because he knew that his so-called crime was not a crime. Reason had persuaded him that the amount of harm his crime would do was far outweighed by the amount of good it would allow him to accomplish. Hence his irrational conscience would not trouble and distort his reason, and he would not lose control of his nerves and make blunders.

This is one way in which the very conception of Raskolnikov springs from the ideology of the Russian radicals in the mid-1860s, and shapes the basic psychological conflict in the book between reason and the irrational. But another essential ideological component is derived from the evolution of Russian left-wing ideas between 1860 and 1865. In this period, for various reasons, we find a shift from the ideals of Utopian Socialism, with its semi-religious glorification of the people, to that of an embittered elitism, which stressed the right of a superior individual to act independently for the welfare of humanity.

The most important event in Russian culture between 1863 and 1865 was a public quarrel between two groups of radicals—the old Utopian Socialists, and the new Nihilists. Dostoevsky's magazine *Epoch* printed a number of articles analysing and commenting on this momentous dispute, and immediately recognised with great perspicacity, that it marked a fateful moment in the evolution of radical ideas. "The sons have taken up arms against the fathers, one generation replaces another," ironically wrote Strakhov, then the chief critic of *Epoch*; "a thick journal, once progressive, has turned out to be backward, and in its place stands another thick journal, which has succeeded in going farther along the path of progress." Even more relevant is that Dostoevsky himself wrote an article about this internecine warfare between the radicals called "Schism (*Raskol*) Among the Nihilists"; and this is what the whole episode is still called in histories of Russian culture. All this was just a few months before Dostoevsky, after the collapse of *Epoch*, sketched out in a letter his idea for a story about a murder committed by a young student acting under the influence of certain "strange, incomplete ideas"; and we can, I think, relate this schism among the Nihilists to *Crime and Punishment* in two ways.

One is in the difference that Dostoevsky draws between the comic and harmless Utopian Socialist in the novel, Lebezvaytnikov, and Raskolnikov himself, who is no longer a Utopian Socialist but a true Nihilist. The Utopian Socialist is in favour of peaceful propaganda, conversion to the cause by reason and persuasion (which is

why he lends books to Sonia), and he believes that the salvation of humanity hinges on communal living arrangements. These matters had still been important just two years before, in the period of *Notes from Underground*; but things in Russia moved very fast, and it was now out-of-date. Raskolnikov looks on all this as ineffectual nonsense; he feels that time is running out, that it is necessary to act now and not be content with Utopian dreams of the future, and that the superior individual has the right and the obligation to strike a decisive blow by himself.

A second reflection of this new situation may be found in Raskolnikov's famous article "On Crime." For every idea in this text, it would be possible to supply a parallel quotation from *The Russian Word*, the "thick journal" that had become the Nihilist organ. The main spokesman for the Nihilists was Dimitri Pisarev, best known for his attacks on art as being useless—which is, of course, merely another application of the Utilitarian calculus. And if we go back and read Pisarev and his group, we find these undeniably genuine left-wing radicals exhibiting the utmost contempt for the people on whose behalf they presumably wish to change the world. We also find them using the arguments of Social Darwinism to establish the justice of the ineradicable distinction between the weak and the strong, and the right of the strong to trample on the weak and unworthy.

Indeed, one of the most pugnacious contributors to *The Russian Word*, Bartholomew Zaitsev, who later in exile became a follower of Bakunin, even defended Negro slavery on the ground that Negroes were biologically inferior and would otherwise be wiped out entirely in their struggle for life against the White race. This opinion was repudiated by the majority of the radicals, although Pisarev defended Zaitsev's premises if not his conclusions. Even though a minority opinion, however, this was exactly the sort of consistent application of Utilitarianism-cum-Nihilism that Dostoevsky believed revealed the true moral consequences of the new radical ideology. This context explains the "Nietzschean" aspects of Raskolnikov, which have been so often commented upon. Thomas Masaryk noted some of these "Nietzschean" elements in Pisarev and Russian Nihilism as far back as 1913, in his indispensable book *The Spirit of Russia*; but nobody has paid the slightest attention to them since, or brought them into any relation with Dostoevsky.

