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Badania

Russian Thought in Europe

**RECEPTION, POLEMICS,
DEVELOPEMENT**

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On Dostoyevsky's Anti-Rationalism, its European Philosophical Parallels and its Followers¹

I am not certain whether the concept of “irrationalism” is quite appropriate to be applied to Dostoyevsky. I would rather speak of antirationalism. I share the approach to this issue offered by Semyon L. Frank, who in his work *Russische Weltanschauung* wrote: “The Russian way of thinking is absolutely anti-rationalist. This anti-rationalism, however, is not identical with irrationalism, that is some kind of romantic and lyrical vagueness, logical disorder of spiritual life. It doesn't involve either a tendency to deny science or inability to carry out scientific research.”² It is quite obvious that Russian antirationalism revealed itself in literature, and most openly in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's works. Western researchers often speak of Dostoyevsky's irrational messianism. I am not certain that Dostoyevsky in his *A Writer's Diary* is trying to prove that Constantinople has to belong to Russia in an irrational way. On the contrary, developing Nikolai Danilevsky's theory of panslavism, Dostoyevsky sounds quite rational; all the time he appeals to logic. That is why Tolstoy did not have to change his generally rational way of thinking to beat Dostoyevsky's approach to the Balkan war in the last part of *Anna Karenina*.³ And let us not forget that very soon Dostoyevsky himself denied his own former messianism in his *Speech on Pushkin* of 1880. This makes rather problematic not only Dostoyevsky's irrationalism but his messianism as well.

¹ This article is a part of the international project funded by Russian State Humanitarian Foundation (РГНФ) and by la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (France), No. 12-24-08000 а/м.

² С.Л. Франк, *Русское мировоззрение*, Санкт-Петербург 1996, p. 165.

³ See С.А. Кибальник, *Споры о Балканской войне на страницах “Анны Карениной,”* “Русская литература” 4 (2010), pp. 39-44.

Dostoyevsky's antirationalism was obviously one of the main sources of Lev Shestov's critique of speculative philosophy, rationalism and ideology. Shestov actually borrowed the central idea of his very monotonous philosophical essays from literature, first of all from Dostoyevsky and Chekhov.⁴ He expressed his critique of rationalism in his first books *Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche* (1903) and *The Apotheosis of Groundlessness* (1905) mostly based on Chekhov's and Turgenev's literary works. As Sergey N. Bulgakov once noted: "Lev Shestov was himself a very rationalist author who did not have much to say except for his perpetual accusations of rationalism."⁵ Apparently, Shestov, who lived abroad for almost a half of a century and published most of his French- and German-written works in well-known western philosophical magazines and publishing houses, contributed a great deal to the reputation of Russian literature in the West as an irrationalist one.

I

In order to understand the nature of Dostoyevsky's antirationalism one should analyse his early works, that is his tales and short stories of the 1840–1850s. As it is well-known, Dostoyevsky began his literary career with the tale *Poor Folk*, which was to a great extent based on the ideas of the French utopian socialism. Valentina E. Vetlovskaya has shown that Dostoyevsky is very sympathetic in this work even to the communist ideas of Babeuf and his followers.⁶ Therefore, the ideological basis of Dostoyevsky's first tale which brought him great success is quite rationalist. However, it is corrected and complicated by means of portraying the main characters' deep and genuinely expressed human feelings.

Resuming his literary career in the second half of the 1850s, Dostoyevsky already had a very critical attitude to utopian socialism and to any rational formulas of human happiness. But he couldn't express this openly: it would look as a betrayal of his former ideals and, most importantly, of

⁴ See С.А. Кибальник, *Художественная феноменология Чехова*, in В.Б. Катаев, С.А. Кибальник (eds), *Образ Чехова и чеховской России в современном мире. К 150-летию со дня рождения А.П. Чехова. Сборник статей*, Санкт-Петербург 2010, p. 18.

⁵ С.Н. Булгаков, *Некоторые черты религиозного мировоззрения Л. Шестова*, "Современные записки," vol. 68 (1939), pp. 305-323.

⁶ See В.Е. Ветловская, *Идеи Великой французской революции в социальных воззрениях молодого Достоевского*, in Г.М. Фридлендер (ed), *Великая Французская революция и русская литература*, Ленинград 1990, pp. 282-317.

his former friends who attended Mikhail Petrashevsky's parties; many of them were still in Siberia. That is why he wrote his tale *The Village of Stepanchikovo* as a cryptoparody. In a concealed manner he parodies the ideas of utopian socialism as well as personalities of some members of Petrashevsky's circle,⁷ and other Russian socialists like Vissarion G. Belinsky. Dostoyevsky once said that "life in Icar's commune or in a phalanstery seems to him more horrible and disgusting than any hard labour."⁸

While using the term "phalanstery" Dostoyevsky obviously referred to Charles Fourier's ideas, and mentioning "Icar's commune" he meant the novel *Voyage en Icarie* by French utopian socialist Etienne Cabet. This utopian novel was quite a successful attempt to make ideas of French socialists popular among the people. Its first edition came out in 1840, and its fifth edition, which was published in 1848, was very soon prohibited by censorship. In Russia this book was well-known and read by most of Petrashevts.⁹ *Voyage en Icarie* is one of the main pretexts of Dostoyevsky's *The Village of Stepanchikovo*. It's worth mentioning that the Russian name "Степан" has a direct equivalent in the French language, and this equivalent is "Etienne." Thus, the title of Dostoyevsky's tale is a transformation of Pushkin's *History of the Village of Goryukhino* (*История села Горюхина*, sic! – S.K.)¹⁰ made in such a way that conceals a discrete reference to the French best-seller by Etienne Cabet.

