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# The Problem of Access to a Writer's Philosophy and Theology: The Unavoidability of Philology. Apollon and the Mouse in F.M. Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*

Tat'iana Kasatkina

Let us first explain the word 'access' which may seem problematic here. The word 'access' now exists as a term in at least two fields. Above all, in the realm of computers, where it denotes access to some data, which is accomplished through a set of operations that must be executed by a human who wishes to obtain access to them. The term, however, is also present in hierarchical administrative language, which contains the expression 'level of access': at a certain level of access various documents are revealed to a person while they are closed to everyone else whose level of access is below the designated one; and this level of access is determined by *qualities the person has acquired/mastered* in the process of advancing during his career and that enable him to deal with this information, among other things, *in a safe manner for him*. When we use the term, both meanings are important, i.e. access as a series of operations that enables us to reach what a writer or poet is saying and access as the capacities/abilities, the professional qualities, that are acquired specifically in the process of a philologist's work and are absent at the level at which a modern philologist and theologian work with texts (of course, we are referring here only to professional orientations, rather than to personalities).

The above-mentioned nonaccess of a philosopher and theologian to a writer's philosophy and theology is closely related to what is now said about the possibility or impossibility of understanding and finding an author's position in a text. There is today a whole trend both in scholarship and in teaching that contends it is baseless in scholarly as well as in pedagogical terms to pose the question of what a writer was thinking and had in mind.

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This contention always seemed very odd to me until I discovered, to my amazement, that the phrase 'author's position' in this instance means an author's *explicit statement*, either in the text of a work or outside the text of a work, in texts of another kind, where the author explicitly and directly, in straightforward discourse, sets forth his own position. And it is in this sense of an author's position that the impossibility of answering the question 'What did the author mean?' (if there are no explicit authorial statements) or a reluctance to do so (if there do seem to be such statements but they do not at all cover, from the standpoint of the researcher/teacher, the 'objective meanings of the text,' and the researcher begins to fight the 'author's authoritarianism,' his right to an 'adequate' discursive formulation of his own thought, expressed in fictional form[1]) are directly related to the impossibility for the philosopher and the theologian of answering the question: 'What is the writer's philosophy/theology?'

## The philosophy and theology of a poet/writer are not the same as the philosophical and theological passages in his texts

This impossibility is based on the fact that the philosophy and theology of a writer/poet is a philosophy and theology that are set forth in a fundamentally different way. That is, they are never present in his texts in an explicit manner. And even if we find in the text something resembling explicit and detailed philosophical or theological reasoning, it is never reasoning on an authorial level, the author will always mean something more complex than any possible explicit statement.

Exactly the same thing applies to the author's position – it is not an explicit statement by the author in the text or regarding his text; the author's position is the aggregate 'expression' that is formed by the entire complexity of the text in the full variety of the interweaving of its elements. It is along these lines that both the writer's theology and philosophy exist in the text.

A philosopher who was an opponent of mine once said that I reject ':the philosophical component' of Dostoevsky's works. I responded this way: of course I believe that Dostoevsky is the best Russian philosopher and theologian. But I reject the possibility of singling out from his works a discursive 'philosophical component' and arguing that that is Dostoevsky's philosophy. Dostoevsky's philosophy is not a 'component' of his texts – it is their basis and artistic result and is fully contained only in the whole of a work, becoming clear only in the whole of the body of his writings.

I believe that in order for Dostoevsky's theology and philosophy to be understood in an ideal artistic form, they must be analyzed by philological methods, since they are contained not in discourse, not in 'explicit words,' but in the images created by words or in a complex system of verbal mediations. In other words – if we focus on uttered words – we will speak not with Dostoevsky

but, at best, with his heroes. That is, Dostoevsky's philosophy is not drawn from his texts by means of simple quotation but is accessible only to analysis and interpretation. In fact, Dostoevsky tried to make sure that what he said was easy to understand and verifiable.

After all, Dostoevsky – and here I will bring up once again his stunning statement that I have quoted many times and that boggles the minds of his contemporary interprets – defines the category of artistry as follows: 'What determines artistry in a work of art? It is whether we see congruence, complete if possible, between the artistic idea and the form in which it is embodied. We will say it even more plainly: artistry, at least in a novelist, is the ability to express in the *characters and images* of a novel his idea so clearly that after finishing the novel a reader *understands the writer's idea in absolutely the same way as the writer himself understood it when he created his work*' (18, 80).[2]

When philosophers have started studying Dostoevsky without a prior philological analysis of the text, they have not merely drawn incorrect inferences about Dostoevsky's philosophy – their inferences have been much more *trivial* than the conclusions to which Dostoevsky was leading his readers. The problem here is not just that some philosophers have tried to read the fictional discourse as strictly philosophical (or theological) without realizing that the author's reasoning runs along a different track than the heroes' reasoning, stated directly in the text – which, of course, is methodologically completely impermissible. The other problem is that the very language and basic concepts used by Dostoevsky were tacitly understood in a trivial way. The tacitness here was natural – an artist, unlike a philosopher, does not define his basic terms in a way that is obvious to everyone. The Latin word *trivium* means 'an intersection of three roads,' and its etymology is important to us here: the words of *Dostoevsky's language*, his *personal* concepts have been understood in different ways, have been defined at the confluence of *other people's* understandings, and only a 'generally accepted' basic meaning has been discerned in them – or a meaning invested in the concept by the philosopher to whom Dostoevsky at a given moment was being compared.

