

The Curse of Modernism in Russia: Dostoevsky's Religious Psychology in Four Short Works

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Russian literature is political, psychological and religious. Unfortunately, those writing on these subjects are in departments of literature and have minimal understanding of any of those three fields. Gogol and Dostoevsky are saturated with the symbolism of the arcana. Many in Russia knew of it back then, but no one in modern academic does, unless they're initiated. How can an urban, well off, liberal professor raised by CNN and MTV, lecturing to a captive audience interpret Gogol or Dostoevsky? After all, the Russian tradition routinely attacked just these pretensions to knowledge. They often don't know they're being mocked.

The result is tremendous pretension and arrogance among Anglo-American writing on these subjects. Specialists in Russian literature by and large are ignorant on the most essential elements of Russian life from which these stories spring. Gogol and Dostoevsky would be considered religious royalists and “conservatives” in the modern mentality, two views abhorred by all professors in the university. Yet they still see these men as great writers. How can they interpret their work without falling into cognitive dissonance?

As always, writers in this field never stop using western terms like “liberal,” “individualist,” “secular” or “human rights” to interpret writers and a culture that never recognized these things in the western way. These terms are laden with ideology and evoke emotional attachments to the liberal capitalism that crated them. This fact alone is beyond the typical writer in this field.

For example, it's commonplace for a modern writer to celebrate Gogol's attack on Petrograd as a repudiation of the “Russian monarchy.” They don't realize that the Russian monarchy is in Moscow, not Petrograd, and that Peter ushered in a revolutionary conception of the world. While its true that the 19th century (and Tsar St. Paul to a great extent) sought to rectify this, such subtlety is beyond the knowledge of the younger academics in departments of literature who not only don't know, but have no idea they don't know.

Ultimately, it is almost impossible for the American liberal conformist in the university to understand Russian literature. It comes from a world both ideologically and religiously so foreign to him that the language barrier is the least of the problems. Liberal professors heap contempt on Russian institutions while pretending to interpret men who loved them. Solzhenitsyn was repudiated by the American academic establishment after his famous speech at Harvard. In his (1989) “Interview with David Aikman,” he said:

Yes, according to the Christian view, history results from the interaction between the Divine will and the free will of individual humans. Obviously, God's will makes itself known, but not in any fatalistic manner, and the free will of individual humans also makes itself known. It is this interaction between them that gives us history. However, in general, history is difficult to understand. For us, it is irrational and we cannot plumb its depths. However, what we must inevitably recognize is that life is organic and develops as a tree grows or a river flows. Every disruption to its course is harmful and unnatural. Revolution is such a disruption.

In his *First Circle*, he has his character Nerzhnin say:

If I only believed that there is any backward and forward in human history! It's like an octopus, with neither back nor front. For me there's no word so devoid of meaning as 'progress'. What progress, Illarion Pavlovitch? Progress from what? To what? In those twenty-seven centuries, have people become better? Kinder? Or at least happier? No, they've become worse, nastier, and unhappier! And all this thanks to beautiful ideas!

Unless history is conceived as a lineal path from "primitive" to "advanced," most educated westerners don't understand it. It will be dismissed as "obscurantist" or worse, be blamed on "German Romantic Idealism" that is often cited but rarely read. The truth is that Orthodoxy never considered progress to be a usable category other than as the struggle against the passions which lead to sin and death. The rest is insignificant. While knowledge in certain technical fields will continue to grow, this, of itself has nothing to do with "progress" unless you already believe this is what "progress" already is. When your universe is based on nominalism and you think that's "reality as it is," then interpreting anything outside of it becomes as tragicomic as Dostoevsky's characters.

An Unpleasant Predicament (1862)

Dostoevsky's little known novel, *An Unpleasant Predicament*, is a masterwork in political psychology. Central to most of Dostoevsky's work is that action, and the mentality or ideology that justifies action, does not spring from reason, but rather a confused myriad of passions and internal drives. Specifically, the theme is that political ideology springs from these disjointed causes, and their tragicomic consequences. The false belief is that one's ideological position derives from "rationality" and a "sincere desire" to "improve" the lot of man is the central core of this story, and lies at the core of modern politics.

The story begins among three high ranking bureaucrats speaking of ethical life just after the reforms of Alexander II. The youngest, only recently promoted to general (as a civil service rank), Ivan Illytch, is the "progressive" of the group, and seeks to outdo his older colleagues in discussion and "understanding of humanity." From the beginning, the desire to "show off" comes to the forefront, and is the first passion driving ideological liberalism within the troubled psyche of the young general.

What drives the young man is the desire to be noticed and recognized as a "progressive intellect." Dostoevsky is attempting to show not an ideological type, but rather a psychological type, for, in reality, the latter does not exist, but only the former. Illytch speaks in instantly recognizable, albeit cliched, phrases: empty, void, but calculated to get him "recognized" as an intellect. Today, we would call this "virtue signaling."

His phrases revolve around "humanity" and "equality," without any specifics, merely chanting mantras learned from western liberals. "They will embrace each other in a moral sense" he repeats, speaking of Russians under his tutelage, without understanding what this phrase might mean. He tries to sound logical and tries to put on airs as an English empiricist, but ends up making a fool of himself. "Humanity" in his lexicon is a code-word for an entire, foggy and inchoate western liberal system, a system Ivan cannot explain or understand, but does "set him off" from his colleagues.

This novel is, like so much else in Dostoevsky's corpus, prophetic. He sees ideology as a sign of a psychological state rather than as some rational interest in “humanity,” and so foresees the mentality of a Kerensky or Yeltsin. These are individuals who believe that ideology is autonomous, that is, that ideas, placed in some sort of order and designed to win applause, can exist and function apart from actual, day to day life of “ordinary” people. That ideology once imposed upon a people, will not have effects separate from what exists on paper, and not apart from the “syllogistic” reasoning of the ideologue. In other words, Dostoevsky is writing a comedy, a comedy aimed at exposing the unintended consequences of the passionate drives that formulate ideology. Rather, these cover for some more fundamental state, a state such as insecurity, a desire for praise, for acceptance.

The arena where the young general will “try out” his ideological phrases and pious posturing is at a wedding of one of his subordinates. Ivan believes that one must treat one’s “subordinates with the utmost in humanity,” a phrase, again, never explained or understood. He believes that, if he arrives at this wedding party – which he hears about third hand, having not been invited – he will enlighten his benighted inferiors, raise their collective consciousness and be treated with the utmost respect and deference. He desires and daydreams about how he will be considered the hero of the party, how he will make speeches on liberal topics designed to evoke tears of joy and heartfelt applause, and how the young couple will remember these for the rest of their married life. His fantasies are soon challenged.

This young clerk just married is named Pseldomov, a name without meaning. Apparently, it was a “bureaucratic error,” for it may have been Pseudomov at one time, but he must now live with this error and use this meaningless name. He's a low level clerk earning a mere 10 rubles a month, and it is out of pity and condescension for this that causes the general to think he will make such an impact.

As Ivan approaches the home where the party is taking place, he begins to fantasize, in the most grandiose way, how his appearance and his lofty ideas will make him nearly an object of worship. He will use his position as a general to impress and enlighten everyone, for they must listen to a man of such a high and lofty rank. He daydreams like this:

They will know my heart, they will know my essential nature: ‘he is stern as chief,’ they will say of me, but ‘as a man, he is an angel!’ Then I will have conquered them; I should have conquered them by one little act which would have never have entered [my colleague’s] head; they will be mine, I should be their father, and they, my children. . . . Why, I am morally elevating the humiliated, I restore him to himself. . . my name will be printed on the hearts of all, and the devil only knows what might come of that popularity!

This psychological type is well known to 21st century western readers. It's that of the 40-something female, new age guru who reads two books on herbal healing and thinks she's a doctor. It's the limousine liberal of the universities, using his position as professor to manipulate his students in the latest fashionable ideology. It's the board member of the big-name corporate foundation who thinks he's uplifting humanity by secretly financing leftist front groups in the name of “democracy. It's the career woman who gives over her children to the daycare 10 hours a day so she can “uplift womanhood” in the corporate world. It's the liberal clergyman who dreams of founding an “ecumenical church” to worship the “moral nature of man” and his “progress.”

