

RUSSIANNNESS

Studies on a Nation's Identity

In Honor of Rufus Mathewson, 1918-1978

Studies of the Harriman Institute

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The Metaphysics of the Novel-Tragedy: Dostoevsky and Viacheslav Ivanov

Viacheslav Ivanov's interpretation of Dostoevsky as a writer of novel-tragedies must be understood in context with his ethics and esthetics, expressed in many articles and essays, and reflected also in his own dramatic poems. Ivanov's esthetic is organic in every sense of that term. Art, like religion, is to him a necessary function of life, of the human as well as the national spirit. The work of art is a living function of its creator's spirit, and hence an integral whole. The Plotinian *endon eidos* (Ivanov uses the term *forma formans* = *forma ante rem*; *forma formata* is the complete work) is accepted not only as a metaphysical, but also as a psychological reality. The poet is a bearer of the "inner word, an organ of the World Soul,"¹ and hence poetry is a source of intuitive knowledge. In all of these concepts Ivanov's esthetic coincides with Dostoevsky's.

The conception of the work of art as a synthesis of the ideal and the real, familiar from German idealist esthetics, is central in Ivanov's thought. While he rejects any excesses of *mimesis* ("naturalism," for example), he is even more intent upon asserting the need for realism in art. In fact, he uses the term "idealist art" in a somewhat pejorative sense.² This coincides with Dostoevsky's emphasis on "facts" and his rejection of "mere theories." Of course Dostoevsky also rejected naturalism.

Ivanov's conception of realism is independent of historical labels. In a magnificent passage in his "Two Essences in Contemporary Symbolism" (*Dve stikhii v sovremennom simvolizme*, 1908), he identifies Shakespeare and the "romantics" Hoffmann and Balzac as "realists," while defining classicism

as "idealist."³ In this regard, too, Ivanov's views coincide with Dostoevsky's.

The most peculiarly "Ivanovian" esthetic category is that of the Dionysian/Apollonian, which he applies to the creative process, to the typology of art, and in historical analysis.⁴ It is here that Ivanov's debt to Nietzsche is greatest. The more specific esthetic qualities which Ivanov associates with the Dionysian/Apollonian, such as the Dionysian dyad as against the Apollonian monad, the female versus the male principle, hunger versus plenitude, and, last but not least, ascent versus descent, are also taken from Nietzsche. None of them are found in Dostoevsky's esthetic thought.

Ivanov's ontology, like his esthetics, is dynamic. Art is conceived as a form of energy, and so is the Word.⁵ Ontological distinctions are seen in terms of a hierarchy which is essentially one of power or intensity. In this, as in so many things, Ivanov follows Schelling. His distinction of Being versus Existence is likewise found in Schelling. Nonbeing is perceived as existentially concrete: it can be artistically expressed.⁶ We have here another significant coincidence with Dostoevsky's thought.

Ivanov considered himself a Christian poet and a Christian thinker. His attempts to wed Christianity to Dionysianism are not unprecedented. Even Schelling had seen the myth of a suffering, killed, and resurrected god as a human universal. Ivanov was of course familiar with Erwin Rohde's treatment of this idea.

The ascent/descent category, clearly taken from Nietzsche⁷ (though it is common in Platonic, Neoplatonic, and Christian thought), permeates every level of Ivanov's creativity. Every aspect of his thought is organized on a vertical axis. Ivanov's ontology, anthropology, ethics, esthetics, and even his history are dominated by this model. Vertical imagery plays a dominant role in his poetry.⁸ The action of his tragedies *Prometheus* and *Tantalus* is arranged on a vertical.⁹

The primary form of the ascent/descent category is mythical. Ascent is quite literally "a winged victory over earthly sluggishness,"¹⁰ while descent is, also literally, a descent to the bowels of the earth or a return to the womb of Mother Earth.¹¹ Both of these mythical conceptions appear in Greek mythology, in Platonic, and in Neoplatonic myths. He recognizes ascent in human striving for a union with the Divine, in Jacob's ladder, in a human soul's renunciation of this world. He sees descent in God's second hypostasis, the Son, in Christ's *kenosis*, in Christian sacrifice and humility (which latter he perceives as a distinguishing trait of the Russian people).¹² All of this is important for Ivanov's interpretation of Dostoevsky.