The composition of both works is very similar. The protagonist appears in a different world where he doesn't understand anything, and is asking many questions trying to figure out what is going on around. However, in *Voyage en Icarie*, where evil existed before, but was eliminated by a kind supreme ruler Icar, the protagonist is delighted with everything. Now in Icaria, in full accordance with the ideas of Ch. Fourier and H. Saint-Simon, "the Reason reigns."¹¹ In *The Village of Stepanchikovo* even a naïve and young narrator Sergey very soon understands that Rostanev's house is "something like a bedlam." But Stepanchikovo Rostanev's landlord, a kind

⁷ See С.А. Кибальник, "Село Степанчиково и его обитатели" как криптопародия, in Н.Ф. Буданова, С.А. Кибальник (eds), *Достоевский. Материалы и исследования*, Санкт-Петербург 2010, pp. 108-142.

⁸ А.П. Милюков, *Литературные встречи и знакомства*, Санкт-Петербург 1890, p. 181; idem, *Материалы для жизнеописания Ф.М. Достоевского. Биография, письма и заметки из записной книжки Ф.М. Достоевского*, Санкт-Петербург 1883, p. 89.

⁹ See *Дело петрашевцев*, vol. 1, Москва – Ленинград 1937, p. 89, 370, 563; vol. 3, Москва – Ленинград 1951, p. 143.

¹⁰ Pushkin's tale was at first mistakenly published under the title *История села Горюхина*.

¹¹ See E. Cabet, *Voyage en Icarie*, Paris 1848, p. 111.

of an ideal man as he was portrayed by French socialists (“his soul was pure as a child’s soul”), is willing to make everyone happy as well. And in this respect he resembles Icar “whose passion was love for human mankind. Since his childhood he could not see another child without approaching and caressing him, embracing and sharing with him even that little he owned.”¹² Like “the kind Icar” Rostanev cannot understand why “a man is such an evil. Why I am so often evil while it’s so good to be kind?”¹³ Rostanev is the Russian Icar but the unfortunate Icar who is trying to make everyone happy not in the whole country, but in his own estate only, and nevertheless fails.

His last name (“Ростанев”) is almost a full anagram of the word “равенство” (“equality”). He calls almost everyone, including his peasants, “brother.” He is ready to make any concessions and compromises with all inhabitants of his house. But he is treated by them as a nonentity, and is even prohibited to marry his beloved woman. The more he concedes to his dependant Opiskin, the worse he is treated by him. Rostanev is trying to give Opiskin good money under the condition that he moves out from his house. But it results only in increasing Opiskin’s power which makes Rostanev call him now “Your Highness.” Incidentally, the kind Icar also “in his youth could not see an unhappy man without himself suffering from his misfortunes and without trying to console him. Once, meeting a poor man almost naked and dying of cold in the street, he gave him his clothes, which he got only two days before, and returned home full of joy, but almost naked.”¹⁴

The last chapter of the tale is called “Foma Fomich creates everybody’s happiness” (“Фома Фомич созидает всеобщее счастье”). “Всеобщее счастье” is an obvious reference to the French Enlightenment and revolutionaries’ concept of “bien-être general.” But the content of this chapter is rather sarcastic. Russian Icar Rostanev eventually forces Opiskin to let him marry Nasten’ka by kicking him out of his house (literally pushing him in his back). Only after such a shock does Opiskin slightly change and become more “reasonable.” There are, in the tale, plenty of other details which clearly indicate that *The Village of Stepanchikovo* is a cryptoparody of *Voyage en Icarie*. I will mention only one more: it appeared to Opiskin that Rostanev looks like a Frenchman (and therefore has too little love for his country), and Opiskin ordered him to shave off his side-whiskers.

¹² Ibidem, p. 211.

¹³ F. Dostoyevsky, *The Village of Stepanchikovo*, New York 1995, p. 111.

¹⁴ E. Cabet, *Voyage en Icarie*, p. 129.

Let us try to answer the question: why could Dostoyevsky not accept people's happiness made by "the kind Icar" who realised in his country the idea of communal property, "brotherhood" and other socialist and communist ideas? Of course, partly because the main characteristics of this rational world: everyone is watching over everyone, writers are appointed by a supreme ruler, books are censored, prohibited and even burnt, and sexual partnership is allowed by law only with spouses (just in case men are allowed to dance with men only) didn't look to Dostoyevsky as an ideal world. But there was another reason: it looked too rational for him. One thing was not taken into account in Icaria. It is the complexity of human nature and psychological contradictions between people. Dostoyevsky's antirationalism in *The Village of Stepanchikovo* is obviously a reaction against excessive rationalism.

