

**REGENERATION - DOSTOYEVSKIJ'S IDEOLOGY,
WITH A GLANCE AT GIDE'S PARADOXICAL
"ADAPTATION"**

by

Agneta Antonia McCreath

submitted in accordance with the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY

in the subject

RUSSIAN

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

Promoter: Prof. M.K.E. Misch

Joint Promoters: Prof. J.D. Daugherty

Dr. H.P. Buchholz

September 1995

ABSTRACT

St. John 12:24, used by Dostoyevskij as an epigraph to his last and highly acclaimed novel *Братья карамазовы* (*The Brothers Karamazov*), served as an inspiration for André Gide. The title of the latter's contentious autobiography *Si le grain ne meurt* (*If it die...*), is part of the same biblical verse.

The significance of Dostoyevskij's epigraph and Gide's title are critically examined with regard to ideologies expressed in their literary works. Analogies and contrasts are scrutinised: considerable similarities but more discrepancies are discerned. Intense crises in Dostoyevskij's life led to an upward movement, reflected in his oeuvre, reaching out toward Christ's message as revealed by St. John 12:24. On the other hand, Gide started his career imbued with the above message, but gradually he deviated from it and died an atheist. His fascination with Dostoyevskij prompted him to write a profound biography on the great Russian, containing a perceptive article on *The Brothers Karamazov* when this novel was still practically unknown in the West. Dostoyevskij's pre-eminence as ideological author, psychologist, philosopher and artist is highlighted while Gide is disclosed as the moralistic immoralist of his time.

The thesis suggested here is that Dostoyevskij's ideology of self-abnegation in order to be regenerated into eternal life challenged Gide to reject this concept. Therein lies his paradoxical "adaptation".

The purpose is to uncover the religious perceptions in Dostoyevskij's four major novels, to establish that his fictional characters, though never used as

mouthpieces for the author, represent his universal philosophy and transmit the author's quest for truth to the reader, and finally to examine Gide's reaction to Dostoyevskij's influence.

KEY TERMS:

Comparative literature. Religious philosophy; St. John 12:24. Dostoyevskij: major works; psycho-analysis; evil, devils, sin, atonement, resurrection. Gide: literary criticism, veneration for Dostoyevskij, autobiography, different faiths, atheism.

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REGENERATION

DOSTOYEVSKIJ'S IDEOLOGY, WITH A GLANCE AT GIDE'S PARADOXICAL "ADAPTATION"

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to trace Dostoyevskij's religious evolution as perceived in his major novels. The revelation in his life was undoubtedly the message found in the Gospel of St. John 12:24, translated in the King James Version as: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit". This rendition will be used throughout because Dostoyevskij himself quoted from a very old source. For greater clarity it might be good to compare it with modern translations. The Revised Standard version of St. John 12:24 reads as follows: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." In the Good News Bible the above verse is rendered as: "I am telling you the truth: a grain of wheat remains no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it dies, then it produces many grains." The biblical elucidation is found in the next verse (according to the King James Version from which the two other Bible versions mentioned hardly deviate): "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal". These two verses taken from St. John seem shrouded in mystery because Christ speaks in parables. This brings about an effect of estrangement ("остранение") which intensifies His message.

Dostoyevskij's interpretation of verse 24, as made clear in his four most significant novels, is that one should die unto oneself in order to live, that there must be a striving for victory over death, for regeneration or immortality. Verse 25 seems to explain that he who loves his own image in this world will lose it, but he who can abandon his ego by being prepared for suffering and hardship in this life, will assuredly keep his nature till all eternity. This is the mysterious centre of Christian morality, the divine secret of happiness: the individual triumphs by renouncing his own desires. Dostoyevskij chose St. John 12:24 as epigraph to his last and most important novel, *Братья Карамазовы* (*The Brothers Karamazov*) and he also wanted it inscribed on his tombstone.

This same text was of great significance to André Gide as well. Already in 1908 he discovered Dostoyevskij as an even higher peak behind the dazzling height of Tolstoj, as witnessed in *Dostoïevski d'après sa correspondance*, and he enthusiastically discusses this with his audience in a series of penetrating *Causeries* on Dostoyevskij which Gide integrates, together with a treatise on *The Brothers Karamazov*, in his biography *Dostoïevski* [Gide 1923:13]. He chose the same epigraph (St. John 12:24) for his autobiography, part of which makes out the title *Si le grain ne meurt* (in English *If it die...*). The full French verse, in Louis Segond's translation, reads as follows: "En vérité, en vérité, je vous le dis, si le grain de blé qui est tombé en terre ne meurt, il reste seul; mais s'il meurt, il porte beaucoup de fruit". Gide himself used this version.

Gide felt drawn to the Russian soul as becomes clear when one studies his works and life. He admired Dostoyevskij's art and philosophy so much that he introduced the latter's last difficult novels to the French reading public. At that stage Dostoyevskij was hardly known in the West. Although he had been translated into French and some of his easier works had been discussed, including his major novel *Преступление и Наказание* (*Crime and Punishment*), no attempt had yet been made to comment on his three last

incomparable novels: *Идиот* (*The Idiot*), *Бесы* (*The Devils*) and *Братья Карамазовы* (*The Brothers Karamazov*). Gide realised that Dostoyevskij's historical dimension was future-orientated, whereas Turgenev (then very much in vogue, particularly in France) and Tolstoj were fixed to the past. So Gide, with his keen insight into Dostoyevskij (as will be illustrated), did pioneering work with his *Dostoïevski*. The French author grasped that to whatever extent Dostoyevskij's fictional characters might bear the mark of their creator, they never become symbolical of some idea; they inevitably stay within the range of humanity. They are never types, they remain very special individuals, depicted in the most original way [Gide 1923:71]. The perceptive leading article on Dostoyevskij's last major work in this exploratory biography, calls *The Brothers Karamazov*, "un chef-d'oeuvre foisonnant" ("an abundant masterpiece") [Gide 1923:61]. On the same page he writes that this book presents a dozen absolutely colossal personalities in whom passions reach their highest peak.

The Russian author's strong influence on Gide's writings, particularly on his autobiography, will be examined. At this juncture the question arises why Gide repeated Dostoyevskij's epigraph and what he intended it to mean. It is interesting to note that Gide uses the epigraph, part of which is the title of his work, in a paradoxical way. Why did he create a paradox? Since Gide was the first commentator on *The Brothers Karamazov* in France, it seems apparent that no literary scholar could have explored this point before Gide. If the above work by Dostoyevskij had been discovered as a masterpiece elsewhere in Europe before 1908, the sophisticated French reading public of that time would have known about it. It also appears that a comparison of the application of St. John's text by the two authors under discussion has not been made subsequently by any writer. Therefore the aim is to try and fill the existing vacuum in this respect.

The proposed thesis is that Dostoyevskij's views on regeneration by self-abnegation, in order to attain heavenly realms, prompted Gide to reflect upon this teaching and finally to reject it. This will be proved by showing how Dostoyevskij's fictional characters shed light on the author's religious vision, how his quest for the ultimate truth is revealed to the reader and how he influenced Gide. The biblical text of St. John 12:24 will be studied in order to show how Dostoyevskij tried to come to grips with it, how his life's many crises (reflected in his works) led him to absorb its message and make it the crucial issue in his existence. The chronological evolution of this thought-process, in his works under discussion, require and acquire progressively more attention in this thesis, so that, from the short preliminary *Double* and *Notes from Underground*, then through *Crime and Punishment* onwards, they will gradually be dealt with more extensively and lengthily in order to reach a climax with *The Brothers Karamazov* that constitutes the longest chapter. The perceptible progress in the unfolding of Dostoyevskij's ideas from novel to novel, is seized upon by Gide: "Il était de ces rares génies qui s'avancent d'oeuvre en oeuvre, par une sorte de progression continue, jusqu'à ce que la mort les vienne brusquement interrompre" [Gide 1923:60]. ("He was one of those rare geniuses who advance from work to work, in a sort of continual progression, till death comes to interrupt all"). Dostoyevskij was pleased with his last novel because he felt he had written something newer, more complete and more original than before. It is noteworthy that this great novel was found to be Tolstoj's bed-side book at the time of the latter's death.

On the other hand, Gide, who also reached out to the teaching in St. John's verse, gradually deviated from it and was eventually led to abandon religious faith. While concentrating on Dostoyevskij's genius as exposed in his above-mentioned major novels, this thesis will examine his influence on Gide, as evidenced generally in the latter's work, with special reference to *Si le grain ne meurt*. Gide's evolution as thinker can be traced in this autobiography which leads the reader through St. John 12:24, but then eventually guides him in a

totally different direction where the French author eventually reaches a solution to life's enigma, completely at variance with Dostoyevskij's. Here the reader is struck by Gide's moral courage to divulge his personal sexual preferences.

After a religious search in diverse directions, the ways of the two authors cross in St. John 12:24. Dostoyevskij finds his ultimate truth here, by submitting to suffering and transcending it. To stress this message one can read Christ's words as quoted by St. Matthew: "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" [10:38]. On the other hand Gide's evolution gradually led to the final realisation that life leads to nothing. Boisdeffre¹ remarked that he made an interminable and "imperturbable effort pour s'arracher à l'emprise du Christ" [Boisdeffre 1963:199] so that he could finally repeat: "Credo non, Je [sic] crois...qu'il n'y a rien" [Boisdeffre 1963:200]. Gide's motives for taking this course will be discussed in later chapters.

Susan Sontag observes crisply in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* that interpretation is "the revenge of the intellect upon art" [Sontag 1966:7] and "the compliment that mediocrity pays to genius" [Sontag 1966:8]. Instead of attempting to analyse, interpret and explain everything, should one not try to retain a certain flavour of the individualism and mystery of the authors under scrutiny? So the aim here is rather to follow the recommendation of Robert Alter whose whole book, *The Pleasures of Reading in an ideological Age*, pleads for literature as a source of complex pleasures and insight. Therefore this research in literature will be as much an intellectual exercise, as a striving to create literary enjoyment by studying two extremely interesting writers, each

1 French secondary sources will be quoted in French.

unique in his own way, totally different the one from the other: the sombre Russian Slavophil and the sophisticated French libertine, each representing his own culture, yet having, at the same time, a strong common bond. An attempt will be made to point out initial similarities and then a growing divergence between these two authors in a contextual and comparative way.

Whilst both writers are introspective, Gide's self-scrutiny is more evident in his journals, whereas Dostoyevskij uses his fictional characters to indulge in his soul-searching. Therefore Dostoyevskij's four voluminous major works will be examined carefully, two earlier short narratives being used as well as an introduction to his evolution as writer and thinker, while Gide's development will be discussed briefly according to the revelations contained in his journals but particularly in the early autobiography *Si le grain ne meurt*.

Fyodor Michailovich Dostoyevskij (1821-1881) was the second of seven children. His father, an army doctor, was tyrannical, highly-strung and stingy. The feelings of the young Dostoevskij towards his father were ambivalent. He realised very early that he had to obey his "rigidly inflexible and emotionally unstable father who tended to identify his own wishes with the sacred dictates of God Himself", as Joseph Frank, the American scholar and authority on Dostoyevskij, put it [Frank 1976:38]. However, the above biographer also felt that such negative sensations were counterbalanced by an instinct to comply with his father's authoritarian wishes and by his growing realisation that Dr. Dostoyevskij was genuinely dedicated to the welfare of his family. The latter certainly took an interest in his children: he used to read books aloud to them and concerned himself with their education.

Fluctuating feelings of resentment and filial piety made the young Dostoyevskij aware of psychological paradoxes whose exploration was to become synonymous with his genius. This ambivalence of his own psyche is

evidently at the root of his Christian ideal to overcome his inimical emotions by self-transcendence, to understand and forgive his father. Joseph Frank considers Dostoyevskij's achievement as deriving from the synthesis of this early psychic need with his religious convictions [Frank 1976:38-41].

At the age of sixteen Dostoyevskij lost his beloved mother who died of tuberculosis. Without her support his father broke down morally and started drinking heavily. Their serfs, deprived of her care, were left destitute and treated mercilessly. Two years later they murdered Dostoyevskij senior, just after his son Fyodor had written him a resentful letter. This made him feel guilty and responsible for his father's death. At this stage in his life the young Dostoevskij came to the conclusion that man is an enigma. Solving this enigma of human life, of a sudden eruption of irrational, uncontrollable, and destructive forces both within the world and in the human psyche and the enigma of the incalculable moral consequences of all human actions, even of his own permissible demands on his father, was to become his life's task [Frank 1976:91]. Subsequently he managed to create universal and cosmic values which would reach their fulfillment with man's final destiny.

The position of André Paul Guillaume Gide (1869-1951), as the only child of devoted and well-to-do parents, was quite different. One reads in *Si le grain ne meurt* that his father was extremely gentle, that his colleagues called him *Vir probus* and that the young André venerated him. But on the same page the author says: "...mon père ne s'occupait guère de moi. Il passait la plus grande partie du jour, enfermé dans un vaste cabinet de travail un peu sombre, où je n'avais accès que lorsqu'il m'invitait à y venir" [Gide 1954:353]. ("My father [...] gave very little of his time to me. He spent most of the day shut up in a vast and rather dark study, into which I was only allowed when he expressly invited me" - translated by Dorothy Bussy [Gide 1951:8]. There his father used to read aloud to him. At a very young age he lost this father whom he

greatly admired. Henceforth he was surrounded by pious, indulgent women who tried to direct him into the right pursuits. Of great importance is the fact that, unlike Dostoyevskij, he was given all the opportunities to live and write at leisure, without any financial problems or pressure from publishers.

Dostoyevskij fascinated him. This is well-known since the elementary textbook by Lagarde & Michard states with reference to Gide, that Dostoyevskij "l'intéressait au plus haut point" [1962:297] and puts forward the view that it is not only because of the psychology of his fictional characters, but also because of his views about God, about temptation and the presence of the "devil" [Lagarde & Michard 1962:297]. Indeed, Gide was naturally attracted to these problems as exposed by the great Russian. Apart from his pioneering work on Dostoyevskij himself, his article on *The Brothers Karamazov* came as a revelation to Western readers in those early years.

Both authors grew up nourished by the Bible: Dostoyevskij in 19th century Russia, Gide in France, half a century later. They both started off in life as devout Christians. Dostoyevskij was born in Moscow, with its innumerable churches capped by golden cupolas, with their bells pealing and endless religious processions. Against this background of a holy city, his family was nurtured on the Gospels almost from the cradle. Its members were scrupulously faithful about fulfilling all customary obligations of the Orthodox Church. Every Sunday and religious holiday they unfailingly went to church for mass and to vespers on the preceding evening [Frank 1976:51].

Gide was also born into a very pious family. It belonged to the small, closely knit, earnest Protestant community in France to which he adhered fervently for many years. As a youth he used to walk around with a Bible in his pocket [Gide *If it die...* 1951:190]. Yet, later he devoted himself to examining

religion, sexuality, politics and morality, these being the great controversies of his time. However, only the significance of his religious ideas will be examined for purposes of this study.

The intention is to show the diverging creed of the above authors; they went in different directions, each having changed his religious orientation at times and having undergone spiritual crises.

As a naively devout youth Dostoyevskij believed in God and Christ, but after meeting young socialists, his religious ideologies took a turn. The famous critic, Belinskij, who had greatly admired the young writer of *Бедные Люди* (*Poor Folk*), saw in him a socialist. Subsequently the latter wrote about Belinskij: "I found him a passionate socialist, and, straight off the bat, he embarked upon atheism" [Dostoyevskij 1954:6]. Dostoyevskij started mixing with liberals and attending meetings of subversive activists. Further in his *Diary* Dostoyevskij wrote: "...as a socialist, he had to destroy Christianity in the first place. He knew that the revolution must necessarily begin with atheism. He had to dethrone that religion whence the moral foundations of the society rejected by him had sprung up" [Dostoyevskij 1954:7]. Though Belinskij had a strong influence on young radicals, it is not likely that he converted Dostoyevskij to atheism, though the latter felt attracted to atheist humanism [Frank 1976:197]. Finally the handsome smooth-speaking Speshnev who propagandized "for Socialism, atheism, terrorism, everything, everything that is good in the world", as Frank put it [1976:263-264], won him over to atheism and the revolutionary cause. During this period of political agitation, while Dostoyevskij went through an intense religious crisis, he was in a highly excitable nervous condition.

Speshnev, the Mephistopheles, as Frank calls him [1976:270], had tempted Dostoyevskij to follow him. It paved the way for his arrest, condemnation,

imprisonment and exile. During this period the only book which the authorities allowed Dostoyevskij was the Bible. Later he wrote from Omsk on February 22, 1854, asking his brother Michail to send him the Koran [Dostoyevskij 1961:67]. Shortly thereafter, in a letter dated March 1854, he wrote to Mme. N.D. Fonvizin that he was longing to find faith and truth:

[...] one does, "like dry grass", thirst after faith, and [...] one finds it in the end, solely and simply because one sees the truth more clearly when one is unhappy. I want to say to you, about myself, that I am a child of this age, a child of unfaith and scepticism, and probably (indeed I know it) shall remain so to the end of my life. How dreadfully has it tormented me (and torments me even now) - this longing for faith, which is all the stronger for the proofs I have against it. And yet God gives me sometimes moments of perfect peace; in such moments I love and believe that I am loved; in such moments I have formulated my creed, wherein all is clear and holy to me. This creed is extremely simple; here it is: I believe that there is nothing lovelier, deeper, more sympathetic, more rational, more manly, and more perfect than the Saviour; I say to myself with jealous love that not only is there no one else like Him, but that there could be no one. I would say even more: If anyone could prove to me that Christ is outside the truth, and if the truth really did exclude Christ, I should prefer to stay with Christ and not with truth. [Dostoyevskij 1961:70-71].

Much later, in 1867, despite the uncertainty he still had about the existence of God, he wrote (about Turgenev) to Maikov: "He told me he was an uncompromising atheist. My God! It is to Deism that we owe the Saviour..." [1961:121]. This was the period after the publication of *Crime and Punishment* in which the hero wrestles with this problem. Dostoyevskij had again become a fervent adherent of the Russian Orthodox faith with its strong emphasis on the Trinity. The acute awareness of a personal conscience, which is the motive force to repentance in all his guilt-ridden fictional characters, is a revelation of the Holy Spirit, directly originating from God. Dostoyevskij's condemnation of Turgenev's atheism and his own cry: "My God!" followed by his defense of Deism, seem to indicate his intense need of God.

E.J. Brown remarks that only "isolation and suffering bestow upon a human being the mark of authenticity" [Brown 1982:275]. This statement could apply to both Dostoyevskij and all his great characters who see in self-abnegation the road to regeneration. It is a mystical realisation, as revealed by St. John 12:24, that man has to die to sin for the spirit to be resurrected, that one's ego has to be crucified, that one has to emerge reborn in order to reach out to a deeper spirituality and that the psyche has to die in order to be born to the holy mystery of eternal life. This is the concept of resurrection or regeneration.

An attempt will be made to prove that this is the central truth at the heart of Dostoyevskij's Christian faith, and that he takes it to its ultimate conclusion. Two verses in Christ's Sermon on the Mount according to St. Matthew 5:4: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" and 10: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's [sic] is the kingdom of heaven", made Dostoyevskij believe that suffering leads to sacred spheres. In a letter to his niece, Sofia Alexandrovna, dated August 17, 1870, he wrote: "Without pain, one comprehends not joy. Ideals are purified by suffering, as gold is by fire" [1961:206]. The crucible of fire is like pruning which is necessary in order to produce fruit. "Mankind must strive for his Heaven" [1961:206], since the question is not whether one reaches it, but how devoted one is to the search. This becomes a Leitmotif in his works.

Unlike Dostoyevskij, Gide came to disapprove of this concept, revolting against his Protestant Bible with its Calvinistic prescriptive morality. Although quotations from the Bible, especially from the Gospels, abound in his works, he looks for the "nourritures terrestres" (fruits of the earth) in a Hedonistic way, questions and eventually rejects biblical teachings. We are struck by the daring juxtaposition of religious rigour and the intoxication of liberated man.

He admired the depths of Dostoyevskij's mystic "âme slave", with its access to Divinity during extraordinary flashes of revelation, usually seconds before an epileptic seizure. Whilst Gide sees mysticism as a component of the Russian Orthodox Church, he interprets Calvinism as a harsh teaching of the selected favoured few who will be admitted through the Narrow Gate which is the main theme of *La porte étroite*. He cannot reconcile himself to this idea, which is debated in his *Immoraliste*, whose hero selfishly looks for the gratification of his own pleasure. Neither does he accept readily St. Paul's admonitions as exposed in *La symphonie pastorale*. He writes in the section *Morale chrétienne* of his *Journal 1889-1939*: "Je m'étonne que le protestantisme, en repoussant les hiérarchies de l'Eglise, n'ait pas repoussé du même coup les oppressantes institutions de Saint Paul, le dogmatisme de ses épîtres, pour ne relever plus que des seuls Evangiles" [1951a:96]. ("I am amazed that Protestantism, while rejecting the hierarchies of the Church, did not at the same time reject the oppressive institutions of St. Paul, the dogmatism of his epistles, in order to derive from the Gospels alone" - translated by O'Brien in *The Journals of André Gide 1889-1913* [Gide 1951c:78]). His conversion to the Catholic faith, mainly under the influence of Paul Claudel, did not satisfy him either. Neither did his subsequent communist ideology.

In 1936 Gide was invited as an official guest of the Soviet Union to the U.S.S.R. Jean-Pierre Cap comments that, in spite of the Soviets' high praise for him, the French author became disillusioned:

Although he was acclaimed there as the greatest living author and showered with the most flattering honors, the little that he did see of the Soviet Union, terrorized by the genocidal famine in the Ukraine and by Stalin's purges, dampened his enthusiasm for communism. Above all, he was shocked by the absence of freedom and truth, as well as by the cynicism and brutality of Soviet leaders toward the people. Gide had the courage to recognize his error of supporting communism in his *Retouches à mon Retour de l'URSS* (1937) [Cap 1990:145].

Regarding Dostoyevskij's stay in Gide's fatherland, one recognizes that it was for other than ideological reasons: he wanted to be reunited with the passionate and capricious Apollinaria (Polina) Suslova. The author was involved in an affair reminiscent of his own novels: she was in love with a handsome Spaniard who rejected her. Her character appears later in the wild, unpredictable Nastasya Filippovna (*The Idiot*) and in the similarly erratic Grushenka of *The Brothers Karamazov*. This becomes quite obvious when one reads these two novels: the fictional characters are endowed with Suslova's impetuosity, her irrational and irresponsible behaviour. Besides, it is also mentioned in Henri Troyat's biography on Dostoyevskij [287 & 355].

Human beings, and intellectuals in particular, grope for something all the time - that is a general truism. As quoted above: "Mankind must strive for his Heaven" [Dostoyevskij 1961:206]. All are travellers on a road hoping to progress like pilgrims towards truth. Likewise, throughout their lives, Dostoyevskij and Gide were confronted with problems arising from their search to understand the ultimate and eternal truth. The dualistic philosophy of spirit versus matter and soul versus body is the most characteristic feature in the works of both Dostoyevskij and Gide. It is of particular interest as their approach is so totally different. Often a conviction comes and goes, or changes according to cultural background or circumstances; sometimes it is abandoned. However, most thinkers are looking for a single, strong, everlasting, vertical spill around which life, earth and universe, the whole creation, revolves and evolves. Otherwise life on our small planet, spinning around in the vast cosmos, would seem senseless and empty. Dostoyevskij and Gide both yearned for the divine reality revealed in Jesus Christ. As part of the Godhead, He says, according to St. John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, the life". He then would be the living truth. If that were not the case, as has been noted above, Dostoyevskij would prefer Christ if he had to choose between the two. This absolute truth, for which each of them is looking,

likewise springs from their own conception of it, formed by their own body of ideas, which means that it becomes an ideology.

Both writers under discussion knew Christianity as a revealed religion. This revelation is brought to humanity through nature [Acts 14:17], through the Bible [II Timothy 3:16] and through Jesus Christ [St. John 1:14 and 20:31]. These three avenues can be traced in the writings of both authors. Dostoyevskij's view, as propounded in his major works, is that this ultimate truth can be reached by a mystic revelation, such as that of Father Zossima (*The Brothers Karamazov*), or in the beauty of nature which Prince Myshkin beholds, even in a single leaf as gazed at by Kirilov (*The Devils*). Dostoyevskij also knew that being childlike and simple like the Idiot, is a condition open to divine revelation. At the same time he realised that there was "absolute incompatibility between reason and faith" [Frank 1976:198] which prompted his creation of so many irrational characters. Though this conviction shines through the pages of his major novels, it is illustrated particularly in the reasoning by the intellectual atheist, Ivan Karamazov, which cannot lead him to faith.

Gide must have understood Dostoyevskij's message, since his work on Dostoyevskij reveals great insight into the latter's thinking. Nevertheless he, the European intellectual, cannot fathom the mysticism of the Russian slavic soul. Ironically Vaclav Cherny, himself a Slav in France, finds this explanation of the "âme slave" unacceptable. He is "at once shattered and maddeningly exalted" by Dostoyevskij whom he experiences as a mystic and a "bizarre genius" [Cherny 1975:24]. Be that as it may, Dostoyevskij's mysticism is not doubted, and it is paradoxical that Gide, despite his true understanding, reasons about faith.

Both authors sincerely follow their individual convictions; so each one's course goes in a different direction. A long spiritual quest drives Dostoyevskij

towards Christ, the part of the godhead who came down to earth as a human being, to suffer with and for humanity, thereby redeeming it. He seems to agree with St. John who wrote: "We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we know the true God. We live in union with the true God - in union with his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and this is eternal life" [I John 5:20]. Gide, after an equally long and intense search comes to the final conclusion that there is nothing after death. The lives and oeuvres of the two writers demonstrate the lure of opposite ways: Dostoyevskij believes that sacrifice is desirable and leads to regeneration; Gide eventually realises that he must obey the dictates of his nature and savour the earth's fruits. These ideas are evident in their lives and in most of their works, as will be illustrated.

Gide's capital work on Dostoyevskij reveals his veneration for the great Russian writer. At its start Gide declared that it would be difficult to follow the Russian's thoughts chronologically, as his important ideas are pursued, reconsidered and intensified all the time in his major novels:

[...] it seemed to me [...] that the ideas I had noted down deserved our prolonged attention, but that the chronological order of exposition, which a biography would require, was perhaps not the best. It is often awkward to unravel the tangle of those ideas, which Dostoyevsky braids tightly together in each of his major works; but from book to book we find the same ones; they are what matter to me...[O'Brien, 1953:3].

Gide's instinctive understanding of Dostoyevskij at a time when comprehensive and true translations in French on the great Russian did not yet exist, is quite uncanny. During one of his lectures in the Vieux-Colombier in 1911, published in his *Dostoïevski* he says:

Combien d'états bizarres, pathologiques, anormaux ne reconnâtrons-nous pas, autour de nous ou en nous-mêmes, avertis par la lecture des oeuvres de Dostoïevski? Oui, vraiment, je crois que Dostoïevski nous ouvre les yeux sur certains phénomènes, qui peut-être ne sont pas rares - mais que simplement nous n'avions pas su remarquer [1923:153]. (How many bizarre, pathological, abnormal conditions do we not

recognise around us or in ourselves, alerted by reading Dostoyevskij's works? Yes, truly, I believe that Dostoyevskij opens our eyes to certain phenomena, which are perhaps not unusual - but which we simply were not able to observe).

He distinguishes three main regions in Dostoyevskij's works: the first belongs to the intellectuals where the soul is untouched, a condition which can lead to psychic instability; the second belongs to the passions, a stormy area, where the soul is not touched either, and this state can lead to chaos; then the third is a deeper sphere, characterized by the regeneration desired by many of Dostoyevskij's fictional characters, the sphere where Myshkin (*The Idiot*) is to be found, leading to death in which true existence originates. Of course the last region is the main one, recurring many times. The circumstances may differ, the personalities may be divergent, but the drive towards eternal life is ever-present.

This drive did not slow down as Dostoyevskij grew older. The French author likens him to Rembrandt and Beethoven who reached an ardent, a sure and violent aggravation of thought while aging [Gide 1923:60]. In the various forms of art expressed by these three mature geniuses, the sacred can be sensed, dark and deeply nuanced. In Dostoyevskij's compositions the distribution of light is very significant, but of even greater importance are the shadows. He respects and protects his tenebrous areas.

Gide tries to find a solution to his ethical problem in Dostoyevskij's thought processes. His biography of the latter, according to Boisdeffre, reflects his own anguished state, similar to the Russian's:

[...] une dernière tentative de rattacher sa conception de l'homme à une éthique d'apparence chrétienne: ce qu'il a cherché dans l'oeuvre du grand écrivain slave, c'est une inquiétude analogue à la sienne, et dans l'équivoque de sa conception romanesque, dans le grouillement de ses inquiétants personnages, cette fraternité des abîmes, ce besoin qu'ont les romanciers de génie de repousser toujours les limites reconnus, d'élargir sans cesse la connaissance de l'homme, de réduire un peu plus

le domaine de l'inconscient. Ce qu'il aime encore en Dostoïewski, c'est la présence en lui, simultanée, du bien et du mal. Et il affirme - ici maints romanciers contemporains lui donneraient raison - que le chaos de Dostoïewski ne peut mener qu'au christianisme: "Non, ce n'est pas à l'anarchie que nous mène Dostoïewski; mais simplement à l'Évangile". Et Gide, tirant argument de "l'horreur" qu'inspirait à Dostoïewski l'Église catholique, de conclure: "Je ne connais pas d'auteur à la fois plus chrétien et moins catholique" [Boisdeffre 1963:154].

On the 28th August 1941 Gide wrote that he went to meet the great Russian émigré writer, Ivan Bunin (1870-1953). He found his visit rather disappointing: "car, malgré de cordiaux efforts de part et d'autre, le vrai contact ne s'est pas établi. L'un fait trop peu de cas de ce que l'autre admire. Son culte pour Tolstoï me gêne autant que son mépris pour Dostoïevski, pour Chhtchédrine, pour Sologoub. Décidément, nous n'avons pas les mêmes saints, les mêmes dieux" [1954:94]. ("for, despite cordial efforts on both sides, real contact was not established. One esteems too little what the other admires. His cult for Tolstoy embarrasses me as much as his scorn for Dostoevsky, for Shchedrin, for Sologub. Decidedly we do not have the same saints, the same gods" - translated by O'Brien, Gide 1951b:83].

It is paradoxical that Gide, who admired Dostoyevskij so much, does not come to grips with his religious faith - he is driven away from God and eventually dies peacefully as an atheist. For Gide sees sacrifice as a negation of life. He demonstrates this in his own life and particularly in *La porte étroite* where the useless self-abnegation of Alissa causes unhappiness to everyone concerned. Here he could even make a parody of Dostoyevskij's most deep-felt belief, as found in St. John 12:24, that one has to sacrifice one's ego in order to attain heavenly bliss.

These divergent attitudes constitute the pivotal point of this research, as they flow directly from the epigraph chosen by both writers for their main inspiration. It expressed Dostoyevskij's ideal which was refuted by Gide in

different ways in his works and particularly in his autobiography. The ideological dimension of both authors' work will be stressed, since the research is centred on this plane, but the debate will be focussed only on their religious convictions. Why the ideologies came into being will also be examined, mainly on the autobiographical and psychological level. Finally a cursory glance will be cast on how and in what literary form these ideas are expressed, as the distinction between the form or the physical structure of a text and its function are most pertinent.

Generally speaking Russian literature is renowned for its profound thought processes, the complexities of its psychological insight, whereas French literature is famous for its impeccable form and style. Both Dostoyevskij and Gide are excellent representatives of this view. It is interesting to note here that Dostoyevskij is prepared to sacrifice the artistic form to his "great idea". Gide remarks in his *Dostoïevski* on the great man himself as revealed in his *Correspondance*: "On s'attend à trouver un dieu; on touche un homme - malade, pauvre, peinant sans cesse et singulièrement dépourvu de cette pseudo-qualité qu'il reprochait tant au Français: l'éloquence" [Gide 1923:19]. ("One expects to find a god; one touches a man - ill, poor, struggling incessantly and singularly lacking in that pseudo-quality, that he criticised so much in French authors: eloquence").