Ivanov's view of the creative process derives from his understanding of the religious quality of true art. He conceives of it as generated by the interplay between the ascent toward an epiphany of the ideal and the descent

to its realization in a proper artistic form. The creation of a work of art is a sacrifice because it represents a lofty spirit's descent to the real.¹³ In his article on the boundaries of art, *O granitsakh iskusstva* (1913), Ivanov presents a diagram of the creative process as ascent toward an epiphany, which takes the creator's spirit through several regions of Being, followed by a descent to "a point of Apollonian contemplation of the apogee of ascent," and further down to an incarnation of the visions gained through the earlier ascent. In this scheme, the lowest form of art takes the artist to "a point of 'subjectivist' mirroring" of his own consciousness. Realist art, such as Flaubert's, takes the artist somewhat higher, to a "point of transcendent contemplation of a reality to be overcome" (called a "desert"). Art of "high symbolism" is capable of traversing the "desert" and reaching "points of intuitive grasp of higher realities." Some rare artists, such as Dante, reach the highest level of intuition.¹⁴

Ivanov applies the ascent/descent model to human affairs at large, and so to history. He is convinced that "not a single step on the ladder of spiritual ascent is possible without a step down the steps that lead to its subterranean treasures: the higher the branches, the deeper the roots."¹⁵ Thus Dostoevsky "was the master builder of that subterranean labyrinth which was to give birth to the new spirituality of the universal, all-human Ego."¹⁶

Ivanov tends to be critical of those aspects of modern art which are in conflict with his monistic philosophy. He deplores the "esthetic anarchism or eclecticism" of his age.¹⁷ He rejects abstractionism: "Some secret law of esthetics demands anthropomorphism in everything and punishes every deviation from it with a curse of amorphism, aridity, and monotony."¹⁸ He will have nothing to do with Russian *décadence* or Ego-Futurism: Any art which abandons life, he says, also loses what it claims to possess—art.¹⁹ Ivanov also rejects the psychologism so characteristic of much of contemporary literature, and drama in particular. With remarkable insight into Dostoevsky's art, he sees in that writer "a great psychologist who nevertheless opposes to psychological study a 'more real' penetration into the secret of human nature."²⁰

Ivanov always speaks of the drama in terms of a living theater, even though his own plays have remained *Lesedramen*. He sees the theater as an inherently communal activity which resists the poet's efforts to convert it entirely into art.²¹ It is then, like the nineteenth-century novel, *Kunst im Werden*. The link of tragedy with sacrifice and cathartic celebration of a suffering god, Ivanov believes, is still present in modern tragic art which, as ever before, signifies the external death and inner triumph of human self-assertion.²² The life and death of young Iliusha in *The Brothers Karamazov* is a case in point.²³

Ivanov perceives three basic components in the theatre: the community, manifest in the choral principle of tragedy and in audience participation; the hero, who realizes the religious or national issues of his community; and the mimetic principle—Ivanov believes that true tragedy is possible only on the grounds of a realistic vision of the world.²⁴ He finds that a drama which fails to introduce one of these elements fails to actualize the true nature of drama; at the same time he emphasizes the dialectic tension between them. He connects the dominance of the hero over the communal principle in Shakespearean drama, and modern drama at large, with the rise of bourgeois individualism. But he also perceives a new trend toward an expansion of the individual 'I' in the direction of cosmic boundlessness (*bespredel'nost'*), achieved through deep personal suffering.²⁵

Ivanov shares with Hegel and others a notion that the Tragic is an attitude of the human spirit rather than a mere literary genre. It is in this sense that he perceives Dostoevsky's novels, or the *Iliad*, as "tragic." Like Hegel, Ivanov sees the content of tragedy as a dialectic of ideas. External clashes, such as between the forces of Nature and human intelligence, are therefore unfit to serve as the subject of tragic art.²⁶ Ivanov's conception of the distinction between tragic and comic drama is also Hegelian.²⁷