In Icaria there are no lazy people, "cause work is so pleasant," there is no "poisoning of a spouse, perfidious courting, destroying jealousy or duels!" There are, however, passions and human attractions. "When I compared him with Valmor, as Dinaise confesses in her letter to his sister, Reason brought me to your brother; but a sort of irresistible force pushed me towards your friend."¹⁵ Instead of struggling for the beloved woman, the narrator decides to leave. But Valmor beats his generosity and self-denial. All of a sudden he decides to marry Dinaise's cousin Alaé, so such a radical change of heart is for him a piece of cake. Thus, a love triangle is transformed into two couples who are going to marry at the same day.¹⁶ What can we find in *The Village of Stepanchikovo* instead? We see that all the time Opiskin blames Rostanov for showing ambition and being an egoist, and appeals to him to restrain his passions. Rostanov accepts this and is trying to become "more kind." But in reality it is Opiskin who is possessed with an ambition to dominate over Rostanov. And not even for the sake of money as Tartuffe in J. B. Molière's famous play, but "being tempted to pull faces, to act, to present himself", as Misinchikov put it.

Charles Fourier was certain that "it's impossible to oppress human passions which are God's voice: facing an obstacle in one point they turn to another point and go to their purpose destroying everything instead of creating something."¹⁷ He believed that one should create social and economic

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 329.

¹⁶ We will see a little later an analogous "rational" solution in Chernyshevsky's novel *What Is To Be Done?* obviously also dependent of Cabet's *Voyage en Icarie*.

¹⁷ See Ch. Fourier, *Le Nouveau monde industriel et sociétaire*, in idem, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 6, Paris 1848, p. 111.

conditions which would allow the satisfaction of everyone's passions, and this will result in a harmonious combination of human individualities. In *The Village of Stepanchikovo* Dostoyevsky creates a situation where everyone in Rostanév's house follows his own ambition and self-esteem no matter whether he or she is oppressed with his or her economic conditions or not. The harmonious combination of human individualities doesn't take place there, and the characters are not capable to direct their passions to achieve some suitable purposes. Dostoyevsky's discrete parody of Ch. Fourier's doctrine is aimed first of all at its rational character.

Criticising rational happiness of the socialist utopia Dostoyevsky, nevertheless, drew on some secondary elements of French socialists' doctrines. Thus, H. Saint-Simon in *Lettres à un Américain* pointed out that "proletarians inspired with the passion to achieve equality after they had got power proved that something worse than the former regime was quite possible."¹⁸ Doesn't it sound like one of the sources of Dostoyevsky's *The Village of Stepanchikovo*?

II

As a frequent visitor to Mikhail Petrashevsky's house, Dostoyevsky once made a speech "on personality and egoism" where "he wanted to prove that among us there is more ambition than human dignity, and that we ourselves are inclined to self-denial and destruction of our own personality caused by egoism and absence of clear purposes."¹⁹ This idea was inspired by another influence. It has already been indicated that this speech was composed by Dostoyevsky under the impression from a famous book *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum (The Ego and Its Own)* by Max Stirner which came out at the end of 1844;²⁰ a copy of this book Dostoyevsky may have been borrowed from M. Petrashevsky.²¹ The only thing which was underestimated by N. Otverzhennyi is that the contents of this speech, as Dostoyevsky later formulated it, is not only permeated with the elements of Stirner's idea of egoism but at the same time is directed against it.

¹⁸ C.-H. Saint-Simon, B.-P. Enfantin, *Oeuvres, publiées par des membres du conseil institué par Enfantin; publiées et précédées de deux notices historiques*, vol. XIII (I), Paris 1869, p. 178.

¹⁹ Ф.М. Достоевский, *Полное собрание сочинений: В 30 т.*, Ленинград 1972–1990, vol. 18, p. 129.

²⁰ Н. Отверженный, *Штирнер и Достоевский*, Москва 1925, pp. 27–28.

²¹ А. Семевский, *М.В. Буташевич-Петрашевский и петрашевцы*, Москва 1922, pp. 168–170.

It is quite obvious that Stirner's book to a great extent shaped Dostoyevsky's other tale – *Notes from Underground*.²² This tale is the most remarkable and passionate manifesto of Dostoyevsky's anti-rationalism. It is interesting to compare it with its German philosophical source trying to figure out to what extent Dostoyevsky's antirationalism was shaped by Stirner's book. N. Otverzhennyi thought that not only Dostoyevsky's "extreme individualism, moments of deep disbelief, a passionate hymn to the creative specificity of human personality," but "the dominance of intuition over reason as well" "closely resemble the central issues of Stirner's philosophy."²³ He shows that Stirner's rational and individualistic nihilism became the type of consciousness Dostoyevsky fought throughout his whole life: in *Crime and Punishment*, *The Possessed*, *The Adolescent*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*. But an author of introduction to this research work A. Borovoy sounds quite reasonable when he points out that "Stirner and everything that is related to his thought is only a part of Dostoyevsky who fought the rationalist nihilism of Stirner."²⁴

Comparing the one book to the other, we have to admit first of all that Dostoyevsky's *Underground Man*'s discourse is widely based on Stirner's philosophy of extreme individualism and nihilism. The very title of Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground* has something in common with the title of Stirner's book. And this title as compared to the title of Stirner's book has some polemic patterns. Stressing loneliness and solipsism of his character, Dostoyevsky underlines that "the Ego's Own" can be only "underground." A critical approach to Stirner's doctrine is thus expressed in the very title of his literary masterpiece.