What do all these people all have in common? It's passion and desire, rather than reason,

that motivates them. Their desire to “uplift” or to “heal” is based on something more fundamental, it is based on a desire to dominate, to control, to alter, to gain reputation, to make money, to be “recognized” as something, to be accepted by the powerful, to be praised, to be considered “progressive,” intelligent and “independent.” Its to be affirmed as superior.

Modern ideology claims autonomy for itself, and in fact, liberalism is based on such an assumption. Liberalism believes that people come to ideology because, in some vacuum, they have weighed all the political, religious and moral options possible, read all the major works in each ideology, religion and moral idea available to modern man, have produced “pro-con” lists, and then, after years (if not decades) of study and reflection, have accepted a certain ideology with conviction. It is doubtful that anyone really believes this, but, of course, if people come to an ideological point of view based on something other than this, what remains of liberal democracy?

If reason doesn't control one's actions, then passion does, or at least, it's a passion which drives reason. If passion drives reason, then people are not free, but are controlled by inner drives and desires very difficult to control, or even understand; then psychology, rather than ethics or politics, is the central discipline of social relations. If the average “activist” doesn't know the difference between a passionate desire and its pseudo-intellectual apparel, what does it say of activism? Are “democratic rights and freedoms” merely a license for people to work out their psychological states and problems? Is “liberal democracy” merely an arena where the apparatus is able to control passionate outbursts?

Ivan enters the wedding party, absolutely certain he will be treated like royalty. For the rest of the novel, the comedy works itself out. The crowd is deeply divided. There is either servile deference or haughty contempt towards the general. Most of the attendees are of lower orders in the Petrine bureaucratic pecking order, and thus either grovel (for the sake of later benefits) or ignore him altogether.

Some even show him contempt, particularly the invited journalists. The bi-polarity here becomes even clearer once the general's plan completely fails. Slowly, the general comes to realize that he's using his bureaucratic position to enlighten the lower orders; in other words, his love of equality is vitiated by the notion that his position and the institutionalization of inequality is at the center of his plans and desires to impose “humanity.” He realizes the whole thing is based on a contradiction, but his passionate desire to impress has long covered up any conceptual conflict over this.

In addition, there is the bi-polarity in his alleged love of humanity and the equality, along with the fact that he is uninvited and is forcing himself on the group. It's the perennial conflict within the liberal psyche that's shown itself, that he's forcing liberalism upon people in the name of equality and “humanity.” He's “forcing them to be free,” in that infamous phrase of Rousseau. Liberalism, wherever it's been implanted, has been imposed by force. From China under Sun to Britain under Cromwell; the French Revolution to the American University system; from Holland to South Africa; from Reconstruction to desegregation, liberalism must be imposed and enforced by violence.

Ideology recognizes no particulars, for it is abstract by its very nature, and as a result, it must be imposed by force, since the average citizen does not think in abstractions. People must conform themselves to ideology, rather than ideology conforming itself to life. Politics, in its true sense, is based on ideas rather than life, and this is the ultimate bi-polarity that this novel exposes.

The comic and tragic elements of the general's appearance at this wedding are precisely

the ideology and its attendant passions coming face to face with life. It's a contradiction: ideology is abstract, general while life is particular, gradual, specific, based around experience, personality and local loyalty. The two are opposites.

Once it's clear that few actually want the general there, and are manifestly uncomfortable with his presence, the story of Pseldemov emerges as an anti-type to the ideological dreaming of the young general. As it happens, Pseldemov comes from the lowest form of urban poverty. Homeless after the death of his father, having his aged mother as his only friend, Pseldemov was able to scrape by, with his mother taking in laundry in a "corner" of a house somewhere, that is, they shared an apartment with several others.

Pseldemov received the lowest of bureaucratic positions at 10 rubles a month, and sought a marriage whereby he might receive some property as a dowry. He found a young girl abused by her father regularly, a girl with obvious mental problems, whose father wanted her out of the house. This father, a drunk and a retired bureaucrat named Mlekopitaev, had a small house outside the city, filthy, but at least with some property that might be improved. This father treated Pseldemov with contempt, forcing him to dance and sing to entertain him and to prove his malleability and submission. He liked the young man because he appeared submissive and weak, and the perfect son-in-law for that reason.

The general, obsessed with praise and reputation, hadn't considered the real life situation of his "inferior." The story of Pseldemov was designed to be a counterpoint to the ideology of Ivan. Stories are specific, like life. Ideologies are very much unlike life, as they are abstract and based on logical designs, the product of the mind and it is this contradiction that brings out the comic and tragic elements of the story.

Ivan hadn't considered that maybe this family was poor, and that by his arrival, they would be forced to buy goods far out of their price range, but customary to serve a man of high rank. The elder Mlekopitaev had given only a small amount for the wedding and refused any more than the bare minimum. As a result, when the general arrived, the Pseldemovs needed to buy champagne and other expensive items out of their paltry store of money, amounting to one ruble. They needed to alter their behavior for the sake of their exalted company. In short, he destroyed the party and broke the family.

Making matters worse, the young general, having drunk too much and after an attempt to make a lofty speech on equality, passes out on the floor, drunk and sick. They then place him on the only available bed in the tiny house, and that's the nuptial bed, which the general proceeds to break and vomit upon. The bride, having been placed in a drawing room for a makeshift "nuptial couch" with her new husband, falls out of the tiny "bed" and screams in terror. The entire party rushes in, only to humiliate the girl, who goes running out of the room. She never really liked this arrangement, and runs straight into the arms of a young officer she had her eye on. Everything ends in disaster, and Pseldemov sits on the broken couch, broke and alone.

The bizarre situation the general has created illustrates in a rather powerful way that incompatibility between ideology and life; between liberalism and the superior social position necessary to impose it upon people who would rather be left alone. The confrontation between culture and the dreams of the bureaucrat and professor. The general's vomiting and illness is symbolic of this unnatural situation, the mixing of elements that cannot be mixed without nausea. They have rejected him as he has rejected their food and drink, neither of which he was used to.

One might connect Pseldemov to the young man Eugene, in Pushkin's "The Bronze Horseman." They are both alienated bureaucrats, both have romantic dreams, both are of a low rank, and both are victimized by the ideological apparatus of those of a higher rank and class,

attempting to “better” the lot of the “poor, benighted Russian.” Peter sought to “tame” nature as he sought to “tame” the average Russian. Petrified Russia is the ultimate example of ideology confronting life and culture. Petersburg was symbolic of Peter’s ideological westernism, but in his attempt to tame nature, he created a situation where the poor would be wiped out at every flood, a flood which destroys the dreams of the poem’s hero.

One might even claim that Yeltsin is a perfect villain here, for he too, along with his western advisers, sought to “liberalize” Russia, create “democracy” and “free-markets” while permitting a gang of oligarchs to rape the nation and plunging the ordinary worker into poverty as a consequence. Ideology, always imposed by force, leads to disaster.

So what is the “Unpleasant Predicament?” It is not merely the public humiliation of the young general, it’s the position of the western liberal in Russia, and liberals in general. While preaching freedom, they use force; while preaching brotherhood, they demand ideological conformity; while preaching equality, they use money and position to alter society secretly.

Ideologues have no understanding of life, a life where most people don’t care about or understand philosophical abstractions and would rather be left alone. Ideology without life leads to frustration, failure and coercion. A knowledge of life, on the other hand, leads to a slow abandonment of liberal ideology.

“Dream of a Strange Man” (1877)

Dostoevsky’s “Dream” has few commentators, largely because few know what he’s talking about. It’s not uncommon to hear people wonder who actually wrote this story, and how different this plot is from the typical Dostoevsky story. The unfortunate part of Russian literature is that professional literary critics are the last people that should be reading it. Russian literature is intensely historical and ethnic as well as deeply religious and metaphysical, which are all things professional literary geeks know nothing about.

The “Dream” is a work of agrarianism, its an attack on civilization, a theme that comes up in Gogol far more often than his commentators understand. Civilization is the creation of Cain and is an urban phenomenon where the labor force used by the elites is kept close by, watched and generally kept under control. The western ideology of “liberalism” was developed to legitimize such an economic development.

Civilization is about power: it is about the harnessing of nature for the ends of the elite; manipulating her and eventually, destroying her. All occult understanding derives from this radical severing of man from nature, and forcing him to live in a world of images rather than the reality of creation. The “Dream” is a polemical attack on the occult, as it was popular in Russian freemasonry at the end of the 19th century.