Ivanov's observations on Dostoevsky's novels are derived from the general ideas outlined above. However, many of them have been accepted even by critics who did not share his philosophic or esthetic views. Ivanov's notion that metaphysical myths can be identified in Dostoevsky's novels, essential to the understanding of several of them, has since been considerably expanded. Much of the symbolism in *Crime and Punishment* is best understood in terms of mythic archetypes.²⁸ Ivanov's interpretation of Raskol'nikov's crime as a revolt against Mother Earth has been reinforced by Freudian critics. Dostoevsky's notes to *Crime and Punishment* suggest that the idea of Raskol'nikov's crime as a symbolic matricide may have been present in the writer's mind.²⁹

Ivanov saw elements of the myth of "Sleeping Beauty" in "The Landlady," in *The Idiot*, and in *The Possessed*.³⁰ In *The Idiot*, a real prince fails to save the divinely beautiful Nastas'ia Filippovna. In *The Possessed*, Mar'ia Timofeevna's prince turns out to be a "false prince." The heroine is in each case a symbol of the soul of Russia. Ivanov saw Myshkin and Rogozhin as a dialectic synthesis of its male version.³¹ The tragedy in *The Idiot* is then the tragedy of Russia. Recent interpretations of *The Idiot* have tended to be elaborations of Ivanov's conception.³²

Mythic elements allow for a more than merely allegoric interpretation of *The Brothers Karamazov*. The tale of three brothers, the youngest of whom turns out to be the wisest, precisely because he is "foolish;" the legend of St. Alexis, "man of God," realized in Alesha; the boy-hero Iliusha with

his mythic associations (Il'ia Muromets, the huge boulder by which he would like to be buried); the somber tale of rape, revenge, and expiation which Marcel Proust detected in *The Brothers Karamazov*³³—these and other mythic elements greatly enrich the allegory of intellect, soul, and spirit, which is of course still the structural basis of the novel. Our understanding of *The Brothers Karamazov* has advanced considerably from Ivanov's, but still owes a great deal to him.

Ivanov saw Dostoevsky's plots as developing on three levels: a pragmatic, a psychological, and a metaphysical level. He was interested mostly in the latter and made a point of identifying in what sense, precisely, Dostoevsky's was indeed a "realism in a higher sense," i.e., something related to the principle of symbolist art: *a realibus ad realiora*. He believed he had discovered manifestations of the metaphysical in several Dostoevskian themes, such as the metaphysics of the Eternally Feminine, the metaphysics of childhood, the metaphysics of the free human personality and its apotheosis through suffering. To these there may be added the metaphysics of fatherhood, which plays a dominant role in Dostoevsky's last two novels.

Ivanov, like Dostoevsky, discerned a tripartite world, where human existence (subject to psychological analysis) lies between metaphysical regions of Being and Nonbeing (neither of which is explicable in psychological terms). He saw Dostoevsky as an artist who had a powerful intuition about those states of the soul which belong to the region of Nonbeing: demonic obsession, bestial vice, and the torpor of the spirit that makes men into living dead. Ivanov was seeing things of which Dostoevsky himself was quite conscious. The Devil is identified (by Ivan Karamazov) as "the spirit of destruction and nonbeing." Ivan also tells Alesha, rather superciliously, of a medieval apocrypha in which certain sinners in hell are mentioned, "whom even God has forgotten." Ivan, who finds this characterization to be one of "singular profundity and power," is—we are not told whether or not he is aware of it—one of these sinners. Anyway, they dwell in the region of Nonbeing.

Dmitrii, meanwhile, is suspended between Being and Nonbeing. In Book Two, his father says that "Dmitrii Fedorovich doesn't exist yet."³⁴ Considering the fact that Fedor Pavlovich repeatedly makes involuntary prophetic statements (a privilege traditionally accorded men whose death is imminent), this somewhat mystifying passage suggests precisely that Dmitrii has yet to enter the region of Being.