So, while Dostoyevskij avoids all eloquence, his artistic values are to be found par excellence, as Todorov remarks, in "the parallelism of the situations [...] marked either by the identity of the character or by some resemblance in the details" [1993:86]. As such Dostoyevskij's aesthetics can be traced in his novels' thematical excursions. Despite their polyphony, the style remains rather simple and unadorned; at times his writing seems quite naked. But Dostoyevskij disliked all forms of rhetoric. Western writers characterise Russian literature by its infinite depth, and in this respect Dostoyevskij is unequalled. According to him art's depth is to be found in its fictional

characters. External portraits of his heroes, directly from the author or from the narrator or through other characters, do not perform the function of finalising them, since they do not create a fixed and predetermining image. On the contrary, the inner unfinalisability of Dostoyevskij's protagonists is one of the most important features of his art. Since he never completely explains his heroes, they always astound the reader by what they say and do, while preserving within themselves the eternal secret of existence. Because the multi-faceted genre of the novel is the most suitable vehicle for his psychological exploration, his genius is to be discovered in his novels, particularly in the four last major ones, while the two introductory works, which will be discussed here by way of prelude, are short novels.

Gide's approach to art is very different. He uses a multitude of different genres, and typical of French authors in general, they are eloquently clothed in an elegant style, while the interdependence of ideology and literary art remains evident. In his Introduction to *Gide's Journals* Justin O'Brien writes: "As a stylist André Gide has always been admired even by those of his countrymen who are least sympathetic to his "message". The apparent paradox of his basing his aesthetics on the very classical austerity that he had fled on the ethical plane has been pointed out by commentators. One even suggests that his original puritanism simply deviated into literary purism, since if the puritan is a purist in morals, the purist is also a puritan in taste" [O'Brien 1951:xv].

CHAPTER 1

THE TWO AUTHORS AND THEIR LITERARY CAREERS

Before dealing with the oeuvres of Dostoyevskij and Gide, an examination of both these writers is necessary in this chapter, since they themselves, their texts and the reader should become interrelated in order for the latter to understand hidden thoughts and meanings.

There are many similarities and dissimilarities between these two writers. Both Dostoyevskij's and Gide's complicated natures are widely acknowledged. This complexity is reflected in their extensive writings: long philosophical discussions about the meaning of life by the major fictional characters are Dostoyevskij's hallmark, whereas Gide's own desires and anguish are mainly projected in his *Journaux* or on autobiographical characters.

Already as youngsters they felt the compulsion to write and each started off at an early age on a long literary career: the one in the Russian and the other in the French capital. They both became prolific writers. Both were introspective as is evidenced in their works abounding with autobiographical detail.

In this respect their approach to literature was also similar in that their life experience was shaped into works of art. In both cases these works were out of step with the spirit and intellectual atmosphere of the day. Their attitude towards the reigning life style was born of inner and outer conflicts caused by a society that was repulsive to Dostoyevskij and Gide alike: to the first because of its money-based structure and social class distinctions, to the latter because of its many taboos. In Dostoyevskij's writings we can discern, according to

Joseph Frank, "a rankling uncertainty about status that helps to explain his acute understanding for the psychological scars inflicted by social inequality" [Vol.I 1976:8]. On the other hand, the psychological hurt discernible in Gide was inflicted by social prejudices. Yet it is this scarring that conferred the mark of authenticity on both writers who became consummate literary artists as well as philosophers and critics.

Unwittingly most writers leave autobiographical traces in their works: in the oeuvres of Dostoyevskij and Gide almost their entire life can be found. The latter wrote to Bouhélier in 1897, as quoted by Davet: "[...] ce que d'autres appellent 'la carrière littéraire' et que je veux appeler ma vie" [1948:14], ("[...] what others call 'literary career' and what I want to call my life"). As true art is based to a greater or lesser extent on the artist's experience, O'Brien observes in his *Portrait of André Gide* that the latter's writings cannot be divorced from the facts of his life, nor his biography from his literary achievement. The one projects light upon the other, making it possible for us to understand both [O'Brien 1953:3]. In the same work one reads:

... he would be utterly incapable of creating the character at all if he did not contain at least a germ of that character within himself...Elsewhere he says that "if it happens that I use myself as a model (and sometimes it seems to me that there can be no other exact way of painting), this is because I first began by becoming the very one I wanted to portray". Again and again he attempted to clarify this relationship between creator and creature [1953:7].

Likewise autobiographical features abound in Dostoyevskij's works. His life can be traced in described events, circumstances and particularly in his protagonists: the morally depraved drunkard who was his father in later life can be detected in Lebedev (*The Idiot*), in Lebyadkin (*The Demons*) and in father Karamazov (who, like Dostoyevskij senior, was murdered); his tubercular mother and his first wife can be found in Mrs. Marmeladov whose death is vividly described (*Crime and Punishment*); Sonia (*Crime and Punishment*) was a saintly woman like his mother; the irrational passionate

woman who was his mistress Polina Suslova is portrayed in Nastasya Filipovna (*The Idiot*) and Grushenka (*The Brothers Karamazov*). Dostoyevskij depicted himself in the compulsive gambler who is the hero of *The Gambler*. Like the author too Raskol'nikov (*Crime and Punishment*) is exiled to Siberia and Dmitrij Karamazov is convicted despite his innocence to a sentence of exile in Siberia. In the *Insulted and Injured* the hero is an impoverished young author who suffers from a nervous condition at night. Like the young Dostoyevskij he was afraid of going to bed since he experienced an abnormal feeling of terror such as people sense who fear death. In these nocturnal moments a psychic imbalance manifests itself - though the mind is very clear, an inner splitting seems to occur accompanied by ghastly sensations of dying. In *The Brothers Karamazov* Ivan suffers from the same symptoms after his father's murder. These personalities share Dostoyevskij's uncontrollable nervous apprehension with its vague division between clear-headed reasoning and the irrational. Such psychic experiences led to Dostoyevskij's belief that self-confident rationalism cannot fully explain human existence.

Both authors moved in literary circles and salons where works were read and discussed. Both of them dreamt of a literary career. Both were quite precocious in their youth.

At the age of sixteen Dostoyevskij wrote to his brother Michail about his soul's unease:

I don't know if my gloomy mood will ever leave me. And to think that such a state of mind is allotted to man alone - the atmosphere of his soul seems compounded of a mixture of the heavenly and the earthly. What an unnatural product, then, is he, since the law of spiritual nature is in him violated [...] This earth seems to me a purgatory for divine spirits who have been assailed by sinful thoughts. I feel that our world has become one immense Negative, and that everything noble, beautiful, and divine, has turned itself into a satire [1961:3].

Dostoyevskij's remark about the human soul being compounded of a mixture of the heavenly and the earthly is most apt à propos of Gide and his writings.

Within the latter and his protagonists there is a continual conflict between the will to adhere to moral principles and the strong call of the senses.

Gide had a nervous, highly-strung nature. When he was twenty-one years old he wrote in his *Journal*, 18 March 1890:

J'ai la tête encombrée de mon oeuvre; elle se démène dans ma tête; je ne peux plus lire, non plus écrire; elle s'interpose toujours entre le livre et mes yeux. C'est une inquiétude d'esprit intolérable. Parfois des rages me prennent de lâcher tout, tout de suite [...] [1951a:16]. ("My head is cluttered with my work; it tosses about in my head; I can no more read than write; it always gets between the book and my eyes. This is an intolerable mental restlessness. At times I am seized by a mad desire to drop everything, at once [...]" - translated by O'Brien [Gide 1949a:6]).

Dostoyevskij was also aware of his strangely excitable nature and he simply had to put his inner turbulence into words to release his nervous tension. His mother called him "настоящий огонь" (real fire) - a typical "Sturm und Drang" figure: very intense, highly-strung, given to fits of ecstasy and depression. Joseph Frank records that as a young man Dostoyevskij frequently complained to Dr. Riesenkampf about an uneasy feeling, leading to insomnia with subsequent irritability:

At such times he got up and spent the rest of the night reading, or most often in working on various stories he wanted to write. Such bouts of insomnia were always followed by periods of extreme irritability, when he would quarrel with everybody for little or no reason" [1976:114].

Creative writing was his only cure, but conflict with life's circumstances, his doubts and agonies as expressed in his art led in turn to mental distress and constant nervous tension which could only be alleviated by more writing. But he wrote in an anguished, feverish state, causing pain to an overwrought system, which often retaliated by an epileptic attack. So his life was marked by over-stimulation, humiliation, suffering and stress. He realised that, despite the brevity of human life, one cannot proceed too fast towards the true goal - there is no short cut in the process to psychic health.

In March 1856 Dostoyevskij wrote to General Totleben: "[...] I had fallen into hypochondria. [...] I was exaggeratedly irritable, had a morbid developed sensibility, and the power of distorting the most ordinary events into things immeasurable" [1961:92]. So while a strong inner impulse drove him to creative, and, subconsciously, autobiographical writing in order to soothe his strained state, writing also stimulated his nervous system. That is why his creative force became obsessive.

Whereas Dostoyevskij had been a hypochondriac for a certain period in his life, Gide's hypochondria was his usual condition. He also suffered from insomnia to which he alludes often in his *Journal*. Invariably he then complained about depression as well.

Both he and Dostoyevskij became intolerable under the stress of success or failure at the start of their career. Each had to strike a pose: Dostoyevskij flitted between arrogance and exaggerated humility; Gide became affected and dandy-like in order to attract attention. Both were surrounded by friends (false and true ones) and enemies, by admiration and envy. Each of them was aware of his genius, yet doubting it at the same time.

Although Gide's debut was practically unnoticed, he became a world-renowned Nobel prize winner towards the end of his career. As a young writer he had "passionnément désiré la gloire" [1954:525] ("passionately desired fame" [1951:222]). When, to his disappointment, his first book, *Les Cahiers d'André Walter*, did not sell, he became convinced that "la qualité des applaudissements importe bien davantage que leur nombre [1954:525] ("the importance of applause lies in its quality and not in its quantity" - translated by Dorothy Bussy [Gide 1951:222]). Later Gide quotes Dostoyevskij saying: "Ce qui est compris trop rapidement n'est pas de longue durée" [1923:15]. ("What is understood too fast, will not last"). Klaus Mann's work on Gide opens with an epigraph quoting the latter who asks his readers: "Ne me comprenez pas si

vite, je vous en prie!" ("Don't understand me too quickly, please!"). The other part of this epigraph is the remark made by Rainer Maria Rilke: "Fame is the sum of all misconceptions circulating about one individual" [Mann 1943:2].

Contrary to what happened to Gide, Dostoyevskij started his literary career on an extremely high note, but soon thereafter found himself unacceptable to the reading public. The high note was struck when the famous critic Belinskij¹ wrote about the manuscript of his first work *Poor Folk*:

I haven't been able to tear myself away from it for almost two days now. It's a novel by a beginner, a new talent; what this gentleman looks like and what his mental capacity is I do not know as yet, but his novel reveals such secrets of life and characters in Russia as no one before him even dreamed of [Frank 1976:138].

Just after the initial enthusiastic reaction by the public to this highly successful epistolary novel, Dostoyevskij wrote in triumph to his brother: "Everybody looks upon me as a wonder of the world. If I but open my mouth, the air resounds with what Dostoyevsky said, what Dostoyevsky means to do. Bielinsky loves me unboundedly" [1961:30]. This euphoria would not return to him. His fame and fortune faded with subsequent publications.

It is interesting that the youthful, idealistic Gide, who was used to all material comforts, dreamt of the typical poor student's life in the Latin Quarter. At the age of twenty he went up to the sixth floor of a building in the Quartier latin with his friend Pierre Louys: "Et nous rêvons tous deux la vie d'étudiant pauvre dans une telle chambre, avec la seule fortune qui assure le travail libre. Et à ses pieds, devant sa table, Paris. Et s'enfermer là, avec le rêve de son oeuvre, et n'en sortir qu'avec elle achevée" (Automne 1889) [1951a:14].

¹ One attempts to follow the international system in the English transliteration of Russian names. An alternative form used by different authors will be noticeable throughout this thesis.

("And together we dream of the impecunious student's life in such a room, with an unfettered pen as the only means of earning a living. And at your feet, on the other side of your writing- table, all Paris. And take refuge there with the dream of your masterpiece and not come out until it is finished" - translated by Justin O'Brien [Gide 1949:3]).

But, whereas Gide had all the material assets enabling him to write when inspired to do so, Dostoyevskij was forever in dire straits and therefore obliged to write and produce under extreme pressure. In 1856 he wrote to general E.I. Totleben: "[...] I possess nothing but this assured, though possibly quite modest, literary talent" [1961:94]. Much later Baron Vrangel wrote in his recollections:

Even a perfectly sound man could not have borne the harassed life that Dostoevsky was then leading! Eternally in want of money, anxious not only for his own family, but also for that of his brother Michael, pursued by creditors, in constant fear of being clapped in prison, he knew no rest day or night; by day he was running from one newspaper-office to the other, and by night he was writing, as he said himself, 'to order, under the lash'. Naturally all that was bound to have a hurtful effect on his health as well as his character [1961 :319].

First and foremost Gide was an ideologist. In all his works he has something to prove. He pronounced his opinion on most current issues: whether seriously, ironically, satirically or allegorically. In particular he took a firm stand on all contentious matters. The existentialists who insisted on committed writing after World War II, led Gide to re-examine his past commitments. As a consequence he issued in 1950 a collection of his tendentious and polemical writings under the title of *Littérature engagée*.

O'Brien remarks:

It is noteworthy that Gide speaks specifically of Dostoyevsky's ideas as his primary interest in the Russian novelist. Such a statement implies

no disregard for the form in which those ideas are expressed, for to Gide form is the external, symbolic presentation of an idea and the two are indivisible [1953:5].

In Gide's *Dostoïevski* the Russian author is portrayed mainly with regard to his fundamental, recurrent ideas. The latter, like Gide, dealt with topical issues, such as poverty, alcoholism, social injustice and the dangers of overcrowding caused by urbanisation, but they are only used as a backdrop. His real presentation of Russian 19th century is found in his rendering of the psyche and unique destiny of the Russian people, threatened by new-fangled ideas from the West. His focus on the reality of the "inner" being, with all its quirks and perversities, its nightmares and buried passions, embodied though it may be in a physical appearance, is the major feature of his work. It is expressed in the philosophical and religious speculations by intellectuals torturing themselves about the meaning of life and death. It becomes a mythology of quest, struggle, symbolic death and regeneration.

Joseph Frank remarks that

the ideological dimension constitutes Dostoevskij's principal claim to fame. From *Notes from Underground* onwards, with the concept of 'idea-feelings' (according to which personal ideology and personal emotions are inseparable), Dostoevsky becomes not only a great novelist, but also a great metaphysician [1986:312].

But his ideas do not exist for themselves. "Even 'truth in itself' he represents as incarnated in Christ" [1986:313].

The concept of happiness for both writers is inextricably linked to their irreligious and/or religious convictions: André Gide eventually chose to follow in the footsteps of Dionysos to regain paradise on earth by savouring all its fruits [*Les Nourritures Terrestres (Fruits of the Earth)*]. On the other hand, the warp in which Dostoyevskij wove his plots is man's irrational choice and

Paradise Lost. Only after spiritual rebirth and regeneration can paradise be regained.

It may be useful to examine the religious origin of the human spiritual conflict. At the beginning of Creation God was surrounded by his beloved angels. But when the first humans were created, angels had to share God's love and had to play the role of go-between (hence their wings). Whilst the desire to stay in the biblical Paradise and retain everlasting happiness would seem natural, certain angels, because of their love for God, became envious. With their free will, they chose their own existence by becoming demons. An archangel wanted to be transformed into Satan with all his powers of evil. It is the fallen angel's sin that obsessed Dostoyevskij because the first humans were allowed to succumb to temptation. They lost their innocence; a duality of good and evil in perpetual collision, originated in their natures, life and death merged forever - Adam and Eve became mortal. In their descendants, right and wrong caused eternal conflicts which directed their behaviour. Therefore in the beginning, after Creation, biblical history leads to the Fall of Man, which entailed the loss of divine bliss and man's subjection to two opposing forces, the polarisation of bad and good, dark and light, sin and redemption, death and regeneration or resurrection. Dostoyevskij sees the coming of Christ as the most important event in the history of mankind, since He is a pledge for the future, not merely a release from the past. For humanity His advent set in motion a process of striving to return to original grace which was vitally important for the Russian author. The greatest contrast in Dostoyevskij's and Gide's convictions is that the former believed in death as a transition in life (see Kirilov's conversation with Stavrogin in Chapter 5 below), whereas the latter believed that death is the end of existence (see Chapter 8 below).

Dostoyevskij longed to return to Eden, the Paradise of the past, where he would find tranquility and peace of mind, which seemed his deepest desire.

As against this ideal happiness, he was also aware of the conflicting dark forces permeating every aspect of existence, infiltrating every hidden corner of the human soul. With artistic intuition he managed to peer into the human subconscious where he discovered not only secrets of our innermost nature with its polarity of good and evil, but also those of the universe. These he dramatised to haunt the reader in his great works.

Gide also longed for Christ's message of rejoicement and His redeeming love. His last attempt to submit to Christianity, is noted in *Numquid et Tu...?*, contained in *Journal 1889-1939*, with these revealing lines: "Seigneur, ce n'est pas parce que l'on m'a dit que vous étiez le Fils de Dieu que j'écoute votre parole; mais votre parole est belle au-dessus de toute parole humaine, et c'est à cela que je reconnais que vous êtes Fils de Dieu" [Gide 1951a:588]. ("O Lord, it is not because I have been told that you were the Son of God that I listen to your word; but your word is beautiful beyond any human word, and that is how I recognize that you are the Son of God" - translated by Justin O'Brien [Gide 1948:170]. And three pages further:

C'est dans l'éternité que dès à présent il faut vivre [...] il n'y a ni prescription ni ordre. Simplement, c'est le secret de la félicité supérieure que le Christ, comme partout ailleurs dans l'Evangile, nous révèle [...] *vous ETES heureux*. C'est dès à présent et tout aussitôt que nous pouvons participer à la félicité.

Quelle tranquillité! Ici vraiment le temps s'arrête. Ici respire l'Eternel. Nous entrons dans le Royaume de Dieu [Gide 1951a:591].

(It is in eternity that right now one must live [...] there is neither prescription nor command here. Simply it is the secret of the higher felicity that Christ, as everywhere else in the Gospels reveals to us [...] *happy ARE ye*. It is now and immediately that we can share in felicity.

What tranquility! Here truly time stops. Here breathes the Eternal. We enter into the Kingdom of God" - translated by O'Brien [1951b:172-173]).

The concept of happiness, the stopping of time and eternity is also expressed by Kirilov in *The Demons* (see Chapter 5 below). Gide's above observation

points to the wonder of rejoicing and the realisation of a higher happiness in Christ, but he does not mention any form of sacrifice or taking up the cross for Christ. Yet one of the requirements of Christianity is suffering for Christ, a message which Dostoyevskij understood so well. With the passage of time, the Russian became more and more aware of the conflict between Good and Evil. For him this animosity between God and Man was resolved by Christ who extends His hands to both Man and Creator. He purchased peace for humanity. However, man still feels the attraction of the two opposites with the ensuing desire and struggle to reach integration.

Both authors examine the duality of man's nature that prescribes human behaviour. Gide himself was always subjected to the struggle between his two different polarities. He suffered from a "discordant duality" in his character [Gide 1954:255]. There is the continuous conflict between his strong penchant towards Christian ardour and the natural impulses of his uncontrollable instinct. One of his diary entries reads: "Je ne suis qu'un petit garçon qui s'amuse, doublé d'un pasteur protestant qui l'ennuie" [Weightman 1990:597]. ("I am just a little boy having fun, with a Protestant minister nagging away inside him" - translated by Weightman 1990:597). Pierre-Quint considered that his "personnages également sont presque tous situés par une idée de bien ou de mal..." [1952:73]. Gide insists on the cohabitation in him of contrasting tendencies. Therefore he is scared of being judged by only one of his books: *La porte étroite* and *Les caves du Vatican* had lived inside his head for more than fifteen years whilst *l'Immoraliste* with which he had been living for hardly a lesser period, came out first. The gestation period of these works was so long because he weighed two opposite points of view within himself and these had to be expressed in different books, one diametrically opposed to the other. Whereas a great Dostoyevskijan character struggles with his two contrasting natures, Gide's ideology can be exposed as a duality by opposing

one text to another, so that the one becomes the antithesis of the other. Hence his fear of being evaluated by one work only.

Whilst Gide's characters are forever submitted either to an exasperated hedonism or to Protestant austerity with its rigid conventionalism, the logical French mind still triumphs in this internal conflict. However, the great Russian was more interested in life's inconsequences which can be explained by the cohabitation of contradictions, which Freud calls the ambivalence of sentiments. Dostoyevskij's fictional characters are inextricably caught up in a spiritual power struggle, torn between their negative and positive poles, which often leads to a split in their personality. At the same time, however, Dostoyevskij exposes another facet of the same duality by presenting an opposite pole in a different personality created for this purpose to complement an important fictional character. (In embryonic form this was the case with Mr. Goliadkin of *The Double*). This innovative method will be illustrated in his four great novels. The dualistic inner turmoil pervading these works is inseparable from Dostoyevskij's persona.

When studying the two novelists, it becomes clear that Gide could not reach Dostoyevskij's profound and uncanny penetration into the workings of the human mind, or his expression of man's striving towards a higher reality. He lacked the dynamism and turmoil which Dostoyevskij projected onto his characters. Yet he too made a psychological scrutiny of every character and situation.

Though Gide cannot approach his Russian master in breadth or depth of significance, he was revered in his day by leading Western leading literary figures. He introduced exciting and audacious ideas about new-fashioned liberalism, but never does he become overwhelming. Nowhere in his work is the reader confronted by a frenzied world of violent emotions and tortured souls or harangued by a demented Underground Man, difficult to approach, to live with, to absorb and to understand. But Dostoyevskij understood that his

generation lived on jangling nerves. His fictional characters' traumas and psychological tension are revealed with an insight and vision that are virtually unique. A mysterious intuition about the true nature of stress, a feeling that the most important psychological impulses lie beyond the scope of common sense, makes him so remarkably "modern". The four great novels, which will be examined here at some length, contain today's typical elements: psychosis, violence, murder and money. Whereas Dostoyevskij's murderers and madmen with their destructive passions have become pillars of the twentieth century literary tradition, Gide does not provide enough deep conflict and psychological resolution for his characters to have a similar stimulating influence on the contemporary reader. Besides, his didactic tendency is too pronounced.

The Russian writer's mystic faith adheres to the belief of Blaise Pascal who pronounces in *Les Pensées*: "Seul l'élan mystique de la foi permet à l'homme de surmonter les conflits où l'entraîne la dualité de sa nature et de contempler dans la gloire l'ordre voulu par Dieu", quoted by *La Revue Thomiste* in *Le péché de l'Ange* [April 1956:223]. On the other hand, Gide scornfully rejects Pascal's religious convictions, remarking in his *Correspondance* that ever since the publication of *Les Pensées* one imagines religion to be a matter of sect and fanaticism.

In order to explore the main purpose of this thesis, namely to trace Dostoyevskij's religious evolution, and to determine in what way Dostoyevskij inspired Gide, the former's major novels will be scrutinised. But first two shorter works deserve attention as they are indispensable to the understanding of these novels.

CHAPTER 2

ДВОЙНИК (THE DOUBLE) - 1846

DOSTOYEVSKIJ'S EXILE

ЗАПИСКИ ИЗ ПОДПОЛЬЯ (NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND) - 1864

Just as God's word, the mystic logos (or discourse), his breath, was the source of life (according to the Christian faith as revealed in the Gospel of St. John), the author's discourse is an attempts to decypher the world and its beings. How that word was made flesh constitutes a religious quest into the nature of discourse. Danow, in his Review article, uses a quotation by M.M. Bakhtin as epigraph: "The person has departed, having spoken his word, but the word itself remains in the open-ended dialogue" [Danow 1989:159]. Wayne Booth claims in his Introduction to Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* that Dostoyevskij's language does "a kind of justice to life itself that other novelists have not achieved" [1984:xxvi]. Dostoyevskij's art is created from crises where his protagonists are debating profundities within threshold situations. He is the great interlocutor who stimulates constant dialogue without any individual having the final word. The questions he poses provide the possibility of divergent answers [Danow 1989:170]. His fictional characters are revealed by their own individual discourse; they never become the mute, voiceless object of the author's words. Dostoyevskij's texts themselves bear witness to Bakhtin's statement. However, because this research concentrates on his penetrating religious thoughts, born from an extraordinary life, the literary

dimension of Dostoyevskij's amazing work will be focussed mainly on the expression of these ideas.

Dostoyevskij started off on his literary mission by trying to discover every hidden corner of human existence. He wanted to expose completely all aspects of human nature and its consequent behavioural patterns in his works. It has been said that Dostoyevskij's heroes represent ideas. Though they are born from an idea as stated in *Notes from Underground* [1985:123], they are developed to fulfill the author's aim to explore the whole of the human psyche. A general behavioural pattern of his fictional characters is that they do not mind humiliating themselves but they cannot endure being humiliated. However, they have no fixed personality; they are human beings who elude an external definition.

Already in his second work, *The Double* the young Dostoyevskij portrays human experience at its extremes. He is not inspired to depict ordinary people, as expected by the Western reader. The latter is used to interacting human relations, but very seldom to the relations of a human being towards himself. This analysis of all the hidden corners of man's psyche is probably Dostoyevskij's key to his intuition of realism in a higher sense, the laws which ideas observe but which are beyond our everyday experience. He concentrates on moments of a deeper extraordinary normality. One grasps for psychoanalysis because his characters often strike one as abnormal or disturbed or possessed. They are indeed often acting under unusual circumstances: drunkenness, deprivation, delirium, the final stages of consumption, epilepsy, hallucination. These conditions can bring about a state of heightened, hypersensitive awareness. A tortured sensitivity seems to hinge on duality, which was as much of interest to Gide as it was to Dostoyevskij, since they both were conscious of the polarity within themselves. But for Dostoyevskij it acquired a far more profound meaning. Gide discusses in general terms in his *Dostoïevski* [1923:147] a tendency to escape from reality in order to lead an imaginary double life, as is the case with

Madame Bovary, or a totally different case in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Of course, this does not relate to the two authors under research. The disconcerting aspect in Dostoyevskij's work is the simultaneity of the character's actions or thoughts and his awareness of his duality as well as inconsequential behaviour.

The purpose of the present thesis is to demonstrate how Dostoyevskij created such central figures suffering from an inner dichotomy so strong that it appears as though two quite disparate personalities lurk within each of them. Their "double" nature is torn between weakness and strength, good and evil, while seeking its own identity. It will be pointed out chronologically in the novels under consideration how these main characters evolve in their search for an integrated nature combining strength of will with purity of soul. Even the centrality of the protagonist gradually diminishes; in *The Devils* it is difficult to establish around whom the main action revolves, or whether it is the multiplicity of devils? Yet the reader is conscious of Stavrogin's all-powerful influence. Eventually in *The Brothers Karamazov* the three legitimate brothers all proceed in their quest to find a unity within themselves and within their brotherhood.

THE DOUBLE

As a matter of course Dostoyevskij's awareness of the conflict between two poles in the human psyche led him to create *The Double*. Many years later it became recognised as his early masterpiece.

Only two weeks after the publication of his epistolary novel *Бедные Люди* (*Poor Folk*), which had made him a celebrity overnight, the new novella appeared, also in 1846.

Dostoyevskij presents his protagonists on the threshold of a final decision, at a moment of crisis, at an indeterminate and unpredeterminable spiritual turning point. The outcome is always indefinite. M.V. Jones draws attention to Dostoyevskij's use of a double identity as a means to investigate these unfinished psychological expressions of personality. He mentions the following interrelated situations:

the thresholds between wakefulness and dreaming, the conscious and the unconscious, reality and fantasy, sanity and madness, self-confidence and the abyss, stability and instability, where the personality is most vulnerable to the breakdown of certainties about itself and the world [Jones 1990:56].

But he omits the most significant threshold situation: the one between good and evil which is already present in this early work.

The Double has become a typical psychiatric case history of man's inner struggle between his good and evil poles, the hallmark of Dostoyevskij's writings. In this youthful masterpiece the pathological behavioural development of the intimidated hero, the Titular Councillor Goliadkin, is brilliantly explored. It is an amazing case history of a schizophrenic who is eventually driven to madness.

This short novel dramatises a particular kind of internal psychological division brought about by a feeling of inferiority, social rejection and an ensuing identity crisis. Though the influence of Gogol' and Hoffmann is felt in *The Double's* gothic theme with its downtrodden little clerk, it is seen to-day as typically Dostoyevskijan. Everything is observed from inside the skin of the unheroic hero. In this nightmarish story he becomes possessed by his exact double who is an effective social climber. The timid Mr. Goliadkin becomes progressively usurped by the successful Mr. Goliadkin. But is it really a double, or does he become subjected to his important and evil "alter ego"? To his horror he realises that this double is probably the evil side of his own character which he abhors and fears. The uncertainty creates the ultimate

terror in this tale which is now recognised as a classic study of human breakdown: Goliadkin is unable to excise the disgusting "self" that accompanies him everywhere, that gradually makes him slither into insanity.

Already in this early work the reader becomes prey to an uncanny sensation caused by the complicity of good and evil in one person. As the great French scientist and religious philosopher, Blaise Pascal, put it: "[...]le problème inquiétant de sa double nature" [1962:144].

It is interesting to note here that this is one of the aspects that interested Gide so much - he himself had an ambivalent nature born of social rejection.

A similar awareness of and struggle with the devil inside him drives Nikolai Stavrogin in *The Devils* to suicide. A splitting of the self reoccurs in Dostoyevskij's last novel when Ivan Karamazov, in a delirious state, fights his own devil. This was something new and is not found elsewhere in literature until much later.

Dostoyevskij called *The Double* "A Poem of St.Petersburg" which would seem to indicate the important role of big city life. Urbanisation had a nefarious influence on those who had flocked towards the great centres. People were alienated from their rural origins. Joseph Frank notes how life in the capital of that period led to moral disintegration:

settled traditions of culture and fixed moral-social norms, had become in the nineteenth century only that of a small 'minority' of Russians; it was 'the life of the exceptions'. The life of the majority, on the other hand, was rather one of confusions and moral chaos, of a social order in continual flux, of the incessant destruction of all the traditions of the past. Dostoevsky felt that his own work was an attempt to grapple with the chaos of the present [1976:6].

It is in St. Petersburg that Mr. Goliadkin, the elderly, unimportant, meek civil servant, would want to put on a mask of self-confidence and success. The

mockery in the narrative tone seems to indicate that the author is not altogether sympathetic towards the downtrodden hero who lacks the moral fibre to go against a socially corrupt stream. A distinctly satirical note is struck. Nevertheless the weak-willed hero's plight is certainly not lessened. Here Frank sees a Dostoyevskijan trend in the ideological implications of his character's psychology, namely that the "abnormalities" resulted from Russian social conditions [1976:309].

Understanding this early work is necessary because it announces many of Dostoyevskij's future themes: corruption of the soul caused by the big city's dislocation of the personality, the subsequent break away from the Orthodox Church, the alienated hero living on the periphery of society with his consequent doomed inner struggle between self-acceptance and social conformity. Despite this desperate conflict, *The Double* lacks a sense of the holy, the sacred aspirations which form the mainstream of Dostoyevskij's major novels.