## A few words about Dostoevsky's theology

Besides the attempt to assume that Dostoevsky's theology is the same as the theology of his 'positive character' (the elder Zosima, for example), a typical error of interpretation even of the character's theology is to consider only the character's direct words, without the underpinnings of his judgments that he assumes are basic and hence does not utter.

In general, it should be noted that inattention to the original, basic parameters that Dostoevsky embeds in a certain text gives rise to the

majority of errors of interpretation. One such error is a reading of *The Brothers Karamazov*, especially in the section on 'conversations and exhortations of Father Zosima,' as a 'Pelagian' text, i.e. a text in which Dostoevsky has a person save himself seemingly 'by himself,' through his own efforts, rather than by divine action.[3]

Yet all of Father Zosima's judgments have as their origin, their starting point, an event that *already* took place two millennia ago: God interrupted the disunity between Himself and man by taking His step (Dostoevsky visually and almost importunately presents these original parameters of the text in two chapters of the novel: 'Cana of Galilee' and 'The Grand Inquisitor.') This is a *presumption* about Zosima's judgments, as a result of which he is speaking in his exhortations, of course, not about what *has already been done* but about what *is yet* to be done – about a *reciprocal* step by man, which has been left entirely to his will since God is the guarantor of his freedom. If we lose sight of the fact that the step by man that Zosima is persistently referring to is a *reciprocal* and *responsive* one, his teaching could well seem Pelagian to us. Moreover, the proposed reciprocal step by man in practice turns out to be simply a *change in vision*, an acquisition by man of an ability to *see* the step that has God has already taken to meet him halfway. It is at the moment of this change in vision that the state of paradise on earth manifests itself, that the transfiguration bestowed on man and the world is discovered according to Father Zosima.

But in order to see this, one must approach Dostoevsky's text without a set of philosophical theories or theological doctrines, without a measuring device in the form of knowledge one already has, against which one can only *compare* and *contrast* while involuntarily fitting to it whatever the writer does in his text. One must approach a text with the flexible tools of philological analysis that make it possible to see what is said specifically here – and possibly nowhere else.

Dostoevsky theologizes without reproducing in his text something that has been previously said; he theologizes with images, and I will now try to show how he does this.

Evangelical and Old Testament quotations and allusions, charactonyms, and other references to Biblical text and Christian history play an important role in the structure of Dostoevsky's texts. This seems to be recognized unreservedly by everyone. The problems begin when one must determine precisely *what* role they play. To put it succinctly, my thesis comes down to the following: Dostoevsky not only uses Biblical text to create and display the meanings of his own fictional text – he also simultaneously uses his text for an exegesis of Biblical text. The former is the act specifically of a writer, while the latter is the act of a theologian. Elena Novikova has written that the linkage, the alignment in Dostoevsky's authorial text of Biblical quotations that are far removed from each other in the original text is a method

of exegetical interpretation of the Bible by Dostoevsky.[4] What I want to express, however, is not at all reducible to this assertion. In my view, Dostoevsky, by 'linking up' his text with Biblical text or Christian history with a quotation or allusion, goes on in the actual 'body' of the fictional text, in his narrative and structure, to uncover surprising meanings of the source and to tell us something not only about a character but also about the participant in the history of the incarnation of God who is compared to him. In other words, he first uses an allusion to lend additional meanings to the text into which he introduces the allusion, and then to convey to us some additional meanings about the text to which the allusion refers. This is precisely why it is absolutely senseless to try to apply to Dostoevsky's works theology that is already known to us, as occurs with the majority of attempts to read them theologically. Dostoevsky's text makes it easy to perform this operation (as a rule, it is easiest to do by deviating into moralism – and every such attempt is invariably marked by moralism, by the researcher's judgment of the heroes) – and we, satisfied by the confirmation of a thesis familiar to us, now will never see what it is Dostoevsky is saying here.

I will try to show how Dostoevsky theologizes with the aid of a hero's *name*, because later in this article we will see how he philosophizes with the aid of a hero's name.

The story 'The Peasant Marey' (a short text that is part of *A Writer's Diary* and is extremely important for an understanding both of Dostoevsky's theory of creativity and of his world view, about an encounter between a child scared to death and a serf named Marey, who gives the boy confidence that he is protected and instills the value of his existence in him) contains the following lines just before the end: ' … I remembered the *soft motherly smile* of the poor serf, the way he signed me with the cross and shook his head. "There, there, you have had a fright, little one!" And I remembered particularly the thick earth-stained finger with which he softly and with *timid tenderness* touched my quivering lips. Of course any one would have reassured a child, but something quite different seemed to have happened in that solitary meeting; and if I had been *his own son*, he could not have looked at me with eyes *shining with greater love*. And what made him like that? He was our serf and I was his little master, after all; no one would know that he had been kind to me and reward him for it. Was he, perhaps, very fond of little children? Some people are. It was a solitary meeting in a deserted field, and only God, perhaps, may have seen from above with what deep and humane enlightened feeling, and with what *delicate, almost feminine tenderness*, the heart of a *coarse, brutally ignorant* Russian serf, who had as yet no expectation, no inkling even of his freedom, may be filled' (22, 49).

These lines obviously show, deep down in the serf, the shining image of Mary[5]–the *beauty* of the image – but I have written about this elsewhere.[6] Here, meanwhile, given our current focus, it is of more interest for us to

understand not what the image of Mary provides for an understanding of the image of Marey but what the image of Marey provides for an understanding of Mary; how Dostoevsky, through a juxtaposition of these images, blows up our ossified, sugary notion of the Holy Mother.

