

# The brothers karamazov by dostoevsky



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Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky, born in 1821, was a great Russian prose writer. He was born in Moscow and studied at the St Petersburg Engineering Academy. His first published work was a translation of Balzac's *Eugenie Grandet*, which appeared in 1844. Two years later his first original works, the short stories *Poor Folk*, *The Double* were published, later followed by other short prose pieces.

(Leatherbarrow, 47-48) In April 1849 Dostoevsky was arrested for suspected revolutionary activity and condemned to death, or at least was taken to the scaffold and to the last moments before execution before the true sentence of four years in prison and four years as a private in the Siberian army was read out. He was released from the army in 1858. The result of his imprisonment was the change of his personal convictions: he rejected the socialism and progressive ideas of his early years, and instead adhered to the principles of the Russian Orthodox Church and belief in the Russian people.

Another immediate fruit of his imprisonment experience was his remarkable *House of the Dead* that appeared in 1861. Other novels followed which display a profound understanding of the depths of the human soul. *Notes from the Underground* of 1864 sets rational egoism, which proffers reasons for treating others as instruments, against irrational selfishness which treats others as enemies. *Crime and Punishment* of 1866, *The Idiot* of 1868, and *The Devils* (also translated as *The Possessed*, written in 1871) led up to his great achievement, *The Brothers Karamazov*, completed in 1880.

With the Slavophiles, Dostoevsky venerated the Orthodox Church, and was deeply impressed by Staretz Amvrosy whom he visited at Optina.

(Leatherbarrow, 169) But his sense of goodness was neither facile nor naive. He saw human freedom as something so awesome that most people are ready to relinquish it. This is epitomized in the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor. In his speech accepting the Nobel Prize for Literature, Solzhenitsyn quoted Dostoevsky, ' Beauty will save the world. ' The Brothers Karamazov is Dostoevsky's final novel, completed only two months before his death.

It was intended as Dostoevsky's apocalypse. Its genre might best be called Scripture, rather than novel or tragedy. (Bloom, 5) This novel is the synthesis of Dostoevsky's religious and philosophic search. The scene of the novel is laid in a sleepy province in the family of the noble, the Karamazovs. A sleepy province had always been for Russian writers the source of characters of integrity, pure passion and spiritual relations among people. However, Dostoevsky presents the life in such province in different light. Spiritual decay had penetrated into patriarchal up-country.

From the very early stages of the novel's writing Dostoevsky underwent several influences. The first was the profound impact the Russian philosopher and thinker Nikolai Fyodorov had on Dostoevsky at this time of his life. According to Fyodorov's doctrine Christianity is a system in which " man's redemption and resurrection could be realized on earth through sons redeeming the sins of their fathers to create human unity through a universal family. " (Sandoz, 221) The tragedy of patricide in The Brothers Karamazov acquires more poignant coloring as Dostoevsky applies a complete inversion of this Christian system.

Thus the sons in the novel do not attain resurrection for their father. Quite to the contrary they are complicit in his murder, and such turn of events is for

Dostoevsky a metaphor for complete human disunity, breakage of the mentioned spiritual relations among people. As already noted religion and philosophy played a vital role in Dostoevsky's life and in his novel in particular. Nevertheless, much more personal tragedy changed the way the novel took later. In 1878 Dostoevsky stopped writing the novel because of the death of his son Alyosha who was only three-years old.

This tragedy was even more difficult to endure for the writer as Alyosha's death was caused by epilepsy, a disease he inherited from his father. Dostoevsky's desolation could not escape being reflected in the novel; one of the characters has a name Alyosha. The writer endued his character with the features he himself aspired to and would like to follow. Though very personal experience had a profound influence on Dostoevsky's choice for theme and actions that dominated the external of the novel, the key problem treated by this work is human disunity, or breakage of the spiritual relations among people.

In comparison to previous novels social split-up is accruing, getting more distinct the relations between people are becoming more fragile in The Brothers Karamazov. " For everyone nowadays strives to dissociate himself as much as possible from others, everyone wants to savour the fullness of life for himself, but all his best efforts lead not to fullness of life but to total selfdestruction, and instead of ending with a comprehensive evaluation of his being, he rushes headlong into complete isolation.

For everyone has dissociated himself from everyone else in our age, everyone has disappeared into his own burrow, distanced himself from the next man, hidden himself and his possessions, the result being that he has

abandoned people and has, in his turn, been abandoned. ” (Dostoevsky, 380) This is how the situation with the Russian society of the 1870s is defined by the novel character, Starets Zosima, who is especially close to the writer. The Karamazovs family in Dostoevsky’s novel is Russia in miniature – it is absolutely deprived of warmth of family ties.

Unvoiced hostility relates the father of the family, Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov, and his sons: the eldest – Dmitry – the man of spoiled nature, Ivan, the captive of loose manners, Pavel Fyodorovich Smerdyakov, a child of shame, lackey by his position and in his soul, and a novice Alyosha, who is making his best to reconcile hostile clashes that finally resulted in a dreadful crime of patricide. Dostoevsky shows that all participants of this drama share responsibility for the tragedy that had happened, and first of all, the father himself, who is, for the author, the symbol of decay and degeneration of human person.