All this, I hope, has now placed us in a better position to understand what Dostoevsky was trying to do in *Crime and Punishment*. His aim, in my view, was to portray the inescapable contradictions in this radical ideology of Russian Nihilism. To do so, he adopted

his usual procedure (in his mature work) of imagining its "strange, incomplete ideas" put into practice by an idealistic young man whose character traits embody its various conflicting aspects. Now Dostoevsky knew very well that the emotional impulses inspiring the average Russian radical were generous and self-sacrificing. They were moved by love, sympathy, altruism, the desire to aid, heal and comfort suffering—whatever they might believe about the headedness of their "rational egoism." The underlying foundation of their moral nature was Christian and Russian (for Dostoevsky the two were the same), and in total disharmony with the superimposed Western ideas they had assimilated, and on whose basis they believed they were acting. Hence over and over again in Dostoevsky's major works we find him dramatising the inner conflict of a member of the Russian intelligentsia torn between his innate feelings and his conscious ideas, between the irrational (which, by the way, is never Freudian in Dostoevsky but always moral as in Shakespeare) and the amorality of reason in one form or another.

In *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky set himself the task of portraying this conflict in the form of a self-awakening, the gradual discovery by Raskolnikov himself of the unholy mixture of incompatibles in his ideology. This is why Raskolnikov seems to have one motive for his crime at the beginning of the book and another towards the end, when he makes his famous confession to Sonia. Many critics have pointed to this seeming duality of motive as a weakness in the novel, an artistic failure on Dostoevsky's part to project his character unifiedly. On the other hand, Philip Rahv quite recently has maintained that this is precisely what makes the book great—that in failing to provide a clear and single motive Dostoevsky reveals "the problematical nature of the modern personality," or the startling fact "that human consciousness is inexhaustible and incalculable."

Both these views, however, are equally and egregiously wrong.³ The whole point of the book lies precisely in the process by which Raskolnikov moves from one explanation of the crime to another, and in so doing discovers the truth about the nature of the deed he committed. Even without the historical background I have sketched

3. Philip Rahv's useful essay, "Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment*," has been widely reprinted and widely read since its original appearance in *Parusian Review* in 1960. It therefore seems advisable to correct an important error of fact that Mr. Rahv's essay has no doubt had the effect of propagating. (See p. 533, above—*Editor*.) A comparison with the original, however, reveals that Dostoevsky asked for Hegel's *History of Philosophy* and not the *Philosophy of History*.

in, this should be abundantly clear to anyone who has some respect for Dostoevsky's capacity as a craftsman, and who studies the curious and original construction of the first part of the novel.

Why, for example, does Dostoevsky begin his narrative just a day before the actual commission of the crime, and convey Raskolnikov's *conscious* motivation in a series of flashbacks? One reason, of course, is to obtain the brilliant effect of dramatic irony at the close of Part I. For the entire process of reasoning that leads to Raskolnikov's theory of the altruistic Utilitarian crime is only explained in detail in the tavern-scene, where Raskolnikov hears his very own theory discussed by another student and a young officer; and this scene is the last important one just before the crime is committed. (It may be well, incidentally, to recall that when the officer doubts the possibility of anyone committing such a crime, the student retorts that, if this were so, "there would never have been a single great man." The "great man" component of Raskolnikov's theory is thus there from the very first, and is not unexpectedly tacked on later.) Temporally, the tavern-scene and the murder itself are at the very opposite ends of a single time-sequence; but they are telescoped together deftly by Dostoevsky's narrative technique—and for a very important purpose. And if we grasp the thematic significance of Dostoevsky's dramatic irony here, I think it will give us a model to illuminate the whole vexed question of Raskolnikov's motivation.

The purpose of Dostoevsky's juxtaposition and telescoping of the time-sequence is obviously to undermine Raskolnikov's *conscious* motivation for the reader. The hypnotic hysteria in which he kills the old pawnbroker could not reveal more clearly, in an objective, dramatic fashion, that Raskolnikov's crime is not being committed according to his altruistic, Utilitarian theory. Whatever Raskolnikov may have believed about himself, he is now acting in the grip of other forces and not on the basis of the theory, which is still fresh in our minds because we have met it only a page or two before. Dostoevsky's technique is thus intended to force the reader, if he is at all attentive, to pose to himself the question of what Raskolnikov's *true* motive can possibly be.