Through the encounter between the *brutally ignorant* Russian peasant and his little master, through the humble and loving service of a lower but at the same time stronger person to a weak and powerless but at the same time higher-ranking person, Dostoevsky conveys the distance separating a person – Mary – from God and His Son. He makes us feel this unimaginable distance through one that is much easier for us to imagine and perceive. To feel an infinite distance, and all of the resolve and freedom of Mary, who made up her mind – and conceived a desire – to bridge that distance (or to disregard it (like Marey) in a burst of love and solicitude) and, with maternal tenderness, to accept as her 'own son' The One Who is more than a 'little master' to Her – Her God. And this selfless acceptance and tender maternal solicitude of Hers for the Supreme Being prove to be a path to freedom not only for Her but for all of mankind (just as Marey's enlightened tenderness proves for God (and Dostoevsky) to be evidence of the entire Russian people's readiness for freedom). And henceforth God sees Her deep in every human being, She Who responded to His call and solicitously took His infantile weakness until her wing. Just as Dostoevsky sees Marey deep in every convict.

The beauty of any human being for God is indestructible because He, God, was nursed and protected by the Holy Mother. 'And when I got down off the bunk and looked around me, I remember I suddenly felt that I could look at these unhappy creatures with quite different eyes, and that suddenly by some miracle all hatred and anger had vanished utterly from my heart. I walked about, looking into the faces that I met. That dishonored and intoxicated peasant with the shaven head, branded on his face as a criminal, bawling his hoarse, drunken song, may also be Marey; after all, I cannot look into his heart' (22, 49–50).

## Back to philosophy

So when a fictional text is offered to us as a philosophical statement, it is absolutely clear that we cannot derive the writer's philosophy from any of its discursive parts. The most that we can draw from it, from direct statements, is a character's philosophy.

Dostoevsky's mode of philosophizing is best illustrated in the text that has traditionally been 'considered his most important, if not only, strictly philosophical work'[7] – *Notes from Underground*. It is regarded as 'strictly philosophical' because of the supposed presence there in Part One of an 'explicitly philosophical' discourse, where the author, finally, seems to

construct judgments rather than images. These judgments, however, cannot be represented to any degree as being expounded by Dostoevsky; moreover, these judgments do not constitute even a coherent philosophy of the hero – and I will now try to show this.

One of the ways of seeing this clearly is to look at the problem of translations of *Notes from Underground* into European languages. *Notes from Underground* has been translated in such a manner and, therefore, all the conclusions about it have been drawn on the basis of a translation from which all of the latent quotations and allusions – primarily Biblical ones – that Dostoevsky built into the text and that the translators have not read and not identified have disappeared. This is an enormous layer of the text that ended up unseen in *Notes from Underground* – as a result of which *Notes…* was read as textual precursor of European existentialism,[8] since only the hero's philosophy was considered – and that in its most superficial layer.

For even the hero's philosophy, read in the presence of the internal references in the text, will be much more complex.

What did the translators do? They sought to preserve the discursive consistency of the text, but the semantic field of a word in one language does not at all coincide with the semantic field of its ostensible equivalent in another language. Their field of meanings overlap only in part. Therefore that which provided in Dostoevsky's original text a reference easily identifiable if the reader was the least bit familiar with the Holy Scriptures or liturgical text, the key words and triggers that actuated a link between the text being read and the text that should have resonated behind it and sprung up in the reader's mind and that were incorporated in this way into the body of Dostoevsky's text – they simply vanished, and together with them so did the text they connected to. A word would be translated with the retention of the meaning actualized in the linear discourse, while the part of the semantic field that made it a reference to, say, a Gospel text simply disappeared. At best, the translators would notice that the author used a word that was rare or stylistically colored, and sought to choose an equivalent according to those parameters, thereby straying even further from the meanings of the original text.

In perusing such a translation, we understand that many (including professional philosophers and theologians) who read the text in Russian fail in exactly the same way to identify these texts 'linked in' by the author (and if they identify them, they do not see the meaning in the linkage). That is, the triggers do not work for them, either. The only difference here is that Dostoevsky's text in Russian still retains these triggers, and readers at some point may begin to discern them – when there is a new change in the overall cultural field, a resumption in the reading of the Holy Scriptures and a presence at the liturgy, i.e. upon a resumption of the associative field that was presumed by the text. But most importantly, when there is a change in ideas about how a fictional text is to be read according to an author's intention. From the

translated text, however, the triggers have already vanished forever. And hence after the translators' work there was no longer any access for any reader to what Dostoevsky wanted to say.

The simplest way to illustrate the problem that arises here is with the issue of how translators handle names.

There is a convention today, unfortunately, of transliterating names without adapting them to the language into which the translation is done. Hence the reader of Dostoevsky in translation loses the sense and meaning of a name, which would be easily identified if the name were translated.

*Notes from Underground* contains a very important name: Apollon, which in Russian is a direct reference to the ancient Greek god [Apollo]. It was transliterated for the translations into European languages, as a result of which that linkage was lost. We should note again that the linkage was not firmly established for Russian-language readers, either, but for the latter it could always be revived. Let us take a look at what this name offers in the structure of the author's philosophy of we actualize its meaning. We will try to show how, via an analysis of the text, we can at last attain both the philosophy and the theology of the writer – and to what extent they are at odds with what we can draw from the direct discourse.

## Apollon and the mouse[9]

*Notes from Underground* has one extremely strange hero named Apollon, the Underground Man's servant, whose presence in the text from the standpoint of the narrative is virtually inexplicable. He has therefore not been considered by any of those who, in one way or another, have described the philosophy of 'Dostoevsky's only strictly philosophical text,' just as nearly the entire second part of the text has traditionally vanished from this description of the philosophy. It has even been argued that it is a hybrid text, a 'centaur,' and that it is completely incomprehensible why Part Two is attached to the philosophical Part One. As a result, it has been proposed that Part One be published specifically as a philosophical text.