The pattern of a tripartite world, where the region of empirical existence is the battleground of intruding forces of absolute Good and absolute Evil, is recognized by Ivanov in other details of *The Brothers Karamazov*, and in the other great novels as well. Ivanov observes this about Stavrogin: "Spiritually he has died long ago, and all that now remains of him is his fascinatingly

beautiful mask" (p. 64). Stavrogin and other godless characters of Dostoevsky's are seen as demonstrations of an *aporia* of human reason, which makes, on the one hand, "empiric and divine reality seem to be mutually exclusive, whereas, on the other hand, the world without God loses not only its meaning, but also its reality" (p. 113). Having lost faith in God, man loses faith even in the reality of his own existence, seeing himself as a "chance conglomeration of cells" (p. 139).

On the side of the good, Ivanov recognizes in Dostoevsky's fiction a belief that "there always are hosts of souls descending from Heaven to Earth, still retaining their celestial memories and bearing within them the possibility of a sudden transformation of Earth into Heaven" (p. 95). He finds in Dostoevsky representations of those states of consciousness which the New Testament defines as "peace" and "the Kingdom of Heaven within man" (p. 93). He also draws attention to those "gleams and flashes of the highest sensation of life and self-consciousness" which precede an epileptic fit, for Dostoevsky yet another instance of contact with "other worlds" (p. 116). Yet another form of the metaphysical discerned by Ivanov in Dostoevsky's fiction is that of the innocence of childhood (p. 95). Ivanov must have shared Nietzsche's determination of the evangelic type as a fusion of the sickly, the childlike, and the sublime. He recognized this type in Dostoevsky.

The capacity of the human individual to transcend empirical existence and to enter the realm of Being—or Nonbeing—means that man is free. Hence the human personality as Ivanov sees it represented in Dostoevsky is involved in an act of transcending empirical existence. Human free will, the keystone of Dostoevsky's world view, places man at a crossroads. If he follows the ways of God, he will be genuinely free. Psychology no longer applies to him. He may act "out of character." Father Zosima is a case in point. By virtue of his free decision before his duel, he entered the realm of Being. But if a man follows the path of self-will and abandons his faith in God, he will soon enough enter the realm of Nonbeing and lose his freedom altogether. The hero of *Notes from Underground*, Raskol'nikov, Svidrigailov, Stavrogin, and Ivan Karamazov—self-willed atheists all—are afflicted with unmistakable symptoms of compulsive behavior which, Dostoevsky takes care to suggest, is somehow connected with the intrusion into the subject's life of a mysterious evil force. A man who gives up his faith, gives up the reality of his existence and his freedom, too.

Ivanov speaks of Dostoevsky's "metaphysical defense of the personality" (p. 117), which, as he also points out, was ignored by his contemporaries, who were preoccupied with social, ideological, and moral abstractions which they mistook for human personalities. The uniqueness, and hence concreteness, of Dostoevskian characters, as pointed out in the narrator's preface of *The Brothers Karamazov*, is in line with Dostoevsky's belief in

human free will, while the social "types" of his contemporaries point toward social and psychological determinism.

Ivanov's chart of the ascent/descent of the poet's soul accommodates the metaphysical imagination along with other forms of imagination. Ivanov conceives the creative process as necessarily consisting of an ascent to a certain level of understanding and a descent to palpable artistic incarnation of such understanding or vision. Creation may fail on the descent no less than on the ascent line. According to Ivanov, it is given to only a few artists to rise to the heights of "intuitive contemplation of higher realities" and then to descend with their intuitions intact to those levels of human experience that allow successful artistic expression. This model may certainly be applied to Dostoevsky who ever since *Crime and Punishment*, always fully aware of the magnitude of his task, sought to make the metaphysical incarnate in realistic plots, characters, and scenes. This is particularly true of his creation of Father Zosima, about whom he knew well that the realistic presentation of holiness involved a *contradictio in adiecto*.³⁵ It is difficult to agree on how often he succeeded, if ever, because the reader—assisted, to be sure, by the writer's imagination—must of course be capable of the same ascent and the same descent.

