



DEMONS AS A MARK OF DOSTOEVSKY'S RELIGIOUS IDEA PORTRAYED THROUGH THE PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA OF KIRILLOV AND SHATOV

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DOI- 10.5281/zenodo.7069923

Abstract:

Kirillov and Shatov, the two characters in Dostoevsky's novel Demons, demonstrate a polar disparity in the need for and significance of God. In the novel, Kirillov takes on the role of Christ. He intends to commit suicide in order to liberate the other members of the gang from their misdeeds. He also takes on the persona of Christ in that he wants to die in order for all humans to be free, to realize their God-like nature. Shatov wants to believe in God, but he doesn't believe he can. He holds the concept of God in high regard and believes that religion is fundamental to Russian identity. Kirillov and Shatov are both firm believers; the former has faith but does not believe in God, while the latter believes in God but does not have faith. One of the big unresolved issues in Dostoevsky's Demons is the enigma of the appearance of a new being, a big mystery and an inexpressible one, as Shatov describes the birth of his wife's child. Maria Shatova, a free-spirited former governess, gives birth to a baby boy just hours before her husband is assassinated by a secret gang. Shatov's murder and Kirillov's suicide cause the new mother's serious illness and, as a result, the infant's death within three days of birth. This nameless newborn is legally Shatov's son but biologically Stavrogin's, symbolize one of several seemingly unfinished subplots within Demons. These characters typically have strong, extreme beliefs and questions about religious claims, which, of course, are never answered. Their sheer nature makes them unanswerable — understanding of what comes beyond death or of God's plans for the world is beyond the reach of mortals. Why would you create a child with such a complicated history only to kill him? Why is it necessary to turn a universal symbol of hope into a mundane tragedy? The present paper focuses on the analogy between psychological sufferings of Kirillov and Shatov for a religious idea in Dostoevsky's Demons.

Keywords: God, faith, psychological sufferings, Mystery, Murder, Suicide and Child birth.

I Introduction

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky was a renowned Russian novelist, short story writer, essayist, and journalist. Dostoevsky's literary works address the human condition in the turbulent political, social, and spiritual atmospheres of 19th-century Russia, engaging with a wide range of philosophical and religious subjects.

Crime and Punishment (1866), The Idiot (1869), Demons (1872), and The Brothers Karamazov were among his most acclaimed writings (1880). Dostoevsky was born in Moscow on November 11, 1821, parents were Dr. Mikhail Dostoevsky and Maria Dostoevskaya. Dostoevsky's paternal ancestors were Russian Orthodox Christians from a noble family. Danilo

Irtishch was granted estates in the Pinsk region in 1509 in exchange for his services under a local prince, and his descendants were given the name "Dostoevsky" after a settlement nearby called Dostoevo. Dostoevsky was exposed to literature from a young age. His nanny, Alena Frolovna, read him heroic sagas, fairy tales, and legends from the age of three, a notably influential character in his upbringing and enthusiasm for imaginary stories. His books impacted a large number of later writers, including Russians such as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Anton Chekhov, philosophers Friedrich Nietzsche and Jean-Paul Sartre, and the rise of Existentialism and Freudianism. His writings have been translated into over 170 languages and have been the inspiration for numerous films.

II Dostoevsky's *Demons*

Demons reflect Dostoyevsky's belief that revolutionaries held Russia's soul and that, unless exorcised by a renewed faith in Orthodox Christianity and pure nationalism, they might drag his country over the cliff. It has become a classic of Russian literature due to its incisive study of human wickedness.