The contemporary society thus was infected with a serious spiritual disease – “ karamazovshchina”. The essence of “ karamazovshchina” lies in the denial of all sacred things and notions that sometimes ranges up to frenzy. “ I hate the whole of Russia, Marya Kondratyevna. ” – confesses Smerdyakov. – “ In 1812 Russia was invaded by Emperor Napoleon 1 [...] and it would have been an excellent thing if we’d have been conquered by the French; [...] Everything would have been different. ” (Dostoevsky, 281-282) The same Smerdyakov “ As a child [...] had loved to string up cats and then bury them with full ceremony.

He would dress up in a sheet, to represent a chasuble, and chant while swinging some imagined censer over the dead cat. ” (Dostoevsky, 156) “

"Smerdyakovshchina" is the lackey variant of "karamazovshchina" and it demonstrably uncovers the essence of this disease - perverted passion for expressing humiliation and desecration of the most sacred values of life. As it is said in the novel "'people do love the downfall of a righteous man and his degradation'". (Dostoevsky, 415) The main bearer of "karamazovshchina" is Fyodor Pavlovich who enjoys constant humiliation of the truth, beauty and good.

His carnal relation with a foolish Lizaveta Smerdyashchaya, the result of which is the lackey Smerdyakov, is a cynical desecration of love. Fyodor Pavlovich's voluptuousness is far from being a mere animal instinct and unconscious behavior. His voluptuousness has an idea to engage in controversy with the good. Karamazov is quite conscious of meanness of his intentions and deeds, and so he derives cynical satisfaction in humiliation of the good. He is always longing for spiting upon a sacred place.

He consciously makes a row in Starets Zosima's cell and then goes with the same intention to the abbot to dinner: " He wanted to take revenge on everyone for his own tricks. [...] I can't hope to rehabilitate myself now, so I'll spit in their faces and be damned! I'll not be ashamed of myself in front of them and that's that! '" (Dostoevsky, 109) A distinctive feature of "karamazovshchina" is a cynical attitude towards the nation's bread-earner - Russian farmer: " The Russian people need thrashing" (Dostoevsky, 282).

According to Karamazov's psychology all higher values of life has to be overridden, dragged through the mud for the sake of frantic self-affirmation. There is a father Therapon living together with the saint Starets Zosima in a monastery. Outwardly this man is striving for the absolute " righteousness",

he leads an ascetic existence, exhausts himself with fasts and prayers. But what is the source of Therapon's righteousness? What is its inducement? As it turns out then, his inducement is the hatred to Starets Zosima and desire to surpass him.

Katerina Ivanovna is very kind to her offender, Mitya, all because of smoldering hatred to him and of a sense of wounded pride. The virtues turn into delirious form of self-affirmation, into magnanimity of selfishness. With the same selfishness and same magnanimity Grand Inquisitor "loves" humanity in a tale contrived by Ivan. In the world of Karamazovs all relations among people are perverted, they acquire criminal character since everyone here is trying to turn those around into "marble pedestal", the pedestal for one's selfish ego.

The world of Karamazovs is the world intersected by the crime chain reaction. Which one of the sons is father's killer? Ivan did not kill, however, this is he who first formulated the idea of permissibility of patricide. Dmitry didn't kill Fyodor Pavlovich either; he teetered on the brink of crime in a fit of hatred to his father. Fyodor Pavlovich was killed by Smerdyakov, but he only brought to an end Ivan's ideas and passion that overfilled Dmitry's embittered mind. In the world of Karamazovs the definite moral boundaries of crime cannot be restored – everybody is, to certain extent, guilty of murder.

Potential delinquency reigns the atmosphere of mutual hatred and exasperation. Every person individually and all people together are guilty, or as Starets Zosima says "As to every man being guilty for everyone and everything, quite apart from his own sins." (Dostoevsky, 379) "Remember

especially that you may not sit in judgement over anyone. \* No man on this earth can sit in judgement over other men until he realizes that he too is just such a criminal as the man standing before him, and that it is precisely he, more than anyone, who is guilty of that man's crime. " (Dostoevsky, 402)

" Karamazovshchina", according to Dostoevsky, is a Russian variant of the disease, suffered by the all European societies; this is a disease of civilization. Its reasons are the loss of moral values by a civilized man and the sin of " self-worshipping". The upper classes of Russian society, following the progressive classes of Western European society, worship their ego and consequently decay. The crisis of humanism comes, which in Russian conditions acquires forms which are particularly undisguised and defiant: " If you want to know, - argues Smerdyakov, when it comes to depravity there's nothing to choose between them and us.

They're all blackguards, but there they walk about in patent leather boots while our scoundrels go around like stinking beggars and don't see anything wrong in it". (Dostoevsky, 282) By Ivan Karamazov's formula: " for if there is no God, how can there be any crime? " (Dostoevsky, 395). The sources of Western European and Russian bourgeoisie were considered by Dostoevsky to be not in economic development of society but rather in the crisis of modern humanity, caused by " strenuously self-conscious" individual. (Lambasa et al.

, 118) Thus it can be concluded that Karamazov's decay, according to Dostoevsky, is the direct implications of isolation, solitude of a modern civilized man, it is the consequence of people's loss of feeling of great universal relation to the secular and divine world that is superior to the



animal needs of human earthy nature. Repudiation of the higher spiritual values may bring a man to indifference, loneliness, and hatred to life. This is the path kept by Ivan and Grand Inquisitor in the novel. Works Consulted Bloom, Harold.

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