This, however, is absolutely impossible, because separating the parts demolishes the entire premise that the author incorporated into *Notes from Underground*. In fact, Dostoevsky linked the two parts practically inextricably. The point is that *Notes from Underground* does not have a 'first' and 'second' part: it has two 'first' and two 'second' parts. The reason is that the part that is first in order is the second one in narrative time (it is what the Underground Man has to say sixteen years after the incident described in Part Two), and therefore the part that is second in order is the first one in narrative time. Another reason is that what is said sixteen years later can be acknowledged and stated only because a certain event was experienced sixteen years before the Underground Man took up

a pen. But he proves to be capable of recounting the event, and makes up his mind to do so, only as a result of all of the reflections and the formation of the judgments that he set out in Part One, sixteen years later. And Dostoevsky sets out this dependency and interconnection between the parts quite openly; each part is driven and substantiated by the other one many times over.

But the main reason this is impossible is that the main philosophical problem of *Notes from Underground* – what a person is like in his selfhood – is not merely not explored but is not even framed discretely in a manner that is understandable to the reader. (*Notes from Underground* begins with the framing and description of the problem: 'I am a sick man … I am a mean man. I am an unattractive man' (5, 99). These are words – in terms of the philosophical meanings of Dostoevsky's text – that are not at all the hero's words about himself but about the nature of a person in his selfhood, the nature of a person's selfhood. This, however, can be grasped only upon returning to Part One after reading Part Two.)

Moreover, there are words in *Notes from Underground* that are conceptually interconnected, where one word is found only in Part One and another is only in Part Two. And one of the most striking examples here is 'Apollon' and 'the mouse.'

In terms of the narrative, it is unclear what Apollon is doing in the text. The narrative of Part Two deals with the hero's meeting with a prostitute, and the reader's focus is on that meeting, while Apollon 'merely adds unnecessary barbarity,' as somebody like Mikhailovskii would say in such a case.[10] Yet in terms of the author's philosophy he is the most important figure of any in the text.

The very *name* 'Apollon' is extremely significant for the main problem that Dostoevsky made the basis of his work.

Here is what Dostoevsky writes in one of the very important essays in *A Writer's Diary*: 'Incidentally, you will recall what the ancient Christian Church was like and what it aspired to be. It came into being immediately after Christ, with only a few people, and in no time, virtually in the first few days after Christ, it began to seek its own "civic formula," which was entirely based on the moral hope of satisfying the spirit through the principles of self-improvement. The Christian communes were born – the Churches – then a new, previously unheard-of nationality began to be created – a universal fraternal, human one in the form of a common, ecumenical Church. But it was persecuted, the ideal was formed underground, while on top of it, above ground, an enormous edifice was also created, a massive *anthill*[11]–the ancient Roman Empire, which was also a kind of ideal and outlet of the moral aspirations of the entire ancient world: a man-god appeared, and the Empire itself was incarnated as a religious idea that in itself and through itself gave an outlet to all of the moral aspirations of the ancient world. But the anthill did not

fortify itself, it was undermined by the Church. *A collision took place between the two most opposite ideas that could possibly exist on earth*: the man-god met the God-man, the Apollo Belvedere met Christ … ' (26, 169).[12] This quotation clearly shows that we can by no means regard the name 'Apollon' in Dostoevsky as an accident.

For Dostoevsky, this name is a symbol of the collision between the State and the Church, which he understands as two ideals of organizing mankind on different bases. The state organizes mankind along the principles of division, 'a big building with apartments for poor tenants under a lease for a thousand years … ' (5, 120). Dostoevsky defines with astonishing precision the principle of the existence of the State in *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*: ' … a way to reunite people, so that each individual, while still loving himself above everyone else, does not interfere with anyone, and thus they are all able to live together in a harmonious society' (25, 117). The state is an accentuation of the self,[13] a partition between people, and simultaneously an anthill, the destruction of identities, the reduction of man to a function in the common existence. The Church is the restored unity of mankind, the triumph of identity rather than the self, it is the principle, realized already here on earth, under which, according to Dostoevsky, our existence for the future age is being organized: 'We will be individuals continuing to merge with everyone … ' (20, 174), it is a 'crystal building' (the crystal city of New Jerusalem), erected from the 'living stones' that completed their own creation in the image of Christ (1 Peter 2:5).

And Dostoevsky defines this momentous collision of the basic principles of human existence this way: Apollo met Christ. Apollo for Dostoevsky, therefore, is the pole at the greatest distance from Christ.

We should now note that Apollon, while he is superfluous in terms of the narrative, is nonetheless obtrusively and persistently present in *Notes* …, and the Underground Man refers to him almost more than to Liza, and in some strange way connects him with his own life. For example, he says: 'I could not live in furnished rooms. My apartment was *my private corner, my shell, my sheath*, where I could hide from all of mankind. And I'll be damned if I know why, but Apollon seemed to belong to the apartment, and for seven whole years I could not evict him' (5, 168). Apollon turns out to be inseparably connected to a *place of seclusion*.