Now I believe that the entire construction of the first part of the book is intended to give an answer to this question in the same objective, dramatic fashion. Part I consists of two alternating sequences of episodes. In one sequence, composed largely of flashbacks, we learn about Raskolnikov's past, his desperate family situation, and all the circumstances pushing him towards the crime. All these scenes build up the altruistic side of his character, and reinforce our sense of his essential goodness, humanity, and sympathy for suffering. It is this aspect of his nature which forever distin-

guishes him from a real criminal, and that makes him think of expiating his crime—if one can really call it a crime—by future services to humanity. But then we also see him in *action* in this part, in the series of episodes with Marmeladov and his family, and with the young girl on the boulevard. And in these scenes we notice a very significant dialectic occurring, which undermines the foundations of his altruistic, Utilitarian theory in exactly the same way as the later dramatic irony; this latter is, indeed, only the final crescendo of this whole masterly sequence.

In each of these episodes, Raskolnikov at first responds purely instinctively to the spectacle of human misery and suffering, and he spontaneously rushes to help and to succour. But at a certain point, a total transformation of his personality occurs from one moment to the next. Suddenly he withdraws, becomes indifferent and contemptuous, and instead of pitying mankind he begins to hate it for being weak and contemptible. In each case, this change of feeling is indicated to be the result of the application of a Utilitarian calculus. For example, he is starving and yet leaves all his money at the Marmeladovs; but as he walks out he begins to laugh at himself scornfully for this gesture. Why? Because, he thinks, "after all they have Sonia and I need it myself." This leads him into reflections on how despicable human beings are because they can become accustomed to anything—like living off the income of a prostitute daughter.

The same situation occurs at greater length with the girl on the boulevard, who has clearly once already been violated and who is in danger of falling into the hands of another seducer. Raskolnikov at first springs to her aid, but then again turns away with a cold revulsion of feeling. "Let them eat themselves," he says to himself (after all, a good Darwinian sentiment). And then he ponders the Malthusian proposition that a "percentage" has to go that way anyhow for the protection of society, so that pity and sympathy are totally misplaced. The "percentage" theory has recently been traced in Russian scholarship to an article of Zaitsev's in *The Russian Word*, who used it for the philanthropic purpose of arguing that, since vice and crime were inevitable natural phenomena, it was wrong to punish their perpetrators. Dostoevsky's use of the same idea for Raskolnikov, however, is perhaps more logical in taking the greatest good of the greatest number as a standard.

Each step, then, in the *backward* process of revealing Raskolnikov's conscious, altruistic motive for the contemplated crime is accompanied by another episode moving forward in time that undercuts it, and that reveals the true effect of his ideas on his feelings. In each case the reader can see clearly that when Raskolnikov acts under the influence of his Utilitarian ideas, he unleashes in

himself a cold and pitiless egomaniac who hates humanity although he continues to believe that he loves it. This repeated dramatic illustration of how Raskolnikov's ideas twist and distort his feelings may perhaps explain why even those critics who taxed Dostoevsky with inconsistency of motive have never gone so far as to claim that his supposed artistic lapse seriously damaged the novel. Clearly, these critics could feel the inner unity of Raskolnikov, even though, on the basis of their misreading of the book, it was impossible for them to explain what this unity was or how it was obtained.

I have perhaps said enough now to explain why it is really no surprise when Raskolnikov confesses to Sonia that he had committed the crime for himself alone, and solely to see whether he was strong enough to have the right to kill. This is merely his own self-recognition of what Dostoevsky has been making the reader feel ever since the first pages of the book. Let me conclude, however, with a few more observations on Dostoevsky's extremely skilful handling of the relation between structure and theme in *Crime and Punishment*.

In Part II, Dostoevsky begins to close the gap that exists between the reader's awareness of Raskolnikov and Raskolnikov's awareness of himself. For in Part II, as he begins to recover from his illness, Raskolnikov starts to ponder all the anomalies of the crime and to realise that he no longer knows why it was committed. At this point he is confronted with his old article "On Crime," which reveals to what extent egomania had always been an inseparable part of the Utilitarian love of humanity. Dostoevsky withholds the full development of this motif, though he had carefully foreshadowed it earlier, until it becomes relevant both to answer Raskolnikov's own questions about his crime and to crystallise and define the reader's earlier impressions. The experience of the crime, however, has now shown Raskolnikov that the feelings which inspired his altruistic love of humanity cannot co-exist in the same sensibility with those necessary to be a Napoleon, a Solon, or a Lycurgus. For the true great man, possessed by his sense of mission, cannot have any thoughts to spare for the suffering humanity on whom he tramples for their own future happiness.