The story revolves around alienation, and the development of epistemology that derives from it. Unfortunately, Rousseau (who Dostoevsky read regularly) fully admitted that there was no going back once the scythe of Saturn had fallen. The scythe, represented in the Soviet flag, refers to the development of civilization as manifesting power through alienation. It cuts man from heaven. In other words, that men are alienated from the earth, the basis of all earthly goods, and, as a result, look to technology to meet their needs. Therefore, whoever controls access to the means of production, controls the world.

Michael Hoffman has spent much time describing the connection between the occult and modern science, or more specifically the development of a technologically oriented society, that might be better described as a society controlled by those who control access to the inventions of science. Technology is what develops to fill the gap when men are severed from nature; they are

severed from nature in that elites realize that technology and the ethos of the city (or “Cain”) can create greater profits, control and organization over their realm than the simple dependence on nature. Hoffman writes:

The sickle symbolizes Saturn, also known as Chronos-Saturn or as the Greeks called it, the Demiurgos, the operating engineer of the universe as opposed to the creator of that universe. The reign of Saturn we see exorbitant building and modeling activities and this is reflected in the masonic reference to their god as the “Big Builder” or “Architect.” This sounds reasonably attractive, many of us can appreciate magnificent buildings and splendid projects along these lines but as usual there is more to it than this.

The Saturnian-masonic “edifice complex” ultimately is building against the grain, against nature, though at the beginning, in the early eras, nature’s forces are manipulated with a knowledge which requires the greatest intimacy with her ways, as reflected in the megalithic structures in the British isles, Europe and ancient America. . . .

Man began his peregrination away from Eden through the conceit that he would ‘become as god.’ Yet, as soon as he let the Divine Plan for the occult process his stated objective became the Cabalistic *tikkun olam* or “the repair of the world”, via the intervention and imposition of human brain power—the very ego maniacal device that caused the separation from God’s natural Eden in the first place. . . .

In the Hermetic-masonic tradition the secret identity of Satan is the cosmic force represented in occult lore as emanating from the star Sirius, the so called dog star, *alpha Canis majoris*. In the secret tradition of the Freemasons, Sirius is overwhelmingly identified with a single primary attribute, the bringing of civilization to earth (Secret Societies and Psychological Warfare, Second Edition, 21-23. Independent History and Research, 2001).

This understanding, completely unknown even to those who think they know something about the occult, is central to the careers of Dostoevsky and Gogol. In particular, they are central to understanding the “Dream,” not for the least of reasons that the dog star makes an appearance.

Petersburg, as I have written before, was itself a Masonic ritual. Peter used the forced labor of Old Russia, represented by the Cossack host, to build his city in the most difficult and cold swamp in the world, near the Finnish border. The city itself was literally built on the bones of these symbols of the Old Belief, that is, everything that Peter and his masonic friends in Holland thought was backwards and deranged.

The new European city, dedicated to finance, military might and industrialism (not to mention the new megastate, built on western Renaissance models) was literally meant to conquer nature itself, not merely in the symbolic building of the city in a terrible place from a strategic point of view, but powerful from a magical point of view, but also in a more powerful sense of being the city that will bring industrialization to Russia.

The anti-hero of the story is tired of life in the city. He sees no point to it. The drive for power leads to the accumulation of more power, and this leads to more power. The state functions to gain power for the sake of defending itself and gaining more power as a result; the purpose of it all is nothing but power for its own sake. This circle seems bizarre, and our anti-hero decides to kill himself.

As he's walking home, he meets a poor girl, one of the cast offs, or sacrifices, necessary to make a modern city function. She is calling for help. Our anti-hero rebuffs her. No one in the story has names, largely because in the city, the person is swallowed up. Only one's place in the hierarchy matters. Image matters, not reality. Why does the main character rebuff this poor girl, who is seemingly looking for help to assist with her sick mother?

Civilization is for the elites, for their problems and for their desire for power, and then security to maintain that power, with the end of gaining more power. To this day, civilization has proven itself incapable of assisting girls like that, no matter who is in charge. Marxism, that fraud of the rich, has merely led to a "bureaucratic aristocracy" (to use Russell's phrase) that left girls like this as destitute as before. Marxism was a means for a specific elite to gain power at the expense of another elite. Power is identical, but excuses for it change. No matter who is in charge, or, more accurately, who is in control of the image manufacturing devices of modernity, have nothing to do with helping girls who are in trouble, or any poor people, for that matter.

However, the second reason why the anti-hero rebuffs the girl is that he has found the "secret" to freedom: imminent death. This is a topic Dostoevsky deals with (cf. *The Possessed*, or the *Idiot*) often, but never as explicitly as in the "Dream." Imminent death is the great liberator, because all your earthly obligations are canceled. Suicide makes man a God. How does this argument work? One must understand the major intellectual currents in Russia near the end of Dostoevsky's life.

One major current was the philosophy of Schelling, or that of the German idealists in general. According to this school, which includes the great Fichte, reality is at least partially created by the mind. Usually, reality is the mind, and mutual experience creates a sort of "inter-subjective" unity around these "objects," or more accurately, "projections." If reality is a creation of the mind (again, Fichte would say the will, which is identical to mind), then the self is the creator of the world. If this is true, then, of course, moral obligations are illusory and, second, suicide will destroy the world. Therefore, suicide makes one a god. The suicidal man is made a god in that he is now above moral obligation, and that, since the world depends on his will, he is destroying the world and its ground (the self). Dostoevsky is fascinated by this idea, and his commentators have missed it completely.

Just prior to returning to his room, the clouds part, showing what clearly is the dog star, Sirius. It is this star that gives him the idea of godlikeness, and that suicide is connected to this state. Dostoevsky was anti-Masonic, but he knew his occult lore, and he knew that Orthodox people would also understand this reference, specifically in the context of Tsarist Russia. He is clearly linking the secret abode of Satan with that of civilization, as well as suicide and the bizarre belief in godlikeness.

It might also bear noting that Hoffman has a footnote to the quote mentioned above, one that states that this star, so important to adepts, is also the realm of Isis in Egyptian mythology. It is clear in the ancient writings dealing with this goddess that she had great skill in manipulating nature using special, magical words. But there is more about this star, a star important to many cultures around the globe in ancient times. Hoffman writes: "The name Shaitan is a form of Set, one of the myriad names, in this case Egyptian, for the entity Sirius (Sothis), the state of the goddess Isis as well as of the jackal-headed deity, Anubis." (31)

However, the anti-hero, returning to his room, is disturbed. There is an intuitive understanding that he did wrong. Though there is no logical reason to feel this way. He falls asleep and dreams that he has killed himself. He then is taken by an unknown force through the heavens, past the dog star (though the force denies that this is the star) and brought to a double of

the solar system, to a double of the earth. He is being brought to Eden.

For someone who understands the arcane nature of the dog star and that of urbanism and civilization, coming to Eden (not heaven) makes perfect sense. The anti-hero is brought to earth prior to the fall. That is to say, prior to civilization, or that which was meant to fill the vacuum after the fall and man's alienation from dependence on creation. What does he find?

Oh, I understood at once even at the time that in many things I could not understand them at all; as an up-to-date Russian progressive and contemptible Petersburger, it struck me as inexplicable that, knowing so much, they had, for instance, no science like ours, but I soon realized that their knowledge was gained and fostered by intuitions different from those of us on earth, and that their aspirations, too, were quite different. They desired nothing and were at peace; they didn't aspire to knowledge of life as we aspire to understand it, because their lives were full, but their knowledge was higher and deeper than ours; for our science seeks to explain what life is, aspires to understand it in order to teach others how to love, while they without science knew how to live; and that I understood, but I couldn't understand their knowledge. They showed me their trees, and I could not understand the intense love with which they looked at them; it was as though they were talking with creatures like themselves. And perhaps I shall not be mistaken if I say that they conversed with them. . .