The *Underground Man*'s passionate exclamation: "Is the world to go to pot, or am I to go without my tea? I say let the world go to pot as long as I get my tea every time"²⁵ – reminds of an introduction into Stirner's book: "My business is not the divine and not the human one, not business of truth and kindness, justice, freedom and so forth. It's exceptionally mine, not common but the only one – as well as I am the only one. To me there

²² Н. Отверженный, *Штирнер и Достоевский*, p. 29.

²³ Ibidem, p. 74. Unfortunately, this was not acknowledged and taken into account in the commentaries on *Notes from Underground* in Dostoyevsky's *Complete Works* in 30 volumes, where the name of Stirner was only once mentioned along with the names of Kant and Schopenhauer. See Ф.М. Достоевский, *Полное собрание сочинений: В 30 т.*, vol. 5, p. 380.

²⁴ Н. Отверженный, *Штирнер и Достоевский*, p. 6.

²⁵ F. Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground and The Grand Inquisitor*, transl. by R.E. Matlaw, New York 1960, p. 108.

is nothing higher than me.”²⁶ Thus, Dostoyevsky’s antirationalism partly directed against western rationalism has its origins in Western thought as well. The difference between these two phrases as well as between Stirner and Dostoyevsky in general is as follows. Stirner’s passionate and emotional discourse is mostly logical and rationalist. Revolting against Hegel’s system Stirner was at the same time very dependent of Hegel. His main idea is just an extreme conclusion from his metaphysical reasoning.²⁷ But very passionate and at the same time logical exclamations of the Underground Man are only a part of Dostoyevsky’s narrative. Dostoyevsky’s antirationalism in the *Notes from Underground* seems to be partly directed against Stirner’s contradiction between mainly the irrational spirit of his book and its rational form.²⁸

However, under passionate exclamations of the Underground Man we paradoxically discover a sort of a logical formula as well, an opposition of the “real life” principle to the “idea,” the “theory.” “Two times two makes four” in the Underground Man’s discourse is identified with “the goal,” “the thing to be attained” and with the “beginning of death,” while “twice two makes five” is identified with the “incessant process of attaining” and with “real life.”²⁹ Doesn’t it sound rather antirational than irrational? The Underground Man doesn’t deny “two times two makes four.” He declares: “I admit that two times two makes four is an excellent thing” (although he considers it “a piece of insolence” at the same time). And he finds it insufficient to describe the complexity of real life: “(...) two times two makes five is sometimes also a very charming little thing.”³⁰ And thus, in

²⁶ M. Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, transl. by S.T. Byington, <<http://www.df.lth.se/~triad/stirner/theego/theego.html>>.

²⁷ В. Саводник, *Ницшеанец 40-х годов. Макс Штирнер и его философия эгоизма*, Москва 1902, p. 72.

²⁸ Pavel Novgorodtsev saw in a philosophy of early anarchists a mixture of rationalism and irrationalism: “Being irrationalist in its social perspectives, a philosophy of anarchy is combined with the most decisive rationalist optimism, with unconditional belief in life-saving strength of abstract dogmas. Like in socialism the extreme irrationalism is mixed up with the extreme rationalism” (П.И. Новгородцев, *Об общественном идеале*, part II “Кризис анархизма,” Москва 1991, p. 627). But he regarded the early anarchists as mainly irrationalists: “A utopian belief of anarchism is characteristic of the early anarchist, especially of Stirner and Bakunin. The later development of anarchism leads it to a change. The true element of anarchism was irrationalism. But as far as the revolutionary enthusiasm is weakening, anarchism is moving towards more concrete doctrines which could replace a decline in religious belief with a thorough elaborating of details. One can see this already in P.-J. Prudhon’s works” (ibidem, p. 628).

²⁹ F. Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground and The Grand Inquisitor*, p. 108.

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 30.

the essence of Dostoyevsky's passionate advocating "real life" against "an idea" one can surprisingly notice a great deal of antirationalism as well as even some rationalism. He turns reason against reason. All this also partly explains why Dostoyevsky's fiction is very often perceived as philosophy.