Dostoevsky's novels may be read on different levels and within different frameworks. Their plots tend to be allegories of the social and political conflicts of his age, but they may also be perceived as symbolic of archetypal conflicts of the human condition. The plot of *Crime and Punishment* has been seen, with good reason, as allegorically prefiguring the Russian revolution. Dostoevsky himself certainly had this in mind. The same may be, and has been, observed regarding the other great novels. To this aspect of the Dostoevskian novel Hegel's observations on the nature of tragedy apply: "In general we can therefore say that the Divine was originally the proper subject of tragedy; though not the Divine as it appears in religious consciousness as such, but rather the Divine as manifest in the affairs of the world and in individual action, and, as a part of this reality, without any loss of its substantial nature, much less without changing into its opposite."³⁶ To Hegel, the manifestations of the objective spirit in affairs of the state and its institutions were not inferior to those of the human personality. Hence the collision of two social or political principles could very well be the subject of tragedy.

But it is not this aspect of Dostoevsky's plots that Ivanov is concerned with. Rather, he looks for simpler, archetypal forms of the inherent dualism of the human condition as he sees them realized in Dostoevsky's novels. To Ivanov, the archetypal tragedy is that of a woman who, recognizing herself as an individual, kills the man she loves.³⁷ The tragedy of the battle of the sexes appears in muted form in Dostoevsky. I believe, though, that a reading of *The Idiot* as the tragedy of Nastas'ia Filippovna, a woman who perishes

because she has become too much of an individual to belong to any man, gives that novel an inner cohesion which it lacks if read with Myshkin as the focus of attention. The tragedy of the lame woman in *The Possessed*, which Ivanov reads symbolically as the tragedy of the soul of the Russian people, mocked, betrayed, and murdered by its male counterpart, does not occupy a focal position in the novel. The scene in which Mar'ia Timofeevna recognizes Stavrogin for the false prince he is, and curses him, has great symbolic power nevertheless. The role of other tragic heroines, say, Katerina Ivanovna in *The Brothers Karamazov*, is marginal to the main interest of the novel. The plot of *The Brothers Karamazov* has tragic potential for a heroine, but Dostoevsky's focus of interest is here, as in most of his works, decidedly male oriented.

The tragic conflict in Dostoevsky basically deals with man's attempts to assert his freedom through affirmation of his Self, to ascend to the regions of the metaphysical as an individual, and to realize the ideal without God. Stavrogin's self-will leads to a disintegration of his personality. Kirillov's mangodhood ends in a messy suicide. Prince Myshkin, a realization of the Christian ideal in a thoroughly secular society, must end in madness.

In every instance, the high point reached by Dostoevsky's tragic hero lies in what Ivanov called the "desert," above the highest level achieved by "subjectivist" art (Dostoevsky's pre-exile works fit that category), yet below the intuitions of objective theurgic art. The high point of *Crime and Punishment*, *The Possessed*, *A Raw Youth*, and *The Brothers Karamazov* finds the rebel in a mood of utter abandonment, desolation, and homelessness. He has nothing more to lose, hence he is entirely free.³⁸ He is a humanist who has lost his love of mankind, a seeker of Truth who no longer believes that there is a truth, a God-seeker who has lost his faith in God.

Kirillov of *The Possessed* is, except in his hour of death, a noble tragic character, a genuinely sublime creation of Dostoevsky's genius, well deserving of the attention it has received in French Existentialism. The exalted and positive side of this character should not be underestimated. Kirillov is filled with genuine enthusiasm and religious fervor, which only in the very end turn into madness.³⁹ Raskol'nikov, Versilov, and Ivan Karamazov also have moments, albeit brief, of deep tragic sadness and exaltation. The significant thing about these tragic characters is, however, that their destruction has no element of apotheosis, or even of high pathos, of the kind that would cause the reader to experience fear and pity. The final scene at the police station in *Crime and Punishment*, Kirillov's suicide, Ivan Karamazov's appearance in court—all these scenes show the hero in his abjection. The Dostoevskian tragic hero reaches for the freedom that would transport him to the regions of the metaphysical, but instead tumbles into the abyss of Nonbeing.