They were as gay and sportive as children. They wandered about their lovely woods and copses, they sang their lovely songs; their fair was light - the fruits of their trees, the honey from their woods, and the milk of the animals who loved them. The work they did for food and raiment was brief and not laborious. They loved and begot children, but I never noticed in them the impulse of that cruel sensuality which overcomes almost every man on this earth, all and each, and is the source of almost every sin of mankind on earth. They rejoiced at the arrival of children as new beings to share their happiness. There was no quarreling, no jealousy among them, and they did not even know what the words meant. Their children were the children of all, for they all made up one family. There was scarcely any illness among them, though there was death; but their old people died peacefully, as though falling asleep, giving blessings and smiles to those who surrounded them to take their last farewell with bright and lovely smiles.

For the same reason the likes of Eva Thompson cannot understand Russia, the "Ridiculous Man" can't understand these people. These people did not actually know anything, or at least, they did not know anything discursively. They would be "backward" according to the English, Whig history. Discursive reasoning is result of the fall, where men understand through bits and pieces strung together, very delicately, why anything can shake the edifice. Here, they understood all they needed to know intuitively, all at once, without recourse to logic.

Logic in the modern sense is the language of mechanization, the language of the fall, the language of alienation and death. Nature was not "dead matter" but was alive, and communicative, though not in words, but in concepts, concepts in all their fullness and depth, rather than the meaningless words of the modern man. In fact, it seems they used few words, for words are the tools of manipulation. They used full, rich concepts that they corresponded in a sort of innocent telepathy, both with nature and each other. They had no temples because nature

was a temple, the landscape of the living God rather than that of the earthly elite. Temples were erected to create islands of sanity within insanity; a place where worldly cares could be kept out, and only love can be seen within, a love born of faith and sorrow, a sorrow for Eden long gone.

Unfortunately, without understanding how, the anti-hero corrupts them. It begins with one small lie, but soon, in a realm of innocence, a realm without defenses, it germinates into the fall, into civilization. In other words, the corruption of this Eden derives from a fallen man making contact with people who knew nothing of “defending” themselves from corruption, as they had no notion of it. Corruption is a manipulation of discursive reasoning to defend a economic or passionate interest of some type, and of course, no such discursive logic existed before the fall.

He brings civilization to Eden, he brings death. He brings separation, the literal meaning of alienation. Suddenly, these people are cruel to animals, using them for profits, controlling them for sale. Animals now retreat to the forest, avoiding mankind. Orthodox saints have had excellent relationships with animals, including recent saints such as Fr. Seraphim of Platina. They no longer “talk”: to the trees, as they view nature as “dead” matter, just waiting to be “humanized” in the words of Schelling, though scientific logic.

In dealing with alienation, people form clans, families and nations. People are separated from one another, and develop theories of justice to deal with the problems. These theories simply lead to more warfare, as the clans begin killing each other to impose their idea of ethics. They develop discursive theories of economics to justify their gradual rape of nature. Suddenly, they realize that logic will not solve their problems, and so they begin to believe that suffering is a part of life, and simply accept it.

What is particularly interesting about the last parts of the “Dream” is that Dostoevsky actually goes through the post-Enlightenment developments in intellectual life in tracing the fall of the people the anti-hero of the story corrupts. He goes from the naive logic of the early Enlightenment through the German idealists, and eventually ends with Schopenhauer. In other words, the final thesis of the story is that ideological formulae, whether political, moral or scientific, have no actual meaning. They are the phenomena of the will to power of individuals, and, as such are not actual ideals, strictly speaking. It is a powerful indictment of ideology, and the faddish slogans that were making the salon rounds in Russian cities during Dostoevsky's time. They are still making the rounds among the faculty lounge scribblers. Of course, these same scribblers have no idea what Dostoevsky is talking about, and so this story remains unread and unappreciated.

“Ivan’s Nightmare” (1879)

“Ivan’s Nightmare” is a chapter near the end of Dostoevsky's famous *The Brothers Karamazov*. It's an extremely important chapter, saturated with historical and philosophical ideas pertaining to Old Russia and the new, since the foundation of St. Petersburg. Compared with other parts of *Brothers* such as the Inquisitor, Ivan’s Nightmare is rather neglected.

The basic context of Ivan’s Nightmare is rather simple, but only represents a small aspect of this huge work. Dmitri Karamazov, as is well known, is accused of the murder of his father. Dostoevsky skillfully keeps the true nature of the crime a secret until Ivan speaks with the mentally ill Smerdyakov (the “man of death”) who fully admits that he killed the elder Karamazov (meaning “black oil”). Ivan, as is typical of Dostoevsky, gets progressively sicker as the novel proceeds, both mentally and physically, and the stress of the upcoming murder trial, the alienation of his beloved, Grushenka, and the death of his wicked father begin to weigh upon his brain. (It might also be noted that Dostoevsky, skillfully, always mingles physical with mental

sickness and pain; they are never separated). Soon after Ivan's nightmare, the trial begins, which, again is well known, leads to Dmitri's unjust condemnation to hard labor.

Dostoevsky crafts Ivan's nightmare with great subtlety, requiring from the reader a basic knowledge of Russian history. He forces it, much like the more famous chapter dedicated to the Inquisitor, upon the reader, isolating it from the mainstream of the novel's motion. In fact, one of Dostoevsky's most charming as well as most irritating qualities is to paint, not merely a simple novel progressing from one point to another, but rather a series of images or philosophical reflections concealed among specifically literary tropes that provide an eccentric grammar, if you will, to his longer work. This is most evident in the extremely difficult novel, *The Idiot*, which might be interpreted as a series of images and reflections that far outweighs the rather mundane story behind it.

Further, the reflections in Ivan's nightmare provide significant glimpses into Dostoevsky's own philosophical and mental state at his mature years, and it is in this, in particular, that permits us to decry the relative inattention it has received in the criticism (though specific works dedicated to *Brothers*, of course, has much to say about it, none of it accurate.)

In the Signet Classic edition that I use, "Ivan's Nightmare" runs a short, latter chapter from pages 599 to 615 (this is the June, 1999 edition, translated very well by Constance Garnett). It consists of a conversation between Ivan Karamazov and an individual that is clearly The Devil, or a demon (and in fact, identifies himself as such). In many ways, what Dostoevsky does here is similar to what C.S. Lewis was to do later in his *Screwtape Letters*.

The narrator goes to great lengths to show the reader that Ivan was suffering from hallucinations, and was in the process of the famous Dostoevsky-style long descent into madness. In Dostoevsky, as well as in Orthodox theology, sin has physical, global consequences, affecting all that come into contact with it. In the Old Testament, where Orthodox worship derives, the unclean made all who came in contact with them also unclean. All actions, in the Orthodox vision, are synthetic in that they bring together moral, psychological, environmental and physical factors in its commission, as well as its effects, to say nothing of its punishment. For Dostoevsky, as is very well known, the wages of sin are insanity, or, more philosophically, that sin is an all-encompassing entity. A sinful man has a physical makeup different from the virtuous man; the brain more troubled and more unbalanced.

Death is a liberation of the soul from these physical affects of sin. It seems that Dostoevsky also shared a version of this view and wove it into many of his characters such as the Underground Man and the more famous Raskolnikov of *Crime and Punishment*. In the midst of Ivan's extreme stress, the image of a man sitting across from him appears as he sits in his rented quarters. The Devil's appearance (or more accurately, a demon's) is telling as to what Dostoevsky's is driving at in this chapter:

This was a person, or, more accurately speaking, a Russian gentleman of a particular kind, no longer young, about fifty, with rather long, thick dark hair, slightly streaked with gray and a small pointed beard. He was wearing a brownish jacket, rather shabby, evidently made by a good tailor. His linen and his long scarflike necktie were the kind worn by people who aim at being stylish. But on closer inspection his linen was not over clean and his wide scarf was very threadbare. The visitor's trousers were of excellent cut, but were too light in color and too tight for present fashion. His soft, fluffy white hat was out of keeping with the season. In brief, there was every appearance of gentility on straitened means. It

looked as though the gentle man belonged to that class of idle landowners who used to flourish in the time of serfdom (600).

Russian nationalist historians will immediately see what Dostoevsky is driving at, and who the Devil truly represents (other than Satan himself). Satan here is presented as a westernizer of the 1840s. That is very obvious from the context. The appearance of the Devil here is saturated with ideological symbolism.