One can say perhaps that the Underground Man is a kind of Russian Stirner. But Stirner is equal to "the Ego" while the Underground Man is not equal to Dostoyevsky.³¹ However, even the Underground Man himself sees in *reason* only one out of many human faculties: "You see, gentlemen, reason is an excellent thing, there is no disputing that, but reason is only reason and can only satisfy man's rational faculty, while will is a manifestation of all life, that is, of all human life including reason as well as all impulses. (...) After all, here I, for instance, quite naturally want to live. In order to satisfy all my faculties for life, and not simply my rational faculty, that is, not simply one twentieth of my capacity for life. What does reason know? Reason only knows what it has succeeded in learning (some things it will perhaps never learn; while this is nevertheless no comfort, why not say so frankly?) and human nature acts as a whole, with everything that is in it, consciously or unconsciously, and, even if it goes wrong it lives."³²

It means that *reason* – Romain Nazirov comments on this – has to concede to "will," that is to the integral striving in which the rational element is one of the main parts.³³ And I would add to this that attacking *reason* the Underground Man as well as Dostoyevsky himself in his journalism applies logic here and there. As Nikolay Trubetskoy pointed out "at this time he argued in his articles with rationalism and utilitarianism and, making the rationalist ideology absurd, often expressed ideas very close to the Underground Man's thoughts. He emphasised that the representatives of Russian intelligentsia who want to live according to the principles of rationalism are only dreaming and chatting, but are incapable of acting, that they are embittered and extremely self-concerned."³⁴

He very often appeals to "logic" in his journalism of that time.³⁵ The fact that one can find very close parallels to Dostoyevsky's *Notes from*

³¹ See А.П. Скафтымов, "Записки из подполья" среди публицистики Достоевского, in *idem, Собрание сочинений: В 3 т.*, Самара 2008, pp. 131-184.

³² F. Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground and The Grand Inquisitor*, p. 25.

³³ Р.Г. Назиров, *Об этической проблематике повести "Записки из подполья"*, in В.Г. Базанов, Г.М. Фридендер (eds), *Достоевский и его время*, Ленинград 1971, p. 145.

³⁴ Н.С. Трубецкой, *О "Записках из подполья" и "Игроке"*, in *idem, История. Культура*, Москва 1996, p. 695.

³⁵ See e.g. Ф.М. Достоевский, *Полное собрание сочинений: В 30 т.*, vol. 20, pp. 54, 100.

Underground in his journalism and literary criticism written for the journals "Time" and "Epoch"³⁶ supports this idea. Referring to Mark Twain, one can say that rumours about Dostoyevsky's irrationalism are "slightly exaggerated."

N. Otverzhenyi stresses similarity between Dostoyevsky and Stirner, but underestimates Dostoyevsky's transformation of Stirner's philosophy in his images of "individualists." At the same time he slightly exaggerates its similarities to the Underground Man's thinking: "the Ego is close to the Underground Man not only in his individualistic outlook, but in a deep psychological sensation. We know what a sharp hatred the underground Man has towards himself, how his dissatisfaction with himself torments him. This finding himself offensive, this internal drama burning 'the Ego' at the bonfire of his tragical introspection is similar in its psychological essence to the feelings of the Underground Man."³⁷ But does "the Ego" find himself offensive? The Underground Man is not equal to "the Ego," since Dostoyevsky's narrative unmasks the Underground Man's confession.

In his paper *Dostoyevsky and Max Stirner* delivered at the 14th International Dostoyevsky Symposium, Takayoshi Shimizu stresses the difference between "the Ego" and Dostoyevsky's individualists, and adds some quite appropriate parallels with some other Dostoyevsky's characters, that is with Stavrogin: "Raskolnikov, Rogogin, Stavrogin, Kirilov, and Ivan, these ultra egoist heroes have extreme egotism, while they also have the very strong motivation to become *Imitatio di Christi*. In this point, they differ fundamentally from the Stirnerian egoist. They make of the Stirnerian ultra ego not only a God in the Russian way, but they also sacrifice themselves to him, at which point they have fallen and betrayed Stirner's thought. The Stirnerian egoist will always be free from the worship of any authority other than himself. Stirner condemns suicide. Needless to say, if one commits suicide, one shows oneself to kneel before some idea that he is not one's own. But Stavrogin and Kirilov have realised their infinite freedom by ending their lives through suicide."³⁸

But the researcher appears not to realise clearly that the differences between his characters and "the Ego" are intentional. By means of these differences Dostoyevsky formulates his own approach to Stirner's doctrine. In other cases Shimizu slightly exaggerates Dostoyevsky's critical

³⁶ See А.П. Скафтымов, "Записки из подполья" среди публицистики Достоевского, pp. 161-184.

³⁷ Н. Отверженный, *Штирнер и Достоевский*, pp. 36-37.