Now let us take a look at who Apollon is. First, the Underground Man reports that Apollon's rudeness stretched his patience to its limit. 'He was my plague, a scourge visited upon me by Providence' (5, 167). Apollon's name derived from the verb 'to wound, to kill,' which is what is behind the Underground Man's remark when he calls his servant his 'plague.' But then we have 'a scourge visited upon me by Providence.' The word 'scourge' not only has the meaning of 'whip' but also included the idea of destruction, perishing, a total calamity. A scourge is a kind of force that completely destroys

everything. Apollo often performed this role, but in this context we are especially interested in Apollo Smintheus, the one with whom *The Iliad* begins. Smintheus derives from the word for 'mouse.' This Apollo was depicted (for example, by the ancient Greek sculptor Scopas) as standing on a mouse and trampling it. This Apollo was appealed to against mice during infestations. Apollo, however, was paradoxically associated with mice because he himself could summon them. Yet his main function, especially in the Classical Period, was to protect against mice.

Now let us look at what we are told about Apollon in the text.

We recall that Apollo is traditionally identified with the sun.[14] So, the Underground Man informs us that his Apollon 'was a pedant in the extreme and the most tremendous pedant I have ever met on earth' (5, 167). Take note of this highly bizarre description: the most *tremendous* pedant I have ever met on earth. What is a *pedant*? It is someone who scrupulously follows something. Who on earth could be called the most tremendous pedant if not the sun?! That is, the one who appears in precisely a certain place at precisely a certain time. The sun is the basis of all the clocks on earth. Hence Apollon in *Notes…* will be closely associated with clocks. He even lisps just the way all the clocks in *Notes …* hiss: 'But what I found especially repulsive was his lisp. His tongue was somewhat longer than it should have been [here, incidentally, is yet another reference to Apollo, who is a serpent fighter, and according to archaic notions was himself a serpent or dragon. – *T.K.*], or something like that, which made him constantly lisp and slobber, and I think he was inordinately proud of this, fancying that this gave him an extremely distinguished aura' (5, 168). Now recall how the Underground Man's clocks work: before beginning to chime they would always hiss.

So we have the sun, clocks, and a dragon. And in addition, 'a vanity that perhaps would have been proper only in Alexander the Great' (5, 167). This is also a direct reference for the reader to antiquity, but the key point is that Alexander the Great is indeed a character to whom no person – i.e. no hero of mankind – has ever been able to compare himself. The Underground Man will look at Apollon *à la Napoléon* (5, 171). And Napoleon saw Alexander the Great as a model for himself.[15] Thus here we have the likeness looking at the original.

And then: 'He was in love with every button of his, every fingernail – absolutely in love, and he looked it! He treated me quite despotically and spoke very little with me, and if he happened to look at me, it was with a stern, superciliously cocksure and continuously sneering expression that sometimes drove me mad. He performed his duties in a manner that suggested he was doing me the greatest of favors' (5, 167–168).

Incidentally, if we recall the gods about whom *The Iliad* mentions that they were slaves or servants of humans, one of the two was Apollo (the second was Poseidon). They erected the walls of Troy. That is, there

is already a precedent for Apollon as a servant. That is why the walls of Troy were almost impregnable – they were built by gods. They took as an assistant one mortal (Aeacus) *so that the walls would not be absolutely impregnable* and the humans could not avoid obeying the gods. There is an interesting parallel here to what we have already discussed about the structure of the self. The self is a casing (a stone wall, a fortress wall), and it turns out that what distinguishes humans from the 'earthly gods' is that the casing *is not impregnable*, that it is vulnerable. But it is only this vulnerability that guarantees that humans meet humans and that humans meet the true God.

There is, however, yet another very important meaning here. When Christ comes, He restores the real status of humans vis-à-vis the gods, which are the elements of the world. Humans regain power over them and stop worshipping them. But in the process of the historical movement from the coming of Christ to today we lose over and over again this kingly attribute that was returned to us, and we become slaves to our servants, we begin to worship and serve our bodies, our selves, the idols and the elements of the world. Hence we have a constant inversion of the hierarchy in the text: Apollon is the Underground Man's servant, but keeps dominating him at the same time.

'He performed his duties in a manner that suggested he was doing me the greatest of favors, yet he did almost nothing for me and did not even feel he was obliged to do anything. There was no question that he took me for the greatest fool on earth, and if he "kept me with him," it was only because he received a wage from me every month. He was willing to 'do nothing' for me for seven rubles a month' (5, 167–168). It turns out that it is not the Underground Man who keeps a servant but the servant who keeps *him*, the servant is essentially sponging off him. One might say that it is the character of our self sponging off our identity, which alone has access to the infinite source *all* (for Dostoevsky, this authorial philosophical concept combines the meaning of 'everyone' and 'everything'; *all* is the original (and potentially expected) state of God, the world, and mankind, from which the world and mankind initially emerge and then the 'splinters' of individual selves begin to split off ('Masha Is Lying on the Table…, ' 'Socialism and Christianity').

The question may came up as to whether this is a carnivalesque inversion (a question that arises from our habit of imposing a readymade explanation on a text and finding satisfaction in it). I do not think this is a carnivalesque inversion at all – and in general, the reference to 'carnivalesque' in this situation is a pseudo-explanation, which would simply not explain anything at all, but it creates the appearance of clarity, of being part of some theory – and hence of being an explanation – and as a result we stop searching for an explanation because we think we have found one.[16]

The essence of the character of Apollon the servant in Dostoevsky is a description of our status as a master that has been returned to us, through Christ's sacrifice, without any contribution on our part but that we are constantly losing and relinquishing by turning back into servants of the one over whom we have been made masters. The elements are relatives of our passions, Christ also gave us power over our passions, but we keep finding ourselves subjugated by them. A carnival here does not provide us anything for understanding what is happening, since this situation is not exceptional but an everyday one for us. We MUST be masters of that to which we find ourselves, as a result, slaves.