However, Goliadkin furnished the Russian author with a psychological paradigm to which he would constantly return. He is not only the ancestor of Dostoyevskij's heroes who struggle to find self-respect and social recognition, but also obviously of his great split personalities. The same character-type would reveal, as Frank words it so well, "the disintegrating effect of the atheistic radical ideology imported from the West" [1976:311]. However, in the mature novels, Dostoyevskij gradually overcame the inability to cope with this character crisis experienced by his heroes because he trusted the innately moral-religious Russian national character, with its instinctive need to believe in Christ and God [Frank 1976:311]. Later he himself was guided by Christ's promise of redemption and regeneration as announced by the conclusion of *Crime and Punishment* and continued through the three subsequent major novels, reaching its climax with the message of St. John 12,24 expounded in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Though this novella's striking quality is its readability, its sense of urgency, excitement and apprehension, it did not find favour with the critics and the reading public of its time. The celebrated critic, Belinskij, who was Dostoyevskij's idol, refers to the depth and originality of the latter's talent and to the immense power of his creative genius [Frank 1976:177]. Yet he criticised the fantastic setting of *The Double* which, according to him, should be confined to a madhouse. Of course Dostoyevskij in his intuitive grasp of abnormal psychology was far in advance of his fellow intellectuals. Shortly before the publication of *The Double* he wrote to his brother Michail about the conventionalism of his readers:

They cannot understand how anyone can write in such a style. They are accustomed to be treated, in every work, to the author's own fads and fancies. Now I have chosen not to show mine [...] They find the book too drawn-out, and yet there is not a single superfluous word in it. Many, like Bielinsky, think very original my manner of proceeding by analysis rather than by synthesis - that is, I pierce to the depths, trace out the atoms, and from them construct the whole [1961:34].

This technique becomes Dostoyevskij's 'trademark', his professional 'raison d'être'. He goes on to say that Gogol, whom he admired enormously and in whose honour he predicted that a statue would be erected, "always works on the broad lines, and so he never goes as deep as I do" [1961:34].

Readership to-day has come to a far deeper grasp of Dostoyevskij, and Jones & Terry realise that this youthful work is way ahead of its time. They observe correctly that it is

situated on the threshold of modernism and post-modernism, where questions about knowledge merge into questions about existence, and where we wonder whether we are dealing with alternative world-views or alternative worlds [1983:58].

Belinskij's and Dostoyevskij's ways parted in 1847. The revered critic had hoped to find in Dostoyevskij a socialist whose novels, as foreshadowed by *Poor Folk*, would have a moral effect on society. Indeed, Dostoyevskij's

ideological evolution had been directed by this forceful man with his strong influence on radical Russian youth. Moreover, at that stage Dostoyevskij was no longer the young and naïvely devout believer in the God and Christ of his childhood days. Nevertheless, although Belinskij's had converted him to socialism [Frank 1976:182], it was not quite in accordance with Dostoyevskij's ideology, since he realised that his art should be dependent on religion. It should be created from the inner depths of the religious Russian soul in order to move his readers. Yet when Belinskij died in 1848, Dostoyevskij was so overcome that he suffered an attack of convulsions, which could have been one of his early epileptic seizures.

In the notes as afterword to Dostoyevskij's *Stepanchikovo and its Inhabitants* [1989:367-368] the famous Russian critic, Nikolai Dobrolyubov, is quoted as saying that "In Dostoyevskij we are shown two types of people whose human dignity has been insulted: the meek and the embittered." The first of these types emerges from *Poor Folk* and to a lesser extent from *The Double*; the other is found in *Записки из подполья* (*Notes from Underground*).

DOSTOYEVSKIJ'S EXILE

However, before this new novella was written, there was an interlude in Dostoyevskij's writing. The year 1849 became a watershed in his life.

Although he had always, like most great Russian writers, spoken out against the evils of serfdom, he had never wanted to be a political agitator. Indignation or outrage could prompt him to cry out against the plight of those insulted and injured by society, but he could never be an active destructive revolutionary.

Even so, Belinskij had led him to socialism, and subsequently Nikolai Speshnev guided him into socialist atheism (See Chapters 1 above and 6 below). After Dostoyevskij's meeting with Speshnev his insight into the dimensions of existence changed remarkably. The latter had become a communist in France; he believed in the materialistic philosophy of communism, the use of violence and atheism. Joseph Frank quotes Engels who wrote in 1844: "We are having much success among the Russians living in Paris. There are three or four Russian nobles and landowners here who are declared radical Communists and atheists" and a little further Frank gives Semevskij's opinion "[...] we can scarcely doubt that one of these Russians was Speshnev" [Frank 1976:261]. Although Dostoyevskij was loosely linked to the subversive Petrashevskij circle where there were endless philosophical debates, it was Speshnev's exhortations about nationalisation and the seizure of centralised power by revolutionaries that decided Dostoyevskij's commitment despite himself. Frank cites his words: "Do you understand, from now on I have a Mephistopheles of my own!" [1976:270] Frank comments further that Dostoyevskij could not resist this strong negative power: "If he identified Speshnev with Mephistopheles, it must have surely meant that he felt he had been tempted, by a force stronger than he could resist, to embark on a dangerous and grandiose enterprise in which he might not otherwise have chosen to engage" [1976:270].

In April 1849 Dostoyevskij was arrested, fettered and imprisoned because of his adherence to subversive political activism challenging the authority of Church and State. Seven months later he was conducted from prison to the enormous practice-ground of the Semenovskij regiment. There, blindfolded, tied to a pole, with drums rolling and rifles pointed at him, he had to suffer a mock execution, as ordered by czar Nicholas I. At the last moment his sentence was commuted to exile in Siberia.

During this period of hard labour he suffered the common miseries of dirt, stench, extreme temperatures and hunger. While he survived this shattering

experience with the only book allowed him, the Bible, as consolation, his Christian convictions were confirmed here. With the time he had to review his youthful radical Western ideas, he realised that Western intellectualism estranged Russians from their Orthodox faith, that it prevented them from ultimate regeneration. Gradually he underwent a religious and spiritual transformation.

His physical distress was compounded because he was surrounded by all kinds of criminals who despised him as one of the gentry. He certainly had the time to study evil and the criminal mind. In February 1854 he wrote to his brother Michail:

I had made acquaintance with convicts in Tobolsk; at Omsk I settled myself down to live four years in common with them. They are rough, angry, embittered men. Their hatred for the nobility is boundless; they regard all of us who belong to it with hostility and enmity. They would have devoured us if they only could. Judge then for yourself in what danger we stood, having to cohabit with these people for some years, eat with them, sleep by them, and with no possibility of complaining of the affronts which were constantly put upon us [1961:61].

While Dostoyevskij was leading the hard life of a convict, epileptic fits, which he had already experienced at times, became more frequent and intense. But worst of all, it seemed as though his beloved brother, Michail, had left him in the lurch - he did not grant any request made in pleading letters; Dostoyevskij did not receive a single answer.

Yet, during his penal servitude Dostoyevskij became very interested in the workings of the criminal mind and he had the time to analyse the desperate criminals. They did not evade long psychic suffering within themselves - "that suffering which is the most purifying and invigorating" [1954:16]. And he became convinced that "self-purification through suffering is easier" than that destiny paved for many by wholesale acquittals in court which lead to cynicism, confusion and contempt for oneself [1954:16]. This realisation is later

brought to fruition when his fictional characters, Raskol'nikov and Dmitrij Karamazov, accept their condemnation and punishment without demurring, although the latter was innocently convicted.

In 1855 he wrote to Mrs. Annenkov about himself: "[...] who for four years, adapting myself, as I did, to my fellow-prisoners, had lived like a slice cut from a loaf, or a person buried underground" [1961:81]. This idea must have taken shape gradually in his mind and was eventually brought to the fore with

NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND

Having returned to St. Petersburg society, he rediscovered himself as author, but now his insight was incomparably more profound. He had had the opportunity to study the deviating behaviour of convicts which, he realised, was the result of an irresistible human need to exert one's crushed personality.

Dostoyevsky prided himself on having been the first to portray the "real man of the Russian majority" and to "lay bare his ugly and tragic aspect" in *Notes from Underground*, as reported in its Introduction by the translator, Jessie Coulson [1985:9]. André Gide considered this first great post-Siberian literary creation to be Dostoyevskij's masterpiece, as he remarks in *Dostoïevski: Articles et causeries*: "Je crois que nous atteignons avec *l'Esprit souterrain* le sommet de la carrière de Dostoïevski. Je le considère, ce livre (et je ne suis pas le seul), comme la clé de voûte de son oeuvre entière" [Gide 1923:164-165]. Tzvetan Todorov translates this as: "I believe that with *Notes from the Underground* we reach the peak of Dostoyevskij's career. I consider this book (and I am not alone) the capstone of his entire work" [1993:72]. This novella provides an essential insight into Dostoyevskij's genius for the creation of a character who is "born from an idea" [Dostoyevskij 1985:123]. His technique as an ideological writer and artist should therefore be illustrated in this work. The protagonist who writes his *Notes* is the first ideologist in Dostoyevskij's work: he advances the idea that man is not final and defined,

he cannot simply obey mathematical regulations - he is free to violate any norms which might be thrust upon him.

(Gide firmly supported this principle: he became the champion for the cause of man's liberation from conventional restrictions.)

But Dostoyevskij goes very much deeper: he is aware that no formula of identity can be applied to man. His consciousness of his own indeterminacy is realised in complex ways which, in artistic terms, are made available through various voices but mainly through self-utterance. The Underground Man knows himself extremely well. The reader's penetration of him comes from within. This underground hero is a déclassé member of the intelligentsia, cut off from cultural tradition, from his roots. He becomes a person possessed by an idea-force, distorting his consciousness and his life (like many Dostoyevskijan heroes after him.) Dostoyevskij's ideology is based on the ideas of his fictional characters and they themselves are born of an idea. Because their dialogue is of such exceptional importance Bakhtin, in his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, raises the possibility of an ideology that is not acquainted with separate thought or systemic unity of any kind:

[...] the ultimate indivisible unit is not the separate referentially bounded thought, not the proposition, not the assertion, but rather the integral point of view, the integral position of a personality. For him, referential meaning is indissolubly fused with the position of a personality [...] Dostoevsky - to speak paradoxically - thought not in thoughts but in points of view, consciousnesses, voices [Bakhtin 1984:93].

The hero of this short novel is a crushed character who writes his "Notes" in the first person. He addresses his readers in a discourse in which he supplies their answers. It becomes a hysterical tirade against society. But in this dialogue one finds the mature Dostoyevskij's dialectic method of putting forward ideas. It is a representation of human language or voices that are not suppressed by a single authoritative voice. They belong to all the characters,

whether hero or secondary figure, while the author stays in the background. Only in Dostoyevskij does Bakhtin find the polyphonic ideal realised [xxii]. He leaves everything to his fictional characters who can never be categorised and never become expendable. Nowhere is the text of *Notes from Underground* a simple impartial exposition of ideas: throughout it is a polemical discourse between the narrator ("I"), the "they" (of earlier voices) and the "you" of the interlocutor, an imaginary listener who formulates presumed responses. The "you" implies the average reaction of the ordinary person who reacts to the ideas propounded, who develops, who starts taking part more and more in the debate. Then there is the internal dialogue of "I" who makes pronouncements, denounces himself, contradicts himself, accuses himself of lying, judges himself ironically, makes fun of himself and of the reader.

So in this first mature work Dostoyevskij reveals himself as the great innovative artist whose protagonist exposes ideas about ideas. Once again the latter is a civil servant, a single anti-heroic character who is incapable of distinguishing fact from fiction. He himself calls his dwelling the "underground". It is like a hide-out where he indulges in morbid introspection. Because he is turned in upon himself, his sensitivity is heightened, his awareness and consciousness become sharpened. Whenever he ventures into the "real world", he blunders along, makes himself intolerable, appears absurd and is ignored by others. Ill-fate hounds him, but this is not merely an external force; it is in a sense created by himself. His own misery is of supreme value to him.

The view that the underground man was initially glimpsed in *The Double*, is supported by Frank [1986:3]. But where Mr. Goliadkin is humble, yet rebellious against his meek nature and envious of the self-assured higher ranking officials, the underground man is embittered. He, the "mere pen-pusher" [Dostoyevskij 1985:53], does everything to avoid appearing deferential towards "them". He bemoans his humiliations, loathsomeness and

independent nature: "[...] compared to them I was a fly, a nasty obscene fly - cleverer, better educated, nobler than any of them, that goes without saying - but a fly, always getting out of everybody's way, humiliated and slighted by everybody" [Dostoyevskij 1985:55] and "I hated my face, and I even suspected there was something servile about it, and so every time I went to the office, I made agonizing efforts to seem as independent as possible, so that I should not be suspected of subservience, and to give my face the most well-bred expression I could manage" [Dostoyevskij 1985:47]. So he wears a mask when he meets others, but unlike Goliadkin, he realises that the others probably also wear masks. Moreover, he looks at himself quite lucidly. The chaos of the underground man's private life is apparently caused by boredom which becomes the overriding factor in his existence: "Do you ask why I tortured and tormented myself? The answer is it was too boring to sit and do nothing" [Dostoyevskij 1985:26]. So he has to invent real life: "I imagined happenings, I invented a life, so that I should at any rate *live*" [1985:26]. Here he comes forward with the visionary modern concept of the test-tube: "[...] even the test-tube!, there's no help for it, we must accept even the test-tube! Or else it will be accepted for us" [1985:35]. The resulting man-made test-tube man, who has not emerged from the womb of Nature, looks upon himself in the present context of the underground man as a person of heightened awareness [1985:21]. His sensitivity to slights drives him alternately to retreat into his corner, his underground, and to revenge himself for his humiliations by humiliating others. Besides, he has sado-masochistic tendencies. Malcolm Jones makes a very valid comment in this regard:

He wants to understand and to explain why it is that in a 'rational' world he feels pleasure in the knowledge that he is a scoundrel and in making other people uncomfortable; why he feels so many conflicting emotions doing battle within him; why it is that when he is most sensitive to 'the sublime and the beautiful' he does the most immoral things; why he feels such pleasure at his own degradation [1983:68].

He is most sensitive to the sublime and beautiful Liza, the only female character in the novella. She is of supreme importance since her love

embodies the possibility of regeneration. In this regard she can be seen as a sort of Christ figure. Despite the strong attraction he feels for her, he shamelessly rejects the love which she offers him, thereby depriving himself of any hope. He realises the significance of the great gift of unselfish love and appreciates that she had not come to him for ulterior motives: "[...] to hear sympathetic words was not what she had come for at all, but to love me, because for a woman love comprises all resurrection, all salvation from whatever sort of ruin, and all regeneration, and cannot be manifested in any other way" [Dostoyevskij 1985:119]. Yet, having tried to humiliate her, he is humbled by her unassuming dignity. She actually understands him: she holds out her arms to embrace the man who tried to humiliate and crush her.

(This theme is repeated in the four great novels discussed below. In *Crime and Punishment* the pure-hearted Sonia loves the murderer; in *The Idiot* prince Myshkin loves everyone around him despite their insults; in *The Devils* father Tikhon listens sympathetically to Stavrogin's terrible confession; in *The Brothers Karamazov* it is taken up three times: the holy Zossima bows before the sinner Dmitrij, Christ kisses the victimising Grand Inquisitor on his bloodless lips, the saintly Aliosha kisses Ivan after listening to his "revolt").

The underground man ponders upon humiliation and acknowledges that it "is purification; it is the acutest and most vivid consciousness" [Dostoyevskij 1985:121]. Here one finds the parallelism of situations, mentioned by Todorov [1993:86]: the underground man is humiliated by his comrade Zverkov who at that stage starts lisping, "which he never used to do before" [Dostoyevskij 1985:86], the first-mentioned then humiliates Lisa, later his servant (who lisps) humiliates him and thereafter he takes it out on Lisa. The underground man views himself in relation to the others; he is made up of several, he is a plural being, the others are part of him.

The presentation of the extremely important underground type is intended to be polemical. He dramatises within himself the position which Dostoyevskij

was opposing. In this work one sees the emergence of a juxtaposition of two opposites with its ensuing tension out of which the dramatic conflict between good and evil is born. That becomes the corner stone of his great writings. In 1892 V.V. Rozanov stated with great insight, as quoted by J. Frank [*Dostoevsky* 1986:311], that *Notes from Underground* was essentially inspired by Dostoyevskij's awareness of the irrational depths of the human soul, with all its conflicting impulses towards evil as well as towards good. In this novella it becomes clear that no world order based on reason and rationality could possibly contain this seething chaos of the human psyche. Only the orthodox religion could aid man to overcome his capricious and destructive propensities. In this connection Joseph Frank writes about "Eastern Orthodoxy" [1986:311] which can be misleading because Dostoyevskij refers to Orthodox-Greek writers as atheists (see chapter 6 below), while he regarded himself as a champion of Russian Orthodoxy.

Typical of the Russian author is this intimate link between psychology and religious ideology. However, the concept of the pilgrim's progress is viewed in a negative way here. For purposes of this study it is particularly interesting to explore Dostoyevskij's manipulation of ideas in this work as they lead to the notion of regeneration and immortality. He wants to analyse these ideas to the end, to envisage the situation arising from them. What will the human condition be eventually? Nothing appears more terrifying than living in a meaningless universe. If one did not have to strive continually for an ideal, for ultimate bliss, life on earth would not be necessary. It would be like Chapter ten in the first part of the work with its "Palace of Crystal, eternally inviolable" [Dostoyevskij 1985:42], symbol of the perfect society, created by man's logical reasoning. Yet its perfection is its greatest weakness because it precludes any improvement or progress. It is final like the rational formula of $2 \times 2 = 4$, but it does not make allowance for any whim of human behaviour. Since earthly existence is in development and is transitional, the other symbolic dwelling, the Underground, might be better because it is not static

either. And this dwelling, the Underground Man says, will not "destroy my desires, blot out my ideals" [1985:42].

It would also be senseless if, when the goal of heavenly spheres were reached, everything would stop. This would seem to indicate that there is a future paradisiac Life, that humans will be regenerated after death if they can overcome their egoism. But the underground man cannot discard his selfishness. His mentality with this egocentric philosophy and his belief in the division of mankind into two unequal categories, makes of him a prototype of supermen from the underground, linked to Nietzsche. And precisely that, insubordination and awareness of superiority, was indicated by Christ as the main obstacle to regeneration into a life after death (recorded in St. John 12:24). The underground man turns into a man who revolts against God.

The religious views which he concocts about man's responsibility only towards himself, sow the seeds for Dostoyevskij's supreme dilemma. From its germination in this work it bursts forth in the subsequent great novels as the man/god perception (the atheist who feels he is a god within himself) versus the God/man (God who comes to earth in the human form of Christ). Although the underground man opposes the thought of the supremacy of human reasoning by allowing the possibility of $2 \times 2 = 5$, he also believes that man can solve the riddles of nature: "It is wicked and silly to believe in advance that there are some laws of nature that man will never discover" [Dostoyevskij 1985:35]. In later chapters this concept which became such a dilemma for the author will be discussed more fully.

The depiction of the underground man withdrawn in a corner, disaccustoming himself to live, morbidly scrutinising his moral decay and carefully cultivating his anger underground [1985:122], led to widespread interest in contemporary European consciousness. It is a major statement about modern man's spiritual problems. Nearly 100 years after this novella's publication Frank wrote [1986:310] that few works in modern literature were more widely read

or more often cited than Dostoyevskij's *Notes from Underground*. His perception is valid that the designation "underground man" entered the vocabulary of the modern educated consciousness, and that this character now begins - like Hamlet, Don Quixote, Don Juan and Faust - to take on the symbolic stature of one of the great archetypal literary creations. No book or essay on the situation of modern civilisation can be complete without some allusion to Dostoevsky's figure. Every important cultural development of the last half-century - Nietzscheanism, Freudianism, Expressionism, Surrealism, Crisis Theology, Existentialism - claimed the underground man as its own. He represents the cult of despair. Whenever he was not adopted as the prophetic anticipation of a looming fate, he was exhibited as a glaringly gruesome warning, because an underground type surely lurks within each one of us.

Obviously the Underground Man looks for certainty and truth. Like Goliadkin he envies the "normal person", the social stereotype with all his certainties "while at the same time sensing the superiority of his own infinitely more complex perception" [Jones 1990:651]. This is borne out by his own observation:

I have only carried to a logical conclusion in my life what you yourselves didn't dare take more than half-way; and you supposed your cowardice was common sense, and comforted yourselves with the self-deception. So perhaps I turn out to be more alive than you. Look harder! After all, we don't even know where 'real life' is lived nowadays, or what it is, what name it goes by. [Dostoyevskij 1985:123].

What he calls consciousness is the hypersensitive awareness that guides his thought processes and actions. This tortured sensitivity is a recurring trait and becomes the hallmark of Dostoyevskij's characterisation. That, in turn, is the result of suffering: "I am certain that man will never deny himself destruction and chaos. Suffering - after all, that is the sole cause of consciousness" [1985:41]. Again this notion comes to the fore as a secret desire in human nature. It is no end in itself; it remains subordinate to the value of asserting

moral autonomy in a world deprived of human significance. The Underground Man points out that a human being may well and probably does choose the undesirable against all rational reasoning:

And why are you so firmly and triumphantly certain that only what is normal and positive - in short, only well-being - is good for man? Is reason mistaken about what is good? After all, perhaps prosperity isn't the only thing that pleases mankind, perhaps he is just as attracted to suffering [1985:41].

The supremely selfish underground man is aware of his true inner nature: "I was so egotistical, I had so little respect for other people" [1985:121]. Yet he discards self-interest and rights. Again the very intricate paradoxical psyche is depicted with all its antitheses. The underground man is made free to choose by Dostoyevskij because he was convinced that mankind will not be saved by grace alone, but that man has a choice according to the tenets of the Russian Orthodox Church. Often this freedom of choice is terrible.

However, it does not necessarily lead to the anguished questioning that would arise at the beginning of the 20th century. This inquiring is also attributable to the ideas of Darwin (1809-1882), Marx (1818-1883) and Freud (1856-1939), and therefore rather unique to Western thought. These three great figures inaugurated a new era in which all the solid foundations of man's religious destiny were shaken. As for Gide, his major works are born of this new period with all its uncertainty arising from their widely accepted theories. They brought a completely new perspective and orientation to the European intelligentsia of whom Gide is the typical representative. The idea of an absolute truth became far-fetched. Against his Western European background he struggled with the liberty of human choice between good and evil, and so do his great characters. Gide gives his version of good or evil in Church dogma, in sexual relationships, in political convictions and in social morality. Generally he prefers opposing the two extremes in two different works, the one complementing the other. He exposes both these forces,

unleashed freely, as potentially destructive. This will be further clarified in chapter 8 below.

After this short interlude about Gide's reaction to contemporary human thought and the liberty of human choice, one should return to *Notes from Underground*. Boris Brasol in his Introduction to *The Diary of a Writer* states that these Notes can be regarded as the nucleus of the profound ideas which Dostoyevskij subsequently develops in his great novels under discussion [1954: vi]. The main concept which he explores in these works is indeed that terrifying freedom of choice between good and evil. Particularly his intellectual characters wrestle with it as will be explored in the following four chapters. But there is an absolute truth to which his great characters aspire, while Dostoyevskij also realises that Christ's commandment of loving another like oneself is impossible for any human being, because "I" is the stumbling block. Whereas the Underground Man, absorbed with himself, "has no sense of the Holy", as justifiably remarked by M.V. Jones [1983:65], such holy sense will develop as he takes on another shape in the subsequent major novels. In these works Dostoyevskij puts forward the two extremes of good and evil either in different characters or in one personality who consequently becomes an ambivalent being. A typical example of such a person is Raskol'nikov, the hero of *Crime and Punishment*. However, he does not, like the Underground Man, reject the saintly prostitute who eventually triumphs in her attempts to save him from his baser instincts and to lead him to sacred spheres so that he can be regenerated.

CHAPTER 3

**ПРЕСТУПЛЕНИЕ И НАКАЗАНИЕ
(CRIME AND PUNISHMENT) - 1866**

Twenty years prior to Gide's article on *The Brothers Karamazov* in *Le Figaro* of 4 April 1911, M. de Vogüé introduced Russian literature to the French reading public, creating enthusiasm for Turgenev, Pushkin, Gogol' and Tolstoy. However, he observed that Dostoyevskij was definitely too Russian, though he consented to present some of the more accessible works. Gide noted this in the above article, stating too that the most significant and the most beautiful works which were also the most difficult, had been omitted [1923:59]. Though M. de Vogüé had dared to tackle *Crime and Punishment*, he had not touched the three subsequent outstanding novels: *The Idiot*, *The Devils*, and above all *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Each in its own way is, according to Viktor Shklovsky, a strange detective novel. As Todorov noted, "strange", since its suspense is induced by endless philosophical debates, and a detective novel because it contains the right requirements: murder, violence, money and psychosis - all the ingredients needed for that genre [1993:73].

Crime and Punishment is the first of Dostoyevskij's major novels which are all linked together in theme and ideological purpose; therefore they must be studied in their chronological sequence.

After Dostoyevskij's re-entry into literary life, his misadventures with St. Petersburg money-lenders furnished details and impressions needed for the background to this novel. Besides, during his years of exile he had time to

study the criminal's mind and behavioural patterns. Its main exploration of crime and punishment is eventually left open-ended and leads one straight into Dostoyevskij's subsequent great works. Its mythical theme is the final promise of regeneration which is pursued in the following novels where it has to pass through the phase of the "perfect man" and then the devils in order to reach its ultimate peak in the *Brothers Karamazov*.

In these works a semi-obscure world comes into being with flashes of light creating radiant moments of heavenly bliss. This world is characterised by psychologically accountable processes, ferment and clashes, conflicts, sorrow and ecstasy. The outer reality is weird: a masochistic drunken father who lovingly deprives his family, a half-insane tubercular mother dancing in the streets while her children collect money, saintly prostitutes, sectarian criminals, irrational neurotics, a hysterical courtesan burning a large sum of money, a penniless student hiding money without using it, pathological débauchés, a repentant satan, a wild and unreliable mistress who wants to share her jilted lover's fate of being exiled to Siberia; some of these characters border on insanity. Yet all these outcasts can be traced to the author's own life and his perception of it.

In most cases love is not accompanied by any advantage but rather by a disadvantage. Although money plays a very important part in the dramatic action of these novels, the outcome is totally unmaterialistic. Money merely serves as a soon-forgotten temptation. What the various protagonists have in common, is their ability to dispense glory or gloom to themselves, to decree their life with its reward or punishment. Two general qualities shared by these tragic heroes are the ability to attract sympathy and the inability to avoid extreme suffering.

Hidden, unspoken thoughts of the characters have to be found between the lines of the text; this tension between the spoken and the unspoken provides true access to their consciousness. Delving under the surface structure in

order to find the real meaning is necessary in Dostoyevskij's earlier writings as well, but in his more mature works this technique acquires even greater importance.

As Notes from Underground is exclusively constructed around one character, so too everything in *Crime and Punishment* hinges on its tragic hero, Raskol'nikov. Again, like the Underground Man, he is not diminished to the dominating consciousness of the author. In the same way, the other characters are not diminished to serve any aim of the protagonist or writer. Although the latter is implicated in the ideology revealed in his work, he does not impose his ideas on any of the characters. Yet, the author's voice cannot be completely absent, however well disguised it may be, so that seemingly Dostoyevskij attacked the Underground Man's ideology, while staying outside the debate. In *Crime and Punishment* he seems to criticise Raskol'nikov's idea of rationally justifying all actions, but he leaves him with an inexhaustible personality, to speak for himself and to pursue independently his idea. But whereas the Underground Man questions the validity of human reasoning, Raskol'nikov tries to prove himself and his great idea in a purely rational way. However, his reasoning clashes with his inner make-up. This is the cause of his dual nature which is reflected in his thoughts and actions as well as in the dualistic structure of the novel. His case becomes typical of Dostoyevskij's great disorientated characters.

"Raskol'nik" means a dissenter from the Russian Orthodox Church, and as "Raskol'" in his name indicates, there is a split in his character (*raskolot'* means to split). Like his two predecessors, Mr. Goliadkin and the Underground Man in Chapter 2 above, Raskol'nikov is an alienated man. A misfit in society. A representative of the Russian urban intelligentsia divorced from the soil. This refers to the social and cultural estrangement of city dwellers from the customs and traditional values of the unspoilt, rural Orthodox Russian.

Raskol'nikov is a development of the underground man, "poor and high-minded" [Dostoyevskij 1985:113]. For lack of money this proud and ambitious young man cannot continue his law studies. Due to his poverty he was compelled to stay in *his* "underground" - a stifling tenement room where he would dream of glory like the underground man with arms folded in a Napoleonic pose. The latter says: "Either a hero, or dirt, there was nothing in between" [1985:59], a hero who would "emerge into God's sunlight, practically riding a white horse and crowned with laurel" [1985:59], a hero who would "preach new ideas and rout the forces of reaction at Austerlitz" [1985:60]. Yet, whereas the underground man could not accomplish his dreams, Raskol'nikov decides to act, to become a real hero, like Napoleon. He, the intellectual, is master of his own destiny. And he believes that, like Napoleon the fate of life or death is in his hands. In a feverish state of malnourishment he decides to kill a mean and harmful usurer in order to deliver needy people from her iniquities.

His worried mother calls him by his little-boy's name when she writes to remind him of his religious upbringing: "Do you still say your prayers, Roddy, as you used to, and do you believe in the goodness and the mercy of our Creator and our Redeemer? I am, in my heart, afraid that you may have succumbed to the influence of the modern spirit of godlessness" [Dostoyevskij 1973:57]. In the letter he learns that his sister, Dunia, managed to escape from the depraved Svidrigailov but fell into the clutches of another ruthless character, Luzhin. With all the worrying aspects of the letter in mind, he falls asleep and has a dreadful nightmare. Here Dostoyevskij evokes a horrifying memory from his own childhood days of a drunken official hammering blows on the peasant cabdriver's neck, who in turn lashes his old mare mercilessly. The same scene is recalled in *Notes from Underground* apparently to mock the furious underground man. The latter notes his shouting at the cabby:

"[...] get on, get on, you wretch!" And then the following: "Oh lord, sir!" groaned the son of the soil [...] In my impatience I thumped the cabby on the back of the neck. "What's that for, why are you knocking

me about?" cried my wretched peasant, but he whipped up his miserable nag [1985:84].

The above episode is relevant to this thesis in that it illustrates how a powerless person vents his fury on some lesser being, in this case the cabby, who in turn avenges himself on a defenceless beast of burden. This very same scene from Dostoyevskij's youth seems to have haunted him, because it returns in different novels under various guises. Here Raskol'nikov is terrified by a similar episode in an intensified form, in a nightmare. He dreams of a drunken peasant, called Mikolka, maltreating and flogging to death his long-suffering mare who cannot pull a cart full of carousing companions. Later Ivan Karamazov tells his young brother of a scene in one of Nekrasov's poems about a peasant flogging his little horse "in its gentle eyes" [Dostoyevskij 1984:281]. This theme is very closely related to the abuse of children, which Dostoyevskij considered the worst evil. In *Crime and Punishment* it comes to the fore with regard to the Marmeladov children neglected by their alcoholic father. In *The Devils* a crime of the most hideous form of child victimisation is committed by the satanic Stavrogin. The theme is taken up again by Ivan in *The Brothers Karamazov* who presents it as the most heinous suffering on earth allowed by God.

Under the spell of this disturbing dream Raskol'nikov realises that he is not able to kill the old woman. Nevertheless, when he meets her half-sister, Elizaveta, whom the old hag exploits, he is once more committed to the cause. In this regard the British scholar on Dostoyevskij, Richard Peace, makes interesting comments about symbols at work in Raskol'nikov's psyche: "Symbols of aggression evoke in Raskolnikov feelings of submission; symbols of submission bring out his aggressiveness. The coin of Raskolnikov's inner realm, bearing on one side the head of Napoleon, on the other the effigy of a louse, spins in a constant game of 'heads and tails' with his surroundings" [1975:36].

The alternating aggression and submission also apply to his changing moods. When he goes to the old pawnbroker he cannot envisage carrying out his dastardly intention. Then he meets the squirming self-accusatory Marmeladov whose drinking brings deprivation upon his family and forces his eldest daughter, Sonia, into prostitution. Raskol'nikov again changes his attitude and wants to execute his plan. Spontaneously he gives Sonia's father money, only to regret it immediately thereafter. His mother's letter brings home to him the similarity between Marmeladov's acceptance of Sonia's sacrifice and his own behaviour - that he allows his sister, Dunia, to sacrifice herself in order to support him.

His mother's apprehension proves to be justified. Later it is explained to her that there are two sides to her son's nature: "[...] as if there were two people of diametrically opposed characters living in him, each taking charge of him in turn" [1973:232]. The words *crime* and *punishment* already indicate two opposing trends. For Dostoyevskij crime becomes a medium of posing religious and ethical problems. Punishment is the form of its resolution. The two combined constitute the basic theme of Dostoyevskij's art.