Moreover, the region of Nonbeing turns out for him to be no mere limbo, but a hell of apparitions, revulsion, and fear. Svidrigailov sees ghosts and thinks of eternity as a place with spiders. Ivan Karamazov is visited by the Devil, and so is Stavrogin in an early version of *The Possessed*. Raskol'nikov, too, has terrifying nightmares. Worse yet, their private hell reverberates with a hellish laughter that makes a mockery of their erstwhile lofty strivings. Raskol'nikov must hear himself described as "one of our homegrown Napoleons," Ivan Karamazov is made fun of by the Devil, who knows his secret weaknesses all too well; and Stavrogin has a morbid fear of being put to shame in public. They have all set out for a rendezvous with Tragedy, but find themselves in the role of "straight man" in a comic grotesque: Napoleon climbing under the bed of an old woman to steal a few hundred rubles.

Human contacts with the metaphysical appear in Dostoevsky's novels either beyond or outside the tragic plot—unless, of course, a descent to the depths of Nonbeing is considered metaphysical. Glimpses of the metaphysical appear in the epilogue of *Crime and Punishment*, in Myshkin's and Kirillov's flashes of mystic exaltation before their epileptic fits, in Alesha's vision in the chapter "Cana of Galilee," in Father Zosima's wisdom. It is in this sense that Dostoevsky's plots do not reach the heights of tragedy as envisaged by Ivanov. In fact, they do not even answer Hegel's definition of tragedy.⁴⁰ Dostoevsky does not grant his defeated hero the dignified end of an Othello, a Hamlet, or a Macbeth.

I suggest that the reason for this must be sought in the Christian ethos of the Dostoevskian novel. As Victor Hugo first suggested in his preface to *Cromwell*, Golgotha sublated the classical tragedy. To a Christian, Golgotha can only be a preview of Resurrection. Christ at Gethsemane and on the Cross, abandoned by men and forsaken by God, not only suffering but also mocked and degraded, must be the archetype of the hero in a Christian tragedy. But Resurrection is in no way a logical step that follows from Golgotha, but the exact opposite, as Tertullian observed so eloquently: *Crucifixus est Dei filius: non pudet, quia pudendum est; et mortuus est Dei filius: prorsus credibile quia ineptum est; et sepultus resurrexit: certum est quia impossibile*. Resurrection is an act of Grace, and a miracle: *a deus ex machina*. When Dostoevsky allows Raskol'nikov to be resurrected in the epilogue, he follows this archetype. Of course Raskol'nikov's resurrection is "out of character" and "psychologically implausible." In view of the archetype which it follows, this is exactly what it should be.

None of Dostoevsky's other novels make an attempt to duplicate what was undertaken in the epilogue of *Crime and Punishment*. In fact, *Crime and Punishment* is Dostoevsky's only novel in which the Tragic and the resurrection of the soul merge into a single plot line. There is no resurrection for

Rogozhin, Stavrogin, Kirillov, Versilov, or Ivan Karamazov. Dostoevsky was himself fully aware of the *metabasis eis allo genos* involved in a Christian's progress to salvation: "The nature of God is diametrically opposed to that of man," he said in notebook entry of 16 April 1864 (the famous passage "Masha is laid out on the table," "*Masha lezhit na stole*"). All this agrees with Ivanov's observation that "*deus ex machina* is the only conclusion of tragedy that is 'logical' in its inconsequentiality."

In one of his brilliant early articles, Georg Lukács sketches a fascinating picture of the dramatic tragedy as "the form of a high point of human existence, of man's ultimate goal, and of man's ultimate limits."⁴¹ Lukács, like Ivanov, sees a hierarchy in the human condition and perceives the tragic experience as its highest step, always in the immediate presence of death, yet triumphing over it. His conception of the Tragic, which anticipates Heidegger's, as Lucien Goldmann has shown,⁴² sees the tragic drama as a "game whose subject is man, and his fate, and whose viewer is God" (p. 218). It is inherently unreal, "impossible in empirical life" (p. 219). The tragic hero undergoes the metaphysical experience of total abandonment and total freedom. It goes without saying that Lukács's tragic hero is also totally godless: the despair of godlessness is also the exaltation of total freedom. Ivanov certainly had something similar in mind when he spoke of tragedy and composed his own tragedies, *Tantalus* and *Prometheus*.