Then the Underground Man says: ' … at the time I could not get rid of him, it was as though he was *chemically* fused with my existence' (5, 168). So it turns out that Apollon is not something external to the Underground Man himself but something within him, some opposite principle that cannot be detached from him, at least until a certain moment ('chemically fused'), and it is then explained why, because right after this 'chemically fused' it says: 'Besides, he would never have agreed to leave me anyway. I couldn't live in furnished rooms: my apartment was my private corner, my shell, my sheath, where I could hide from all of mankind.' The Underground Man, as we see, is describing a condition of extreme isolation of the self, which only can be afforded, according to Dostoevsky, by the Apollinic principle, the principle of the state: 'And I'll be damned if I know why, but Apollon seemed to belong to the apartment, and for *seven* whole years I could not evict him' (5, 168).

Note that figure '7,' which is continually associated with Apollon: he serves the Underground Man for seven years, the Underground Man pays him seven rubles, etc. Seven is Apollo's number, and from the start of their worship of Apollo the Greeks began to celebrate the seventh day of every month, whereas they had been marking the end of the month. But the figure '9' also appears in connection with Apollon in Dostoevsky's text, and that is the second figure associated with Apollo in Greece.

Further, we have, on the one hand: 'Apollon is chemically fused with my existence,' and on the other, he 'belongs' to the Underground Man's apartment, and the apartment is 'my private corner, my shell, and my sheath,' that is, my external hard casing. If we recall the continuous dichotomy between Apollo and Dionysus, with which we are now most familiar from Nietzsche (but which existed, of course, long before him), we know that Apollo is the master of rigid, solid forms, the craftsman of wholeness, unlike Dionysus, the god of fragmentation (incidentally, our Apollon does work as a tailor, that is, he sews pieces into a whole). Therefore Apollon is one who designs the world into rigid, stable forms and simultaneously fuses it into a whole, he is a flame that destroys all that is unattached in the world. This effect of a god on the world, which at first glance seems contradictory, is no more contradictory than the effort of the state

simultaneously to divide everyone into separate individualities and to consolidate them into nonpersonalities. Dionysus is a process, an elusive condition, a continuous transition of one into another. Apollo, meanwhile, anchors the world, sets it in place, gives it stability. Dionysus watches from the depth of all the eyes in the world; Apollo makes all individuals his own organs, his own 'implants' – he creates an anthill.

It is interesting that the Underground Man is constantly trying to fight with his Apollon. And specific stages of this struggle are intriguing as well. He tries to fight him by refusing to give him his wages: He fantasizes: ' … I would take the seven rubles out of the drawer, show him that I had them and had specifically set them aside, but that I "don't want to, I don't want to, I just don't want to give him the wages, I don't want to because that is what I want," because that is 'my will as the master" (5, 168). And the reader immediately recalls Part One of *Notes* …, where it refers to *one's will* as the paramount value, the supreme human value. And he repeats 'my will as master' because he is affirming, trying to affirm his primacy and dominance with regard to Apollon, who has subjugated him. Incidentally, in rhythmic terms this phrase clearly echoes a phrase on the first page of *Notes…*about the elements that were the opposite of wicked in the Underground Man that he 'would not allow them, would not allow them, I refused to let them out' (5, 100).[17] Obviously he is not letting these elements out because Apollon, inside him, 'chemically fused with him,' is actively creating the hard casing of the self.

The Underground Man refers to himself in Part One as a *conscious mouse*. Meanwhile, Apollo, as we recall, is depicted by Scopas as standing on a mouse and trampling it; Apollo destroys mice. Why, from where does this drive in Apollo to fight mice come from? Because mice do what is contrary to the very nature of Apollo, who creates solid, finished, complete-in-themselves forms of the world. A mouse gnaws holes in them. That is the crux of the ongoing struggle between Apollo and the mouse. It is the myths related to Apollo that refer to mice as 'children of the sky and earth.' Now we also understand the meaning of the dichotomy in Part One of *Notes…*between a mouse that is simultaneously a man 'born out of a test tube' and a normal man 'rushing straight ahead like a bull,' who is a child of nature. A mouse cannot and does not want to stay within the boundaries allotted for it by Apollo, and it knows how escape them even if they are stone walls, whereas the bull will be held in by a fence made of two crosspieces.

Incidentally, let us recall what Apollon in *Notes…*does after the Underground Man finally gets rid of him. He reads the Psalter for the dead, and at the same time *exterminates rats (*and makes boot polish; the boot polish puts an emphatic gloss on the boundaries and forms) (5, 168). The reading of the psalter here is also important, especially since Apollo reads the psalter while he is still working for the Underground Man: "What especially drove me mad was when he would begin reading the Psalms in his cubicle. I had to endure *many a battle* over this

reading. But he just loved to read in the evening, in a low, even, singsong voice, *as though for the dead* (5, 168). A psaltery was originally a musical instrument, and it was roughly the Jewish counterpart of the Greek lyre, Apollo's instrument. Later the Underground Man would describe himself as a man whose skin was ripped off and who feels pain just from contact with the air (5, 174). Here we immediately think of Apollo's contest with Marsyas, who ventured to compete against Apollo's lyre, for which he was flayed. Why does Apollo *flay* Marsyas? Because this way he simply deprives him of what belongs strictly to Apollo – a rigorous and static form. That is, the form that Apollon forces onto the world when he reads the Psalms *as though for the dead*. Because only a nonliving form that is devoid of an inner, creative soul is static. The hero with ripped-off skin, on the one hand, stays clear of *everyone* even more because any movement by someone else causes him pain; but on the other hand, the ripped-off skin is the beginning of a transformation. It is a disfigured and repulsive beginning, but any beginning of a transformation, any destruction of a previous form, is always like that. Dostoevsky keeps pushing details so that there is no way we can miss all of it. The text simply teems with semantic rhymes … and nevertheless no one has even come close to discerning and grasping the role of the servant of the Underground Man in the text and in Dostoevsky's philosophy and anthropology.