The fact that the man is “no longer young” is extremely significant. It was common to refer to the westernizing school of “Young Russia” as a “rebirth” of Russia that many liberals were publicly claiming. There was a “Young England” movement that Dostoevsky, given his love for English literature, was very familiar with. The fashionable ideology of the 1840s is no longer fashionable, but it's just another threadbare fad promoted by many of the wealthy at the time. The Devil is wearing the clothes of a bygone era, though he wishes to feel fashionable and respectable in so doing. The ideological content is that Young Russia was created by good tailors, or rather, gifted philosophers of western European descent. That is to say that the westernizing school was taking wholesale from the likes of Voltaire, Rousseau or Schelling, and seeking to impose such an order on Russia. This was evident at the Decembrist rebellion of 1825. On a Russian gentleman, however, such ideological baggage looks silly, old and out of date.

The necktie is very significant. In western Europe, the state/capital complex slowly destroyed the medieval order, that is, free farmsteads, the calendar based on the seasons, holy, festal days and fasting regulations, unregimented labor and decentralized, Christian government. The former free peasant was now subjected to ever more rigid discipline from the capital/state alliance. The tie is connected to this.

The necktie became a fashion for the elites, as it symbolized the noose, or the direct control of the state over the individual. The necktie represented the rule of the state over the rule of the church, and usurped the place of God over decisions of life and death. This was the reason St. John Maximovich refused to permit anyone who served at the altar with him to wear neckties. It's a symbol of the secularization of society by the state.

The powerful phrase “gentility on straitened means” is as brilliant as it is damning. Dostoevsky is indicting the Petrine experiment in Russian history. Becoming a western empire, as I have written elsewhere, was expensive, and came at the expense of traditional Russian liberties. Russia, given many exogenous and endogenous variables did not have the ready cash to become an eastern version of France, nor was there any good reason for desiring to be so. Centralized bureaucracies, regular, mass armies and the infrastructure of central command was an extremely expensive and delicate proposition, but the bureaucrat, so skillfully mocked by the greatest of Russian writers, Gogol, was slowly becoming the symbol of the destruction of Old Russia.

The primary victims of westernization were the peasantry, who were forced to work harder to finance the grand experiments of Peter and many of his successors. Not only did the peasantry need to work harder to finance the growing state, but peasant culture, that healthy mixture of Slavic nationalism and Orthodox religion, was slowly being transformed by the Petrine machine so as not to threaten the western ideological pillars of the New Order. The final extinction of the Cossack liberties of the steppes by Catherine the Great was a necessary concomitant of this revolution.

Dostoevsky describes the visitor as “ready to assume any amiable expression as the occasion might arise.” This derives from solid theology: as the Devil hardly ever appears as The

Devil, but always as some pleasant ideological or theological movement, loaded with plastic piety and prima facie plausibility. The point of this is to slowly convince the reader that this is no hallucination of Ivan's, but is the Devil himself, taking advantage of an ambiguous situation so as to confuse and disorient his victim. Documented cases of demonic possession consistently show this to be the case.

Demons, often speaking in ancient languages the victim could not ever have known, sprinkle some truth with many lies and exaggerations, thereby spreading confusion and embarrassment to all concerned. All instructions, whether of eastern or western origin, instruct exorcists to always ignore the ravings of the demons, and never, under no circumstances whatsoever, enter into an argument with the possessing power.

Oddly, the Devil is wearing a large gold ring with a cheap opal in it. Why is this even mentioned? Opal, in western Europe, is the stone associated with October. October, bleeding into November and also made more blurry by the differences in the eastern and western calendars, is also the harvest festival, and is a central month of rejoicing in agrarian societies. Westernizers have a habit of mocking and degrading traditional agrarian societies, regarding them as "backward," never asking themselves whether they were happier than their industrial and post-industrial counterparts. The significance of the harvest is that, in old Russia, peasants were given the right to leave a landlord at the end of harvest season in November (and the second feast of St. George, rarely observed in contemporary Orthodoxy) if all their bills were paid.

By the time of Peter this right of the peasants had been slowly whittled away, eventually falling into disuse. Now, not making any statements about serfdom (which has been dreadfully dramatized among western historians), the point is that the harvest season is representative of the freedom of agricultural work, and its promised reward. The crushing of agrarian Russia was the Masonic fantasy of Peter and the westernizing school in general. The opal is placed into a gold ring, makes the connection between the harvest season and "golden freedom," very commonly found within the cycle of Serbian epic poetry.

The first words from Ivan's visitor of any significance concern the nature of belief. Ivan does not want to believe that the Devil prompted some of his previous actions (the nature of which need not detain us). Ivan has to have some premonition as to who his visitor is, and apparently, Ivan has had some contact with him before. The Devil's reply is simple, "don't believe it then." And, "there's no use to believing against your will."

Unsurprising words, given that the Devil is typified, especially in societies dedicated to his worship, in self will. Some Marxist "Orthodox priests," working for the Soviet system, sometimes gave themselves away by attacking reason as the necessary foundation of faith. It derives from the caricature of Christianity common among many secular persons. The fact is that faith is not only an act of will, but derives ultimately from reasoned reflection about the nature of reality and man's place in it. Blind faith is mindless and rejected by the church as detrimental to religion. No one has ever advocated it and the term "faith" never meant just credulity. The Devil making reference to faith as purely a matter of will is an extremely subtle attack on the mockery of Christianity common among the Left.

Then the conversation quickly turns to the existence of this "hallucination." Ivan desperately wants to believe it is merely a product of his imagination, of his pressing sickness, but the Devil shows him otherwise. Ivan persists in claiming, with increasing anger, that the visitor is a phantom. The Devil begins to justify himself on page 603, with some very interesting statements. The Devil says:

My dear friend, above all things I want to behave as a gentleman and be recognized as such. . . I am poor but. . . I won't say very honest, a fallen angel. I certainly can't conceive how I can ever have been an angel. If I ever was, it must have been long ago that there's no harm in forgetting it. Now I only prize the reputation of being a gentlemanly person and live as I can, trying to make myself agreeable. I really love mankind, I've been slandered! Here when I stay with you from time to time, my life gains a kind of reality and that's what I like most of all. You see, like you, I suffer from the fantastic and so I love the realism of earth. Here, with you, everything is circumscribed, here all is formulated and geometrical, while we have nothing but indeterminate equations. I wander about here dreaming.

The Devil reveals much of his nature. For him, appearance is more important than reality, as was the case among the westerners in Russia. That is, the external garb of westernism is all Peter was able to accomplish. If the USSR could not root out Orthodoxy or the agrarian ideal, then no one will

The reference to geometry will quickly set off red flags (pun intended) for those familiar with Russian history. Freemasonry has as its central symbols the compass and square, showing their devotion to Pythagoras, and representing the nature of their god, the Demiurge of Platonic and Gnostic philosophy. "God" in freemasonry is the devil, represented by the great architect, or the Demiurge, who cannot create *ex nihilo*, but must build with what God has created. Therefore, Masons today believe that matter is by nature eternal and contains all the power normally reserved to God.

The notion of "building" according to geometric forms, expressible in numbers, represents the central core of all Gnosticism, or the willful "correction" of nature, based on elite philosophical and scientific principles. Civilization, which Gogol deplored, is based on the idea of the deification of man, specifically, those who control the economy, and the enslavement of the "backward" peasantry, who are dragooned to feed the elites in the cities. Peter was initiated into the Lodge during his Great Embassy tour of western Europe (most likely in Amsterdam) and his agenda for Russia was a rather crude formulation of western Masonry. This assumes he was the same man that returned.

Continuing the Masonic metaphor, the Devil continues in this vein about an ax. A game was played in Russian villages (and is common around the world) that the unwary were asked to lick an ax in zero degree temperatures. The tongue sticks to the ax and the mouth bleeds. Ivan asks about the ax and the devil answers:

What would become of an ax in space? What an idea! If it were to fall any distance, it would begin, I think, flying around the earth without knowing why, like a satellite. The astronomers would calculate the rising and setting of the ax, Gatzuk would put it in his calendar, that's all.

One needs to be familiar with the esoteria of Masonry to understand this reference, and no one has commented on this passage in English. The ax is an ancient symbol in Russia. It represents Janus, of sorts, but of the dual nature of reality according to classical paganism. Dark being equal to light, and light existing only because of the experience of darkness. Further, it relates to the scythe, or the scythe of Saturn, the instrument which separates man from God, and

man from His creation.