Can it be said that Dostoevsky's vision of the tragic fate of his heroes is similar to that of Lukács and Ivanov? Actually, the type of character in whom one finds some of the Titanism celebrated by Nietzsche, Ivanov, and Lukács is not readily available in Dostoevsky. Nietzsche was fascinated by some of the criminals in *Notes from the House of the Dead*. But elsewhere in Dostoevsky strong characters who perish standing up are not found among the heroes who represent an idea. Smerdiakov is a better man than his master Ivan. Fed'ka the convict is a better man than any of the major characters among those on the Devil's side in *The Possessed*. Rogozhin is a better candidate for tragedy than Myshkin, but he hardly stands for an idea. Smerdiakov, Fed'ka, and Rogozhin, who are ideally tragic characters, are not only downgraded socially, but are also relegated to the fringes of the plot.

There really is not all that much in Dostoevsky's novels to justify calling them "novel-tragedies." *Crime and Punishment* is the only one that comes close to having—well, almost—a tragic hero. Raskol'nikov is still close to the Byronic hero, whom Dostoevsky cherished as a great symbol of the recent past. But in the following novels, the godless rebels are no longer accorded either the privilege of a moment of metaphysical exaltation before their undoing, or that of perishing in a way that is fitting for a tragic hero. Perhaps Nastas'ia Filippovna is the one exception to this rule. By and large, the divine aspect of the metaphysical is shown in rare, occasional epiphanies,

which are of an unobtrusive, humble nature (such as Dmitrii Karamazov's dream of the babe). These epiphanies are not linked to the plot, as a rule, and if they are ("Cana of Galilee" is a case in point), these links are subtle and hardly dramatic. Appearances of metaphysical evil are more common, but still, it is "ordinary," psychologically explicable life that dominates the action in a Dostoevskian novel.

Needless to say, Dostoevsky's novels are still vivid illustrations of Father Zosima's words about "contacts with other worlds," which alone make human life meaningful. But only in a saint are these contacts so strong and so steady as to determine his whole Being. We are told nothing about the process by which Father Zosima became the saint we know. As for Dostoevsky's rebels, they only reach for the metaphysical, in a way that makes for no more than an abortive tragic plot.

Brown University

Notes

1. "Zavety simvolizma" (1910), *Sobranie sochinenii* (Brussels, 1971 -), 2: 596. This edition is referred to, unless otherwise specified. Translations are mine.
2. See James West, *Russian Symbolism: A Study of Vyacheslav Ivanov and the Russian Symbolist Aesthetic* (London, 1970), p. 52.
3. "Dve stikhii v sovremennom simvolizme" (1908), 2: 546.
4. For Dionysian and Apollonian stages in the creative process, see "O granitsakh iskusstva" (1913), 2: 644-645. For Dionysian and Apollonian themes in poetry, see "Ekskurs: O liricheskoi teme" (1912), 2: 203-204. For this historical aspect, see "O veselom remesle i umnom veselii" (1907), *Po zvezdam: Stat'i i aforizmy* (St. Petersburg, 1909), p. 233.
5. See, for instance, "Predchuvstviia i predvestiia," *Po zvezdam*, pp. 199-200, and "Sporady," *ibid.*, p. 339.
6. See, for instance, "O deistvii i deistve" (1919), 2: 159, and *Freedom and the Tragic Life: A Study in Dostoevsky* (New York, 1971), pp. 38-39. References in this article, identified by page number, are to *Freedom and the Tragic Life*.
7. There are many examples in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*.
8. In his essay "Simvolika esteticheskikh nachal" (1905), Ivanov identifies a whole series of images which he associates with ascent/descent (1: 823). His ideas very largely coincide with those of Gaston Bachelard, who surely was unaware of his predecessor. See, for instance, Gaston Bachelard, *L'Air et les songes* (Paris, 1943).
9. See "O deistvii i deistve," 2: 169. It may be noted that Georg Lukács, in his early essay, "Metaphysik der Tragödie," also introduces the ascent/descent category. See "Metaphysik der Tragödie," in *Die Seele und die Formen* (Berlin, 1971), p. 228.
10. "Simvolika esteticheskikh nachal," 1: 827.
11. See Carin Tschöpl, *Vjačeslav Ivanov: Dichtung und Dichtungstheorie* (Munich, 1968), p. 126.
12. "O russkoi idee" (1909), *Po zvezdam*, pp. 329-330.