That is the crux and meaning of the dichotomy between Apollon and the Underground Man. We should note that in Part Two the Underground Man never calls himself a mouse. He refers to a mouse only in Part One, because in Part Two Apollon is 'chemically fused' with him, and the Underground Man does not yet know how to gnaw holes through the solidified boundaries of the real world. On the contrary, he lives in his shell, in his sheath.

Then again, he does call himself a *fly*. 'It was excruciating torment, a constant, unendurable humiliation, stemming from the thought, which bordered on a constant, physical sensation, that I was a fly before that whole world, a dirty, obscene fly – more intelligent, civilized, and noble than everyone else, of course – but nonetheless a fly who was constantly giving way to everyone, insulted and injured by everyone' (5, 130).

In regard to flies, Apollo had a very specific relationship.

During the festival of Apollo a bull would be sacrificed to flies. In addition, the bull was one of the animal incarnations of Apollo. Therefore it turns out that the normal man (the one in Part One of *Notes*…'rushing straight at a target like an enraged bull' (5, 103)) is a human Apollo. That is why he is handsome. But his completed form is destroyed by a fly.

What is actualized here is the contradiction between the beautiful and the sublime, which the Underground Man derisively unifies in his monologue at the beginning of Part Two. Only a finished form can be beautiful. Conversely, only an open form can be exalted. A test tube (from which, according to the Underground Man, a contemporary person is born, which

in the discursively received text of *Notes…*strikes the reader as humiliatingly unnatural) in the original sense, in the ancient world (as a canopic jar), is an *open* tube extending from the womb, a tube designed to elevate ('sublimate') the reborn being to a new life.

The sublime is what, in principle, cannot be confined to a finished form, because it is called upon to rise higher and higher – not rest in place. (Incidentally, reading the psalter for the dead also represents, so to speak, a salute to the single instant when the form is in its absolutely finished state (before this it was being created, and after it will begin to crumble – although it may be fixed in place, as was done, for example, in the art of mummification)).

It is interesting to note that at a certain point the Underground Man realizes he is literally a *savior*. Or rather, he refuses to recognize that he is one. When the Underground Man explains to Liza why he hates her so much, he says, among other things: ' … I will never forgive you for catching me in my dressing gown just as I was flinging myself like a vicious dog at Apollon. Your *savior*, your ex-hero, flings himself like a mangy, shaggy cur at his lackey, and the lackey laughs at him!' (5, 174). 'Savior' is a word that in the literal sense can only be applied to Christ.

Therefore we are looking at an encounter between Christ and Apollo, which takes place in every person, in every soul. And in this moment, in this soul, Christ is losing. We remember that when the Underground Man begins his conversation with Liza, he writes that he has started to feel as though an *odor was coming from the underground*. 'A grim thought took shape in my brain and ran through my entire body like the nasty sensation you get when you enter a dank and musty underground' (5, 152). What is apparently being described for us here is precisely the moment when the Underground Man is entering *his* underground. That is, he is entering the underground like Orpheus, initially with an opportunity to bring Liza out of it, with an opportunity to play the role of savior to that dying soul. But he resolutely rejects that role, losing to Apollo within himself; he remains underground, from which Liza does escape, 'elevating herself' (for no footprints are evident anywhere on the freshly fallen snow) at the end of Part Two of *Notes…*

As a matter of fact, this is what the famous question 'Should I let the world go to pot or go without my tea?' is about. 'More than anything I value my peace and quiet.' 'I need my shell, my sheath.' 'My shell' means 'I want to stay inside my egg,' and we all remember the fairy tale where the mouse breaks the egg by swinging its tail – a golden tail at that, Apollonian – an egg that no one was able to crack.

## Notes

1. See, e.g., the article 'Seksizm, litsemerie, neliubov': chto ne tak s prepodavaniem literatury v shkole' (https://daily.aflsha.ru/relationship/4797-seksizm-licemerie-

nelyubov-chto-ne-tak-s-prepodavaniem-literatury-v-shkole), in which a teacher of literature, a graduate of a journalism department who has no skills in philological analysis, apparently knows nothing about philology as a 'science of comprehension,' and, as a result, deals with sociology in literature classes, explains why one must not ask the question, 'What did the author want to say?'.