Demons is partly inspired on the 1869 assassination of Ivan Ivanov by members of the "People's Vengeance." The Book of Revelation played a part in it. Sergei Nechayev and Timofey Granovsky are the inspirations for the supporting characters Pyotr and Stepan Verkhovensky. The story takes place mostly on the estates of Stepan Verkhovensky and Varvara Stavrogina in a regional Russian environment. Pyotr, Stepan's son, is a budding revolutionary conspirator who tries to assemble a group of revolutionaries in the neighbourhood. He sees Varvara's son Nikolai as vital to his strategy because he believes Nikolai lacks sympathy for humanity. Pyotr assembles a group of conspirators, including the philosophising Shigalyov, the suicidal Kirillov, and the former

military officer Virginsky. He plots to strengthen their allegiance to him and each other by assassinating Ivan Shatov, a fellow conspirator. Pyotr intends to have Kirillov, who is planning to commit suicide, take credit for the murder in his suicide note. Kirillov agrees, and Pyotr murders Shatov, but his plan fails. Pyotr manages to flee, but the rest of his wannabe revolutionary gang is apprehended. Nikolai kills himself in the epilogue, pained by his own actions.

III Religious Idea in Dostoevsky's *Demons*

It's worth noting that Socialist and Marxist philosophies never addressed psychological trauma, while Russian Orthodoxy only did so sparsely. Although there has been much written about Dostoevsky's ability to convey the human conscious and his preciseness in presenting various mental disorders, there has not been as much popular discussion about the individuals in his works who suffer for a religious idea. These characters typically have strong, extreme beliefs and questions about religious claims, which, of course, are never answered. Their sheer nature makes them unanswerable — understanding of what comes beyond death or of God's plans for the world is beyond the reach of mortals.

Individuals, particularly youngsters, who suffer at the hands of others surely touch the reader's heartstrings; cerebral suffering, on the other hand, engage the reader's sympathies in a different way. We can be positive for those who suffer at the hands of others: they may conquer or escape their tormentor, and there may be hope for their future. The characters who suffer from a religious idea, on the other hand, never find relief from their ailment; they are plagued day and night by their incapacity to solve or resolve their problem. The various characters that suffer from other sorts of anguish reach varying resolutions to their

traumas: while some do not achieve recompense or an end to their anguish, others do find solution or a sense of tranquility.

Those who suffer from religious psychological agony, on the other hand, never find relief; they either go insane or seek suicide. These characters claim that mental suffering is the most pitiable form of agony, and that those who suffer for a great radical religious thought go through an anguish that cannot be alleviated on this planet. Perhaps the utter lack of Socialist doctrine's appraisal of this kind of anguish, as well as Orthodox doctrine's failure to thoroughly analyse this kind of suffering, explains why Dostoevsky partially accepted the latter but could never fully embrace the former. Nilych, Lexei Engineer by profession, Kirillov. He is an outright nihilist who thinks his own desire is the only true reality. Pyotr Stepanovich plans to kill himself and use the publicity that will follow to achieve his revolutionary objectives. His obsession with the idea that a person may only stop living in fear of death when he or she rejects that fear to the point of voluntarily taking one's own life has brought him to the position of "thoroughgoing crazy," as described by one critic. Kirillov believes that the true God is a man who is capable of performing such feats. Al Alvarez proposes this theory about Kirillov in his study of suicide, *The Savage God*:

"Thus Kirillov... But secretly he kills himself because he knows he is not God. Had his ambitions been less, perhaps he would only have attempted the deed or mutilated himself. He conceived of his mortality as a kind of lapse, an error which offended him beyond bearing. So, in the end he pulled the trigger in order to shed this mortality like a tatty suit of clothes, but without taking into account that the clothes were, in fact, his own warm body." (123–24)

Kirillov suffers from a debilitating religious idea that has him fixated on the character of God. Suicide, he argues, is the only genuine act of self-will that will help him achieve his objective of becoming God, as God is defined by his capacity for acting solely out of self-will. He is driven insane because there is no other way to confirm or disprove his thesis than to end one's life. "I can't think about anything else, my whole life I've thought about one thing," he says to the narrator when explaining his designs. God has plagued me my entire life." (70)

He commits suicide in the end.

Kirillov believes that as long as he kills himself for the proper reasons, he would be happy, so his plan to commit suicide is founded on a straightforward, albeit inflexible, logic. If he is executed for the proper reasons, his demise will stand in for humanity's ability to atone for its sins.