Once Raskolnikov's original theory breaks apart in this way, he is then confronted with the choice between non-Utilitarian Christian love and self-sacrifice in Sonia or total amorality leading to self-destruction in Svidrigailov. The construction of the latter half of the book thus clearly reflects its purpose, which was to persuade Dostoevsky's readers among the radical intelligentsia that they had to choose between a doctrine of love and a doctrine of power. Both were embodied, as I have tried to show, in the strange mixture of impulses and ideas that went by the name of Russian Nihilism.

And that Dostoevsky's attacks did have some effect may be indicated by the change that occurred in Russian radical ideology in the 1870s, when "rational egoism" was abandoned for a secularised Christian ethics of love.

As a footnote, let me add that I have always been intrigued by the information that the high-strung young Pisarev broke down and wept when he read *Crime and Punishment*. Was there any shock of recognition involved in this response? If so, it did not prevent him from immediately writing an article, which has since become a classic in Russian criticism, proving that Raskolnikov's crime was really caused by hunger and malnutrition.

NICHOLAS BERDYAEV

[Dostoevsky, the Nature of Man, and Evil]†

* * *

Crime and Punishment is different from the books mentioned above [*The Idiot*, *Raw Youth*, *The Possessed*]. In it human destiny is not worked out collectively in the restless surroundings of personal relations; Raskolnikov discovers the bounds of human nature by communing with and making his experiments upon himself. He is a child of darkness, but there is nothing enigmatical about him as about Stavrogin or Ivan. He represents a less advanced stage upon the road of human wilfulness, he has not yet reached their degree of complexity. It is not Raskolnikov who is a puzzle, it is his crime, in which the man exceeds his own limitations. But perverse inclination has not yet radically modified human nature in him. Raskolnikov, like the hero of *Letters from the Underworld*, puts forward problems and riddles: Versilov, Ivan Karamazov, Stavrogin are themselves these problems and riddles.

Dostoevsky was more than anything else an anthropologist, an experimentalist in human nature, who formulated a new science of man and applied to it a method of investigation hitherto unknown. His artistic science or, if it be preferred, his scientific art studied that nature in its endless convolutions and limitless extent, uncovering its lowest and most hidden layers. He subjected man to a spiritual experiment, putting him into unusual situations and then taking away all external stays one after another till his whole

† From *Dostoevsky* by Nicholas Berdyaev and Ward, 1934. Pp. 44-50 and 95-101. Originally published by Sheed.

social framework had gone. Dostoevsky pursued his study according to the methods of Dionysian art, and when he made his way into the deep places of human nature he took his whirlwinds with him. His work is an anthropology-in-motion in which things are seen in such an atmosphere of flame and ecstasy that they have meaning only for those who are themselves involved in the tempest. He leads us into the pitch darkness of man's innermost recesses—and there a glimmer of light must be found. Dostoevsky wants to kindle that spark. So he takes man and emancipates him completely, from law, from the cosmic order, and follows up his destiny in this state of freedom until he reveals whither it has inevitably led him. That was what interested Dostoevsky: what happens to man when, having liberty, he must needs turn aside to arbitrary self-will. Only then can the depth of human nature be seen; all the while existence is normal and firmly established it remains hidden, so Dostoevsky's interest begins from the moment that man sets himself up against the objective established order of the universe, cuts himself off from nature and his organic roots, and manifests his arbitrary will. When he has repudiated nature and the organized life he casts himself into the hell of the city and there treads his miserable path in expiation of his sin.

It is very instructive to compare the respective conceptions of man of Dante, Shakespeare, and Dostoevsky. For Dante (as for St. Thomas Aquinas) man is an organic part of the objective order of the world, the divine cosmos. He is one of the grades in the universal hierarchy: Heaven is above him, Hell below; God and Satan are realities belonging to the universal order, imposed on man from without, and the seven circles of Hell with their terrifying torment serve only to confirm the existence of this objective divine order. God and Satan, Heaven and Hell are not revealed within the human spirit and by human experience: they are given to man from outside and they have a reality equal to that of objects in the material world. This conception of the world, of which Dante was so great an interpreter, is strictly in line with that of the men of antiquity, and man's faith in the heaven with its hierarchical choirs above and the gehenna below was not shaken until the Renaissance. From that time on there is an absolutely new notion of the world. When the humanist era was established, with its self-affirmation and shutting-up of man within the walls of nature, Heaven and Hell were closed—but an infinity of worlds was opened. There was no longer a single cosmos with an ordered hierarchy; the infinite empty sky of the astronomers was not like Dante's sky, the mediaeval heaven, and that terror which Pascal experienced before "endless space" may be understood: man was lost in those vast solitudes which were no longer subject to any