2. Dostoevskii [Dostoevsky], F.M. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 30 tomakh*. Leningrad, Nauka, 1972–1990. Hereinafter the volume and page are indicated in the text in parentheses after the quotation. The italics in the quotations are mine, while the bold face comes from the quoted author.
3. See, in this regard, the works of Archpriest Pavel Khondzinskii 'Dostoevskii kak 'uchitel" Tserkvi" (http://www.ruiuvers.ru/philosophy/logosphere/450438) and '"Chistaia liubov'" v poucheniiakh startsa Zosimy.' In *Dostoevskii i mirovaia kul'tura, Al'manakh N 30, chast' I*. Moscow, Izdatel' S.T. Korneev, 2013, pp. 423–440.
4. See Novikova, E.G. *Sofiinost' russkoi prozy vtoroi poloviny XIX veka*. Tomsk, Izdatel'stvo TGU, 1999, p. 99.
5. Dostoevsky is doubtful in the text: 'I don't know whether there is such a name,' thereby emphasizing, as is typical of him, the special importance of what he is expressing doubt about – and how unusual it is for the Russian language for a female name to be used as a male one.
6. See Kasatkina, T. *Sviashchennoe v povsednevnom: Dvusostavnyi obraz v proizvedeniiakh F.M. Dostoevskogo*. Moscow, IMLI RN, 2015, pp. 429–434.
7. Scanlan, James P. *Dostoevsky the Thinker* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 56.
8. Walter Kaufmann, the editor of the anthology *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, which has already become a classic, wrote: 'I can see no reason for calling Dostoevsky an existentialist, but I do think that Part One of *Notes from Underground* is the best overture for existentialism ever written. With inimitable vigor and finesse the major themes are stated here that we can recognize when we read all the other so-called existentialists from Kierkegaard to Camus' (*Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre. The Basic Writings of Existentialism*, edited, with an introduction, prefaces, and new translations by Walter Kaufmann (Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books, 1975, p. 14.)
9. The allusions to the well-known article by Maksimilian Voloshin both in the heading and in the text of the article are no accident, but it is interesting to note that when he wrote the article Voloshin had no associations with the only text in Russian literature that could be called the precursor to this story. (See: Voloshin, M. 'Apollon i mysh'.' In the book: Voloshin, M. *Liki tvorchestva*. Edition prepared by V.A. Manuilov, V.P. Kupchenko, and A.V. Lavrov (Leningrad, Nauka, 1988), pp. 96–111.
10. [A reference to Nikolai Konstantinovich Mikhailovskii (1842–1904), a literary critic, sociologist and theoretician of the Narodniki (Populist) movement who criticized some of Dostoevsky's works on ideological and psychological grounds, saying they contained excessive cruelty and violence. – Trans.]
11. The anthill is an extremely important authorial concept for *Notes from Underground*. As we see, it is directly linked in Dostoevsky's mind with Apollo.
12. The meanings expressed here are drawn entirely from an intrinsic analysis of *Notes from Underground*. But we have become so accustomed to mistrust analysis and to trust only direct authorial expressions that the above quotation is almost essential so that some readers do not say that Dostoevsky took the

name 'Apollon' at random and for no particular reason and that Dostoevsky had nothing in mind like what the author of the article has set forth.

13. The self [*ia*] is Dostoevsky's personal concept, which is very important to all his texts, beginning with *Notes from Underground* (or to be more precise, beginning with the famous rough entry 'Masha is lying on the table. Will I see Masha again …,' which was written over the body of his deceased wife on the night after she died). Strictly speaking, the main philosophical problem of *Notes from Underground* is a person in a state of the self and the possibility of escaping from that state. The self is the boundary that separates a person from the outside world – but in reality it also separates him from his inner world. That is, a person in a state of the self turns out to have access only to this circumference – the line separating the outside and the inside, which are actualized only in each other's presence. A person in a state of the self is his own 'stone wall' (another highly important authorial concept of *Notes from Underground*) – and nothing else.
14. Just as Christ is also called the sun, the 'Sun of Truth.' That is, when Christ and Apollo meet, it is not merely two fundamental prototypes of human existing colliding – two suns of the world are colliding, and they are radically different.
15. See also: Podsokorskii, N.N. 'Eshche raz o Napoleone iz podpol'ia.' In the anthology: *Dostoevskii i sovremennost'. Materialy XXVI Mezhdunarodnykh starorusskikh chtenii 2011 goda* (Velikii Novgorod: Novgorodskii muzei-zapovednik, 2012).
16. Here we must digress from concrete analysis and return to the problem of access to a writer's philosophy. Why is our approach to texts so problematical when we attempt to draw a direct parallel between some philosopher and a writer? Because the philosopher, after all, has explained himself discursively. And we draw certain concepts, certain attitudes, certain rules of the operation of the universe from his text without additional work. And when we begin, against this background, to see something similar in a writer, it is very often a projection of the knowledge we already have onto the text. A writer is saying something completely different – but since we are already armed with a previous theory, we identify something similar and familiar in what is said, simply because we are much more inclined to recognize (something known) than to learn (something new) – without making any attempt whatsoever to ascertain what these parts mean in the whole of the writer's text. And it turns out that the pre-existing, preconceived theory does not clarify the writer's text for us but obscures it from us. So this is where an important methodological principle must be established: we begin analysis of a text – whether we want to find the author's position or we want to discover the author's philosophy – not from the place that seems familiar and clear to us and comparable to philosophies that are known to us, but from the place that is unfamiliar and unclear to us and even seems to be 'erroneous.' Because this point of lack of knowledge guarantees that we will be free from our own attitudes (or the attitudes of the philosopher with whom we have decided to compare the writer) and from their projection onto the text. That is, it will free us from the knowledge we already have, from the system that will close off to us everything new that the author wants to convey to us.
17. 'I was simply having fun at the expense of the petitioners and the officer, but I really could never be nasty. I was constantly aware of many elements in me that were the complete opposite of that. I felt that these opposite elements were always teeming inside me. I knew that they were teeming inside me all my life and were trying to break out, but would not allow them, would not

allow them, I refused to let them out. They tormented me to the point of feeling ashamed; they drove me to convulsions and – I finally became fed up with them, how fed up I was!' (5, 100). This is one of the most vivid descriptions in *Notes from Underground* of what the self is and what a person is in a state of the self. Outside is the wicked, alien world. But inside there are also elements that are the opposite of 'my self,' which the hero 'is not letting out.' Hence the self turns out to be merely a boundary – not a domain but merely its surface. That is all that is accessible to us as 'our selves.' Everything outside and everything inside in this state is alien and inaccessible to us.

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