Though the bright ex-student appears ruthless in his firm decision to chop to death a ghastly old woman, he is rather timorous when it comes to his rapacious landlady who persecutes him for the repayment of a debt. During the novel's succeeding scenes this duality in Raskol'nikov's nature is reflected in pairs of personalities of whom one represents opposite characteristics of the other. As literary artist Dostoyevskij used this technique throughout the four novels under discussion. Todorov terms it "parallelism" of situations, names or characters - Viktor Shklovskij¹ was to learn this literary device ("приём") from Dostoyevskij. Such pairs of characters are discernible in the loathsome money-lender as opposed to her humble sister, Elizaveta; the exploiting

1 One of the leading Russian Formalists.

landlady as opposed to her helpful servant; Svidrigailov and later Luzhin as opposed to Dunia; Mrs. Marmeladov as opposed to Sonia. At the same time Raskol'nikov's ambivalent nature shines through his mental processes: self-assertive as against apprehensive, high and mighty as against meek and mild, rational as against irrational, bad as against good. This dichotomy is omnipresent in his thoughts, actions and attitudes to others.

Eventually, when he finds out that her submissive and innocuous half-sister will be away, he becomes determined to kill the avaricious old woman. Yet, for lack of planning, Raskol'nikov is also forced to kill a young woman who unexpectedly enters upon the scene. To his horror he discovers that it is the pawnbroker's very sister, Elizaveta, whom he had wanted to deliver from her evil presence. His crime is a heinous double murder and robbery. However, he never uses the stolen treasure for which he had such lofty purposes - he hides it in a wall and does not seem tempted to retrieve it later.

Up to this episode the reader is introduced to various characters who can approximately be categorised as either self-assertive or self-effacing according to an article on crime written by Raskol'nikov himself. In the first (ruthless) category there are the money-lender, Luzhin and Svidrigailov; in the second category there are those prepared to be abused: Elizaveta, Sonia and Dunia. Symbolically these personalities represent the two opposing poles in Raskol'nikov's nature. Richard Peace puts Mr. Marmeladov in the second category too [1975:37]. However, he should not figure in this class since he is not really self-effacing; neither is there anything of his cowering attitude about Raskol'nikov. Sonia's father belongs in a class on its own. As a weak-willed alcoholic, squandering his daughter's income, he is genuinely ashamed of himself. Here one finds again the Dostoyevskijan outcast. But he clowns about and publicly flouts his shortcomings because he lacks self-confidence. Later in Dostoyevskij's work this type of clowning father reappears in the old

Karamazov. These are types who will not or cannot overcome their evil inclinations. However, whilst the latter is a despicable character, father Marmeladov evokes pity. Life treated him harshly (his first wife died, his second wife is a consumptive with many children). And so he drinks to escape from his worries. Though he is a disgusting type, Dostoyevskij manages to awaken sympathy for him. The reader feels that all these sinners, sufferers, social outcasts, irrational beings are not discarded by Christ. Indeed, these are the people who need Him and they have a chance to be regenerated, for they are closer to finding the ultimate truth than those who have no need to want it.

Glancing at Gide, one notices that all this is in stark contrast to the social environment created in his works, particularly in his autobiography: he depicted himself with a growing awareness that his morals were socially unacceptable. What was far worse for him, was that they were not acceptable to his wife who was his only steady support and whose judgment meant everything to him. Accordingly in Gide's work and in himself one finds the two poles of good and evil represented by "moral" or "immoral". According to the dictates of society he is condemned on the grounds of immorality. And he revolts against his rejection by turning away from religion, instead of trying to find solace in it as Dostoyevskijan outsiders would. His slow but sure evolution towards atheism is one of the main themes of his autobiography.

Returning to Raskol'nikov, one finds that, far from discovering a new super-identity by committing this double murder of the monstrous old woman and her sister, he exacerbated his lack of self-identity. He feels that his identity is not continuous with itself before and after committing the crime. In killing others, he also killed part of himself, since his two victims represent two poles within himself: the grasping pawnbroker represents his strong side: ruthless, rational and domineering, whereas the subdued Elizaveta represents his

weaker side: unselfish and kindhearted. It is impossible for Raskol'nikov to assert one pole of his character without involving the other: by murdering the money-lender it inexorably follows that he murders her sister too [Peace 1975:39]. Here then, in one person are the eternally conflicting forces of good and evil that cannot exist the one without the other.

Maddened by his guilt, the disillusioned young criminal buries himself in his miserable tiny attic room. Yet, domineered by his forceful pole, he still tries to rationalise his action: he did not want to be a louse but a strong man who dares, like Napoleon. Such is his defence privately and publicly for killing the pawnbroker, but Elizaveta is not mentioned.

As a result of his rash crime, his conflicting inner voices leave him no peace: he becomes both his own advocate and the accused. In this sense he is both the criminal and the victim. Subsequently Dostoyevskij explores this phenomenon more deeply when the victimiser and the victim change roles in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Dostoyevskij's concept of evil is particularly evident in the rational expression of self with all its destructive forces. Conversely good is found in the meek, the humble, the mourners, the simple spirits - all those mentioned by Christ in his Sermon on the Mount.

Similar to Liza in *Notes from Underground*, the great female character of *Crime and Punishment*, Sonia, is an unselfish and loving prostitute. One should remember that the name "Sonia" is the diminutive form of "Sophia", the Greek word for wisdom. As Saint Sophia of Kiev was the first great Christian church built in ancient Russia, the name may well refer to the holy wisdom of orthodoxy. It is also noteworthy that Sonia stays with the family Kapernaumov, a name calling forth the Biblical city, Capernaum, where Christ

performed many miracles. These simple, saintly young heroines abused by older men form a recurring "shadow theme" in Dostoyevskij's works.

When she visits Raskol'nikov, Sonia reads directly to him from the New Testament which was given to her by the murdered Elizaveta. She recounts the entire story of the raising of Lazarus [1973:341-342]. Christ predicts divine glorification when He hears of Lazarus' illness: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" [St. John 11:4]. He consoles Martha with the words: "Thy brother shall rise again" [St. John 11:23]. The well-known text on regeneration is also found in St. John [11:25]: "I am the resurrection, and the life: He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." This last verse becomes the nucleus of Raskol'nikov's inner conflict.

Sharply contrasting with Dostoyevskij's theme of regeneration, is Gide's version in *Si le grain ne meurt* of Lazarus' feelings after he was raised from the dead by Christ: "I brought back with me, on my return to France, the secret of a man newly risen from the grave, and suffered the kind of abominable sickness of heart that Lazarus must have felt after Christ's miracle" [Gide:285]- see Chapter 9 below.

St. John's account of the raising of Lazarus is the main inspiration for *Crime and Punishment* and becomes embedded in the main text. Thus, in this crucial scene, the reader is confronted with a structural duality of two texts which produce a mutually illuminating commentary on each other. One is also struck by the presentation of Sonia becoming, in a certain sense, a restatement of Elizaveta - she who has to die in order to live.

When Raskol'nikov discovers that the role of murderer has made his own self a victim, he is forced into a new role: that of detective of his old self's motives. Eventually he admits to Sonia that he had only wanted to prove himself:

It suddenly became as clear as daylight to me that no one, neither in the past nor to-day, had ever dared, while passing by all these absurdities, to take it by the tail and send it flying to the devil. I - I wanted to dare and - and I committed a murder. I only wanted to dare, Sonia, that was my only motive! [1973:431]

Gide follows the same line of reasoning in his "sotie" *Les caves du Vatican*. Here the young Lafcadio wanted to dare commit an absurd murder without a clear reason. He kills a sad-looking man in a train compartment, thinking that he probably relieved him of unhappiness. And like Raskol'nikov, he does not seem remorseful afterwards. Yet, unlike his Russian model, Lafcadio does not reach the stage of eventual repentance.

Turning back to Raskol'nikov's confession to Sonia, one notices that Elizaveta enters his consciousness for the first time. The confession scene is a reverse replica of the murder scene, for while addressing Sonia Raskil'nikov's humility comes to the fore together with the memory of the victimised Elizaveta. But during this assertion of his meek side, his strong side also needs representation.

Just as Mr. Goliadkin of *The Double* hates and fears the other Mr. Goliadkin, the evil part of himself, so Raskol'nikov also abhors his evil double outside himself: the self-assertive and lurid Mr. Svidrigailov. Therefore this strong counterpart appears in the shape of Svidrigailov who takes up quarters next door to Sonia in the same apartment, recalling that the pawnbroker shared living quarters with her sister. Raskol'nikov cannot, as it were, stand on one leg only. So, to keep him in balance, Svidrigailov has to be present. Invisible behind a wall he listens to the confession. Yet this repulsive creature is not altogether evil: he is wondering whether he is a monster or a man, whether a human being should be held responsible for his actions. Later this dividing

wall disintegrates symbolically with Svidrigailov's suicide. His decision to take his life makes it clear that he must have become aware of his own free choice. However, now that Svidrigailov is no longer there, Raskol'nikov can emerge without his dark side. At this juncture he hands himself over to the police. He does not even have to confess the murders openly; his psyche is revealed by mental telepathy to the investigator, standing close to him in a dark corridor near a lamp. In a rather alarming way the latter turns as white as a sheet. In Dostoyevskij's polyphonic novels there are also communicating inner voices forever at work.

After his disappearance which his mother seems to understand instinctively, she apparently convinces herself that he will return in nine months. This period of nine months is evidently the poor woman's delusion about the rebirth of her son. This must be a reference to the biblical story of the raising of Lazarus that Sonia read to him - a religious regeneration in maternal terms. In a similar vein Raskol'nikov cannot love Sonia till his mother dies. Then the so-called little mother of the Siberian prisoners is able to replace Mrs. Raskol'nikov.

His admission, that he wanted a manifestation of self, indicates that he does not have Napoleon's forceful character, that there is a tug-of-war between his strong and meek sides. A force outside himself, the devil, committed the murder. His self-questioning, before and particularly after the crime, does not leave him any peace.

Raskol'nikov, who is infinitely more complex than Gide's Lafcadio, still suffers from a divided personality: at this juncture the ruthless side can be equated to Svidrigailov and the subdued side to Sonia. Yet, even Svidrigailov, the monster whose perfidious actions are made known, shows another side of his nature after his meeting with Raskol'nikov. He falls genuinely in love with the latter's sister, Dunia.

He explains Raskol'nikov's theory about Napoleon to Dunia, who is shattered that her brother shows no signs of remorse:

"Napoleon had impressed him terribly, or rather what impressed him was the fact that very many men of genius paid no attention to individual cases of evil, but stepped over them without giving them a thought. I suppose he must have thought that he, too, was a man of genius - that is, he was quite sure of it for a time. He's suffered a lot, and he's still suffering from the thought that he was capable of inventing a theory, but was incapable of stepping over without hesitation, and that, consequently, he is not a man of genius. And that, of course, is very humiliating to an ambitious young man" [1973:503].

After Dunia's rejection of him he realises for the first time that he is powerless. Within this new awareness he devotes himself to Sonia's family and gives away his wealth. In a dingy hotel room, similar to Raskol'nikov's, he has disturbing dreams about girls he seduced in which he is both victimiser and victim (again like Raskol'nikov). By committing suicide the oppressor as well as the oppressed are killed. Then too, in Sonia's submissiveness there is danger. A false charge of theft leads to her arrest. Her very nature renders her powerless when faced with this evil accusation. Although strong characters come to her rescue, the disgrace heaped upon her innocent young brothers and sisters could have been prevented by her presence.

Upon examination of the important characters surrounding the central figure one has to agree with Richard Peace that they "are like mirrors reflecting and distorting aspects of his own dilemma" [1975:57]. They too have a divided personality in that they symbolically represent another character. In this sense there is another outside double to Raskol'nikov's character. He is Mikolka, the peasant who is painting the building in which the pawnbroker lived at the time of the murder. Not only does he become a natural suspect of the crime, but he falsely confesses to it. He wants to take suffering upon himself because he is a raskol'nik, a member of the church schismatic sect of dissenters who had been persecuted in the past. One can detect in him both a confessional side of Raskol'nikov's character as well as another duality:

Mikolka is also the name of the repulsive peasant who beat the old mare to death in the nightmare. Raskol'nikov symbolically rids himself of this latter double by his confession to the investigators, thereby liberating the sectarian Mikolka from police detention.

By and large Raskol'nikov must not be regarded as a criminal in the ordinary sense. He has excellent qualities, such as his generosity and charity despite his own need, his sensitivity and kindness towards the oppressed, his courage demonstrated by saving children notwithstanding personal danger. But he is a rebel, like the underground man. He believes that his striving towards a higher truth will lead to his own free exercise of will. However, Dostoyevskij makes it clear that unlimited powers of the godhead do not reside in human beings. Therefore one finds that, despite Raskol'nikov's confession, his personality has not yet become integrated.

That can only happen when he eventually repents humbly; only then can the two opposing elements within himself become reconciled. Then he will emerge as a well-balanced strong personality with great sensitivity who will work out his own salvation.

Upon closer examination of both the ruthless and the subdued sides of Raskol'nikov's character, the reader observes that these seem to be coming closer together. Later Raskol'nikov asks Sonia: "Is it penal servitude you're thinking of?" and her answer is: "Accept suffering and be redeemed by it - that's what you must do" [1973:434]. He follows her advice, admits his crime and is exiled to Siberia whither she accompanies him.

In banishment, due to his pride, he is treated as an outcast among the convicts. It is paradoxical that these try to murder him because they think he is an atheist. During his subsequent illness, when he is in a state of delirium, it occurs to him that no one can simply act on the strength of a grandiose theory. This awareness, coming to him at the end of the novel rounds off the action in

the same way that it started: the feverish state in which Raskol'nikov conceived his theory about killing the nasty pawnbroker.

While Sonia is also ill, the revelation comes to him that he loves her. In their humbled and ailing condition they realise that they are meant for each other. Sonia restores in him his Christian faith which he is now ready to accept. The two of them are entering a new existence: "They were both pale and thin; but in those sick and pale faces the dawn of a new future, of a full resurrection to a new life, was already shining" [1973:557].

The novel's epilogue promises Raskol'nikov rebirth in a future life. Here the narrator comes to the fore and concludes the novel with: "But that is the beginning of a new story, the story of the gradual rebirth of a man, the story of his gradual regeneration, of his gradual passing from one world to another, of his acquaintance with a new and hitherto unknown reality". In the following and final sentence he calls upon the reader when he says: "That might be the subject of a new story - our present story is ended" [1973:559], expecting the reader to carry on reading the next novel. That new story is *The Idiot*.

CHAPTER 4

ИДИОТ (THE IDIOT) - 1868

Like his hero in this novel, Dostoyevskij seemed utterly incapable of fending for himself. Generally it can be stated that whilst Western man wants to enrich himself outwardly and even his soul-searching is conditioned by events outside himself, the Easterner projects himself onto higher planes of inner contemplation. Since Dostoyevskij spiritually belonged to both East and West, his fictional characters are maladapted to the strains of life, as he was himself: over-humble and crippled by debts. He, who had to humiliate himself all his life, pleading for help or money, or postponement of deadlines for scripts demanded by unscrupulous publishers, creates a world of the humble, the meek, the persecuted, the ridiculed. The outer reality in this new work is weird. Again several characters could be described as pathological cases: a sectarian murderer who weeps over the body of his victim, criminals, neurotics, a hysterical courtesan burning a large sum of money, self-incriminating débauchés; some of these outcasts border on insanity. Yet all these pathological cases can be traced to the author's own life and his perception of it.

Dostoyevskij needed his elder brother Michail for moral and financial support - later he provided for the family of this brother after the latter's death. From Geneva in 1867 Dostoyevskij implores Maikov to send him money. Writing "life is torture" outside Russia and "I need Russia for my work, for my life", he explains the reasons why he had to leave:

[...] in the first place, I had to save my health and even my life. The attacks were recurring every eight days, and it was unbearable to feel and recognize the destruction of my nerves and brain. I really was

beginning to lose my senses - that is a fact. I felt it; the ruin of my nerves often drove me to the very edge of things. The second reason is that my creditors would wait no longer, and on the day of my departure several summonses were out against me [1961:114].

Because he had become an inveterate gambler, he also incurred gambling debts regularly. In the same letter he complains about his lack of moderation: "but the worst is that I have an evil and exaggeratedly passionate nature. In all things I go to the uttermost extreme; my life long I have never been acquainted with moderation". And further he exclaims about his wife: "Anna Grigorovna pawned her last, her very last, possession. That angel! How she consoled me, how she suffered in that cursed Baden, in our two tiny rooms above the blacksmith's forge, the only place we could afford!" [1961:119] His beloved middle-class wife was too ordinary to inspire him as an author, but she knew that his gambling would drive him to a point of despair which in turn would force him to write.

Subsequently one reads about the basis of all his hopes, namely "that only under one condition can everything be arranged so as to bring forth fruit - namely that my novel really succeeds" [1961:125]. Dostoyevskij was probably referring to *The Idiot* which he wanted to "bring forth fruit" but the writing of which he found arduous. In 1868 he writes to his niece, Sofia Alexandrovna:

The idea of the book is the old one which I always have so greatly liked; but it is so difficult that hitherto I never have had the courage to carry it out; and if I'm setting to work at it now, it's only because I'm in a desperate plight. The basic idea is the representation of a truly perfect and noble man. And this is more difficult than anything else in the world [1961:142].

While busy on this novel he wrote in haste *The Gambler* so as to frustrate a greedy publisher's plot to obtain the copyright of all his works unless he submitted a new novel within a month.

Dostoyevskij, though a literary genius, was childlike and totally defenceless against the refined scheming of his materialistic environment; in this he was similar to his prince Myshkin, the main character of *The Idiot*. He transposes these characteristics on his hero, regarded as a fool or an idiot. This perfectly good, well-balanced, integrated personality represents the positive side of the Higher Man which Raskol'nikov wanted to be. He is the inspired idealist who does not need Raskol'nikov's forceful nature, because his strength is in his disarming honesty and meekness.

The novel deals with the climactic period in the life of this naive, open-hearted prince, untainted by corruption. He is Christ as well as Don Quixote, probably the most lovable character in Christian literature, the divinely ridiculous, who wants to help mankind. Whereas Don Quixote is physically feeble, prince Myshkin has a physical and mental disorder: he is an epileptic, he is the Idiot. He was regenerated from his state of idiocy and now he "brings forth fruit". Through the love and understanding of this gentle young man, the strong and mighty are tamed. He radiates joy and kindness. Initially ridiculed, he made the surrounding characters stop thinking of him at some stage in the novel as an idiot when they realise that they failed to understand him. When they gradually start confiding in him, their existence starts taking on a new dimension; they discover a higher plane of life. In total innocence he undemandingly loves everyone: the liars, the righteous, the cynics. He shows understanding for them all in his childlike way (mentally he does not grow up beyond a certain age). Though incapable of fending for himself, he helps everyone. They, in turn, trust him. They come under his spell: particularly the brutes, the violent, the lost souls. These sinners are closer to finding the truth than those who have no need to want it.

His simple belief in everyone seems to be based on verse 3 of the Sermon on the Mount, found in St. Matthew 5: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of God." The Christ-like intention becomes even clearer when one reads that an ass woke him up out of his state of idiocy while he was being

treated in Switzerland [Dostoyevskij 1935:51]. Its braying symbolically resembles the exultant clarion call of the Apocalypse and reminds one of Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem on this lowly beast of burden.

From this humble ass, which probably has some bearing on an asinine idiot, a paradox is created with the hero's name: Lyov (meaning Lion). This is certainly no coincidence, as there is also reference to Krylov's fable of the lion and the ass [1935:130]. Besides, names are always important in Dostoyevskij's works. So one should also examine his surname, which is derived from "Mysh" (mouse) - again a paradox which is not really so paradoxical. The timidity and meekness of a little mouse are preceded by the courage and strength of a lion. Though meek like a mouse, he is powerful like a lion: in his total honesty he does not waver. Unconditionally he helps everyone, even when he knows that his life is in danger - here one thinks of his visit to Rogozhin who wants to kill him. A similar paradox is created by the fact that he is the only one in the novel with the title "prince". This has strong biblical overtones (prince of light, prince of peace), while he is referred to as the "idiot", even by himself [1935:25] and the writer. There is also a paradox in Myshkin's saying that humility is a terrible force [Peace 1975:67] but this contrast is typical of his nature.

As indicated above, the mouse is really the lion. This concept is found in Christ's teaching quoted by St. Mark 9:35: "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." The meaning of this verse seems quite clear: the lesser, humble ones, will eventually be the most important.

The opening scene of the novel is an excellent exposition of the dramatic action that is to follow. It takes the reader to a third class train compartment where one becomes acquainted with the principal characters, if not directly by their presence, like the three who are conversing together, then indirectly through illuminating remarks. Two of the passengers in conversation are the main protagonists who represent the two opposing poles in the nature of man

which Dostoyevskij always stresses in his works: prince Myshkin, so good, gentle and forgiving versus Parfyon Rogozhin, the brutal fanatic. The third passenger, who seems to know everyone, Lebedyev, links together all the novel's various characters. Being a typical Dostoyevskijan character, his personality consists of contradictions: virtuous and vicious, self-abasing and arrogant, reasonable and irrational, clowning and serious, comic and tragic. Vera, his daughter, is the only person who helps the prince in the sombre Russian world to which he returns after his unexpected cure from his dark insane torpor in Switzerland. Lebedyev's interpretation of St. John's Apocalypse is significant. The great controversial female figure, Nastasya Filippovna, is also enraptured by the meaning of The Revelation. He refers to her as beautiful and a princess in her own way, which announces the possibility of her becoming a princess. Rogozhin seems to be smitten by her. He recounts the first glimpse he had of her: "[...] she came out of a shop and got into her carriage. I was all aflame in an instant" [1935:10]. Prince Myshkin talks quite open-heartedly to these strangers and Lebedyev says to him with insight: "[...] anyway you are straightforward and simple-hearted, and that's to your credit" [1935:5]. When Rogozhin wants to know his opinion on women, the prince quite candidly answers: "Perhaps you don't know that, owing to my illness, I know nothing about women." And Rogozhin cries: "Well, if that's how it is [...] you are a regular blessed innocent, and God loves such as you" [1935:13]. Here one finds the announcement that the prince is loved by God.

Just as the guileless prince Myshkin is pure and innocent, so are children in general. They appear as a recurring theme in Dostoevskij's works. "The poor in spirit" are like little children who have a simple belief. St. Matthew quotes Christ's words: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" [18:3-4]. To be simple, to be a child, to have the naive belief and goodness of a child, to love like a child, that is the familiar motif. Their

innocence is often contrasted to worldly wisdom of intellectuals who struggle with themselves and cannot find peace.

This theme is absent from Gide's works. Indeed, very few children can be found in his works. However, there are youths at odds with themselves about religion. And, in glaring contrast to Dostoyevskij, he describes svelte boys as an object of pleasure. Evidently it expresses the opposite of what the Russian writer had in mind.

Coming back to Prince Myshkin, one finds that the only ones with whom he feels empathy in Switzerland, where he was being treated for his mental illness, are children. He understands them better than their teachers or parents and a reciprocal bond of love between him and them is created quite naturally. His love for Marie, the persecuted tubercular peasant girl, who was violated by a commercial traveller and whose only company are the cows herded by her, makes the children love her too. Although abused, she remains unselfish and loving towards those who scorn her. Her name is significant: she evokes a type of Holy Mary who, according to the Gospel of St. Matthew, would have been rejected by Joseph, who is usually referred to as her fiancé at this stage, but the Gospel speaks of her (probably allotted) husband: "Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly" [1:19]. Publicly disgraced by the righteous villagers, divorced from their company, this Swiss Marie is overwhelmed by the love of the simple prince and the children.

Myshkin relates this as a flash-back in the scene where he first meets the Epanchin family. There is something unreal about the three similar Epanchin girls who are described in a Gogolesque way: "The three daughters of General Epanchin were blooming, healthy, well-grown young women, with magnificent shoulders, well-developed chests and strong, almost masculine, arms; and naturally with their health and strength they were fond of a good dinner" [1935:33]. This type of portrayal seems to indicate that the three sisters, so

much alike, do not seem to be made of quite real flesh and blood. They have not fully come to life yet. Despite their "almost masculine arms" and healthy appetite Dostoyevskij repeatedly refers to their irresistible beauty. Their names are also alike: Alexandra, Adelaïda and Aglaia. The two older sisters are artistic: the eldest one is talented in music and the second in painting. The youngest Aglaia has the name of one of the Greek graces and is the most beautiful. She could well be perceived as the classical beauty of a white marble Greek statue. She is cherished, protected and somewhat spoilt by her family. However, these three sisters soon develop into individual human beings; particularly Agalaia who becomes one of the main characters.

After meeting the Epanchins, Myshkin shows them in a child-like way, his writing skills by imitating the beautiful signature of a fourteenth century igumen (holy father). This priest Pafnuttij tried to save Orthodox Russia from the pagan Tatars. The detail is important since it introduces Myshkin as he is - a simple, saintly man who would like to help, comfort and save all those around him. He is even somewhat like the holy idiot who plays such an important role in rural Russia. However, the sisters discover a paradox in the prince's mental condition, namely that he is an intelligent fool. When he first starts talking to the family, Adelaïda calls him a philosopher [1935:54]. Later Aglaia openly admires his candid truthfulness and distinguishes between two forms of intelligence:

"I consider you to be the most honest and truthful of men, more honest and truthful than anyone; and if they do say that your mind...that is, that you're sometimes afflicted in your mind, it's unjust. I made up my mind about that, and disputed with others, because, though you really are mentally afflicted (you won't be angry at that, of course; I'm speaking from a higher point of view), yet the mind that matters is better in you than in any of them" [1935:408].

Despite his avowed ignorance of women, he understands and knows them far better than anyone else in the novel. In an early scene the Christ-like hero and Ganya both look at a portrait of Nastasya Filippovna. On examining it closely Myshkin sees the despair in her beautiful proud features. A feeling

seems to overwhelm him that he wants to comfort her and protect her against evil. Even before he met her, while studying her photograph with Ganya, he has a foreboding of her murder:

All at once Ganya approached Myshkin, who was at that moment standing before the portrait of Nastasya Filippovna, gazing at it.

"So you admire a woman like that, prince?" he asked him suddenly, looking searchingly at him as though with some peculiar intention.

"It's a wonderful face", he answered, "and I feel sure her story is not an ordinary one. The face is cheerful, but she has passed through terrible suffering, hasn't she? Her eyes tell one that, the cheek bones, those points under her eyes. It's a proud face, awfully proud, but I don't know whether she is kindhearted. Ah, if she were! That would redeem it all!"

"And would *you* marry such a woman?" Ganya went on, his feverish eyes fixed upon him.

"I can't marry any one, I am an invalid," said Myshkin.

"And would Rogozhin marry her? What do you think?"

"Marry her! He might to-morrow; I dare say he'd marry her and in a week perhaps murder her" [1935:33].

Ganya realises that Myshkin is the only person he can trust although there is a conflict of interest: "Perhaps I really am doing wrong in confiding in you, dear prince. But it's because you are the first honourable man I've come across" [1935:115]. The prince's intuition about the unpredictable Nastasya Filippovna is so right. She is charitable but can be wild and cruel. (She reminds one of Dostoyevskij's lover, Polina - see the Introduction above.) Nastasya Filipovna's irrational behaviour can possibly be explained by her unfortunate youth: as a beautiful young girl she was abused by Totskij, her adoptive father, on his country estate where he kept her. But later she unexpectedly leaves his estate and proudly confronts him in St. Petersburg. There he subsequently puts her up in luxurious surroundings where she "receives" her "visitors" with dignity. Totskij becomes one of her many unsuccessful, intimidated suitors.

Further in the narrative, during the very important scene of her birthday party, her behaviour is quite revealing. She listens with interest to Ganya's

statement that "it was strange and unaccountable to call the prince 'an idiot', that he thought him quite the opposite - a man, in fact, who knew very well what he was about" [1935:128]. But the guests are puzzled by her behaviour: "It was difficult to understand her strange and at times abrupt and sudden sallies, her hysterical and causeless laughter, alternating with silent and even morose depression. Some of her visitors suspected that she was feverish" [1935:132]. Enthusiastically she supports the suggestion that the guests, against their better judgment, play an inappropriate *petit-jeu*:

Nastasya Filipovna was always self-willed and inconsiderate when once she had expressed a desire, even though it were the veriest caprice, of no benefit to her. And now she seemed hysterical, ran to and fro and laughed spasmodically and violently, especially at Totskij's uneasy protests. Her dark eyes glittered, there was a hectic flush on her pale cheeks. The dejected and disgusted air of some of her visitors possibly increased her ironical desire to play the game. Perhaps the cynicism and the cruelty of the idea was just what attracted her [1935:134].

Money as a means to seduce or pacify Nastasya Filipovna becomes completely irrelevant. Already in the opening scene of the novel there is much talk about money and inheritance, but at this stage the theme of money becomes really important. Totskij's offer of 75000 roubles to make up for the harm done to her in the past, simply meets with derision on her part, although the visitors seem most impressed. The sum of money is irresistible to Ganya who wants to marry her for this reason and is scorned by the magnificently proud Nastasya Filippovna. Then the love-sick Rogozhin, in a sort of delirium, comes with a bundle of hundred thousand roubles. It elicits her rightful wrath:

"This, friends, is a hundred thousand roubles", said Nastasya Filippovna, addressing the company with a sort of feverish, impatient defiance, "in this dirty bundle. This afternoon he shouted like a madman that he would bring me a hundred thousand this evening, and I've been expecting him all the time. He was bidding for me: he began at eighteen, then he suddenly passed at one bound to forty, and then this hundred here. He's kept his word! Foo! how pale he is!" [1935:152]

Then she spouts forth her contempt for Totskij's money and for himself, who kept her "like a countess" [1935:153]. Haughtily she decides she will go to her "proper place, in the streets!" [1935:154]. She "must either have a spree with Rogozhin or go out as a washer-woman", for she has nothing of her own. And who will take her in her total poverty? [1935:154] At this point the innocent Myshkin declares his love for her and his desire to marry her. In spite of her protestations that she is disreputable and Rogozhin's woman, he persists:

"I consider that you will be doing me an honour, not I you. I am nothing, and you have suffered and have come pure out of that hell, and that is a great deal. Why, then, are you ashamed, and ready to go off with Rogozhin? It's fever...You have given back seventy thousand to Mr. Totsky and you say that you still give up everything - everything here. No one here would do that. I...Nastasya Filippovna...I love you! I would die for you, Nastasya Filippovna! I won't let any one say a word about you" [1935.:155].

Paradoxically the unmaterialistic, asinine hero discovers that he will inherit a fortune of one and a half million roubles. And so, after this romantic declaration the fairy tale develops further: the kept woman will become a wealthy princess, adored by her husband. However, this is not a real-life situation. Nastasya Filippovna refuses to "ruin a child like that" which is more in the line of Totskij's impulses [1935:160]. She hovers between the pure prince and the fanatical criminal, Rogozhin. Her heart and body are divided. The passionate Nastasya Filippovna becomes half-demented when she discovers Myshkin's infinite love for her which she considers out of her reach due to her past history. And he cannot prevent her murder, as foreseen by him. Impulsively she decides to run away with Rogozhin and throws his bundle of money into the fire.

Her name too is of great significance: Anastasya means the resurrected or regenerated woman, which implies that she is kindhearted and will be redeemed. Hence Myshkin's almost instinctive attraction to her. She wears a black dress in her portrait, indicating that she intends to renounce the world. When he sees her photograph, he kisses it: "Her dazzling beauty was

positively unbearable - the beauty of a pale face, almost sunken cheeks and glowing eyes - a strange beauty! Myshkin gazed at it for a minute, then started suddenly, looked around him, hurriedly raised the portrait to his lips and kissed it" [1935:74]. Her image, which he worships, becomes a symbolical icon, not of the Madonna but of the fallen Mary Magdalene. Of great importance is the garden scene in which he meets Nastasya Filippovna, because it is reminiscent of Christ's appearance before Mary Magdalene in the garden. Richard Peace is of the opinion that the patronymic Filippovna, with which she is always addressed, refers to Filippov, "the semi-legendary founder of an extreme sect of heretics within the Orthodox fold" [1975:84].