It is a central symbol of Gnosticism, or the “ancient, antediluvian wisdom” that man is God and can create with “eternal and preexisting” matter what he will. Therefore, man’s “primitive” dependence on nature is replaced with technics as the central aspect of civilization, where man’s will filters perception and the very relations of man and nature. The city, Canaan, named for Cain, “the builder of the city,” was the civilizational apogee of the domination of adepts over cowans, or the uninitiated.

Esoteric freemasonry believes that civilization, or the understanding of man’s “true’ role in the world, derives from the Dog Star, the star of Sirius. Beings from this world visited primitive man and showed them the nature of “good and evil” and the nature of technics and civilization. This will reappear in “Dream of a Strange Man.” Here, Dostoevsky is laying out a challenge to Freemasonry, in language that only adepts, or serious critics, understand. When speaking of himself, the devil, against justifying himself, as well as proving beyond any doubt that he is not a hallucination, says this:

No, live, I’m told, for they’d be nothing without you. If everything in the universe were sensible, nothing would happen. There would be no events without you and there must be events. So against the grain I serve to produce events and do what is irrational because I’m commanded to. . . . Without suffering what would be the pleasure of life? Life would be transformed into an endless church service; it would be holy, but tedious. (606-7)

One of the great, and nearly inarguable of Dostoevsky's philosophical positions is that mankind is irrational. The Enlightenment posited an unreal man: the purely rational, calculating, pleasure seeking machine. Society, Diderot, Voltaire, Comte and many others said, would be served if this was the model of economic, legality and politics. Empirical evidence, rather than fashionable theorizing, shows the opposite: mankind is irrational, passionate and often does what he knows will bring him misery rather than happiness. The individual’s reaction to civilization, as well stated in Notes from Underground, is to deliberately subvert the Enlightenment by acting in ways considered to be irrational: to act impulsive, passionately, arrogantly, in a way that is ultimately self-destructive. Today, in late 2019, such forms of behavior are institutionalized and considered the norm.

The Devil continues, concerning his agenda:

As soon as men have denied God—and I believe that period, corresponding with geological periods, will come to pass—the old conception of the universe will fall itself without cannibalism and what’s more the old morality, and everything will begin anew. Men will unite to take from life all it can give, but only for joy and happiness in the present world. Man will be lifted up with a spirit of divine Titanic pride and the man-god will appear. Extending his conquest of nature by his will and his science, man will feel such lofty joy from hour to hour that it will make up for all his old dreams the joy of heaven (613).

From all that has been said before, this is the Devil’s apogee. It will be the Masonic elite (and here speaking broadly) that will provide the scientific and ideological components to the naked rule of Antichrist (the man-god, the reverse of Christ, the God-man).

Antichrist is the fulfillment of all Masonic and esoteric Judaic dreams: he will perform great wonders, solve many of the world's pressing problems. He will be a man of great piety, though of a general and vague nature. He will preach unity, but a unity based on vague and general principles. He will speak of freedom, but nothing about the basis on which one makes choices. According to Orthodox tradition, the man-god, known as Adam Kadmon in the Kabbalah, will appear once the gospel is preached worldwide. It's not accepted worldwide, but its present worldwide. The unification of the globe, the advances of science capable of creating amazing wonders and the centralization of economic power are all necessary conditions for the rise of the man-god.

In a cryptic statement, back at the beginning of the chapter, the Devil says to Ivan: "I would like to join an idealistic society; I would lead the opposition to it." "Idealistic" is left vague. But the conception of joining a society, and then leading the opposition to it is strange. In esoteric Judaic political thought, society is controlled by two pillars, one, the pillar of mercy, the other, the pillar of severity. These are artificial distinctions, showing that the pillars spring from the same source: it vaguely explicates the distinction between "liberal" and "conservative" in modern life. The two pillars are the two "paths" common to occult lore, often called the left and right paths. The left is characterized by the female and its typical "picture thinking."

Its based on an emotional attachment to such abstractions as "nature" and "ancient" that is, pre-Christian culture. It is egalitarian and vaguely socialist. At present, the left hand path in the occult is represented by the hippie types, and a rather cliché environmentalism, anarchism and feminism. The right hand path is more structured and hierarchical, formally rejecting egalitarianism and representing the male, logical principle. Its represented by Nietzsche, Ayn Rand and many libertarians. The two pillars, or paths, ultimately coincide, though by radically different means. The same is true of the division between liberal and conservative: same agenda, different means.

For example, the female environmentalist and "eco-feminist," a staple on college campuses, formally preaches egalitarianism. She often speaks in florid terms, though ultimately saying very little. She is motivated by symbolic, or picture thinking saturated with emotion. She pictures herself as a tireless crusader, a moral preacher devoid of any personal interest. These images, and the image of the world she believes to be fighting, are products of her imagination and its concomitant emotion. They are completely denuded of logical progression and often termed "intuitive." She is often a whore, and usually preaches sexual liberation.

However, the problem arises when these schemes are imposed. Doesn't she think of herself as a moral aristocrat, above the mundane cowan, considering only the interests of the good? Is she not part of some imagined vanguard, leading the repressed into a world of freedom and equality? As in "An Unpleasant Predicament," she finds herself in a contradiction she's usually too stupid to understand. The followers of Nietzsche and the "right hand" arrive, assisting the left in imposing their Order. How else can she justify the erection of a massive infrastructure of repression to eliminate those not politically correct? It is an infrastructure that is logical, bureaucratic and definitely not egalitarian. Therefore, the two pillars are one; this is the essence of Gnostic and Masonic thought, and precisely that which is exposed, however subtly, in "Ivan's Nightmare."

This is likely the reason this important chapter is basically ignored in the literature. The few times when it is mentioned, it is interpreted completely out of the ideological and religious context that Dostoevsky was familiar with, but beyond the knowledge of the average "Russia scholar." There is an entire side to Dostoevsky completely unknown to scholars, that is, the side

of this great author which takes aim at the secret origins of modernity, the secret origins of civilization: the sons and daughters of Sirius.

Uncle's Dream (1888)

Russia after the reign of Nicholas I was in a state of rapid change far beyond the norm in her history. These changes were partially related to Russia's "defeat" against much of Europe during the Crimean conflict and was largely fanned by a press overpoweringly liberal and utterly defeatist. Regardless of the causes and myths of the connection between social change and the post-Crimean life, this era, Dostoevsky's era, was one of struggle—a struggle for a Russian identity outside of Europe and yet very much linked to her and her ideas, for better or worse.

The genius of Russian literature is its highly social character; but this is its greatest challenge, the idea that events and characters in Russian novels and plays represent forces in Russian life often invisible or misunderstood to Russian historians, let alone literary theorists. "Uncle's Dream," written in 1859, almost completely unread today, is an excellent example of this.

Russian literature in the Imperial (or Petrine) period cannot be approached from the standpoint of a literary theorist divorced from historical and religious reality. At the very least, the reign of Peter I and Catherine II are the most significant, representing a break between two ideas of Russia. The old is Orthodox and decentralized while the new was secular and highly regulated. Dostoevsky, just to name one, is a major figure in dealing with this schism, and in figures of "The Prince," whether in *The Idiot* or in the present work, is dealing with the identity of Old Russia.

This novel, one of the shorter of the Dostoevsky corpus (about 130 pages), takes place in a small provincial town called Mordasov. Like so much of Russian literature, it sets up a schism within a schism: the nature of modernity in parts of Russia that have the most difficult time in absorbing it: small, provincial towns. These take modernism as a means to gain a plastic prestige without the slightest idea of its philosophic content. This is a major device for Gogol, and can either be the source for pathos or hilarity, or both. In this novel, it is the former.

Mordasov has within it what might be called a mini-salon, an imitation of the Petersburg salons (which are themselves imitations of the French), but provincial, thus imitative and much smaller in scope and influence. Its leading lady, and the main character of this novel, is the overbearing and plastic Marya Moskalev. She is a wonderful embodiment of the average woman living in suburban America: vain, arrogant and manipulative. All of this, of course, is done under some syrupy verbiage of "love" or "devotion."

She is a deceiver and liar, but becomes a creature of pathos due to her lack of power. This town, being small, takes the many vices of Petersburg (as the archetypal European capital), without actually matting. In other words, in Petersburg, the salon ladies, superficial and phony, do actually have some indirect influence over public affairs. In Mordasov, however, they have none, and thus, the manipulation of Marya is done for its own sake.