Ivan Pavlovich Shatov is the son of deceased valet, Varvara. She took him and his sister Darya Pavlovna under her protection as children, and they were tutored by Stepan Trofimovich. Shatov was expelled from university for his communist beliefs after an incident. He worked as a tutor for a merchant's family overseas, but his position ended when he married the family's governess, who had been fired for 'freethinking.' They split up practically immediately since they didn't have any money and didn't recognise the connections of marriage. He went through Europe on his own before returning to Russia. By the time the novel's events take place, Shatov has entirely abandoned his previous beliefs and has become a zealous protector of Russia's Christian past.

Shatov's reformed beliefs are similar to those of Dostoevsky's favourite modern philosophy, Pochvennichestvo. Pochvennichestvo, like the broader Slavophile movement, emphasised the value of Slavic

traditions in Russia, as opposed to cultural influences from Western Europe, and emphasised the Russian Orthodox Church's distinctive purpose. Shatov goes even further, calling the mission "universal" rather than "Russian." Shatov is awkward, gloomy, and quiet most of the time, but when his convictions are affronted, he gets emotional and outspoken. He has a heated discussion with Stavrogin about God, Russia, and morals in the chapter 'Night.' Shatov idolised Stavrogin as a young man, but now that he has seen through him and deduced the mystery of his marriage, he wants to demolish the idol in a scathing critique. Stavrogin, though affected, is not withering, and responds by pointing out Shatov's own faith's insufficiency, which Shatov himself acknowledges. Shatov and Pyotr Verkhovensky have a mutual loathing for each other. Verkhovensky comes up with the notion of having the group assassinate him as a traitor to the cause, thus tying them together through bloodshed.

These men are tragic, not because they are vulnerable or because they suffer in a horrible or obvious manner, as the characters who suffer physically do. They have an impact because they give well-thought-out counter-arguments against God, whether they are about the world he created, his plan for each individual, or his metaphysical nature. These religious conceptions are perplexing since they can't be explained in the physical, spatial, and temporal realms. These characters' psyches break down as a result of their obsession with their different concepts and inability to reconcile them. It is apparent that they find no answers in religion, and an economic revolution would not have alleviated their concerns. God never responds to their allegations against him; therefore, their agony is eternal and cannot conclude in a happy ending. As a result, they are the most miserable,

forlorn persons, deprived of the prospect of a bright future and tortured by a mental anguish that cannot be remedied on Earth.

III Conclusion

Dostoevsky could not disregard suffering, although accepting it as a metaphysical truth. He looked for solutions in his religion's teachings as well as his revolutionary associates' views. Neither of them, however, was able to satisfy his desire for an explanation. Russian Orthodoxy placed too much faith in each man's ability to use his free will to correctly reform himself, and relied too heavily on the mystery of hidden harmony. Socialism's doctrines improperly assigned the existence of misery to man's environment, and hence advocated society to change in order to eliminate that suffering. Furthermore, neither doctrine adequately handled Dostoevsky's most afflicted characters: psychological victims. Dostoevsky's philosophy on suffering, as expressed through the characters in his novels, was complex.

It was a social, temporal, emotional, and moral challenge that could not be resolved solely via faith or reason. He counselled men to turn to Christ as a paradigm for self-transfiguration, but he did not believe that they could do so. He advocated for unending love for one's fellow man on this planet, but he didn't necessarily believe that man could offer it. He exuded a spirit of unwavering optimism, balanced with firm, realistic expectations. His perplexing demeanour added to the enigma of pain. It is worth mentioning that Dostoevsky placed a great value on life, not just in spite of, but also in the midst of, suffering. The reality that man will suffer as a result of living his life is unavoidable, but Dostoevsky prioritised existence over misery. In the course of human history, pain will never be fully explained; it must only be suffered and analysed, but

it is a product of the gift of life. In this scenario, Dostoevsky's lesson is as follows: man must suffer in life, but man has life, and that is the most important thing.

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