Glancing at André Gide, one finds that the only true love in his life was his wife whom he would not and could not "defile" physically. With a love similar to Myshkin's for Nastasya Filippovna, he adored her like a Russian icon (see chapter 8 below).

To continue with prince Myshkin: he appeared to recognise a face that he knew upon examination of the portrait. He felt as though she had called to him already [1935:159]. In fact, that is what happened. Nastasya Filippovna confesses that she used to dream of him:

"You are right, I dreamed of you long ago, when I lived five years all alone in his country home. I used to think and dream, think and dream, and I was always imagining some one like you, kind, good, honest, and so stupid that he would come forward all of a sudden and say, 'You are not to blame, Nastasya Filippovna, and I adore you'[...] And then this man would come, stay two months in the year, bringing shame, dishonour, corruption, degradation, and go away" [1935:161].

Yet, while pointing to Myshkin, she shouts to the company: "Would you have had me ruin him? [...] How can he be married? He wants a nurse to look after him" [1935:161]. Because this woman has come to recognise the true values of life through her suffering, she enters Paradise and is regenerated. She sacrifices an earthly life of luxury and comfort, as offered to her by

Tomskij, which she does not want to accept on moral grounds, and she refuses the loving, peaceful, wealthy life which the prince offers her on the moral grounds that she does not want to corrupt him. Yet she is prepared to "be a faithful wife" [1935:200] to the brutal Rogozhin who will probably kill her. Her actions are clearly not guided by self-interest; on the contrary she displays a strong urge to self-destruction.

To a lesser extent this urge is shared by Aglaia who at this stage in the narrative has started coming to the fore. Unlike her sisters, she plays a major role as adversary of Nastasya Filippovna. She comes to understand Myshkin and ambivalent feelings of love and pity besiege her. When she unexpectedly receives a letter from him, she puts it away carefully in a book. Only later does she notice that the book is, very aptly, *Don Quixote de la Mancha*. She also sees the similarity between the Spanish hero and Pushkin's *Poor Knight*, except that he is serious, not comic. However, the resemblance really exists between prince Myshkin and the poor knight. Aglaia reads this poem to an assembly of people visiting prince Myshkin who is recuperating after an epileptic fit. For her Pushkin's ballad glorifies the whole grand conception of medieval chivalrous and platonic love. Its hero wrote the letters A.M.D. (Ave Mater Dei) with his own blood on his shield. The invocation to the Virgin Mary reflects Myshkin's "tortured relationship" with the two main female characters in the novel [Peace 1975:76]. Intuitively Aglaia seems to understand this and while reciting, she changes these letters to N.F.B., the initials of her rival. Just as the knight who conquers unbelievers in the Holy Land, Myshkin tries to convert the philistines around him in Holy Russia. However, both are destined to fail in their mission [Peace 1975:77]: the knight returns to his castle where he dies insane; finally the prince returns to Switzerland in a state of idiocy.

One evening at Aglaia's home Myshkin is holding forth on happiness which becomes an integral part of the worshipping nature as it is revealed by God

(see Introduction above). His spontaneous and practical approach to life cannot help but impress the others:

"I'm twenty-seven, but I know that I'm like a child. I have no right to express an opinion [...] My ideas are really all so simple [...] I know it's not right to talk. Better set an example [...] I don't know how one can walk by a tree and not be happy at the sight of it? How can one talk to a man and not be happy in loving him! [...] Look at a child! Look at God's sunrise! Look at the grass, how it grows! Look at the eyes that gaze at you and love you!" [1935:526-528]

The ecstasy of these ideas work him up to such an extent that they bring on an epileptic fit. Aglaia is there to help him: "She was in time to catch him in her arms, and with horror, with a face distorted with pain, she heard the wild scream of the 'spirit tearing and casting down the unhappy man'" [1935:528]. Slowly Aglaia is initiated into the outside world with its pain and suffering. She provides a balance to the other important female figures: Marie, the innocent, lowly outcast among the animals of the field; Nastasya Filippovna, the resurrected Mary Magdalene who has to die in order to live; and from the Second Part onwards, Vera (faith) Lebedyev who cares for others. The latter always carries her baby sister who is called Liubov (love). This virginal young woman carrying love everywhere with her, is an obvious Madonna figure. When Myshkin thinks of her, he sees her radiant face: "And what a charming, what a sweet face Lebedyev's eldest daughter had - the one standing up with the baby! What an innocent, what an almost childish expression! What an almost childish laugh!" [1935:216] These women are loved by Myshkin. He kisses Marie to comfort her [1935:65], he kisses Nastasya Filippovna's photograph [1935:74], he kisses Aglaia's note [1935:344], he kisses Vera's hands and her forehead.

However, it is dark in the agitated heart of Nastasya Filippovna. It is even darker in Rogozhin's. The outer reality of his house alerts the reader to his character. The sensitive prince has an almost tangibly unpleasant sensation when he goes there: "[...] he had not expected his heart to throb so painfully

[...] It was a large gloomy house of three stories, of a dirty green colour and no pretensions to architecture" [1935:192]. The owner belongs to the Skoptsy sect, a Russian sectarian group that practices self-mutilation (often castration). There is a foreboding atmosphere: "Without and within, the house is somehow inhospitable and frigid; it seems to be keeping something dark and hidden [...] The stone staircase was dark and the walls painted red" [1935:193]. Significantly there is a picture by Holbein of Christ who had just been taken down from the Cross [1935:206]. Myshkin muses that the sight of a dead Saviour might make some people lose their faith [1935:205]. Even the women and disciples who had followed Him and worshipped Him during his three years of ministry, must have found it very hard to believe in this broken martyr. He who raised the Maiden and Lazarus, how could He now overcome death and be regenerated? [1935:388-389]. Exactly these sensations are besieging Rogozhin. Yet, though the Russian soul can be a dark place [1935:216], Myshkin has a passionate faith in it. It comes to him when he sees a simple peasant woman, rejoicing at her baby's first smile, cross herself with great devotion [1935:208]. He tells Rogozhin:

"[...] that is the whole conception of God as our Father and of God's gladness in man, like a father's in his own child - the fundamental idea of Christ! [...] The essence of religious feeling does not come under any sort of reasoning or atheism, and has nothing to do with any crimes or misdemeanours [...] But the chief thing is that you will notice it more clearly and quickly in the Russian heart than anywhere else" [1935:208-209].

Then comes an anecdote of a learned atheist with whom the prince "made friends on the spot" [1935:207], followed by the story of two peasant friends. One of them believes in God so thoroughly that he prays fervently while he cuts his friend's throat (it reminds one of Ivan the Terrible who used to pray for the soul of his victims). It also prepares the scene for Rogozhin, consumed by jealousy, who attempts knifing the prince [1935:222]. For the former knows that Nastasya Filippovna loves Myshkin and he tells him so: "Just as I love her now, she loves another man now. And do you know who

that other man is? It's you! [...] She is afraid of ruining and disgracing you; but I don't matter" [1935:203].

Here again, Dostoyevskij depicts the split personality: the two great protagonists call each other "brother", they exchange crucifixes and Rogozhin takes Myshkin to his mother so that she may bless him. He admits to the prince that, in a fit of jealousy, he beats Nastasya Filippovna black and blue and then falls on his knees before her, stays there while fasting and pleading for forgiveness [1935:199]. She eventually, realising that he might murder her, consents gloomily to marry him, not because she is afraid of him, but because "there's nothing but ruin anyway" [1935:200]. However, Rogozhin is aware that his violent love is not as strong as the prince's loving pity [1935:217]. He also remarks shrewdly that there might be passion in Myshkin's pity. Indeed, the latter's relationship with Nastasya Filippovna develops into something quite different from the platonic love of medieval chivalry. Moreover, the prince seems to be in love with two women, the two rivals, totally different the one from the other. They too seem to be in love with him and jealous of one another. So the relationship between Myshkin and Christ becomes very complex. He is certainly an image of Christ, but can never be completely like Him. Jostein Bortnes advances the theory that a portrait of the prince emerges which the two great women figures project on him, endowed with qualities they detect [1994:12]. Holbein's picture of the dead Jesus is probably the key to understanding the prince as the image of a humanised Christ.

Despite the hero's outward calm, he is subject to opposing inner forces. In this respect, as indicated by his names, Leo and Mysh, he has an ambiguous nature like most Dostoyevskijan heroes. He blames himself "for two extremes, for his excessive 'senseless and impertinent' readiness to trust people and at the same time for his gloomy suspiciousness" [1935:285] - he has a premonition that Rogozhin wants to murder him. As Christ's is led into temptation by Satan [St. Matthew 4:1-11], he is tempted by the Devil who

makes him suspicious of Rogozhin. And he believes in his demon [1935:219]. He believes in the alarming problem of man's double nature, about which Blaise Pascal had issued a warning (see chapter 3 above).

Even Dostoyevskij's young nihilists have the shattering of discovering an alter ego. One of these nihilists, the eighteen-year-old Ippolit, sneers at Myshkin's ideas, for he believes that humans should torment each other. He reminds one of the Underground Man, a victim of confined consciousness. Cloistered in his room during the final stage of consumption, his only view is a blank wall. Suicide becomes the sole action left to him to prove the strength of his own will [1935:395]. Yet, in an anguished moment he cries out: "Oh, help them, help them! God will repay you a hundred-fold. For God's sake, for Christ's sake!" [1935:281]. Another nihilist, Keller, openly admits: "[...] words and lies in the hellish (and always present) craving to get the better of a man, to make something even out of one's tears of penitence. It is so, by God!" [1935:294]. They are looking for Paradise on earth which is "not easy to reach" [1935:324]. For the nihilists this is their ultimate goal since it is the "triumph of rights" [Peace 1975:116].

Myshkin warns Keller of the danger of double thinking which also besieges him: "[...] it is awfully difficult to struggle against these *double* thoughts; I've tried. God knows how they arise and come into one's mind. But you call it simply baseness! Now, I'm beginning to be afraid of those thoughts again" [1935:294]. His struggle against evil seems to become an uneven one. With his physical weakness he can hardly bear it before he is overcome by an epileptic fit. Dostoyevskij describes the condition: "[...] pale, weak, suffering, agitated; his knees trembled and a vague bewildered smile hovered about his blue lips"; he has shivers, cold sweat, darkness and chill in his soul [1935:219]. He is also doomed to self-destruction, but it is because of his love for others. He has to die to himself and his suspicions in order to be regenerated to a new life.

Although Rogozhin becomes the symbolic brother of a Christ-type Russian, he still represents the dark side of the Russian religious temperament with its castrate and flagellant sects, its fanaticism and violence [Peace 1975:91].

Despite his understanding of Rogozhin's insanely jealous, passionate love for Nastasya Filippovna, he fears for her safety. He knows that such love cannot be distinguished from hate [1935:201]. He muses in agony about Rogozhin's inevitable savage revenge, but still hopes that he will forgive her:

When he knew all the truth, when he realised what a piteous creature that broken, insane woman was, wouldn't he forgive her all the past, all his agonies? Wouldn't he become her servant, her brother, her friend, her Providence? Compassion would teach even Rogozhin and awaken his mind. Compassion was the chief and perhaps only law of all human existence [1935:218].

It is the most important commandment that Christ taught the world. But Myshkin realises to his horror that he does not trust Rogozhin. He accuses himself of his double thinking: "Ah, how unpardonably and dishonourably he had wronged Rogozhin! No, it was not that 'the Russian soul was a dark place', but that in his own soul there was darkness, since he could imagine such horrors!" [1935:218]

Duality of nature can also clearly be discerned in the two main female characters. Outwardly the reader is presented with the virginal Aglaia and the immoral Nastasya Filippovna. However, it is not merely this contrast that counts. Instead of looking at them as two opposing characters, one should see that they are rather similar, that each of them is at odds with herself. Behind their external beauty a state of spiritual disturbance and suffering is hidden. The two of them create chaos. When Myshkin studies the portrait of Nastasya Filippovna, he is struck by something in the face: "There was a look of unbounded pride and contempt, almost hatred, in that face, and at the same time something confiding, something wonderfully simple-hearted. The contrast of these two elements [...]" [1935:74]. One detects in this instability,

as Richard Peace puts it: "a typically Dostoyevskyan alternation between aggression and submission, which is in keeping with Nastasya Filippovna's desire for revenge on the one hand, and her pangs of guilt on the other" [1975:108]. In this respect she recalls Dostoyevskij's unpredictable mistress Polina Suslova (see the Introduction above). Aglaia too, is prone to contradictory tendencies. She has more mind than heart, as her mother points out to her: "I am a fool with a heart and no sense, and you are a fool with sense and no heart, and so we are both unhappy and miserable" [1935:75]. About Aglaia's inner turmoil her mother makes this remark: "She's a wilful, mad, spoilt girl - if she cares for any one she'll be sure to rail at him aloud and abuse him to his face" [1935:301]. This is exactly what she does. But though she taunts, mocks and disparages the prince in company, she also has the courage to defend him publicly. Knowing his virtues and exasperated by his humility among visitors, she bursts out:

"There's no one here, no one, who is worth your little finger, nor your mind, nor your heart! You are more honourable than any of them, nobler, better, kinder, cleverer than any of them! Some are not worthy to stoop to pick up the handkerchief you have just dropped...Why do you humble yourself and put yourself below them? Why do you distort everything in yourself? Why have you no pride?" [1935:326].

There is perversity and compassion in her nature. Somehow she loves Myshkin with pity, rather similar to his love for Nastasya Filippovna. The two women behave incongruously: they are capricious, irrational, impulsive creatures. Both are torn between the opposing elements of a split personality. From the goodness of her heart Nastasya Filippovna wants to sacrifice herself by trying to bring together Aglaia and the prince. And Aglaia is ready for it. One of her friends says: "She'd refuse the most eligible suitor and run off delighted with some student to starve in a garret - that's her dream! [...] The prince has hooked her, in the first place, because he wasn't fishing for her; and secondly, because he is looked upon by every one as an idiot. The very fact that she is upsetting her family about him is a joy to her" [1935:448-449].

The saintly mystic Myshkin, physically ignorant of women, loves them all. He belongs to another, timeless, world where the resurrected woman, Nastasya Filippovna, was familiar to him. Only the last humble woman, Vera, brings physical and mental order. She also provides spiritual comfort after the harrowing event of Nastasya Filippovna's murder followed by a long night's vigil. She represents the final faith before he relapses into idiocy. He, who is like Christ, still needs that faith to overcome the gloom of having to return to idiocy. Even Christ pleads (in St. Matthew 26:39): "O my father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me." But it was not to be, since Christ was strong enough to carry everyone's burden. He conquered all human sins and suffering; he conquered evil. There is no perfectly good man, so prince Myshkin goes back to his "normal" condition where he ceases to be human. At the conclusion of the novel (as in *Crime and Punishment*) the narrator confides in the reader and comments on the future of the fictional characters of "our story" [1935:584].

Although the prince does not complain, the sin surrounding him and the whole earthly burden becomes too much for him. He cannot keep up resisting the evil forces of the world around him. A heavily looming cloud oppresses him like darkness descending on earth. It leads to a particularly severe epileptic seizure after which he withdraws into his protective shell of idiocy whence he had come, for he was not of this world.

Similarly Dostoyevskij himself advances towards his spiritual revelation.

Without going into too much detail, one should examine a few short but relevant comments on epilepsy. According to *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary* it is "a chronic functional disease of the nervous system, manifested by recurring attacks of sudden insensibility or impairment of consciousness, commonly accompanied by peculiar convulsive seizures" [1972:439]. *The short Encyclopaedia of Medicine for Lawyers* adds that in the more severe form (from which Dostoyevskij himself and Prince Myshkin suffered): "the patient

falls to the ground, at first with the muscles rigid and later with powerful jerking movements, often injuring himself in falling [...] He may pass water and faeces" [1966:145]. Under "aura" the latter dictionary mentions "peculiar sensations that precede an attack in epilepsy" [1966:46] and adds that there may be flashes of light, to be followed immediately by the epileptic's cry or shout as he falls unconscious in a fit [1966:145].

The ancient Greeks called it a sacred disease. It is known that many prophets, *inter alios* Mohammed, were epileptics. The above-mentioned "peculiar sensations" can lead to strange visions and mystical ecstasy.

Dostoyevskij was also beset by such premonitions of an oncoming epileptic fit: great excitement and doubt would transcend into heavenly harmony: he would be calm, free of worry and ready to receive the rejoicing of paradise. But these radiant moments, he writes in *The Idiot* [1935:213], are only a prologue to an immediate epileptic attack. Yet these moments reveal the Heavens, total fulfilment and peace in the highest form of life: this is the point of mystical ecstasy after which, injured and bruised, he would feel mortified, thinking he was losing his mind. For purposes of this research prince Myshkin's sensations or aura just before an epileptic fit should be examined, since they produce accurate visions of a timeless future. Within one minute just before an epileptic seizure, the deeper truth of existence is revealed:

[...] suddenly in the midst of sadness, spiritual darkness and oppression, there seemed [...] a flash of light in his brain, and with extraordinary impetus all his vital forces suddenly began working at their highest tension. The sense of life, the consciousness of self, were multiplied ten times at these moments which passed like a flash of lightning. His mind and heart were flooded with extraordinary light; all his uneasiness, all his doubts, all his anxieties were relieved at once; they were all merged in a lofty calm, full of serene, harmonious joy and hope. But these moments, these flashes, were only the prelude to that final second [...] with which the fit began. That second was, of course, unendurable. Thinking of that moment later, when he was all right again, he often said to himself that all these gleams and flashes of the highest sensation of life and self-consciousness, and therefore also of the highest form of existence, were nothing but disease, the interruption

of the normal condition; and if so, it was not at all the highest form of being, but on the contrary must be reckoned the lowest. And yet he came at last to an extremely paradoxical conclusion. "What if it is disease?" [...] "What does it matter that it is an abnormal intensity, if the result, if the minute of sensation, remembered and analysed afterwards in health, turns out to be the acme of harmony and beauty, and gives a feeling, unknown and undivined till then, of completeness, of proportion, of reconciliation, and of ecstatic devotional merging in the highest synthesis of life?" [...] That it really was "beauty and worship", that it really was the "highest synthesis of life" he could not doubt [...] It was not as though he saw abnormal and unreal visions of some sort at that moment, as from hashish, opium, or wine, destroying the reason and distorting the soul [...] These moments were only an extraordinary quickening of self-consciousness [...] and at the same time of the direct sensation of existence in the most intense degree. Since at that second, that is at the very last conscious moment before the fit, he had time to say to himself clearly and consciously, "Yes, for this moment one might give one's whole life! [...] Stupor, spiritual darkness, idiocy stood before him conspicuously as the consequence of these "higher moments" [...] he told Rogozhin [...] "at that moment I seem somehow to understand the extraordinary saying that *there shall be no more time* [...] "this is the very second which was not long enough for the water to be spilt out of Mahomet's pitcher, though the epileptic prophet had time to gaze at all the habitations of Allah" [1935:213-215].

The sensations of light and wonder reveal the glory of heaven. This is probably the reason why Dostoyevskij emphasises the interpretation of the biblical book of The Revelation in this novel. Just as it announces the appearance of monsters, so the revelation in those radiant moments announces his subsequent stupor and spiritual gloom.

These feelings of mortification pursued him all his life and gave rise to the motif of the impotent, the misjudged, the rejected - so well understood by our great South African poet, N.P. van Wyk-Louw, in his *Dostojewski* taken up in *Die Halwe Kring*:

Deur watter stiltes moes hy gaan
 van daadlose vernedering,
 tot hierdie vreemde diep bestaan:
 dat só sy deemoed hom omring
 - 'n wit kelk van geborgenheid
 waarin hy lê, van alle drang

en trots vervreemd en wil tot stryd -
 dat s6 in hom die stroom en dwang
 van mens-wees tot die yswit stand
 van roerlose waatre kon verloop.
 Geen smaadwoord beef tot deur die wand
 waaragter hy skuil teen die Hoop
 en al haar laatre bitterheid;
 want alles het gegroei in hom
 tot dié geduld-in-lydsaamheid
 waaraan die goue vreugde blom [1947:14].

It must be very difficult to capture the mood and intensity of this poem, and the following translation by Adam Small does not quite do justice to the original:

Dostoyevsky

He had to live through silences unknown
 and strange humiliation
 until he reached this deep being of his own
 - a cup it is in which submissively
 he lies hidden, remote from any will
 to pride and will to quarrel
 The force and drive
 of being a man have settled in him
 to a state of water white and motionless
 No evil word can penetrate the wall
 he waits behind, hiding from hope
 and all the bitterness of hope
 For in him everything has blown
 to a patience rich with suffering
 from which, like a flower
 happiness has grown [1975:21].

Van Wyk-Louw grasped Dostoyevskij's being in this sensitive poem. The first lines may well refer to the incomprehensible silence of humiliation after an epileptic attack, through which he had to wade to reach a stage of submissive surrender. The theme of motionless waters could allude to foetal liquid where he feels safe ("geborgenheid waarin hy lê"), where he feels far removed from pride and a will to struggle. This "vreemde diep bestaan" ("deep being of his own"), where he was hiding against Hope and its subsequent bitterness,

reaches its climax in the final three lines which by themselves, in the Afrikaans poem, are rather paradoxical: everything in Dostoyevskij "grew" towards "lowliness". And it is the happy choice of a created adjective "geduld-inlydsaamheid" (long-suffering) which sums up the Russian's greatness and which leads to his "golden bliss" (Small's "happiness"). If the pre-birth condition was the poem's intention, the final happiness would refer to a rebirth or spiritual regeneration in humility.

After a search of many years Dostoyevskij came to understand the value of this humility in suffering, which his hero, the Idiot, had always known instinctively. Of course this truth is found in the Sermon on the Mount. "The poor in spirit", "they that mourn" and "the meek" are blessed "for they shall inherit the earth" [St. Matthew 5:5]. It goes further because the mortification in suffering also refers to Christ Himself. As Blaise Pascal puts it in his *Pensées*: "Un Dieu humilié, et jusqu'à la mort de la croix; un Messie triomphant de la mort par la mort. 2 natures [sic] en J.-C., deux advènements, 2 estats de la nature de l'homme [1950:319]. ("A God humiliated even to death on the Cross; a Messiah victorious over death through death. Two natures in Jesus Christ, two Avenues, two states of human nature" - translated in Blaise Pascal 1950:320).

Glancing at André Gide, despite his profound admiration for Dostoyevskij, one realises that he could not accept the Dostoyevskijan conviction that humility and suffering are necessary to reach Christ's Paradise. This concept is born of the message in St. John 12:24, that one has to die to oneself in order to be reborn. Yet he, like N.P. van Wyk-Louw, understood that Dostoyevskij's greatness as ideologist is precisely to be found here. It is interesting to note that N.P. van Wyk-Louw wrote a poem on Nietzsche which appears after his poem on Dostoyevskij in the same volume, keeping in mind that Gide, after writing his book on Dostoyevskij, also chose Nietzsche as subject for an important work.

In *The Idiot* prince Myshkin sows the seed which has to die in order to bring forth fruit. But as Dostoevskij explained in the letter to his niece, Sofia Alexandrovna [1961:142], quoted at the start of this chapter, it is infinitely difficult to portray a truly good man. Notwithstanding the fact that he cannot pursue that role, because being human he has to fail, he is the timid prophet who came not to reproach humanity but to spread light around him.

Because Dostoyevskij had not envisaged his hero descending into the abyss of idiocy again, he wrote to the same niece on 8th March 1869 that his great idea of a Christ-like figure had failed: he refers to "the manifest failure of the story" [1961:170]. However, to-day one looks at the plot of *The Idiot* differently by keeping in mind that even Christ had seemed to fail in his mission, as the Idiot so aptly remarked while studying Holbein's painting of the dead Saviour. And like Christ he does not die; he is "buried" in idiocy and he will be regenerated.

With regard to this novel Jostein Bortnes, in *Dostoevskij's Idiot or the Poetics of Emptiness*, contends that Christ's divinity is lost: "In *The Idiot*, the dead body of Holbein's painting has been emptied of its divine content, its very emptiness signifying that the sacrifice of Christ has lost its meaning, thereby depriving the whole of Christian culture of its meaning, too" [1994:13]. Bortnes lends more weight to his contention by adding that in Rogozhin's house where the picture hangs, another human body is sacrificed. It is the corpse of Nastasya Filippovna lying in a room which reminds one of a church. But even if Dostoyevskij thought prince Myshkin had failed in his mission, he most certainly did not have such meaning of emptiness in mind. On the contrary, he used the church image to indicate that Nastasya Filippovna would be resurrected like Christ. In fact, this provides the novel's concluding strength.

Yet the Christ-like hero who is central to all the action and other fictional characters, made room for evil. As Dostoyevskij writes in his *Diary of a Writer* (July-August 1877):

It is clear and evident to the point of being obvious that evil lurks deeper in mankind than the socialist-healers suppose, that no matter how you arrange society you will not avoid evil, that the human soul will remain the same, that abnormality and sin originate in the soul itself, and that, finally, the laws of the spirit are still so unfamiliar, so unknown to science, so undefined and so mysterious, that there is not and cannot yet be any healers [Dostoyevskij 1954:787].

Cherny discerns in Dostoyevskij a terrible talent for the depiction of cruelty. His good characters, such as Prince Myshkin, are rather colourless, but those steeped in evil are immortal [Cherny 1975:26]. So whilst Dostoyevskij struggled with the creation of the perfectly good man, evil spirits emerged quite naturally from *The Idiot's* sub-plot concerning the clash of generations, of nihilists, which became so important to the author, that he developed it to its logical conclusion. His creation of demons taking possession of rebellious youngsters, a theme which had haunted him a long time, came easily.

CHAPTER 5

БЕЦЫ (THE DEVILS) or (THE POSSESSED) (1870)

Dostoyevskij spent long periods abroad and, like Tolstoj, felt nothing but disgust for the materialistic and plutocratic civilisation of the West. There the pressing need to execute in great haste a novel based on his ideas on atheism and demons drove him to despair. He wrote to Maikov in December 1868 that his whole existence was threatened by his "cursed creditors" and that it was stupid of him to have run away to foreign countries, that it would have certainly been better for him to have stayed at home and let himself be put in the debtor's prison [1961:157].

In the same letter, Dostoyevskij wrote that planning his new long novel on atheism, he would have to read "a whole library of atheistic works by Catholic and Orthodox-Greek writers" - this last remark indicates his aversion to these two forms of the Christian religion. He had in mind a hero who "tries to attach himself to the younger generation - the atheists, Slavs, Occidentalists, the Russian Sectarrians and Anchorites, the mystics: amongst others he comes across a Polish Jesuit; thence he descends into the abysses of the Chlysty-sect¹; and finds at last salvation in Russian soil, the Russian Saviour, and the Russian God" [1961:157-158].

These were his initial thoughts about this novel, but with the passage of time his concept changed somewhat. Further in the above letter he wrote to his friend that he had come to a totally different conception of truth and realism

1 A flagellant sect still widely spread over Russia.

from that of his contemporary realistic writers and critics. Only with God's aid was it possible to tell what Russians had gone through during the previous ten years in the way of spiritual development. He must have been referring to the generation gap, the desperation of the older generation trying to understand the young ones while realising that they themselves were blameworthy. Simultaneously though, they would reach a much more profound comprehension of the conflict. In the eyes of realists this would be sheer fantasy. Yet with deeper insight it was pure realism - the one true, deep realism as opposed to the other writers whose sense of realism was "altogether too superficial" [1961:158].

Again in a later letter to Maikov, dated February 12, 1870, Dostoyevskij wrote that the big idea which he had in mind might be difficult to implement. It was somewhat like the Raskol'nikov theme of *Crime and Punishment*, but still closer to actuality, dealing with the most weighty question of the time. What he had in mind was evidently the question of the infiltration into Russia of pernicious Western thoughts. Introduced by a liberal older generation these ideas would find fertile soil in youthful emotions, would lead to atheism and a revolt against God. In his new novel he planned to challenge the subversive movements in Russia and proclaim his faith in the regeneration of his native land - and afterwards the whole world - through a return to Christianity as propounded by the Russian Orthodox Church. Dostoyevskij wrote to Strachov on March 18, 1869, about "the ultimate destiny of the Russian nation: namely, that Russia must reveal to the world her own Russian Christ, whom as yet the peoples know not, and who is rooted in our native Orthodox faith. There lies, as I believe, the inmost essence of our vast impending contribution to civilization, whereby we shall awaken the European peoples" [1961:175].

He felt passionate and intense about his thrilling theme. As he wrote to Strakhov, in February 1870, he never had a better or a more original idea. He

simply had to put it into words, realising that the implementation of it lay in God's hand. However, he was worried that he might indeed spoil all, as he had so often done [1961:185]. The great idea was developed into a voluminous novel, *The Devils*, on which he worked more easily and with more enjoyment than ever before as he wrote to Maikov [1961:183-184]. That very year the novel was published.

Not only the regeneration of the individual soul, as expounded in St. John 12:24 and explored in the character of Raskol'nikov (*Crime and Punishment*) occupied Dostoyevskij in this new sprawling novel. Here he worked on a much broader basis. The Raskol'nikov theme was extended to the soul of a whole nation, even the world.

This provocative, controversial, ill-constructed, ill-received novel was to become the most unfathomable of Dostoyevskij's works. He must have been aware of such a possibility, for he wrote to Strakhov in March 1870 [1961:187] that he was relying a great deal on what he had written for *The Russian Messenger*, but with the tendentious rather than the artistic point of view in mind. He was so carried away by the feelings which had accumulated in his heart and mind that he was anxious to express them, even if they ruined his novel as a work of art. Later in another letter to Maikov [1961:217] he admitted that he could not control his material, that he crowded his novel with many separate stories and episodes so that the whole lacked proportion and harmony. Indeed an artistic structure is sacrificed for his big idea which becomes all-important. Again this is a polyphonic novel in which the narrator addresses his reader and subtly keeps him in suspense.

The Devils has a very long explanatory beginning in which Dostoyevskij confronts the reader with his ideas about socialism. Henry Gifford agrees with Joseph Frank's observation that Dostoyevskij was "wholeheartedly in

accord" with the moral impulse inspiring the various socialist systems. But he adhered to none of them. His knowledge of human psychology alerted him to the dangers of any system, however benevolent, that sought to limit personal freedom. In his sympathies for religious Orthodoxy, Dostoyevskij felt he was defending the system that had the deepest insight into human weakness [Gifford 1990:38]. This must have been the great attraction of the Russian Orthodox Church for him.

David Magarshack refers in his Introduction to this novel to Dostoyevskij's Christianity as practised by the Greek Orthodox Church. It is submitted here that this is not correct. On the contrary, Dostoyevskij, being a fervent adherent of the Russian Orthodox Church, attacked Greek Orthodoxy as seen above, on the first page of this chapter, when he wrote to Maikov about atheistic works by Orthodox-Greek writers.

After the lengthy exposition all the characters are fleetingly described in rapid succession and then the disturbing events follow at a fast rate. Here one finds the typical Dostoyevskijan double warp around which this novel is written: his fiery condemnation of revolutionary nihilism and, on the other hand, his religious and philosophical quest. He was alarmed by the nihilistic trend among young Russians and this work is a frightening account of its excesses. Dostoyevskij concentrates particularly on its West-European origins and its nefarious results. The two great anti-heroes, Piotr Verkhovenski and Nikolai Stavrogin, are the product of Western liberal influences. Both of them have lived in Europe and so have their uncommitted parents, both of whom have non-Russian ideas and love speaking French. It should be noted here that in Dostoyevskij's times nihilism was not merely a belief in nothing; in the tsarist nineteenth century nihilism meant a terrorist movement whose aim was the overthrow of all existing institutions of society in order to build Russia up anew on different principles. Seen against this background one can

understand his vehement letter written to Maikov on March 25, 1870, stating that the nihilists were threatening to weaken the moral fibre of the nation, that those youngsters exasperated him:

Only wait until this scum that has cut itself adrift from Russia, is quite played-out. And, do you know, I really think that many of the young scoundrels, decadent boys that they are, will sooner or later turn over a new leaf, and be metamorphosed into decent, thorough-going Russians? And the rest may go rot. But even they will finally hold their tongues, for sheer impotence. What scoundrels they are, though! [1961:192]

On December 15, 1870, Dostoyevskij wrote again to Maikov: "I want to speak out quite openly in this book, with no ogling of the younger generation" [1961:211]. What he had in mind was to exorcise the demons that possessed the errant generation of revolutionaries. With this aim he chose as epigraph to this work verses 32-36 from St. Luke 8:

There was a large herd of pigs near by, feeding on a hillside. So the demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he let them. They went out of the man and into the pigs. The whole herd rushed down the side of the cliff into the lake and was drowned. The men who had been taking care of the pigs saw what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they were all afraid. Those who had seen it told the people how the man had been cured.