³⁸ Takayoshi Shimizu, *Dostoevsky and Max Stirner*, Manuscript.

attitude to Stirner: e.g. *Notes from Underground* is hardly “a parody of Stirner’s philosophy.”³⁹

The parallels between Dostoyevsky and Stirner can be expanded. For example, in the initial chapters of the second part “Ownness” and “The Owner” – this motive is developed in a way which reminds of Raskolnikov’s thinking: “When the ‘loyal’ had exalted an unsubdued power to be their master and had adored it, when they had demanded adoration from all, then there came some such son of nature who would not loyally submit, and drove the adored power from its inaccessible Olympus,” (...) “You long for freedom? You fools! If you took might, freedom would come of itself. See, he who has might ‘stands above the law,’ (...) ‘Man’ is the God of today, and fear of Man has taken the place of the old fear of God. (...) In consideration of the right, the question is always asked, ‘What or who gives me the right to it?’ Answer: God, love, reason, nature, humanity, etc. No, only *your might, your power* gives you the right (your reason, e.g. may give it to you). (...) This means nothing else than ‘What you have the *power* to be, you have the *right* to.’”⁴⁰

Stirner discusses further in *The Ego and Its Own* the issue of “crime:” “The State practices ‘violence,’ the individual must not do so. The State’s behaviour is violence, and it calls its violence ‘law;’ that of the individual, ‘crime.’ Crime, then – so the individual’s violence is called; and only by crime does he overcome the State’s violence when he thinks that the State is not above him, but he is above the State. (...) ‘The criminal is in the utmost degree the State’s own crime!’ says Bettina.⁴¹ One may let this sentiment pass, even if Bettina herself does not understand it exactly so. (...) Every ego is from birth a criminal to begin with against the people, the State.”⁴²

Then, he deals even with “crime and punishment:” “*Punishment* has a meaning only when it is to afford expiation for the injuring of a *sacred* thing. If something is sacred to any one, he certainly deserves punishment when he acts as its enemy. A man who lets a man’s life continue in existence, *because* to him it is sacred and he has a *dread* of touching it is simply a *religious* man. (...) ‘Crime’ or ‘disease’ are not either of them an *egoistic* view of the matter, i.e. a judgment *starting from me*, but starting from *another* – to wit, whether it injures *right*, general right, or the *health* partly

³⁹ Ibidem.

⁴⁰ M. Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*.

⁴¹ Ibidem.

⁴² Ibidem.

of the individual (the sick one), partly of the generality (*society*). 'Crime' is treated inexorably, 'disease' with 'loving gentleness, compassion,' etc. (...) But it is exactly punishment that must make room for satisfaction, which, again, cannot aim at satisfying right or justice, but at procuring *us* a satisfactory outcome."⁴³

Some of these formulas look like excerpts from Raskolnikov's article: "It is said that punishment is the criminal's right. But impunity is just as much his right. If his undertaking succeeds, it serves him right, and, if it does not succeed, it likewise serves him right)." ⁴⁴ "But let the individual man lay claim to ever so many rights because Man or the concept man 'entitles' him to them, because his being man does it."⁴⁵

To some extent Dostoyevsky drew on Stirner's polemics with socialists and communists: "Consequently one has a prospect of extirpating religion down to the ground only when one antiquates *society* and everything that flows from this principle. But it is precisely in Communism that this principle seeks to culminate, as in it everything is to become *common* for the establishment of – 'equality.' If this 'equality' is won, 'liberty' too is not lacking. But whose liberty? *Society's!* Society is then all in all."⁴⁶ N. Otverzhennyi found it "significant" that the former member of Petrashevsky's circle, Dostoyevsky, borrowed arguments and a strength of thought from a thinker who considered liberals as well as socialists the enemies of a human personality.⁴⁷

Criticising inconsistency of the socialists' position Stirner expressed ideas in which one can see, as well as in some Dostoyevsky's works, a source of all anti-utopias: "The Socialists, taking away *property* too, do not notice that this secures itself a continued existence in *self-ownership*. Is it only money and goods, then, that are a property. Or is every opinion something of mine, something of my own? So every *opinion* must be abolished or made impersonal. The person is entitled to no opinion, but, as self-will was transferred to the State, property to society, so opinion too must be transferred to something *general*, 'Man,' and thereby become a general human opinion."⁴⁸

⁴³ Ibidem.

⁴⁴ This parallel in a general way was made by N. Otverzhennyi (see Н. Отверженный, *Штирнер и Достоевский*, p. 44).

⁴⁵ M. Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*.

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

⁴⁷ See ibidem.

⁴⁸ Ibidem.

III

In his characters' arguments Dostoyevsky reproduces Stirner's arguments with some other philosophers. Thus, at the very beginning of the second part of *The Ego and Its Own* we find Kirillov's motif of "God-man." This motif is known to go back first of all to Ludvig Feuerbach and to his *The Essence of Christianity*.⁴⁹ But Stirner opposes to God not just a Man, but "the Ego," and therefore Kirillov's feeling that he is "bound to show **self-will**"⁵⁰ reminds first of all of an intention of "the Ego" to kill not only God, but the Man in him as well: "At the entrance of the modern time stands the 'God-man.' At its exit will only the God in the God-man evaporate? And can the God-man really die if only the God in him dies? They did not think of this question, and thought they were through when in our days they brought to a victorious end the work of the Illumination, the vanquishing of God: they did not notice that Man has killed God in order to become now – 'sole God on high.' The *other world outside us* is indeed brushed away, and the great undertaking of the Illuminators completed; but the *other world in us* has become a new heaven and calls us forth to renewed heaven-storming: God has had to give place, yet not to us, but to – Man. How can you believe that the God-man is dead before the Man in him, besides the God, is dead?"⁵¹

Kirillov's idea to commit suicide in this context looks like the realisation of Stirner's metaphor in the last phrase: "(...) before the Man in him, besides the God, is dead." Certainly, Kirillov differs from Stirner's "the Ego," since he wants to commit suicide not for himself but because he sees in it "the salvation for all."⁵² Kirillov embodies not Stirner's idea itself but Dostoyevsky's transformation of this idea directed to show that it leads to the Man's ruining himself.