Marya has a daughter, Zina, who is very beautiful, but confused and headstrong. She wants to be honorable in her dealings with men but has no domestic examples. She sees herself as too good for the locals, an attitude that clearly comes from the mother. Remember, Peter the Great released women from the *terem*, or the Asiatic means of segregating women from male company, largely to protect them from predators in the age of Mongol devastation. The *terem* is the Russo-Mongol version of the *harim*. Much like modern feminism, this "liberation" was male-directed and simply brought the vices of the *terem* into public life, leading to the disgusting

spectacle of the salon, where ill-digested liberalism took the place of mindless gossip.

This is the root of her confusion. At some level, she knows her life is meaningless. Her father is the typical Dostoevsky petty bureaucrat, another creation of Peter. His name is Afanasy, and has received his position solely based on connections and malleability. He is absolutely clueless, irrelevant and dominated by Marya. This is the irrelevant leading the absurd, and both are creations of Petrine modernism.

Zina is being pursued by many men, with the most significant being an impulsive and half-sympathetic Pavel Mozglyakov, who uses every conceivable rhetorical technique to attract her. She responds in good modern fashion, using her beauty as power. She strings him along as a means of controlling him.

Now, Pavel Mozglyakov is distantly related to a scion of the old gentry, the old boyar class, and a typical character in Dostoevsky. Here, he is normally referred to as "The Prince." He has a small fortune and some land, but, like almost all the characters in the novel, is clueless about the world. In fact, his cluelessness is the funniest part of this story. The Prince, however, represents Old Russia, one permanently altered by Peter but preserved in the Old Ritual.

Regardless of the hilarious confusion, the prince is a sympathetic character. He has the old manners of old Russia, but his age has shown itself rather badly. He's become ill, has difficulty walking and has a glass eye. His facial hair is artificial, as is his hair. He is amiable, but apparently, only out of stupidity. He is old Russia to Dostoevsky: dignified and intelligent, but outwardly ignorant, fake and confused. It is this old Russia that failed to diffuse Peter's reforms, but found a place within them and superficially adopted their outward forms (hence the fake hair and the glass eye).

What's worse, his confusion seems to stem from this class being out of its depth in the modern world, representing the superior virtues of Old Russia, but, in the modern context, appears ignorant in spite of himself. Apparently, though there is little said of this, Zina had once been in love with a starving poet named Vasya, but Marya, seeing his lack of funds, sought to derail the relationship. It is Vasya's death scene near the end of the novel that's the heart of the narrative.

The plot of the novel is as follows: The Prince comes into town, which, in the provinces, creates a large stir among the society ladies. Marya, as always the first fiddle, seeks to monopolize his attention. Pavel Mosgliakov is a distant relative of the Prince and his travelling companion. He falls for Zina. Marya is exasperated at his continuing proposals to Zina and decides to arrange a marriage between Zina and the broken down, but wealthy, Prince. Soon, the Prince will die and Zina will be the inheritor of substantial wealth. This wealth can then be used to attract a suitor more physically desirable, and its hoped, will lead Zina to become a part of Petersburg society, the only real goal that Marya has. The novel hinges on this dynamic. Zina's beauty, in short, is the only means Marya has to escape Mordasov and become one of those "important" Petersburg ladies.

The Prince is invited to Marya's house and is given plenty to drink. Zina is then asked to play a song on the piano, a song designed to evoke the passions necessary to induce the Prince to propose. In a swoon, he does so. In the meantime, Marya has convinced Zina to go along with the plan, though over some substantial protestations of her daughter, who recoils at the prospect of marriage to a man much older than herself, and one that is literally falling apart physically. Marya provides a brilliant performance of her manipulative skills in convincing Zina of the morality in such an act.

Unconvinced but oddly cowed, Zina goes along with the absurdity. Unsurprisingly, Pavel

hears about this by spying through a keyhole in a door and is predictably outraged. He realizes that Marya has concocted this for herself, for her own advancement. She will also be throwing a large ball so that the entire town can hear this announcement. Pavel's plan is then, to convince the Prince that it was only a dream (hence the title), which, given the perpetually muddled state of the Prince, takes minimal effort to accomplish.

The punch line to the entire affair is the spectacle made of Marya by both the unwitting Prince and the disgusted Pavel. Marya throws the largest banquet she can muster, making certain that all the society ladies in town show, as they all do. Marya is waiting for the prime moment when the announcement can be made, but, alas, the Prince is "quite certain" the entire affair was a dream. A mortified Marya does whatever possible to salvage this event, but the Prince remains adamant in his denial. Flustered and humiliated, Marya throws a fit, calling the Prince an "imbecile" and the entire affair ends in her massive humiliation. He dies soon after.

Briefly after that, the poet, Vasya, dies a horrid death from consumption, and Zina is by his side every minute, clearly showing the love she has for this penniless, but clearly brilliant and creative, literary mind. This scene is a strange interlude, but, in the context of the novel, makes Dostoevsky's point brilliantly. Here, Dostoevsky is making an argument for the rule of organic love over personal self-interest, while Marya has been its antithesis. For her, there is no love, only gain and personal rank. In the death of Vasya, the set of symbols personified by the characters become clear: the novel is a dialectic, a method well familiar to Dostoevsky.

The thesis of this dialectic is the Prince who is old Russia. He represents simplicity and grace, but also shows the signs of old age, obsolescence, senility in a pathetic rather than a comic manner. He is the only one to refer to the Old Russian religion, as he is going to spend some time with Father Michael at a nearby monastery. In a telling and comic line in the story, the Prince proudly tells a local gathering at Marya's house that he is going to go abroad to soak in the "new ideas" of western Europe, just after he returns from the monastery with Fr. Michael. Of course, those two ideas are opposites, and the Prince has not the foggiest idea that they are, having no concept whatsoever what the "new ideas" are, only that the elites speak that way, and therefore, he must as well.

Old Russia is to be found throughout Dostoevsky's corpus, and, as in Prince Mishkin in *The Idiot*, shows a simple yet perpetually confused and manipulated character. Old Russia for Dostoevsky seems to be a time of grace and simplicity, but one that cannot return to Russian soil due to the antithesis, Marya, or socially speaking, the reforms of the westernizing monarch, Peter I. The Prince is only in such a state because of the present social life, not due to any faults of his own.

Peter the Great created modern Russia, at least in outline. Peter created a new bureaucracy in response to the militarization of Prussian society under Frederick William. He created a bureaucracy staffed largely by foreigners. He created the woman symbolized by Marya, the creature of "liberation," or the alienated, sullen manipulator whose entire life revolves around getting the better of her foes, either real or imagined. She is the archetypal liberated woman, whether American or Russian. She is liberated from family, community and religion, and liberated into the fallen world of power politics, arrogance, aggression and abortion.

Marya is feminism; she is the creation of modernity. She is living death, where the most crude manifestations of power are the only reality and are systematically confused with strength and virtue. Marya, or the modern woman, uses the ancient concepts of "chivalry" and old civility for her own uses in a manner little different from the modern American woman, who, while throwing away the baggage of old femininity, still uses old concepts of chivalry so as to better

manipulate the men around her. Modern feminism has guttered out.

According to the online medical journal Health 24, 1 out of every 3 doctor visits made by an American woman concerns her mental instability. 1 out of every 10 women is taking some form of anti-depressant (SSRIs), while more are on stronger medications, or illegal drugs. When these are factored in, the ratio is closer to 1 out of 4.

She will insist, unlike her male counterparts, that she be immune from physical violence, while using that ancient shield of chivalry to get away with the most vicious of tirades directed against the men in her life. Men of course, are still quite subject to slaps, punches and, more seriously, potentially debilitating hits to the groin, popularized and pushed by modern American media.

She will shield herself as being the “weaker sex” in an argument, but will insist on her equality, if not superiority, to the male principle while looking for work. She will claim to be the “weaker sex” (and thereby be in need of state protection) when her boss treats her poorly, but claim to be identical to a man in any context where her power and income are augmented. Modernity recognizes nothing but raw, Machiavellian power, and thus, “liberation” is little more than a code-word for the ability to use femininity: looks, suggestive phrases, dress and her protected status to manipulate the men around her.