Indicated by the plurality of the title, Бесы (*The Devils, Les possédés*), there is no single protagonist in this novel. Although the principal devil is central to the thought behind the novel and its main action as well as in his relation to the other characters, he does not appear on the scene so often. The beginning of *The Devils* centres around Stepan Verkhovenskiĭ and his friend Mrs. Stavrogin. They are full of fashionable liberal ideas after their return from Europe to Russia. Verkhovenskiĭ plays a type of lover-parasite role by accepting her hospitality and being financially dependent on her. Westernism

amongst their generation of Russian aristocrats was very much in vogue. These two elderly people, though, are more advanced in their thinking than the average Russian liberal aristocrat. They proclaim absolute freedom for the future. Under their influence and led by their evil sons a group of young rebels wants to free Russia of moral restraints. Stepan Verkhovenskij is the link between these two directions of the novel. As the narrator's story advances, however, demons take over and the end is in direct contradiction to the original idea with which the elderly couple started: from unlimited freedom the young generation arrives at absolute despotism. The final scene is like a Shakespearian play where the stage is littered with corpses. As one progresses in this sombre novel surrounded by possessed characters, one genuinely starts experiencing the eerie feeling of being possessed oneself. However, there is hope for the future, since the gradual change to total tyranny scared everyone.

With Dosotjevskij it is always important to pay attention to names, as they usually convey ideas. *Verkhovenstvo* is a now obsolete word meaning leadership. This idea is borne out by the Verkhovenskij father and son continually vying for supremacy as leader of their generation. Piotr (Peter) means "stone" or "rock"; in this case it could be seen as the rock on which Satan built his empire. In the name Stepan Trofimovich Verkhovenskij one can already discern Dostoyevskij's merciless mockery. Stepan means "wreath", probably in the sense of a "crowned academic", whereas Trofim means "ward" or "nurseling" which seems to indicate his dependency on Mrs. Stavrogin. This learned liberal who cannot speak Russian without inserting French, makes totally exaggerated remarks not only about French intelligence and Russian idleness (of which he himself is an example) [Dostoyevskij 1986:50] but also about the "absurdity of the word 'mother country'" [1986:39]. In reality he is out of touch with his own people. Shatov, who is to be murdered by the disciples of the learned Verkhovenskij, realises this and accuses the

latter of never having suffered or sacrificed anything for the ordinary Russian people whom he claims to love [1986:52].

Dostoyevskij's satirical intentions become evident right at the start of the novel when the narrator announces that he will give "biographical details concerning our talented and greatly esteemed Stepan Trofimovich Verkhovensky". This pedantic western liberal, whose eloquence "led him to imagine himself as standing on a high pedestal, a position that was very gratifying to his vanity" [1986:21], can only be the object of ridicule. On the next page he is compared to "a certain Gulliver [...] grown so accustomed to look upon himself as a giant". Dostoyevskij ends the paragraph with the narrator's humorous remark that his intellectual conceit has "a more innocent and inoffensive form, if one may put it that way, for he was a most excellent man" [1986:22]. In a letter to Maikov dated March 2, 1871, Dostoyevskij wrote that Stepan Trofimovich is a fictional character of lesser importance but that his role is so closely linked to the principal events that he was obliged to use him as basis for the whole novel [1961:214].

This idealist pays lip-service to the serfdom liberation movement with rehearsed enthusiasm [1986:30], whereas in actual fact it scares him so much that he wants to leave Russia. He sells his own serf, Fedka, to the army (which is supposed to quell peasant unrest) in order to repay gambling debts. His claim to intellectualism is also based on past scholarly efforts as a lecturer. So he creates an illusion of academic grandiosity while talking, drinking and playing cards.

In Dostoyevskij's previous work, *The Idiot*, the young nihilistic generation is not understood by the parents (Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* explores this same basic misunderstanding, as is pointed out by Verkhovenskij senior [1986:221]). However, a development of the author's ideas can be traced throughout his

great novels, of which a typical example can be found in *The Devils*: Stepan Verkhovenskiĭ realises that he understands the young generation and at the end of the novel it dawns on him that he is responsible for their demoniacal aberrations, that he is their ideological father, that they took his concepts to an unjustifiable extreme. They do not repent; they do not hold themselves responsible for the misery they caused; they see sin and human suffering only as a by-product of environmental and material conditions. Now the old man bewails his own aberrations. He realises that there is a common guilt, that all are to be blamed. Finally he sets out on a symbolic search to find his Russian roots and God. By now a weak invalid, he becomes a humbler, positive hero with a religious message. One can discern his new role more clearly by Dostoyevskiĭ's method of directly quoting the Gospels (as he did in *Crime and Punishment* where Sonia reads to Raskol'nikov about the raising of Lazarus): at the patient's request his nurse reads to him the passage from St. Luke about *ces cochons* which forms the epigraph to the novel. Becoming very excited about the biblical text, the learned Verkhovenskiĭ exclaims that he sees *une comparaison*. There are sores festering on the beloved ailing Russia, who asks to be cleaned of all those impurities and abominations. They are then driven into swine, being the godless revolutionaries led by himself, who will throw themselves down a cliff. But then the invalid Russia will be healed and will sit at Christ's feet [1986:647-648]. All the ailments tormenting Russia can be healed by the Christian faith; its demons can be driven out into a lake where they will be choked. After his physical and religious recovery, the purified elder Verkhovenskiĭ's discovers that the view from his room is over a lake - he had not noticed it before [1986:648].

In his capacity as repentant sinner he counteracts the nihilistic negativism. At this juncture he says: "God is necessary to me if only because he is the only being whom one can love eternally" [1986:655]. In Dostoyevskiĭ's terms this relates to regeneration, to being reborn into eternal life. So here too, the

older Verkhovenskij comes to the following conclusion: "If God exists, then, I too, am immortal! Voilà ma profession de foi!" [1986:655] Mrs. Stavrogin, by now also a reformed character, probably misunderstanding his meaning, counters by protesting that there is no doubt about God's existence [1986:655].

Her son, Nikolai Stavrogin, is a dark, forceful, criminal character. He is portrayed as a handsome, rich, intelligent young man, very attractive to women. The atheistic communist, Nikolai Speshnev, who had exercised such a nefarious influence on the young Dostoyevskij, was the model on which the latter based his satanic Stavrogin in *The Devils*. The resemblance between these two sinister figures, the one real and the other fictitious, is striking: they both have an imposing appearance and strength of will. They have the same initials. They are both atheists, political intellectual radicals who have returned from Europe. They are handsome, confident, impenetrable and irresistible to women. For Stavrogin neither good nor evil exists - he admits in his "Confession" that he cannot discern between good and evil [1986:692]. There are earlier hints about debaucheries committed by the "elegant", "remarkably modest" Stavrogin [1986:56]. An ominous note is struck on the next page when one reads that "there was something hideous" about this "paragon of beauty" whose face was like a mask. The young revolutionaries project their ideologies and dreams onto his enigmatic figure. Despite all his amorous conquests, something is absent: he is neither hot nor cold. According to the Bible the true believer cannot be indifferent or tepid. Whilst lacking the true sensation of love Stavrogin wants to "possess" in the same way that he and his followers are "possessed" by devils. Similarly in *The Idiot* the possessed fanatic Parfyon (meaning virgin) Rogozhin wants to retain his mistress, Nastasya Filippovna, by killing her.

Nikolai Vsevolodovich Stavrogin and his admirer, Piotr Verkhovenskij, the demonic son of Stepan Trofimovich, are the source of the main topic with its

political and religious theme. Here again the importance of names in Dostoyevskij's work should be stressed. The word Stavrogin contains "stav" and "rog", from the Russian "ставить" and "рог" which would indicate "to put on horns", referring to the devil. On the other hand, *stavros* is the Greek word for "cross". The importance of the cross emerges at the end of the novel when the narrator says that Stavrogin has a desperate need for the cross. Then again Nikolai means "conqueror of nations" and Vsevolod "master of all". A typical Dostoyevskijan pattern can be discerned: in those names the ambiguity and contradiction announce a duality of character. There is a hint of sinner and saint combined. Satanic acts call for some impulse towards atonement and suffering. Critics' opinions on this puzzling protagonist vary, which makes a probe into his character all the more exciting, particularly since all the other fictional characters revolve around him. As general drift in *The Poetics of Emptiness*, Jostein Bortnes sees in him an empty figure. It is difficult to agree with this opinion, because he is infinitely complex. He is shrouded in a mist of obscurity which does not facilitate the emergence of any clear picture. To call him empty, however, seems totally wrong. David Magarshack's explanation, in his Introduction to *The Devils*, why it is difficult to come to grips with him, provides insight:

Stavrogin himself remains an obscure and enigmatic figure, the mystery surrounding him being mainly due to Dostoevsky's decision to leave him hanging in the air, as it were, rather than waste 'the great idea' he had decided to keep for his last novel on him [1986:xii].

Even this theory does not quite solve the riddle of his divided nature. One wonders if Dostoyevskij did not want to depict the devil as an enigmatic being who remains a mystery because he is not likely to reveal himself. His satanic power is found precisely in his inexplicability and his disguised appearance.

In contrast to the hidden depraved psyche of Stavrogin, there is the openly despicable character of his counterpart, Piotr Verkhovenskiij. Whereas the

former embodies absolute pride, the latter thirsts for absolute power. He masterminds the activities of the terrorists and he informs Stavrogin about his plans: "We'll create political disturbances [...] We shall create such an upheaval that the foundations of the State will be cracked wide open". He supports the system where slaves are equal; he tells Stavrogin: "[...] without despotism there has never been any freedom or equality, but in a herd there is bound to be equality [...] we, the rulers, will take care of that. Slaves must have rulers. Complete obedience, complete loss of individuality" [1986:419]. And: "There's going to be such a to-do as the world has never seen. Russia will be shrouded in a fog, the earth will weep for its old gods" [1986:422]. He is explaining these projects to his "other self" to whom he declares his "love": "Stavrogin, you're beautiful! [...] I love beauty [...] I love an idol. You are my idol!" [1986:420]. Later in the novel he cries out: "You're the light and the sun. It is I who am terrified of you..." [1986:526]. Piotr is, as Richard Peace put it correctly, "ill-mannered, insolent, peevish and petty-minded in his ruthlessness [...] undoubtedly a sinister clown" [1975:150-151]. This observation is borne out by Stavrogin's remark to Piotr: "I'm laughing at my monkey" and the latter's reply: "Oh, I see, you realized that I was playing the fool" [1986:527].

According to Magarshack's Introduction Dostoyevskij seems to use these two main protagonists as pegs on which to hang his two most violent dislikes: first, the Russian nobility and second, revolutionaries [1986:xii]. So the two young aristocratic political activists are certainly not endowed with endearing features. Piotr Verkhovenski's ideas are hardly appropriate for the real political aspirations of the young generation. It should be admitted that Dostoyevskij went out of his way to emphasise that he was a rogue, not a socialist [1986:422]. Though Piotr seems to possess all the demonic traits, Stavrogin emerges as the real devil who tempts one with his beauty and intellect. In biblical terms satan is the tempter and one prays not to be led

into temptation. Piotr is evil and can immediately be identified as such. His wicked spite is conspicuous in everything he does and says. On the other hand, Stavrogin understands the other characters, which is illustrated in his approach and behaviour towards them; he speaks to them with suggestive subtlety. Because he appears sympathetic and self-confident, the others can communicate with him. He can tempt them and reason with them because he penetrates into their psyche.

As the reincarnation of a fallen angel he has the potential of a saint, since extremes meet - this will be seen in his "Confession". The basic dichotomy of his nature is revealed in many incidents relating to his marriage. One reads that as the result of a wager after an orgy, he married Marya Lebyadkin, a poor half-demented cripple. But he shows respect and affection for her: when he makes his very first appearance, at a Sunday gathering, he speaks "to her in a gentle, melodious voice, and his eyes were filled with an extraordinary tenderness. He stood before her in a most respectful attitude" [1986:191]. Richard Peace puts the pertinent question: "Is this marriage of the god-like Stavrogin to the least of human beings a satanic exercise of the will, or is it, on the contrary, a Christ-like burden of self-identification with 'the insulted and the injured'? By this act is Stavrogin revealing himself a sinner or a saint?" [1975:182]. Shatov probably interpreted Stavrogin's behaviour as insulting towards the lame young woman, because he slaps him in the face, whereupon the latter restrains himself not to retaliate. More questions arise: why does Stavrogin behave in a self-effacing manner and why does he deny his marriage to Marya Lebyadkin? When challenged to a duel, why does he aim so as to miss? Does his behaviour show contempt or reconciliation? He definitely has an odour of sanctity.

According to Dostoyevskij's letter to Maikov, dated 11th December 1868, the fundamental religious and metaphysical search of this novel is focussed on

atheism [1961:157] and a great sinner, which Dostoyevskij had originally planned for his last great work (see Letter to Maikov, March 25, 1870: 190). These two themes are combined to form the main plot revealed in the character of Stavrogin the real and awe-inspiring Devil.

Like the duality of this principal theme, there exists a parallel duality in the theme of "fathers and sons" in respect of the elder Verkhovenskiĭ and his responsibility for his son Piotr. Similarly, Stavrogin can be seen as the spiritual father of Shatov, Kirilov and the gang of nihilists.

As a figure who becomes involved with Stavrogin's activities, Shatov, the Slavophil, should be studied. He equates the ordinary Russian with an adherent to Orthodoxy and the Russian nation with God. In the same way that Dostoyevskij pushes Stepan Verkhovenskiĭ's ideology of western liberalism to an extreme, so he drives Shatov into an extreme ideal of Slavophilism where to him the Russian nation becomes God. There are autobiographical traits in this fictional character: he gives up revolutionary activities in his quest for God. Although he is still seeking, he thinks that he will eventually find Him. His name is evidently derived from "shatkij" which indicates wavering. Magarshack, in his Introduction to *The Devils*, also sees Shatov as the projection of the author himself with his doubt about the existence of God:

It was only in people like Shatov - that is to say, people, who, like Dostoevsky himself, had turned their back on their liberal past and wholeheartedly embraced a philosophy of life based on autocracy and the Church - that he saw the gleam of salvation for a tortured world. And the tragedy of Shatov was also Dostoevsky's tragedy: both believed in Christ and both were tormented by their disbelief in God [1986:xii].

Linked to Shatov is Kirilov, who was also involved in subversive political activities in Switzerland. He comes back to Russia inspired by western liberal thoughts. His name is probably derived from "kyrios" (Lord) as one finds it in "Kyrie, eleison" (Lord, have mercy). In *The Devils* he proposes a new religion that rejects the idea of a holy God and puts man in His place. In Kirilov one finds the desire for absolute existence. He wants to prove his theories by committing suicide. The reader may well want the Lord to have mercy on him because he is a sympathetic character. However, his name can also refer to St. Kiril who brought a new faith to the Slavic peoples. Just as Shatov takes the final stance as Slavophil, so Kirilov reaches the ultimate point as Westerner where the human will leads to self-destruction. To prove total freedom in its most meaningful manifestation, is to take one's own life. And towards the middle of the novel, against a background of darkness and rain, the satanic group puts pressure on Kirilov to kill himself according to his own plan. (It is interesting to note that there is an analogous episode in Gide's *Faux-Monnayeurs*: see Chapter 7 below). In addition he has to leave a note to that effect because it would further the radicals' cause. This is followed by a crucial scene between him and Stavrogin who asks him:

"Do you love children?"

"I do", Kirilov replied, rather indifferently however.

"In that case you must love life, too, musn't you?"

"Yes, I love life. Why?"

"But you've made up your mind to shoot yourself?"

"What about it? Why put the two together? Life's one thing, and that's another. Life exists, but death doesn't exist at all".

"Do you believe in a future everlasting life?"

"No, not in a future everlasting but in an everlasting life here. There are moments, you reach moments, and time comes to a sudden stop, and it will become eternal" [1986:242].

Here is a reference to St. John 11:25: "[...] and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." However, Kirilov's meaning differs from the Bible in that human will can conquer time and death since both these phenomena are human concepts. He seems to believe in a sort of mystical timelessness and an eternal present.

The above conversation between Kirilov and Stavrogin gives rise to the image of the leaf which forms the essence of *The Devils*. This image takes shape in the continuation of the previous conversation when Kirilov tells Stavrogin about a leaf:

"i saw one recently, a yellow one, a little green, wilted at the edges. Blown by the wind. When I was a boy of ten I used to shut my eyes deliberately in winter and imagine a green leaf, bright green with veins on it, and the sun shining. I used to open my eyes and couldn't believe it because it was so beautiful, and I used to shut them again"

"What's that? An allegory?"

"N-no - why? Not an allegory, just a leaf, one leaf. A leaf's good. All's good".

"All?"

"All. Man's unhappy because he doesn't know that he's happy" [1986:243].

Thinking about the leaf and the beauty of nature forever passing through the cycle of life, death and rebirth, brings happiness with a dream of regeneration: Kirilov sees a yellow leaf with green in it and wilting edges. In winter season he dreams about a bright green leaf, as it is in summer when it has become alive again after winter's death.

Our South African poet, Sheila Cussons, grasped its importance perfectly in the poem *Die Blaar* from her volume *Verwikkelde Lyn*:

Kuns en beskouing is êrens één aktiwiteit.

Kirilof het hom aan sy blaar:

"ek praat van 'n blaar, 'n groen blaar, effens bruin
aan die randjies", skoon uit die tyd uit verkyk;

Stawrogin het gedink hy is gek -

[...]

duisende verskuiwings van lig en seisoene met alles
in sy vorsende vermoë deursoek op soek na die kern,
die virginale essens wat lob binne lob binne lob
die verkenning bly ontwyk -

Vlugtige aandag glíp, verwylende aandag wórd;

die een bly kliphuids heel, die ander brokkel, week,
syg weg, en stoot 'n oerwoud oë uit eie kompos op.

Niks is geskep en klaar, maar verbrei oneindig

genuanseerd die eie aard om eie aard; daar is geen
 grens aan 'n blaar effens bruin om die randjies;
 nòg blaar nòg bruin is ooit finaal -
 Lob binne lob: die verste ruim is die ui nog nie:
 die woord, die sin begin in die wegsterf van die vokaal [1983:8].

Cussons' own excellent translation is the following:

The Leaf

Art and contemplation are very much
 one activity. Kirilov regarding his leaf:
 "I speak of a leaf, a green leaf, slightly brown
 at the edges" undid time gazing
 [...]
 shifts of light and seasons in search
 of the centre, the virginal essence which lobe
 within lobe within lobe always eludes possession.
 Careless attention slips, faithful attention becomes;
 the one remains coldly whole, the other crumbles,
 soaks, sinks, and thrusts a forest of eyes
 out of its own compost.
 Nothing is created and done, but extends
 unendingly its own nature around its own nature;
 there is no limit to a leaf slightly brown at the edges;
 neither leaf nor brown is ever final -
 Lobe within lobe within lobe: infinity is still not the onion:
 the word, the sense begins in the dying away of the vowel [1985:64].

One has to ponder on this poem in the context of this thesis. Kirilov's nihilism is defeated by dreaming about the beauty of a summer leaf while studying a half-shriveled autumnal one. And he tells Stavrogin: "Ek praat van 'n blaar, 'n groen blaar, effens bruin aan die randjies" ("I speak of a leaf, a green leaf, slightly brown at the edges") - more or less following Dostoyevskij's text. Those are moments when time stops, when Kirilov wants time to stop by stopping his watch - "Kirilof het [...] hom skoon uit die tyd verkyk" ("Kirilov [...] undid time gazing") and where time becomes eternal. Cussons refers here to Kirilov's dialogue with Stavrogin as quoted above: "[...] you reach moments, and time comes to a sudden stop, and it will become eternal" [1986:242]. The same idea of future time is found in "verwylende aandag wòrd" ("faithful

attention becomes"). It is further developed in the image of the leaf and its colour which are never final: "nòg blaar nòg bruin is ooit finaal" ("neither leaf nor brown is ever final"). Ultimately it ends on the highest Dostoyevskijan note of everything in life being born from death, being regenerated as in Christ's parable of the grain of wheat - "die woord, die sin begin in die wegsterf van die vokaal" ("the word, the sense begins in the dying away of the vowel"). This last quotation could also refer to creation, the meaning of God's word, the mystic *logos* (discourse) which starts with the dying away of its vowel sound.

As in *Die Blaar* the essence of life seems to elude us: "die kern,/ die virginale essens wat lob binne lob binne lob/ die verkenning bly ontwyk" ("The centre, the virginal essence which lobe/ within lobe within lobe always eludes possession". One has to agree with Cussons that it is very difficult to penetrate Kirilov as a character since his essence remains elusive. As she wrote, Stavrogin's only rational explanation would be to consider him mad: "Stavrogin het gedink hy is gek". The meaning of Kirilov's remarks seems hidden in the novel ("lob binne lob") ("lobe within lobe"), but in Dostoyevskij's text there is a hint that he might be an epileptic. Possibly during an aura he has a clairvoyant's preview of future events, such as the abuse of a little girl by Stavrogin. The following conversation with the latter adds some clarification to both these controversial figures:

(Men) "are not good", he resumed suddenly, "because they don't know that they are good. When they find out, they won't rape a little girl. They have to find out that they are good, for then they will all at once become good, every one of them"

"Well, you've found that out, so I suppose you are good?"

"I am good".

"As a matter of fact, I agree with you", Stavrogin muttered, frowning.

"He who teaches that all are good will bring about the end of the world".

"He who taught it was crucified".

"He will come, and his name will be the man-god".

"The god-man?"

"The man-god; there is a difference there" [1986:244].

His notion of man-god is not far removed from Shatov's concept of the Russian nation as god. In reality the two extremes of their religious convictions have to meet in the same way that the sinner and saint meet in Stavrogin who supplies the main impulse to the dramatic action.

The attribute of Kirilov's godhead is will. He is like the Underground Man who matches his own will against the laws of nature. It appears that Kirilov wills man to be good so that he can rise above all earthly baseness. Richard Peace comments that "Kirilov had been prepared to acknowledge even the rape of a little girl as 'good'" [1975:188]. But such an inference can surely not be correct. However, the reader may well be sceptical about Kirilov's philosophy (as Stavrogin apparently was) considering that it leads to self-destruction. However, his reasoning seems to indicate that Dostoyevskij was still not sure about the existence of God and that through Kirilov, as fictional character, he projected his own uncertainty. One may also find that Kirilov's concept of man-god is formulated from the atheistic view held by the Underground Man (see Chapter 2 above) because he speaks of god-man and man-god with small letters. Gide interprets Kirilov's wish to commit suicide as a mystical need to reject the existence of God, but he makes no comment on any possible belief in Christ (see Chapter 7 below).

An examination of the minor characters is deemed to be unnecessary for the purposes of this research. Some of the duality in circumstances and character should, however, be pointed out. Fedka, the serf whom the liberal Verkhovenskiij senior sold to the army, becomes an assassin in the service of his son Piotr. This convict stays in the house where Kirilov lives. Piotr orders him to kill Marya Lebyadkin (Stavrogin's crippled wife) who stays together with her brother in the house where Shatov lives. So Kirilov's fellow inhabitant must assassinate Shatov's fellow inhabitant, which implies, in Dostoyevskijan terms, that the atheist must murder the Orthodox Russian. At this juncture one should look at the other "couple": captain Lebyadkin and his

sister Marya are linked together like Shatov and Kirilov, representing two extreme opposite tendencies. The brother is a violent, wilful brute. As a clowning figure his role is somewhere between father Marmeladov of *Crime and Punishment* (see Chapter 3 above), Lebedyev of *The Idiot* (see the previous chapter) and the evil clown, father Karamazov of the following chapter. He maltreats Marya who can be regarded as a holy fool. When he asks Stavrogin why he married the half-wit, the answer is: "I married your sister when I wanted to, after a drunken dinner, for a bet, for a bottle of wine, and now I shall announce it publicly. Why shouldn't I if it amuses me?" [1986:273] Captain Lebyadkin's misdeeds anger him; besides, he knows too much. Fedka, the hired assassin, is waiting outside. Whereas it is Marya's spirituality that inspires Stavrogin, her pathetic appearance and incoherent ramblings are repulsive to him. One night when he visits her, she knows that he is annoyed and that he has a knife on him. She is scared of this other Stavrogin, unmasks his demonism and curses him. Rushing out, Stavrogin is confronted by Fedka also armed with a knife. He is ready for the kill. The next day Stavrogin explains the situation to a girl friend: "One little devil proposed to me on the bridge yesterday to murder Mary and Lebyadkin so as to put an end to my marriage without anybody suspecting anything" [1986:298]. Horrified she cries: "May the Lord protect you from your demon" [1986:299], realising that he clinched the deal.

The duality of these "couples" of personalities makes wide circles: after the murder of the Lebyadkins, Shatov and Kirilov must die as well. So the personal motive for the assassination, linked to the metaphysical and religious thread running through the novel (the Lebyadkins recognising Stavrogin's wicked dual nature), becomes tied up with the political motif. By way of Marya's assassination Stavrogin symbolically cast away the Russian quality of religion.

Another woman with whom Stavrogin is connected is the ideal of westernised beauty. This other important female figure is the wealthy, svelte, intelligent

Lisa, educated in Switzerland - in every respect the opposite of Marya Lebyadkin. Unlike the latter, who was attracted to the "gentle" side of Stavrogin's nature, Lisa feels challenged by his dark, dangerous side. She looks forward to going away with him, but not "somewhere where we should 'rise from the dead' again" [518]. She thinks he will take her to some terrifying place: "I always imagined that you would take me to some place where there was a huge, wicked spider as big as a man, and we should spend the rest of our lives looking at it and being afraid of it" [1086:522]. Lisa's concept of a spider reminds one of Ippolit's tarantula image (in *The Idiot*: see Chapter 4 above) as the evil destructive force in the world. But with Stavrogin she does not experience anything exciting. Despite their dissimilarity both Marya and Lisa have a similar reaction during the "night" they spend with him. Both women are disillusioned - the former is spiritually disappointed, the latter sexually. Therefore both women elude him, which implies that he can reach neither the Russian nor the European ideal. In typical Dostoyevskijan terms it also means that Lisa is doomed to be killed by the satanic gang on the spot where Marya died. Lisa is not caught by Stavrogin's spider of evil because he is passive; he is neither hot nor cold. This is his most serious shortcoming which causes his spiritual destruction since in biblical terms being tepid means that there will be no salvation.

It appears that the ardent spider is Piotr Verkhovenskiy who is the most active perpetrator of wickedness. His followers certainly regard him as such in the chapter entitled "The Last Decision". His ruthlessness is getting out of hand and they become terrified: "They suddenly felt like flies caught in the web of a huge spider; they were furious, but they shook with fear" [1986:548]. And they obeyed all Piotr's commands. So it is that Lisa, the woman who discovers Stavrogin's pitiable nature, is killed by them.

One of the nihilists is Shatov's wife who appears on the scene a day after the murder of the Lebyadkins. She, Marya Ignatevna has the same Christian names as the Lebyadkin sister (Marya) and brother (Ignat), but calls herself

Marie. It might indicate that she is a Western reincarnation of the Russian "couple". She returns to Shatov from Europe when she is about to give birth to Stavrogin's child. Shatov is thrilled about the arrival of his wife and of the baby. This reunion probably signifies the reconciliation of the European atheistic wife and the Orthodox Russian. However, the reconciliation comes to naught: shortly hereafter Marie and the baby die whilst Shatov is murdered by Piotr's gang.

What Magarshack writes in the Introduction to *The Devils* about these demonic activists, apart from the two main "devils", is rather appropriate:

The other conspirators in the novel, with the exception of Kirilov - the most metaphysical character Dostoevsky created - are quite terrifyingly alive as people, but only caricatures as 'revolutionaries' [...] To him even a mild liberal like Stepan Verkhovensky was a 'devil' who could just be 'saved' on his deathbed by a non-too-sincere recantation of his former opinions [1986:xii].

Magarshack's last remark on Stepan Trofimovich Verkhovenskij should be examined. The latter's pilgrimage leads him on a peasant cart to the simple Russian people. Here he finds the Bible seller, Sofia Ulitina. Her name suggests humble wisdom. She reminds the reader of Sonia in *Crime and Punishment* who brought biblical wisdom and finally the promise of regeneration to Raskol'nikov. Verkhovenskij senior is filled with the feeling of universal happiness and forgiveness that one has encountered in the figure of prince Myshkin in *The Idiot*. The first of his two philosophical ideals is already expressed by Kirilov and the second by Shatov. So their positive essence is now concentrated in Stepan Trofimovich. One still wonders, however, if he is convinced of the truth of his new faith. Whilst he is prepared to sell Bibles, he also offers to correct the errors therein. It seems that Dostoyevskij satirises him to the end when a certain Dr. Salzfisch is looking after him. The village which he wanted to reach is Spasovo (meaning "of the Saviour"), but there is a lake separating him from his goal. Dr. Salzfisch may well have emanated from this lake. The reader is also reminded of the lake in

which all the evil spirits of the possessed man were drowned (see epigraph to the novel: St. Luke 8:32-36). Verkhovenskiĭ senior counted himself quite frankly among the swine who were choked to death in the water (see above).

It becomes clear that in this contentious novel the author tries to warn young extremists against dangerous foreign trends. Later, in April 1878, addressing a group of Moscow students, he explains to this younger generation that it is out of touch with Russia (like his Stepan Verkhovenskiĭ who tutored a younger generation), that it should not accept and assimilate alien concepts which might cause harm, that it:

[...]lives in dreams, follows foreign teaching, cares to know nothing that concerns Russia, aspires, rather, to instruct the fatherland. Consequently it is to-day beyond all doubt that our younger generation is become the prey of one or other of those political parties which influence it wholly from outside, which care not at all for its interests, but use it simply as contribution - as it were lambs for the slaughter - to their own particular ends [1961:241].

The biblical parable of the pigs that were drowned, with its side issues of self-destruction and madness, is at the heart of the novel. Many of the fictional characters commit suicide: Kirilov who regards himself as master of his own destiny, another young man who considers death the most apt and attractive end to an orgy, the violated little girl of the censored chapter, who hangs herself after the utter humiliation inflicted on her by Stavrogin, and ultimately the "devil" himself, Stavrogin, who wants to bring to an end all his evil activities. The two latter personalities have a rational motive for this final act in life, but the two former ones are referred to as insane. One finds an interesting reference to this topic in the very first chapter of *The Devils*, named "By Way of an Introduction". It is concerned with a play written by the old Verkhovenskiĭ, in which there is a scene of a cultured young man who "feeling a superabundance of life within himself [...] seeks forgetfulness [...] but his dearest wish is to lose his reason as soon as possible" [1986:24].

A deranged figure such as Marya Lebyadkin is a pitiable creature who has a premonition of her own death by looking at Stavrogin. Some of the peripheral nihilists lose their mind after participating in atrocities. The ravings of Piotr Verkhovenskiĭ who wants to introduce a new cult of the most extreme sect of flagellants and castrates (cf. Rogozhin, the mad extremist sectarian in *The Idiot*, Chapter 4 above), seem to be uttered by a madman. When Piotr kisses Stavrogin's hand, the latter mutters "Mad!". And Verkhovenskiĭ agrees: "I may be raving, I may be raving" [1986:420]. Thus it would appear that Dostoyevskiĭ depicts nihilism as a form of madness.