In *The Possessed* the idea of "no God" has given birth to Dostoyevsky's well-known formula "If there's no God, how can I be a captain then?": "Ah, here's another anecdote. There's an infantry regiment here in the district. I was drinking last Friday evening with officers. We've three friends among them, *vous comprenez*? They were discussing atheism and I need hardly say they made short work on God. They were squealing with delight. By the way, Shatov declares that if there's to be a rising in Russian

⁴⁹ Ф.М. Достоевский, *Полное собрание сочинений*: В 30 т., vol. 12, pp. 221-222.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, vol. 11, p. 627.

⁵¹ M. Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*.

⁵² Ф.М. Достоевский, *Полное собрание сочинений*: В 30 т., vol. 11, p. 629.

we must begin with atheism. Maybe it's true. One grizzled old stager of a captain sat mum, not saying a word. All at once he stands up in the middle of the room and says aloud, as though speaking to himself: 'If there's no God, how can I be a captain then?' He took up his cap and went out, flinging up his hands."⁵³

Here, we find a sort of irrational reaction to a rational argument, and this reaction represents Dostoyevsky's denial of Stirner's reply to Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*. Dostoyevsky opposes to it his own reaction to Feuerbach's denial of God. The rational sense of his *captain's* irrational reaction could be formulated as follows: "If there is no God, and God is just a human essence put in the sky, then a man not only doesn't become God but stops being a man." One can also say that the *captain's* apparently irrational reaction to a rational idea of the modern world has in the context of Dostoyevsky's novel an antirational character.

In *The Brothers Karamazov* Ivan Karamazov's analogous formula "if there's no immortality of the soul, then there's no virtue, and everything is lawful" is a logical conclusion which Stirner had drawn from L. Feuerbach's centering a man instead of God. A denial of "God-man" and the idea that "everything is lawful" is the main idea of Stirner's book. Ivan Karamazov's idea is argued by a "divinity student" Rakitin, "a young man bent on a career."⁵⁴ Rakitin's defending atheist morality:

His article is absurd and ridiculous. And did you hear his stupid theory just now: if there's no immortality of the soul, then there's no virtue, and everything is lawful. (And by the way, do you remember how your brother Mitya cried out: "I will remember"!) An attractive theory for scoundrels! – (I'm being abusive, that's stupid.). Nor for scoundrels, but for pedantic poseurs, "haunted by profound, unsolved doubts. He's showing off, and what it all comes to is, on the one hand we cannot but admit" and "on the other it must be confessed!" His whole theory is a fraud! Humanity will find in itself the power to live for virtue even without believing in immortality. It will find it in love for freedom, for equality, for fraternity⁵⁵ – resembles Ludvig Feuerbach's position.⁵⁶

"The Ego" also makes some remarks which are similar to Ivan Karamazov's and the Grand Inquisitor's phrases: "I am the owner of humanity,

⁵³ F. Dostoyevsky, *The Possessed*, transl. by C. Garnett, New York 1963, p. 229.

⁵⁴ F. Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, transl. by C. Garnett, London 1915, pp. 38, 75.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 81.

⁵⁶ See С.А. Кибальник, *О философском подтексте формулы "Если Бога нет..." в творчестве Достоевского*, "Русская литература" 3 (2012), pp. 153-163.

I am humanity, and I do nothing for the good of another humanity. A fool, you who are a unique humanity, that you make a merit of wanting to live for another than you are. (...) The world belongs to 'Man,' and is to be respected by me as his property. Property is what is mine! Property in the civic sense means *sacred* property, such that I must *respect* your property. (...) Whoever knows how to take and to defend the thing, to him it belongs till it is again taken from him, as liberty belongs to him who *takes* it. (...) My intercourse with the world consists in my enjoying it, and so consuming it for my self-enjoyment. The *intercourse* is the *enjoyment of the world*, and belongs to my self-enjoyment. (...) Whether what I think and do is Christian, what do I care? Whether it is human, liberal, humane, whether unhuman, illiberal, inhuman, what do I ask about that? If only it accomplishes what I want, if only I satisfy myself in it, then overlay it with predicates as you will; it is all alike to me."⁵⁷

Generally speaking, in Ivan Karamazov's poem *Grand Inquisitor* Stirner's impact is displayed here and there: "Then we shall give them the quiet humble *happiness of weak creatures such as they are by nature*. (...) Oh, we shall allow them even sin, they are weak and helpless, and they will love us like children because we allow them to sin."⁵⁸ By the way, Dostoyevsky's conviction that an individualistic approach to life is doomed perhaps is partly based on the fact of Stirner's life failure and early death in 1856. Having been freed from hard labour, Dostoyevsky definitely read about this.