Marya is the antithesis of Old Russia because she uses the illusion of virtue to promote her own demented agenda, an agenda understood as demented by Zina. Therefore, she is even lower than merely an antithesis in that she is represented as not even human, but a mere machine that uses her environment and social status to augment her standing. Dostoevsky makes her environment an inconsequential provincial town to underscore the absurdity of such standing.

The most interesting aspect of the novel, however, is the rather loose set of characters and symbols that might be brought under the heading of “synthesis.” They are four: Pavel, Vasya, Zina and Marya’s husband, Afanasy. They represent the struggle between Old and New, or Petrine Russia, and the various social responses to this awful battle.

Zina represents one such reaction, and that is confusion. Her reactions to her mother’s manipulation takes the form of loud and tearful tirades, but she is ignorant as to where this confusion comes from. In some vague sense, her final conversation with Vasya adds that necessary content to her inchoate confusion and anger.

Vasya depicts himself at his death scene as an evil man, one who, out of his foolish love for Zina, would have had her marry him, and thus to live in poverty. Vasya is a romantic (in the true sense of the word), one unconcerned with money but with poetry, feeling and love. He might well represent the first wave of Slavophiles enraptured with Schelling, or the creation of a romantic utopia in opposition to Peter and westernism. Therefore, it dies, in all its beauty, glory and sensibility, in an irrelevant provincial town, having and wanting nothing to do with Petersburg and its false glory.

Afanasy might be flattered to be called an empty shell, a uniform without ability, a human form without intellect. He is weak in a way that only Russian writer could represent. He's everything that is absurd about the Petersburg elite while being even less relevant. He is Goladykin from “The Double” combined with Akakii from Gogol’s “The Nose.” He's the ultimate bureaucrat, for he exists only to receive orders. He's also the creature of modern feminism in that he is purely a tool of Marya; he is a Beta, the sort of man no woman can respect. At the end of the story, Zina and Marya have moved to Siberia and take up with the local elite there. Afanasy is no where to be found: he evidently had been ditched somewhere and few seem to notice, the common lot of such men. Again, this is a comic mockery of liberation. The

question is never asked in modern, staged, political discourse: What is liberation? Liberation into what, exactly? Sexual liberation benefited only the immoral, the impulsive and the attractive.

Westernism sought to “liberate” the state from the old princely families in the name of “merit.” Of course, the practice has nothing to do with the theory, and what it actually created is a bureaucracy of Beta males, trained solely to be the hands and feet of the Petrine agenda. The old princely families, contrary to official myth, were the repositories of civility, religion and elite bulwarks against the west. While often greedy and manipulative, it was they who staffed government offices before Peter. Afanasy-types staffed them after, in the name of merit and “liberation.” Marya is the new order and Afanasy the “new man,” serving only to take orders for the benefit of the few.

Pavel is the last and least significant of the responses to Peter laid out in this novel. While Zina retains, in an unconscious manner, the ways of Old Russia (and, as such becomes Dostoevsky's heroine), Afanasy and his wife represent the full conclusion to westernism and modern liberalism, Vasya represents German idealism in some vague way, Pavel seems to represent a man without identity, but an identity-less existence that is continually reaching out for some form of fulfillment, the content of which Pavel confuses for love, or what he thinks is love, specifically, Zina's hand.

He seems to have no further purpose, but is nowhere near the sick manipulator of Marya's type. Perhaps he might be Afanasy before the westernizing ideology of the Petrine bureaucracy warped him. He seems to find something alluring in Zina apart from her looks, though this remains vague and undefined. Zina contains a vague heroism, vague precisely in that this is the post-Petrine and post-Crimean era. Among the archetypes of the attractive man, Vasya is the lover, while the Prince is what's left of the “king.” Without the “king,” no other male archetypes can form.

The disaster of the Crimea merely gave false ammunition to the westernizing faction in Russian life, claiming that Peter had not gone far enough in his reforms. Pavel is a blank slate, and, depending on Zina, his destiny is indefinite. He is the young generation of the 1850s. Caught between two worlds, and may not even have the mental apparatus to make a decision. Zina's salvation can only come from a decisive break with her mother—a break which never happens as they move to Siberia and marry into wealth and power there, showing a grave pessimism in Dostoevsky. Could there be salvation in marriage to the Prince? This idea, as grotesque as it is on the physical plane, might have deeper significance in “wedding” the youth of Dostoevsky's day to representatives of Old Russia. It might be precisely that that saves the Prince, as much as the other way around.

Uncle's Dream is too powerful a work to make any impression on modern, American literary theorists and “Russia specialists,” and thus remains unread. It is a condemnation of Peter and westernization (the latter more specifically), and represents that mentality in Marya, her husband, and to a lesser extent, Pavel.

He represents the young generation as insecure, unhealthy, but possessed of an unspoiled soul slowly being degraded by the older generation. It remains pessimistic, in that the Prince remains an idiot and Zina goes the way of her mother. Pavel has taken a post in the service, and is sent to Siberia on a surveying mission (there is where he, years later, meets up with Zina, and her fate is known—she has become her mother.) Dostoevsky's conclusion then, it seems, is that westernism and liberalism have corroded society too far to be saved. Doom is not too far ahead.

Conclusion

It's been my contention that western writers can't understand Russian literature due to their secularism, nominalism and ignorance of royalist political thought. They can't interpret men they hate. Pretentious writers like Eva Thompson from Rice University will even go so far as to defend this imposition of western liberalism onto any text it studies. Her article, "Reflections on Some Errors of Western Scholarship on the Brothers Karamazov" is the pot talking to the kettle. The article is an attack on Ellis Sandoz work on the Grand Inquisitor. Since she knows little about Orthodox theology, she reacts vehemently when someone approaches the subject in a sympathetic way, especially someone with a reputation in academia.

She cannot comprehend Dostoevsky's attack on Catholicism and even claims she was unaware "of any Catholic writer of fiction who has ever tried to discredit Orthodoxy at its core by suggesting total corruption of its doctrine and practice." This shows how sheltered she is. She then claims that Dostoevsky's "friendship" with Konstantin Pobedonostsev was suspect because the latter "had a low opinion of the Russian people," showing she's likely never read him. Dostoevsky wanted to "obscure the indescribably destructive role Russia played in inhibiting normalcy in societies in Europe and Asia." The comment is left vague, but she must mean the rejection of British-inspired revolutions elsewhere.

She chides Dostoevsky for falling for the "fiction that Russia is the Third Rome" and opines that he lashes out at the church of Rome for challenging those claims. Yet, nowhere in her corpus does she show any knowledge about that doctrine or the faith itself, not to mention the historical context within which this was developed. All she knows is that there's no one to challenge academic liberalism, so she can do as she pleases.

She also claims "thousands" of Uniats were executed for "refusing to convert to Orthodoxy," which is certainly news to me. She's unaware of where the Uniat movement came from and how it was imposed. This typically female university professor is apparently ignorant of the countless attacks of Catholic Poland on Russia or the crusade launched by the Teutonic Knights, among many other things. Her ignorance of Russian history makes her see Dostoevsky's anti-Catholicism as irrational rather than as the result of centuries of violence. Unfortunately, the typical professor of history would do no better.

Thompson represents the worst in American scholarship. She cannot grasp any non-liberal approach to anything and defends it, saying that "reason" will dissolve all theological systems. Apparently it cannot dissolve bad history and pretentious condescension. She proves the brittle arrogance of an academic class that cannot mentally handle that these geniuses would loathe her knee-jerk liberalism, the result of monopoly capitalism and Postmodern moral rot that she enforces at Rice University. So while extolling their literary virtues, somehow they can separate that from everything else they held.

She looks at Russian history as a hostile outsider and still claims to be an interpreter of these texts. She's merely ignorant and, without anyone to challenge her, begins to believe that these views are serviceable. Liberalism certainly seems inevitable and without peer when no one else is permitted to invade her safe space.

Thompson is just one extreme example of this pretended "expertise" being no more than alienated liberalism imposing itself on a culture she finds frightening due to its rejection of liberalism (and her livelihood, indirectly). To actually defend the distortion of western interpretation is a new low. Her thesis amounts to the claim that, since we all know Orthodoxy is false and her national claims are fiction, so, without anyone to challenge me, I can say that Russian history is irrelevant. Like another infamous woman once said to me, "I don't need facts."