The theme of the saintly great Sinner comes from St. John's Revelation about those who are neither hot nor cold. The lukewarmness applies to Stavrogin as well as Stepan Verkhovenskiĭ. Stavrogin has to die, because lifelessness means death. In a letter to his friend, Shatov's sister, he opens his heart, he says that he envies the revolutionaries:

Do you know that I looked even upon our iconoclasts with envy and spite because I was jealous of their hopes? [...] Your brother told me that he who loses his ties with his native soil, loses his gods - that is, all his aims [...] from me nothing has come but negation, with no magnanimity and no force. Even negation has not come from me. Everything has always been petty and lifeless. Kirilov, in his magnanimity, could not compromise with an idea and - shot himself. But I can see that he was so magnanimous because he was insane [...] I know that I ought to kill myself; to brush myself off the earth, like some loathsome insect" [1986:666-667].

He hangs himself in a garret-like room, which creates the same death scene as that of the little girl abused by him.

In the Appendix Stavrogin told father Tikhon "that he was subject, especially at nights, to some kind of hallucinations, that he sometimes said or felt beside him the presence of some kind of malignant creature, mocking and 'rational', 'in all sorts of guises and in different characters, but it is the same, and it always makes me angry'" [1986:676]. And "It's myself, different aspects of

myself. Nothing more. You don't think, do you, that because I've just added that - er - phrase I'm still doubtful and not sure that it's me and not in fact the devil" [1986:677]. Later he says without any shame: "I do believe in the devil, I believe canonically, in a personal devil, not an allegory" [1986:677]. Stavrogin pertinently asks father Tikhon to read the passage from St. John's Apocalypse censuring lukewarm feelings. The bishop knows it by heart and recites it: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So that because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" [1986:679].

Glancing at Gide, one notices that he too was haunted by his personal devil. In *Numquid et tu...?*, which forms part of his *Journal*, he cries out to the Lord in this passage which seems to come straight from the heart: "Ah, ne laissez pas le Malin dans mon coeur prendre votre place! Ne vous laissez pas déposséder, Seigneur! Si vous vous retirez complètement, il s'installe. Ah! ne me confondez pas tout à fait avec lui!" [1951a:599]. Justin O'Brien translates it: "Ah, do not let the Evil One in my heart take your place! Do not let yourself be dispossessed, Lord! If you withdraw completely, he settles in. Oh, do not confuse me completely with him" [1948:180].

The most disturbing scene in *The Devils* is contained in Stavrogin's Confession handed over to Bishop Tikhon. This morbid document forms part of the Appendix which was suppressed in many editions. It reveals his sadistic behaviour towards a little girl who had already been victimised by her mother. Stavrogin admits in it that he knew he was a scoundrel but he was not in the least ashamed of it. He states: "[...] the rule of my life, namely, that I neither know nor feel good or evil and that I have not only lost any sense of it, but that there is neither good nor evil (which pleased me)" [1986:692]. In conjunction with Dostoyevskij's great love for "innocent" children, child abuse is a recurring theme in his works. This seems to him the most cruel crime. According to Christ, referring to children: "Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone

were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" [St. Matthew 18:6]. Father Tikhon, having read Stavrogin's terrible confession about his cruel treatment of the little girl whom he drives to suicide, decides that it is "the work of the devil who took possession of that man" [1986:681]. The Bishop, who had been conversing quietly with Stavrogin without condemnation, then changed his tone and put it bluntly: "[...] there certainly is not, nor can there be, any greater or more terrible crime than what you did to that girl" [1986:699].

André Gide, rather cynically, ascribed Dostoyevskij's obsession with paedophilia to his repression of a subconscious desire, but his own instinctive hankering after children probably gave rise to this thought.

However, as in *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoyevskij uses a confession to indicate the desire for atonement. Here too, Stavrogin is haunted by his deed and therefore by a need to atone. Accidentally he breaks Tikhon's small ivory crucifix, symbolically breaking the cross in his name. But the satanic part of his nature still needs the cross. As the narrator in the novel puts it: "The basic idea of the document is an undisguised, terrible need for retribution, the need for the cross, for a public execution. And yet this need for the cross in a man who does not believe in the cross is in itself an 'idea'" [1986:681]. When Stavrogin states that he seeks "boundless suffering", Tikhon feels relieved and he cries out ecstatically:

"[...] if you believe that you can forgive yourself and obtain that forgiveness for yourself in this world through suffering, if you set that purpose before you with faith, then you believe in everything already", but he stresses: "It says in the Book, 'And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones' - remember. According to the Gospel, there is no greater crime" [1986:703]

Apart from the metaphysical and religious plane of *The Devils*, a few words should be added about its political theme and implications. While Dostoyevskij's famous contemporaries were depicting an established society

based on solid foundations, he exclaimed that this unshakable Russian cosmic structure was fragile. Surrounded by the undisturbed pattern of life, he alone spoke of a cultural crisis and about an unimaginable approaching catastrophe. He makes terrible predictions about a future Russian revolution against autocracy resulting in a new autocracy by a tyrannical minority. With astonishingly accurate visions of the future, he depicted revolutionary activists returning from the west and he singled out Switzerland (where Lenin subsequently worked out his revolutionary strategies). In Stavrogin's letter to Shatov's sister [1986:665] he mentions that Herzen, the active Russian communist, had taken out naturalisation papers (he was to stir up the revolutionary movement from London). Richard Peace sees in the terrifying futuristic dreams of Piotr Verkhovenskiĭ a looming figure of Hitler and his National Socialism [1975:175]. Surely this is a highly rebuttable presumption. Verkhovenskiĭ junior speaks of the formation of pressure groups and "cells" to gradually undermine state authority. That is not the way the fascists took over political control; they did so by show of force. They did not have revolutionary activists who returned from the West to overthrow autocratic rule. What Verkhovenskiĭ predicts, are the subversive activities of future Russian communists. It is submitted that Dostoyevskiĭ, the ardent Russian patriot, looked at Russia, at the evil to be inflicted by Russian rulers who enslaved their own population and who purged their own nation's talented people. Involuntarily one thinks of Stalin and his henchmen whose Reign of Terror caused incalculable suffering to the Russians. Perhaps the full extent of Stalinist atrocities was still unknown in 1975 when Peace's excellent work on Dostoyevskiĭ was published. Finally one wonders whether Dostoyevskiĭ's visualisation of a Russian Christian state as leader of other nations will also come true.

Certainly, as Cherny observes, Dostoyevskiĭ was a fanatic Russian chauvinist, for whom mystical Russia looms as a Messiah of the degenerate West; yet he was drawn to Europe as a moth to light. Though he was Russian to the marrow of his bones, he was interested first and foremost in man *per se*, in universal human salvation, which is not limited necessarily to Russians only [1975:21].

The withholding of the novel's publication later in the Soviet Union appears to be due mainly to its political implications. If the Soviet publishers saw Dostoyevskij's "possessed" heroes as being essentially Russian types and if Berdyayev really believed that "Dostoevskij opened a metaphysical hysteria of the Russian soul, its unique inclination for possessedness" [1989:88], as Mondry remarks in *The Waking Sphinx*, then the Soviets could not have understood Dostoyevskij's true intentions.

These intentions are clarified in his next and last novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, where his ideology and his faith in the Russian soul are completely evolved and are taken to their peak.

CHAPTER 6

БРАТЬЯ КАРАМАЗОВЫ (THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV) (1880)

In March 1869 Dostoyevskij wrote to his niece about his one great ideal: "[...] that my whole literary activity has embodied for me but one definite ideal value, but one aim, but one hope - and that I do not strive for fame and money, but only and solely for the synthesis of my imagination and literary ideals, which means that before I die I desire to speak out, in some work that shall as far as possible express the whole of what I think" [1961:171]. *The Brothers Karamazov* accomplishes this desire.

Dostoyevskij's young son, Aliosha, died in 1878 of a severe epileptic attack which lasted over three hours. To the father this was an even greater disaster than to the mother because he felt responsible for the little boy's hereditary frailty. His guilt feelings with regard to this shattering experience made him undertake a pilgrimage to the Optina Monastery. There the words of consolation spoken by the Elder are the same as those used by father Zossima in *The Brothers Karamazov* to comfort a peasant woman who lost her last child called Alexey (of which Aliosha is the diminutive). In the following emotional scene the Elder piously tells the grieving woman to weep so that her tears may overcome her sorrow at the loss of her little three year old boy, who died at the same age as Dostoyevskij's own Aliosha:

"Be not comforted but weep, and every time you weep be sure to remember that your little son is one of the angels of the Lord, that he looks down on you and sees you and rejoices in your tears and points them out to God. And for a long, long time you will go on weeping as all mothers have done since time immemorial, but in the end your weeping will turn into quiet joy and your bitter tears will be only the tears of quiet, tender joy, purifying the heart and saving it from sin. I shall mention your little boy in my prayers. What was his name?"

"Alexey, Father."

"A sweet name. After Alexey the man of God?"

"Of God, Father, of God. Alexey the man of God"

"He was a great saint!" [Dostoyevskij 1984:52]

Here one is struck by the syrupy tone of father Zossima's voice, but it has to be remembered that he was speaking to a devout grief-stricken peasant woman. Whilst Dostoyevskij is considered by Bakhtin the greatest writer of the polyphonic novel, not one of the voices is his own. One finds the discourse of the good characters, Myshkin, father Tikhon, Aliosha and Zossima, conspicuously less stimulating than that of the bad ones who are vibrantly alive, daring and desperately brave in their forsaken condition. In their voices the reader finds a stronger ring of authenticity to which he can relate more easily.

Be that as it may, while writing the novel Dostoyevskij poured out these sentiments after the loss of his youngest child in order to overcome this last catastrophe. Here he creates his own realm of mystery and mysticism into which each subsequent blow by fate had pushed him. It is noteworthy that the innocent youngest Karamazov son is called Aliosha, the one whom Dostoyevskij designated as the hero.

In a letter to Maikov from Dresden, dated March 25 1870, he declares: "This will be my last novel; it will be as long as *War and Peace* [1984:190]. Indeed, it did become as long as Tolstoj's great novel. It also became the answer to his previous novel (see Chapter 5 above) because the whole work relates to "devil-ridden chaos" [1984:268] versus Christ. St. John, the most mystic of the Gospel writers and the disciple closest to Christ, repeats His words spoken to the pharisees: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him" [8:44]. This verse has direct bearing on the main theme of Dostoyevskij's last novel.

As has been pointed out, during his tumultuous life Dostoyevskij went through many phases of belief and unbelief, eventually reaching fulfilment in the Russian orthodox faith. Again David Magarshack states in his Introduction to the novel that Dostoyevskij "saw the solution of Russian troubles in the Greek Orthodox Church" [1984:xxiii], an opinion with which the author of this thesis cannot agree (see Chapter 5 above).

But Dostoyevskij was still obsessed by his doubt about the existence of God as is clearly stated in the same above letter to Maikov: "The main question that will be discussed in all the parts is one that has worried me, consciously or unconsciously, all my life - the existence of God" [1961:190]. On the other hand, as Joseph Frank puts it: "[...] it was always emotionally impossible for him ever to accept a world that had no relation to a God of any kind" [1976:43].

Although *Notes from Underground* are hailed to-day as the most extraordinary literary creation, *The Brothers Karamazov* as a novel is generally considered Dostoyevskij's masterpiece, not only in ideological terms but also compositionally. For Cherny this artistic work with its logic and harmony is the second best novel in European culture after Cervantes' *Don Quixote* [1975:23].

For this final and greatest novel Dostoyevskij chose the biblical epigraph in which the pivotal thought of this thesis is expressed. It is found in St. John 12, verse 24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit". In order to bear fruit one must die unto oneself and one's materialistic vain ideologies that lead to non-existence. If one loses one's earthly ideals, one will attain spiritual eternity. The corn of wheat which dies, is reminiscent of the grain of salt which is absorbed by the surrounding soup: it disappears in order to bring forth flavour, whereas the grain of salt which remains in the salt-seller will serve no purpose in its crystal palace.

Christ's words seem to indicate that His death was necessary to redeem us from our sins and that a spiritual regeneration is needed to understand His message. St. John quotes Christ as saying: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" [3:3]. In the same Gospel Christ's subsequent words on regeneration are cited: "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" [5:24]. This truth was expressed more tangibly with reference to a human being in the Raskol'nikov theme which explores man's ability to die away from his old self in order to be spiritually reborn as a new person. Thereafter prince Myshkin in *The Idiot* was dead, is spiritually reborn and brings forth much fruit. For this Christ-like figure, it was necessary to die again for a final resurrection. In *The Devils* St. John's verse applies to a whole nation and even the world where the forces of darkness appear to rule supreme. Finally the protagonists in *The Brothers Karamazov* are turned into symbolic representations of the same archetypal pattern of new life through death and rebirth.

Here physical death by murder occurs again as catalyst to the final realisation of the great Dostoyevskijan theme. Although mixed feelings are experienced every time by the perpetrator of the crime, the underlying motive for murder is different in each of Dostoyevskij's four major novels. Where it is self-assertion, jealousy and politics respectively in the previous works, there is such intense hatred of a despicable father by three of his sons here that each of them wants to kill him. Apart from Dostoyevskij's own ambivalent and even hostile feelings (which were shared by his brothers) towards his father, parricide as subject fascinated him since childhood. At the age of ten he saw a performance of Schiller's play *Die Räuber* (*The Robbers*) which is based on parricide and the rivalry between two brothers. It made a lasting impression on him; to the extent that he reread it aloud to his family while writing *The Brothers Karamazov*. The background to this novel's dramatic action is the strife-ridden family Karamazov with its dissipated father, no mother-figure,

three acknowledged sons and one unaccepted presumed son. Central to the outer plot is the assassination of the father by one of his sons. In this respect it resembles a detective novel because the reader is held in suspense for a long time before the murderer is unmasked.

Reciprocal guilt feelings of real and fictitious fathers and sons belong to the inner conflict. The theme of the generation clash which was announced by Ippolit in *The Idiot*, developed in *The Devils* where it is suggested that fathers are responsible for the behaviour of their sons, is taken still further in *The Brothers Karamazov* in which it becomes evident that sons should also be answerable for their father. In its narrow sense this theme of conflicting generations has no bearing on the main thrust of this thesis. But seen in its wider context, it is of direct importance, since in each of these three major novels, it implies a revolt against humans which becomes a rebellion against God. In Dostoyevskijian terms the great rebels are always atheists.

As the title indicates, the acknowledged Karamazov sons, in their capacity as brothers, are the pivot around which the action unfolds. Of the three brothers Dmitrij plays a more active part than Ivan and Ivan a more active part than Aliosha. Yet, as pointed out in Dostoyevskij's Introduction to the novel, the last one is the hero. Upon scrutiny of these fictional characters one becomes aware that Aliosha, who presumably represents brotherhood, is the link between them. Both elder legitimate brothers open their heart to him; so does the bastard brother, Smerdyakov, in an indirect way. The holy father Zossima, on his deathbed in the monastery, also confesses to Aliosha. Hereby the latter becomes the link between the turbulent outside world and the peaceful monastic world. Besides, he is the only brother who does not hate his father.

In the novel's first scene Schiller's theme is introduced. Here father Karamazov with the two eldest legitimate sons come together in the monastery where Aliosha, a novice, shares the cell of the holy tsarets (elder) Zossima.

For the first time Aliosha meets his half-brother Dmitrij, who had been abandoned in infancy by the father, and his well-educated brother Ivan. Immediately he feels drawn to Dmitrij, whereas the younger Ivan appears impenetrable to him. What he does know though, is that the latter is a "learned atheist" [1984:32]. With the knowledge of great suffering in store for the eldest brother, Dmitrij, the tsarets bows down to the ground in front of him. The repulsive father, Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov, acts the clown. He introduces Ivan to Zossima as the respectful Karl Moor and Dmitrij as the disrespectful Franz Moor who plotted his father's death and was in love with his brother's fiancée in Schiller's *Robbers*. Ironically it is a reversed prediction of what happens in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Joseph Frank makes the following interesting observation: "If *The Brothers Karamazov*, after *King Lear*, is considered the greatest work ever written to illustrate the moral horrors that ensue when family bonds disintegrate, it is partly because Dostoevsky had been mulling over this theme all his life" [1976:62]. One wonders though if this is a valid statement, since there were hardly any family bonds - the brothers come together for the first time as grown-ups in the opening scenes of the novel. But the bonds with their father, if bonds there were, certainly disintegrate. Dostoyevskij's own father slumped into a downward movement after his wife's death, retrogressing into over-indulgence, cruelty, obsession with money and total selfishness. This father figure in its ultimate state can be retraced in father Karamazov who is depicted without redeeming features. Contrasting sharply herewith, there was a conspicuous upward movement in Dostoyevskij's development: he himself seemed to reach out towards the spiritual revelations of a father Zossima.

Gide stresses in his *Dostoïevski* [1923:128] that Father Zossima dominates the whole drama. His real greatness does not reside in his being a "hero" seen through the eyes of the world, but he is a saint. And he only reached this state of saintliness by renouncing his personal will and intelligence. As has been pointed out, in Dostoyevskij's work, as in the Gospels, the kingdom of God

belongs to the poor in spirit. So the opposite of love is not hatred, but dependence on intelligence. Dostoyevskij's heroes' willful intentions seem to precipitate them towards Hell since their reasoning usually plays a demonic role. Therefore his most dangerous characters are inevitably intellectuals. This does not imply that the will and intelligence of Dostoyevskij's personalities are only used for bad purposes, but that it is so much more difficult for them to achieve good. Gide made these observations very early in this century when there was not yet a comprehensively accurate translation of *The Brothers Karamazov*. Even more fascinating is that Gide realised that the great Russian's contact with the Gospels was linked to the Asiatic spirit of Buddhism which equates life to suffering as a result of passion. Renunciation of oneself is the only way to redemption.

Dostoyevskij's most cherished, new and subtle thoughts have to be found in the discourse of his fictional characters. They raise individually moral questions of which the answers are to be sought in the psychological domain. These questions are sometimes so complex that they become obscured and very often peripheral characters cast light on them. But the opinions are not only relative to the personalities who express them, but also to a precise moment in their lives. So they only seem to be valid at a particular moment in someone's life.

Dmitrij's confession to Aliosha extends over three chapters against the background of their father's rampant garden. Though Dmitrij is a passionate prodigal leading a dissipated life, he appreciates poetry. Because he loves life he wants to quote Schiller's ode *An die Freude* (to joy). However, he changes his mind and instead of rejoicing, he starts reciting desperately *Das eleusische Fest* (The Eleusinian Feast) also by Schiller. The wild garden setting with its apple trees and berries is very appropriate when one examines Dmitrij's name. It means "of Demeter", the Greek version of Ceres, the goddess of the fruits of the earth. At the point in Schiller's ode where Ceres beholds man in all his

depravity, Dmitrij breaks out in tears because he recognises himself in such a man. He cries out to Aliosha:

"And every time I happened to plunge into the very depths of the most shameless debauchery [...] I always read that poem about Ceres and man. Did it reform me? Never! For I am a Karamazov [...] but I am still thy son, O Lord, and I love thee, and I feel the joy without which the world cannot be and exist" [1984:122-123].

The words "timid", "naked" and "wild" in Schiller's poem announce events in his life to come. Later Dmitrij will be standing shy, naked and wild with fury in front of his tormentors. However, he also quotes a part of the "Hymn to Joy" glorifying the beauty of nature in which he delights. Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot* is also stirred by the splendours of nature because that is where God reveals Himself (See Introduction above). But in nature there are also storms. Dmitrij confides in Aliosha that he yearns for beauty, the ideal of the Madonna, while he relapses into a state of Sodom. The eldest brother knows storms and lust, but beauty remains one of God's enigmas: "[...] lust is a storm - worse than a storm! Beauty is a fearful and terrifying thing! Fearful because it is indefinable, and it cannot be defined because God sets us nothing but riddles. Here the shores meet, here all contradictions live side by side. I'm a very uneducated fellow, old man, but I've thought a lot about it [...] The awful thing is that beauty is not only a terrible, but also a mysterious, thing. There God and the devil are fighting for mastery, and the battlefield is the heart of man" [1984:123-124].

Dmitrij inherited his impulsive, sensual nature from his father, but he has a sense of morality and far more strength of character than the old man.

The day after the meeting Aliosha feels oppressed by the premonition of a terrible impending disaster which will befall his eldest brother. When he hurries back to the same dilapidated summer-house in his father's garden, he hears the voice of Fyodor Pavlovich Smerdyakov. Again the significance of names should be stressed: the patronymic Pavlovich means that he is Pavel's

son. The old Karamazov is called Pavel Fyodorovich which indicates the link between them. Dostoyevskij does not state directly but makes it apparent that father Karamazov raped the village idiot, "stinking" Lisa (Lisa Smerdyashchaya). Karamazov's faithful servant, Grigorij and his wife, who had just buried their own baby, adopted the infant Lisa gave birth to just before her death in the garden close to their cottage. Grigorij seems to know the origin of the child when he tells his wife: "[...] he has been born of the devil's son and a holy innocent" [1984:114]. The baby was born with six fingers, auguring nothing good for the new infant. He grew up in Grigorij's house and, as an additional blow, father Karamazov gave him the "stinking" surname Smerdyakov. So he lives on Karamazov's property where he does service as cook in the former's household. This is another link. The wretched Smerdyakov is a cowering creature with sadistic tendencies - he enjoys torturing animals. The reader has already observed that Dostoyevskij considers crime against children and animals, who cannot defend themselves, to be the worst (cf. Raskol'nikov's nightmare of the little mare who was whipped in the eyes and beaten to death by a drunken peasant - see Chapter 3 above). Smerdyakov has a tenor voice and his fanciful way of singing in a sugary falsetto is that of a lackey [1984:261]. His hair is "pomaded and almost curled" and he wears "patent-leather shoes" [1984:264]. From this description he emerges as a false, pitiable creature.

Aliosha overhears him confessing to his friend, Maria Kondratevna, that the circumstances of his birth are revolting to him; he says: "I am called a bastard because I'm the son of that stinking idiot woman and haven't got no father" [1984:261] and he curses the day when he was conceived: "I'd have let myself be killed in the womb rather than come into the world at all" [1984:262]. Besides, he rebels against being brought up as a peasant in Russia, the country hated by him [1984:262]. In his plaintive tone he carries on by telling her:

"The Russian peasant, my dear, must be flogged, as Mr. Karamazov quite rightly said yesterday, mad though he is, and all his children."

"But you told me yourself that you've a great respect for Mr. Ivan

Karamazov".

"Well, my dear, he called me a stinking lackey." [1984:263]

There is, indeed, an odour of secrecy and suspicion about him. His indirect woeful confession is in stark contrast to Dmitrij's exuberant tone with his spontaneous outbursts: whilst Dmitrij is full of the joys of living, Smerdyakov understandably bewails his destiny in life. When Aliosha joins the couple, Smerdyakov treats him with distrust and reticence.

After this unexpected encounter Aliosha hurries to the inn hoping to find Dmitrij. There he only finds Ivan who is also waiting impatiently for Dmitrij. So, instead of the latter, it is the youngest Karamazov who shares a meal with Ivan. The relevant chapter, called *The Brothers get Acquainted*, deals with profound religious ideas exchanged between Aliosha and his brother. In the rather shabby inn Ivan bares his soul to his saintly young brother. Dmitrij told Aliosha that Ivan "is as silent as the grave" [1984:267]. Though he is not at all silent in this chapter, there is something grave-like about him. He divulges his plans to go travelling in Europe where he is prepared to find nothing but a graveyard of all its great spirits:

"And yet I know very well that I'm only going to a graveyard, but it's a most precious graveyard - yes, indeed! Precious are the dead that lie there. Every stone over them speaks of such ardent life in the past, of such a passionate faith in their achievements, their truth, their struggles, and their science" [1984:269].

Dostoyevskij seems to indicate here that the renowned European intellectuals die and stay in the grave without any hope of regeneration, because theirs is the realm of the mind and not of the soul. Ivan resembles a grave in his longing to be associated with the great Western minds. However, Aliosha retains the hope that he can still save his brother from a final death in a symbolical gesture to raise up the "dead who have perhaps never died at all" [1984:269].

Similar to Dmitrij's confession to Aliosha, Ivan's is contained in three chapters. Each brother's own way of speaking is revealing: as a man of learning, Ivan uses scholarly arguments to explain himself. Yet there is a passionate poetic side to his character as well. Aliosha considers Ivan to be a riddle [267], and as such Dostoyevskij uses the latter to present the whole question of the enigma of God's relation to man and the existence of evil in a world where the will of a beneficent God presumably prevails. In his confession that even if life is unbearable, it is yet worth living (up to thirty at least), the reader finds the solution to the damnable life as depicted in *The Devils*:

"If I didn't believe in life, if I lost faith in the woman I love, if I lost faith in the order of things, if I were convinced that everything was, on the contrary, a disorderly, damnable, and perhaps devil-ridden chaos, if I were completely overcome by all the horrors of man's disillusionment - I'd still want to live [...] I love the sticky little leaves of spring and the blue sky" [1984:268-269].

With the image of the beauty of a young leaf (in which the cycle of life is revealed from birth onwards) Ivan, like Kirilov before him in *The Devils*, contradicts his own nihilism. When he tells Aliosha that he loves life so much, regardless of logic [1984:269], the latter is relieved and exclaims: "Yes, most certainly regardless of logic, for only then will I grasp its meaning [...] Half your work is done, Ivan: you love life. Now you must try to do the second half and you are saved" [1984:269]. This second half is, as one has read, "to raise up your dead who have perhaps never died at all" [1984:269], meaning that death is not the end, that it leads to rebirth into a new life.

Though Ivan seems to represent the modern intellectual, his approach to Christianity is contradictory and ambivalent, as illustrated in his above remark that he loves life regardless of logic. On the other hand, he is logically convinced that "man has invented God" [1984:274] and he argues the case of man against God. According to him, this axiom was laid down by Russian boys, based on European hypotheses which were supported by Russian

professors being "quite often just the same Russian boys" [1984:274]. Again Ivan presents an explanation of *The Devils* by referring to the character of Stepan Verkhovenskiĭ, the mentor of a younger generation. Yet he supports Verkhovenskiĭ's ideas that there cannot be a God as long as atrocities are committed against innocent children. Like Dmitriĭ, he is concerned about the vile unredeemed condition of the human being which causes his inhumanity towards others. This is the reason for his rebellion (as the chapter is entitled). Here and in the subsequent famous Grand Inquisitor scene Ivan fervently puts forward his atheistic attitude, while Aliosha Karamazov makes an impassioned plea for Christianity during this very long dialogue. He submits himself to the awesomeness of infinity and wants to convince his brother "of the necessity for an ultimate faith in the goodness of God's mysterious wisdom" [Frank 1976:53]. Then the intellectual Ivan introduces his imaginative dialectic between Christ, who has come back to earth, and the Grand Inquisitor while the "autos da fe" were still taking place. He asks Aliosha if there is a being in the entire world who has the right to forgive torturers of the innocent, who can justify their suffering. Once again it raises the question whether there is a God and if so, why God allows all these injustices. This cardinal point is left unanswered, except that Aliosha points to Christ. Thereupon Ivan, in his Legend of the Grand Inquisitor, protests vehemently against God's injustice and he pleads his case for atheism much more convincingly than Aliosha's plea for Christ. The inquisitor condemns the latter to the stake as the worst heretic. The former symbolises the individual's support from "without" as against Christ who represents the support from "within". Dostoyevskij was afraid that the intellect, by repressing human passions, would alienate man from himself. In the long Grand Inquisitor scene the inversion of the dominant hierarchy, with the aggressor becoming victim and the victim an object of veneration, is crucial to the understanding of Dostoyevskij.

"Catholicism and Jesuitry, as compared with Orthodoxy" [1961:159] had been long in Dostoyevskij's mind and it eventually becomes a heated debate in this

scene. However, one should be careful not to read the "legend of the Grand Inquisitor" as an anti-Catholic tract, ignoring the far broader implications concerning the attack of evil on good. Here, as in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, evil is more attractive, its case is put better than that of goodness and charity. In his unique way the author creates a drama with equal forces; because he believes that good will triumph over evil, the latter needs stronger representation. Ivan argues that all human behaviour can be reduced to a single basic urge: the will to power. That higher state, the Higher Man (Raskol'nikov's perception and the theme that Nietzsche took up later with his "Uebermensch"), is the passionate man who is master of his passions; the creator who excels in both passion and reason and is able to employ his powers creatively. Ivan Karamazov argues that man can be a god within himself with full responsibility for all his actions. This scene forms the climax in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

N.P. van Wyk-Louw has taken up its theme in a penetrating poem *Die Hond van God* (from *Gestaltes en Diere*). In this poem the essence of the novel is caught in a few lines. The inquisitor's argument with Christ is becoming a plea because (like Raskol'nikov in *Crime and Punishment*) he has become his victim's victim:

[...] U weet die twyfel is my doringkroon
 wat diep gedruk word, telkens, en geroer,
 gelig, met vingers aangeraak; en ek woon
 bestendig in die pyn soos op 'n vloer.
 Maar in sy hart was daar geen angs...

daar was 'n nuwe ligtheid, buigsaam, teer,
 asof hy ons waarheid, twyfel, albei in die vangs
 gehad het van sy nette en weer
 gelos het om die diep see in te swem:
 ek weet dit is die nuwe tyd wat mens
 bo God stel, chaos bo kristal, [...]

Literally translated it reads as follows:

The Dog of God

[...] You know doubt is my crown of thorns
which is pressed deep, every time, and stirred,
lifted, touched by fingers; and I live
constantly in the pain as on a floor.
But in *his* heart there was no fear...

there was a new lightness, flexible, tender,
as though he had our truth, doubt, both caught
in his nets and released again
to swim into the deep sea:
I know it is the new time that places
man above God, chaos above crystal, [...]

The title refers to the Inquisition's leaders who were predominantly Dominicans or "Domini canes". It appears that Van Wyk-Louw refers to Dostoyevskij himself in the first four lines: his doubt causes him profound pain like Christ's crown of thorns. This doubt is pressed deep into his soul, stirred, lifted or lightly touched according to circumstances. He lives in this pain which depresses him, as if he were being flattened onto a floor. In contrast, the following line represents a fearless Christ. The lines thereafter could allude to the tender Aliosha Karamazov, who caught hold of truth and doubt only to set them free again so that, in the last two lines, Ivan Karamazov and all the intellectual radicals influenced by the new Western trend, could place Man above God, chaos above crystal.

N.P. van Wyk-Louw and Gide understood Dostoyevskij's existential philosophy which links Nietzsche to him. Both former writers realised that the Russian novelist and the German philosopher had a limited interest in the ordinary human being and concentrated on the extraordinary man (also see Chapter 4 above). Dostoyevskij explains this approach in his preface to *The Brothers Karamazov*.

As for Gide, he must have found Ivan's arguments about the futility of life very convincing. Yet, although both can also love life, the source of their rejoicing is completely different. At the times when Gide experiences ecstasy because his senses are stimulated physically, he is like Dmitrij in Sodom who still reaches out to the Madonna. Gide also reasons about nihilism, as Ivan does. His joy at being alive is also regardless of logic, like the two older Karamazov brothers. However, in Gide's case it is derived from sensuality similar to that of father Karamazov, though the former was plunged into a state of utter depression afterwards as he realised that his true spiritual love of his wife was far more precious (see Chapter 8 below). Eventually, with the passage of time and much soul-searching, Gide came to the conclusion that there is nothing but man, that he is the centre of his own universe, that God is dead. According to this reasoned ideology, André Gide reaffirmed that there are earthly fruits to be gathered, as he propounded in *Les Nourritures Terrestres*, and that there is nothing beyond the tomb.

In contrast to Gide's attitude, Ivan's love of life is part of his nature (up to the age of thirty), despite his awareness of disillusionment, suffering and chaos. Like Dmitrij he can be spontaneously happy. For Aliosha, this is the redeeming feature of his mentality. Nevertheless Ivan is still utterly unhappy about the meaning of life, and Aliosha's following words indicate his understanding of Ivan's dilemma: "[...] his is a stormy spirit. His mind is in bondage. He's obsessed by a great, unsolved problem" [1984:92].