Some Russian thinkers were aware of the affinity between Dostoyevsky's main philosophical topic and Stirner's polemics with Feuerbach. For instance, Semyon Frank in his book *Ethics of Nihilism* wrote: "Russian intelligentsia's moralism is just an expression of its *nihilism*. However, speaking strictly logically, one can deduct from nihilism only nihilism that is immoralism, and it was not very difficult for Stirner to explain to Feuerbach and his disciples this logical consequence. If being is deprived of an internal meaning, if subjective human desires are the only reasonable criteria for a practical orientation of a man in the world, then why should I acknowledge any obligations and isn't my egoistic and natural enjoyment of life my legal right?"⁵⁹

Boris Vysheslavtsev in his *The Ethics of the Transfigured Eros* formulated "the idea of man-god" in the following way: "If a man is a live

⁵⁷ M. Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*.

⁵⁸ F. Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 273.

⁵⁹ С.Л. Франк, *Этика нигилизма*, in idem, *Сочинения*, Москва 1990, pp. 84-85.

concrete person, then why not recognise a man the only God we know? This idea occurs necessarily and leads to 'a religion of mankind,' to the only possible form of atheist ethics, in other words, of an atheist hierarchy of values. It is conceived in two ways: either the only value and a sacred thing for me is my live and concrete 'I' – all the rest is subordinated to him (Max Stirner), or the only value and a sacred thing is 'mankind,' the collective 'proletariat' (Feuerbach, Marx)." And he concluded that "dealing with this dialectics is shown by Dostoyevsky, and it is still being dealt with by contemporary human mankind..."⁶⁰

Gaito Gazdanov, one of the followers and at the same time opponents of Dostoyevsky in the 20th century Russian prose, in his novel *The Night Roads* makes a homeless French philosopher Plato say: "I am very far from Cartesian ideas (...). I consider that they have caused great harm to our thinking. The possibility of a full and clear answer to a complex question seems attainable only to a limited imagination: this was Descartes' fundamental flaw. But in certain cases one highly significant and definitive aspect of a question seems to me irrefutable."⁶¹

It is quite natural that the Russian writer makes a Frenchman criticise the Cartesian tradition. But let us not forget: he still acknowledges some rational reasoning "in certain cases." And the French character is doing this in full accordance with the Russian writer's creative will. According to "the supplementary principle" of Niels Bohr, rationalism and irrationalism are the two different sides of reality. Although the majority of contemporary intellectuals see in the basis of reality mostly irrational elements they consider them as only a part of their unity with the rational ones.

Russian intellectual history includes phenomenological philosophy (Nikolai Hartmann, Gustav Shpet, Semyon Frank) which has obviously a very rationalist basis.⁶² Even Russian intuitivism developed by Nikolay

⁶⁰ Б.П. Вышеславцев, *Этика преображенного Эроса*, Москва 1994, p. 539.

⁶¹ G. Gazdanov, *Night Roads. A Novel*, transl. by J. Doherty, Dublin 2006, p. 111.

⁶² See for example some research on Gustav Spet's rational aspects of his phenomenology: В.Н. Порус, *Спор о рационализме: философия и культура (Э. Гуссерль, Л. Шестов и Г. Шпет)*, in В.А. Лекторский et al (eds), *Густав Шпет и современная философия гуманитарного знания*, Москва 2006, pp. 146-168; Е.А. Юркшткович, *Возможности герменевтики как метода рационального мышления в философии Г. Шпета*, in Г.В. Заболотнова (ed), *Творческое наследие Густава Густавовича Шпета в контексте философских проблем формирования историко-культурного сознания (междисциплинарный аспект)*, Томск 2003, pp. 124-132; Л.А. Микешина, *Логика как условие и основание научной строгости исторического знания (Письмо Г.Г.Шпета Д.М. Петрушевскому 16 апреля – 6 мая 1928)*, in М. Денн et al. (eds), *Густав Шпет*

Lossky was formulated by him in quite a rational way. In general, Russian philosophy – even the religious one – is not something absolutely irrational as it is evidenced by Lev Shestov's writings. It is rather antirational, as Semyon Frank put it, and at the same time has a significant rational pattern. And to a great extent this dialectical symbiosis goes back to Dostoyevsky.

Thus, this research on Dostoyevsky's intertextual connections with German philosophy, especially with Feuerbach and Stirner, makes us think that while reacting to Dostoyevsky's works, Nietzsche reflected their sources in the 19th century philosophy which he could easily see. And that is why developing in his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Dostoyevsky's anti-rationalist motifs in *Notes from Underground*,⁶³ Nietzsche at the same time and to some extent drew on Stirner's *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum*.

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⁶³ See S. Clare, *Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky: Hypotheses on Human Nature and Societal Attacks*, <<http://voices.yahoo.com/nietzsche-Dostoyevsky-hypotheses-human-nature-1470335.html>>.

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