After the long conversations between Aliosha and his brothers it becomes evident that they both need him, but both turn their back on him and disappear. Whereas Dmitrij walks off with healthy, strong steps, Ivan's strides are less firm. Does this indicate that Dmitrij has a typical spontaneous Russian temperament whilst Ivan gives considered opinions in the west-European way? It seems that every brother has a different driving power: Dmitrij is governed by his emotions, Ivan by his intellect, Aliosha by the soul

and finally Smerdyakov's sickly, tortuous psyche throws its shadow on each of them.

However, even Aliosha is contaminated by the Karamazov blood pulsating through his veins. This is pointed out to him by one of his co-novices in the monastery: "I can't help marvelling at you, Alyosha: how is it you're still a virgin? You, too, are a Karamazov, aren't you? And in your family sensuality has reached a point where it becomes a devouring fever" [1984:89]. A little later he says: "That's what the Karamazov problem boils down to - sensualists, money-grubbers, and saintly fools! Your brother Ivan is writing theological articles at present as a joke and for some unknown reason, for he himself is an atheist" [1984:90].

Apart from these spiteful remarks by this seminarist, who is clearly envious of Aliosha as Zossima's favourite, Aliosha himself is aware of the sensuality inside him, as he tells Dmitriy: "I did not blush at what you were telling me, nor at what you've done. I blushed because I'm the same as you" [1984:125]. Moreover, father Zossima urges Aliosha to leave the monastery and to go out into the world where he will experience worldly pleasures and know great sorrow. He advances Dostoyevskij's keynote message: "in sorrow seek happiness" [1984:86]. This spiritual father (the good man) dies at the same time as Aliosha's own father (the bad man). The former's body starts decaying too soon. All this happens after Ivan's convincing plea about the non-existence of God. It seems to imply that Ivan won the argument and that Aliosha is losing his faith. Moreover there is Aliosha's friendship with Lise which might turn to love: when they come together, she "seized his hand and kissed it impulsively three times" [1984:253] (Russians symbolically kiss three times). And he responds to her impulsive action: "Aliosha was still standing beside her, holding her hand in his. Suddenly he bent over her and kissed her full on the mouth" [1984:254]. After the impetuous kiss, he starts reflecting on his behaviour and he warns her:

"My brothers are destroying themselves," he went on, "and my father, too. And they are destroying others together with themselves. What we have here is 'the earth-bound Karamazov force' [...] earth-bound, unrestrained, and crude. I don't even know whether the spirit of God moves over that force. All I know is that I, too, am a Karamazov. I a monk, a monk? Am I a monk, Lise? I believe you said I was a monk a moment ago."

"Yes, I did."

"And yet I don't think I even believe in God." [1984:257]

Evidently Aliosha does not know whether he believes or not. Both he and Lise dream repeatedly of devils crowding in on each of them; when they cross themselves, the devils shrink back, but when they curse God, the devils come rushing forward again. His recurrent dream, reinforced by Lise who is linked to him, seems to symbolise the struggle between faith and scepticism. So, even without full comprehension, Aliosha suffers from ambivalent religious thoughts. This brings him closer to his brothers.

Aliosha is not only central to understanding the brothers and the saintly elder, he is also the link to all the other pertinent fictional characters. Their true nature is revealed through him. Yet as hero, Aliosha does not dominate the other figures, he merely draws them all together in universal brotherhood.

Whereas Ivan puts forward ideas which Dostoyevskij wanted to refute, Aliosha becomes the novel's positive pole, the radiant core of the family. He is the healthy, human side of the Idiot. Through him the reader learns about the background of the holy tsarets Zossima, because in *Book Six: The Russian Monk*, the reminiscences and memories of the dying *pater pneumatikos* are written down by Aliosha. Here then is the third confession which comprises three chapters. Throughout Dostoyevskij indicates the importance of the Christian number three (in the trinity, the three men crucified on Golgotha, the darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour, and three days of Christ's death and resurrection). The title of his last and greatest novel refers to the three brothers with the surname Karamazov. And finally, in Dostoyevskij's oeuvre

there are three fictional characters in whom dark urges seem conquered by divine powers, whose words and actions reflect purity, submission and holy wisdom: prince Myshkin, Aliosha and father Zossima.

In a letter to Maikov, dated March 25, 1870, Dostoyevskij called the part about the holy Zossima "the second story" which "will have for its setting a monastery". He continues hopefully: "On this second story I base all my hopes. Perhaps people will admit at last that I can write something but pure nonsense" [1961:190]. Shortly thereafter one reads: "I know the *milieu* through and through; I have been familiar with the Russian monasteries from childhood" [1961:191]. He must have conceived this part about the Russian monk as the great counter-argument to Ivan's contentions.

Shortly before his death Zossima explains gently to the seminarists that he loves them all, but he singles out Aliosha because he is a special source of inspiration to him [1984:335]. Besides, Aliosha is very important to him as pupil, teacher and biographer. His name, apart from its connection to saint Alexey, means helper. As such Zossima urges Aliosha to help Dmitrij, because the expression on the latter's face and in his eyes seem to foreshadow a terrible fate [1984:334]. He foresees the possibility that Dmitrij will be the victim of a miscarriage of justice.

Parricide and judicial proceedings form a sub-plot to the main theme of atheism versus the existence of God in the age-old cycle of life, death and rebirth. When sending Aliosha off in aid of his brother, Zossima reminds him that everything is from God and quotes the novel's biblical epigraph: "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" [1984:334]. The holy monk tends the sufferers and advises on how to combat adversity: "Always decide: 'I will combat it by humble love'. If you make up your mind about that once and for all, you may be able to conquer the whole world. Loving humility is a terrible force, the strongest of all, and there is nothing like it" [1984:376]. This is the wisdom

Dostoyevskij aspired to all his life. He supplies the real answer to Ivan's world-view by countering it in an indirect but convincing way, diametrically opposing the atheism previously expressed so vehemently by the latter. This refutation clearly brings out the ideological dimension of the novel.

Whilst tsarets Zossima's pious, at times sentimental, expressions are not as convincing as Ivan's blasphemies, it should be remembered that the tsarets' audience does not need to be gained over to his side; it supports positively his values and beliefs. But why does father Zossima's death make his sanctity suspect? Why does his dead body start decaying and smelling so soon after death? Does this imply that one need not be a saint to "bring forth fruit"? Why does he advise Aliosha to leave the monastery and go out into the world? Is that to "bring forth fruit" in other spheres?

Zossima's life history which becomes a sermon of farewell from the world, recorded by his young novice Aliosha, is written in the Elder's distinctive words. All the different voices blend together, but each has its own separate persuasive and authentic tone. Whether it be the narrator addressing his reader, or the various characters propounding their views, Dostoyevskij's voice is never heard. Every personality develops along his own lines without interference by the author.

In Zossima's life history Aliosha writes that the former's brother Markel was a militant atheist, that he laughed and swore while maintaining that there was no such thing as God. But as he faces death there comes a remarkable change in his outlook and he starts praising God ecstatically. Like Kirilov in *The Devils* he cries out: "Life is paradise, and we are all in paradise, but we don't want to know it, and if we wanted to, we would have heaven on earth tomorrow" [1984:338]. At this stage it may be appropriate to mention that Dostoyevskij, as indicated in his works, was an early nature conservationist who loved a pure earth and sky. Again like Kirilov, this young man sees the

glory of God in the beauty of nature all around him: "the birds, trees, meadows, sky" [1984:340]. With the experience of paradise he is going through a spiritual rebirth.

In Zossima's own life story the godless man is portrayed before experiencing an epiphany. Then he too sees God's splendour so that he cries straight from the heart, in much the same way as the Idiot at the Epanchin's home:

"all things are good and beautiful, because all is truth. Look [...] at the horse, that great animal that is so near to man, or at the sad and pensive ox which feeds him and works for him, look at their faces: what meekness, what devotion to man, who often beats them mercilessly [...] there is no sin in them, for all but man is perfect and without sin, and Christ has been with them even before us" [1984:346].

Zossima repeats the familiar motif: "Nature is beautiful and without sin, and we, we alone are godless and foolish and don't understand that life is paradise" [1984:352]. His condemnation of certain norms and conventions, such as socially accepted falseness and lies, as morally wrong and his rejoicing in God's gifts of the clear sky, the pure air, the tender grass and the birds, remind the reader of his brother Markel, of Kirilov and of prince Myshkin.

The third man, presented at the turning point of his life, is the mysterious visitor. His soul is tortured because of a dreadful murder he committed. In the wake of all his torment, one part of him wants to confess, repent and suffer while the other part hesitates because of his family. This inner conflict reaches a climax when Zossima reads to him chapter 12, verse 24 from the Gospel of St. John, again the text which forms the epigraph to *The Brothers Karamazov*. Later the mysterious visitor returns to the holy father since he wants to kill him, according to his confession, but is saved from another gruesome deed by heavenly intervention which leads to his spiritual regeneration.

These rather similar episodes taken from Zossima's life, about three men who become spiritually regenerated, again stress the importance of the holy number three.

Smerdyakov "loves" his counterpart, his half-brother Ivan, in the same way that Piotr Verkhovenskiy loves Stavrogin (see Chapter 5 above). Old Karamazov notices Smerdyakov's dog-like devotion to Ivan and says to the latter: "It's you he's so interested in. What have you done to make him so fond of you?" Ivan replies: "Absolutely nothing". Then, full of suggestiveness: "Got it into his head that I'm a great fellow. A boor and a lackey like him! First-class material, though, when the time comes" [1984:153]. Despite his love of Ivan, Smerdyakov realises that of all the brothers this one is most like their father. It is Ivan's theory of everything being permissible in a nihilistic world that brings him closest to the repugnant old man.

Freedom of choice between good and the temptations of evil is presented as dreadful because it led to our loss of Paradise. With Dostoyevskij heroes the awareness of this terrible choice usually implies a destructive individuality.

The liberty to choose looms large in the Russian's works, whereas Gide is more influenced by the Calvinistic approach based on predestination. Because this concept of grace seemed illogical to Gide, he rejects it and eventually accepts the vicissitudes of life without further struggle. As a western intellectual he could not reconcile himself with Aliosha and Ivan's idea that one loves life "regardless of logic" (earlier in this Chapter).

The heroes who are to be pitied in Dostoyevskij's works are those who suffer from intellectualism created by this awesome individualism: characters like Raskol'nikov and Ivan Karamazov. However the holy elder, Zossima, and his novice, Aliosha, are not confused about the real spiritual distinction between political and civil liberty and Christ's morality. Their certainty is in sharp contrast with the Inquisitor, as Harry White points out:

This confusion is what allows him to associate the anxieties of modern consciousness with Christ's freedom: "I tell Thee that man is tormented by no greater anxiety than to find someone to whom he can hand over the gift of freedom with which the ill-fated creature is born. But only one who can appease their conscience can take over their freedom..." [1993:66].

This forms the hub of the Inquisitor's argument and his most serious and damaging charge. Wasiolek, for example speaks of "the anxiety and fear of choosing freely" (1972:168). Steiner agrees that men "are racked by doubt and metaphysical anguish because Christ has allowed them the freedom to choose between good and evil" (1989:338), and while the Grand Inquisitor regards freedom as the cornerstone of Christianity, then it would seem that without suffering there can be no liberty of choice. However, history offered Dostoyevskij little evidence that men, forever born with the gift of free moral choice, were for that reason racked by fear and metaphysical anguish. On the contrary, the type of anxiety the Inquisitor attributes to the human condition did not appear to be endemic before Dostoyevskij's time. Thus, while Dostoyevskij analyzed the disorder throughout his writings, he always identified it not as a condition of mankind's freedom, but as a symptom of unprecedented social-political changes, a consequence of the development of personal consciousness, a diseased state caused by the negation of spontaneous ideas and laws (authoritarian, patriarchal, laws of the masses). Unlike the Grand Inquisitor, he never assumed the anguish men like Ivan, Raskolnikov, or the Underground Man experience, results from their having been born free; nor does he identify these anguished souls as Christians. In Harry White's view their anxiety was unique to the modern age and attributable to the influence of contemporary Western thought [1993:66-67].

Along these same lines of reasoning, roots of to-day's "liberation theology" can be found in the Grand Inquisitor looking after the masses. He defends the poor and the weak. He promises them no longer heavenly bread, but earthly bread, since man's aim is to be happy in life. The Inquisitor's theology of

"nourritures terrestres" is the same as the atheistic socialism preached by the Verkhovenskijs in *The Devils*. Later when the delirious Ivan confronts his own devil, the latter argues that the success of nihilism resides in the destruction of the concept of God in man's mind. It must be replaced by the image of man/god who permits everything [1984:279].

As far as Gide is concerned, he explored this concept in his *Nourritures Terrestres*. Here he presents weak human beings who want no more than earthly happiness with the permissibility to sin. This modern liberation theology is much the same as the atheistic socialism expressed in Dostoyevskij's *Devils*. The Grand Inquisitor calls for moderate happiness, without anguished questioning, as opposed to full spirituality. But the Grand Inquisitor does not mention that one's anxiety is caused by one's wrong choice. After all the human being can be guided into the right direction to avoid anguish by following the dictates of his/her conscience. As Harry White puts it: "If men like Ivan are tormented by the anxieties of isolated individualism that is because they have rejected authority in favor of libertarianism. That, Aliosha insists, is not what Christ taught or intended. For it is finally not the moral freedom Christ spoke of, but the wrong choices men make that creates such anguish for them" [1993:68]. And "a ruler who allows every sin, as the Inquisitor does, will confront a range of sins more extensive than he might have anticipated [...] such unrestricted freedom will compel him to enforce unrestricted despotism" [1993:70].

All these long debates are typical of Dostoyevskij's method as author. The hallmark of his fiction is a never-ending dialogue between opposites. The reader follows constant long philosophical conversations between the various characters. The reader, like the author himself, has to evaluate the reasoning and draw his own conclusions. By this dialectic method the aspirations and hidden motives of the soul are revealed. It is Dostoyevskij reasoning not so much with his reader as with himself. Subconsciously the background and the characters represent part of the writer himself. Raskol'nikov, the Idiot, father

Karamazov and his sons are all a part of Dostoyevskij's background, of himself. He is a mystic like the Idiot, Aliosha and the holy elder Zossima. He leads the reader into a philosophical and religious search by putting many questions without answering them. In this respect his novels touch on the allegorical and didactic.

Glancing at Gide, one notices that this tendency is far more prominent in his works which are nearly all allegories with pronounced didacticism.

To return to Dostoyevskij's questions; a vital point he raises, is to what extent fathers are responsible for their children, and in this novel he progresses to the thought that children should be answerable to their father. The Karamazov brothers are tainted by the sins of their father: he is a ludicrous, despicable character, hated by three of his sons. He has the lurid nature of the Underground Man, but instead of withdrawing into a corner of his lair like a wounded beast, he flouts his shortcomings in a clown-like way, much the same as Piotr Verkhovenski in *The Devils* (see Chapter 5 above). Again the profound psychological insight into the unloved and unlovable social outcast who lords it over his family and plays the clown in public. He is guilty towards all his children - here is a repetition of the theme of the fathers' responsibility for the suffering of their children. He himself is to be blamed for his murder which is committed by the wretched unaccepted son, Smerdyakov. But now the father is killed, the wish has become reality; Smerdyakov, Ivan's other lower "self", was merely the link between thought and deed. There is a tacit understanding, a conscious connivance, between him and Ivan. Ivan is not actively responsible for his father's death, in the same way that he is not actively accountable for the death of the peasant, whom he flings onto the icy ground, well knowing that he will die in the snow. The compassion of a St. John (the same name as Ivan) is totally absent in this other callous side of Ivan's nature. Having left Smerdyakov when he becomes convinced of his own complicity in the crime, he stumbles across the freezing peasant. Now his attitude has changed: with a feeling of pleasure he helps the peasant and

ensures that he will recover. He realises that he may not shake off his responsibilities and that he must clear Dmitrij's name - he cannot be like the biblical Cain who questions God: "Am I my brother's keeper?" [Genesis 4:9]. Ivan reasons about his complicity and becomes mentally convinced of his guilt.

The same dual polarity can be observed in Dmitrij's attitude towards his father-figure. Dmitrij is a violent, impulsive man who openly vows to kill his biological father and assaults him physically. But after the night of the crime he is guilt-ridden because he erroneously thinks that he killed Grigorij, the old man who carried him in his arms, washed him and was a real father to him when he was abandoned by everybody. Then there is yet another father-figure whose image is violated by Dmitrij: the latter humiliates father Snegirev in front of his son. Dostoyevskij's theme of fathers and sons is developed by Dmitrij's overtly severing the bond of respect which sons should have for their father. The realisation that this is his true crime is strengthened by his dream about a child's grief. During his dream in which he recognises his guilt, someone places a comforting pillow under his head.

Again it is important that this third father is made to suffer by Dmitrij: the Christian holy number three is relevant here again. Christ was resurrected on the third day. This connotation appears to indicate that the eldest Karamazov son, whose great suffering was announced by father Zossima, will be regenerated.

The number three reappears in the sum of three thousand roubles which father Karamazov needs in order to attract the favours of Grushenka. Three brothers are also implicated: Ivan has to secure this amount through a transaction for his father; Dmitrij has just squandered that sum of money when he is arrested; Smerdyakov kills his father and keeps the three thousand roubles hidden in a sock which he is wearing. This very amount of money with which old man Karamazov tries to lure Grushenka is used by Dmitrij for his lust after the same woman. Moreover that sum points to him as

perpetrator of the crime, whilst the actual criminal is the bastard brother. By selecting Smerdyakov as murderer, whose epilepsy is crucial to the execution of the crime, Dostoyevskij probably associates himself with the guilt of a son and a father.

Concerning the murder itself, the reader is held in suspense. He is made to believe that Dmitrij is the culprit. The chapter appropriately called *In the Dark* shows Dmitrij, filled with disgust, watching his father from the garden. When the old man leans out of the window, Dmitrij takes the pestle from his pocket... At this critical point the narrative is interrupted. But one reads that Dmitrij is boiling with hatred, that his jealousy regarding Grushenka, is all-consuming. Furthermore this insane jealousy is not directed towards other lovers, but only towards his father. The idea that the old lecher might propose marriage to her, might use three thousand roubles to entice her, enrages Dmitrij. Even more so since he regards that sum, derived from a property, as a legacy from his mother. He believes that the money is hidden in the old man's bed. All its sexual implications further infuriate him. It should be noted that his passion for Grushenka is the same as his father's, born of violent carnal desires. Later the public prosecutor analyses the fatal passion which starts off with the desire "to give her a thrashing" but changes to wanting to remain "at her feet" [1984:827]. Simultaneously the father comes into the grip of "the most violent, most Karamazov-like passion", while Grushenka admits that she "was laughing at both of them" [1984:827]. Yet jealousy is not the primary motivation for Dmitrij's "crime" because he loathed his father intensely long before he set eyes on their mutual mistress. For the same reason money is not a motive either. Dmitrij's behaviour becomes clearer when one takes into review the night of the murder. He can tell by the expression on his father's face that Grushenka is not with him: the sneering grin and the voluptuous glint in his eyes are absent. It is that expression which he detests more than anything else. This points to something much deeper than ordinary hatred: it has the appearance of the primordial Oedipus complex. The most repulsive idea is of his father's bed with his mother in it;

subsequently her money hidden in it and his mistress in it. In his plea of innocence he postulates that his mother must have been praying for him. However, the uneducated Dmitrij, who grew up "like a wild animal" [1984:876] is unacquainted with the perception of Oedipal guilt feelings.

However, Ivan reasons about his sensation of involvement and complicity. At his brother's trial he suddenly hands a bundle of paper money to the president of the court who then asks him in surprise:

"How did you get hold of this money if - if it is the same money?"
 "I got them from Smerdyakov, from the murderer, yesterday....I went to see him before he hanged himself. It was he and not my brother who murdered my father. He murdered him, and I told him to do it. Who doesn't wish his father dead?" [1984:807]

This last question reveals that Ivan is conscious of his complex nature. However, it can be taken further: the father whom he wishes dead could be God. As he pointed out to Aliosha, God allows crimes against children; He permits sadistic fathers to perversely neglect their children; He seems indifferent to the fate of his children on earth. As Ivan's God appears to be identical to his human father, the wish to kill his father extends to both these figures. Yet Ivan longs for an authoritarian father-figure, so he creates a third one: the Grand Inquisitor who usurps God's kingdom on earth - again the number three.

Not only the two older brothers are connected with three fathers, but also Aliosha. Apart from his biological father he has been adopted as son by the holy father Zossima who also teaches him how to find his real heavenly father.

Finally, Smerdyakov has his hated real father, but the father who brings him up is Grigorij, whereas the third, the venerated father-figure in his life is Ivan. To Smerdyakov who hates Russia and its peasants, this half-brother impersonates the European man of intellect with refined manners.

Under the latter's spell, Smerdyakov kills his real father. Ivan's ideas and wishes prompt him to commit this crime, as it were in his name. Smerdyakov tells Ivan: "You murdered him. You are the chief murderer. I was only your accomplice, your loyal page, and I done it because you told me to" [1984:731-732]. When Ivan grasps the full implication of those words, he freezes with horror. Something seems to give way in his brain. A cold shiver passes down his spine and he begins shaking all over [1984:732]. The truth dawns on him.

Though Smerdyakov appropriates the old man's three thousand roubles, he shows little interest in them. Whereas Ivan's complicity in the murder is spelt out, Dmitrii is indirectly implicated as well. The bastard brother becomes Dmitrii's agent, for while the latter hesitates at the last moment to kill his father, Smerdyakov carries out his intention. The fact that both of them climbed over the fence at the same spot where Stinking Lisa did, just before Smerdyakov's birth, is a further link between these two brothers. This action makes Smerdyakov, the father's servant, also the servant of his two older brothers.

Unpleasant religious overtones are present in the depiction of Smerdyakov: he has the features of a Castrate, a member of the extreme religious sect that negates the positive side of Christianity, as is seen in Rogozhin's fanatic character (cf. *The Idiot*, Chapter 4 above). Ivan takes an intense dislike to him, the familiar way in which his bastard brother treats him, he finds revolting [1984:313]. Particularly Smerdyakov's Castrate appearance fills him with revulsion: "He looked with disgust and anger at Smerdyakov's eunuch-like, haggard face with the hair combed back from his temples and the fluffed-up little tuft of hair on the top of his head" [1984:314]. His link with Marya Kondratevna reinforces the Castrate image. The name Marya obviously suggests a Madonna type which is very important to the fanatic sectarians. Moreover, the founder of the Castrate sect was a certain Kondratij. Therefore her patronymic seems to imply that he is her spiritual father. With relation to Smerdyakov the colour white is of great significance (the Castrates

are clad in white, are called "White Doves" and the ceremonial act of castration is referred to as "whitening"); he lives in the white hut, and above all he hides the stolen money in his white stocking. Initially father Karamazov did not hide this money in his bed as suggested, but actually hid it behind holy icons. From there Smerdyakov transferred it to his white sock. Ivan's reaction is very revealing:

Ivan looked at him and suddenly shook with convulsive horror. "Madman!" he bawled and, jumping up quickly from his seat, he drew back so violently that he knocked against the wall and seemed to be glued to it [...] He gazed at Smerdyakov with insane horror [...] He was as white as a sheet. "You frightened me with - with your sock," he said with a strange grin [1984:733].

The identification between these two brothers and Ivan's dread when looking at the white stocking, suggests that he, the rebel against God, is like a sectarian extremist. Every positive human attribute seems to inspire its negative part. Smerdyakov is the punishment of the freethinker Ivan who proves to be no super-human. The former is disillusioned by the latter's fear, as clarified in the sentence: "You said everything is permitted, and look how frightened you are now!' Smerdyakov murmured in surprise" [1984:733].

As in *Crime and Punishment* the theme of punishment looms large in *The Brothers Karamazov*. The fictional characters seem to be obsessed with hell, as presented by them in various ways. A special sub-chapter entitled "Of Hell and Hell Fire, a Mystical Discourse" is devoted to Father Zossima's views on hell. The debates arising from this concept originate from the theological article written by Ivan who examines the question of justice and punishment as a prelude to the dramatic action of the novel. Whereas Raskol'nikov's article deals with crime, which is the primary determinant of *Crime and Punishment*, Ivan's focus is on punishment, and he raises the question of ecclesiastical and civil courts [1984:67]. In the case of Roman Catholicism the Church became absorbed by the state (the Holy Roman Empire). Opposing this

phenomenon, father Paissy (in Zossima's monastery) proposes that "the Church must be transformed into a State" and all civil elements should be absorbed by the Church. In the chapter "It will be! It will be!" he exclaims: "Our Lord Jesus Christ came for the sole purpose of setting up the Church upon earth. The Kingdom of Heaven, of course, is not of this world, but in Heaven; but you enter Heaven only through the Church which has been founded and established on earth" [1984:68].

In stark contrast with this idea, André Gide believes that the Church corrupts Christ's message and that it interferes with the beauty of Christ's teaching. Obviously he refers to the Western Church, whereas Dostoyevskij's visions are concentrated on the Russian Orthodox Church. With regard to the West, supporting Gide's views, Zossima says:

"[...] in many cases there are no more Churches left there at all, but only clergymen and magnificent church buildings, the Churches themselves having long ago striven to pass from their lower form as a Church into the higher form as a State, so as to disappear in it completely. This is, at any rate, the case in Lutheran countries, I believe. In Rome, of course, a State has been proclaimed instead of a Church for the last thousand years [1984:72].

Apart from Zossima's erroneous belief expressed about magnificent Lutheran church buildings, the distinction is made between the attitude of the Church and of the State: whilst the first is spiritual, the state's procedures are based on human reasoning. Father Zossima argues that the only effective punishment "resides in the awareness of one's own conscience and inspires fear and brings peace to the soul" [1984:71]. It is suffering caused by the individual's guilty conscience that is the punishment. He continues by declaring:

"All these sentences of hard labour in Siberian prisons, and formerly with flogging, too, do not reform anyone and, what's more, scarcely deter even one criminal, and, far from diminishing, the number of crimes are steadily increasing [...] If anything does protect society even today and indeed reforms the criminal himself and brings about his regeneration, it is, again, only the law of Christ [...] The criminal today,

therefore, is capable of recognizing his guilt only towards the Church, and not towards the State" [71]. The holy elder sums up his thoughts with: "...the whole point is that, in addition to the established civil courts, we have also the Church, which never loses contact with the criminal as a dear and still precious son" [1984:72].

It should also be remembered that Christ said: "And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" [St. John 12:47].

To Ivan human justice seems totally barbaric, but he contradicts the Elder's arguments because he negates divine justice and the ideas of eternal harmony. Whereas Zossima (like prince Myshkin in *The Idiot* and Kirilov in *The Devils*) rejoices in the beauty of nature, while he feels that God is revealed in the magnificence of forests with their bird-life and the goodness of animals [346], Ivan, who is also sensitive to the beautiful little sticky spring leaves, still feels disillusioned about the evil world that God created. His grand inquisitor shows nothing but contempt for humanity. Moreover, his negation of love brings home to Ivan in a nightmarish experience the utterly negative force of Satan. The awareness of a personal devil takes on the most prominent dimensions. Instead of Ivan's all-powerful reason his tormented imagination starts haunting him. In a feverish hallucination his self splits; he sees the devil, an unexpected visitor sitting at the table. Ivan realises that the devil is he himself, his "alter ego" who argues with him. In his delirium Ivan tells him: "[...] but I always guess the absurd things you say because *it is I, I myself who am talking and not you!*" [1984:748]. He starts a furious debate with his own demon. Ivan accuses him: "You are my hallucination, You're the embodiment of myself, but only of one side of me - of my thoughts and feelings, but only the most vile and stupid" [1984:749]. He wants to shake off the satanic other half of himself but the latter awakens Ivan's thought by anticipating it: "I understand, I understand, *c'est noble, c'est charmant*. You're going to defend your brother tomorrow and sacrifice yourself - *c'est chevaleresque*" [1984:750]. It is interesting that the devil likes speaking French

when analysing Ivan. Dostoyevskij probably implies that the foreign side of Ivan's character corrupts him. When he explains himself to Ivan he does not use French: "[...] in society they usually take it for granted that I'm a fallen angel. Honestly, I can't imagine how I can ever have been an angel. If ever I was, it was so long ago that I can be forgiven for forgetting it" [1984:750].

With regard to Gide, one finds Michel of the *Immoraliste* aroused by and battling with the satanic Ménalque. But the latter merely plays the role of tempter; there is no splitting of the self.

Ivan, as the devil, tempts himself, the intellectualiser, to undertake the long journey to an enduring after-life which he so stubbornly refused. He tells himself that "Mephistopheles, when he first appeared to Faust, introduced himself as one who desired evil but did only good" [1984:761]. In actual fact, he taunts his own arrogance and obstinacy with regard to the rejection of eternal peace and harmony. The following admission of his own devilish self should be quoted:

"I'm perhaps the only man in the universe who loves truth and sincerely desires good. I was present when the Word, who dies on the cross, ascended into heaven, carrying on his breast the soul of the thief who had been crucified on his right hand, and I heard the joyful cries of the cherubim, singing and shouting: "hosannah", and the thunderous shouts of rapture of the seraphim which shook heaven and all creation. And I swear by all that is holy I longed to join the chorus and shout "hosannah" with them all. [...] But common sense - oh, the most unhappy characteristic of my nature - kept me here, too, within the proper bounds, and I let the moment pass!" [1984:762]

During a snow storm Aliosha starts knocking at the window. It is his unexpected appearance on the scene that unfetters Ivan from his devil. From what Ivan tells him feverishly Aliosha realises that his brother wants to accept God's truth but that he is too proud to submit: "He began to understand Ivan's illness: 'The agony of a proud decision - a deep-seated conscience'. God, in whom he did not believe, and truth had gained a hold over his heart, which

still refused to give in" [1984:771]. His punishment exists in the torment of the consciousness of his own guilt. From the last two passages quoted it must become clear to the reader that Ivan is only hampered by his intellect while both he and his baser nature, his "double", are looking for God's eternal peace. In this way the devil is objectivated and exorcised. Evil becomes ridiculous in a nightmare and no longer inspires fear.

Based on p. 753 of *The Brothers Kaaramazov*, *Time International* published an interesting article, entitled *Essay on Evil* in which Ivan's struggle with his devil is discussed:

In this bitter diabolology the devil speaks of the game village girls play who persuade someone to lick a frosted ax and then find the tongue sticking to it. He also wonders idly, "What would become of an ax in space". The article leaves out the next two lines which apparently indicate the foreign influence: "Quelle idée! If it got far enough, it would, I think, begin circling the earth as a sort of satellite". Then the article picks up again with: "It would orbit there, and the astronomers would calculate the rising and setting of the ax". Ivan's prescient devil was speaking a century before bright metal began to fly up off the earth and circle round it. There is something spookily splendid about evil as an ax in space. [Time International. June 10, 1991. No. 23. *Essay on Evil*:46].

For purposes of this thesis Dostoyevskij's astounding visions of the future, highlighted by the quotation, are irrelevant. However, the symbol of the axe is important as implement of destruction and as weapon in savage hands. The same weapon was used by Raskol'nikov to murder the old pawnbroker.

It must be remembered that Dostoyevskij acts as the devil's advocate: he preaches falsehoods in order to lead the reader to the truth. One is taught to realise that what one reads does not blame but praises Christ.

Like prince Myshkin, Dmitrij is confronted by the double ideal of beauty and Sodom incorporated in the guise of two women. Katerina Ivanovna recalls Aglaia (Yekaterina means "pure") whilst Grushenka (meaning "juicy little

pear") reminds one of Nastasya Filippovna. Katerina's innocence is for her more valuable than loving Dmitrij. In his eyes her virtue detracts from her merits. However, Katerina and Ivan are mutually attracted, as her patronymic Ivanovna indicates. On the other hand Grushenka, similar to Nastasya Filippovna, will be redeemed from a sinful life through her unselfish love. She too, resembles Mary Magdalene.

These two female figures are tied to Dmitrij by amorous and financial links. The theme of money is the same as in *Crime and Punishment* where Raskol'nikov thinks he needs it but subsequently disregards it completely; it is also the same as in *The Idiot* where suitors try to tempt Nastasya Filippovna with it but where she treats it with utter scorn. In *The Brothers Karamazov* Dmitrij hands over spontaneously five thousand roubles to Katerina Ivanovna in order to protect her father's honour. Then with money returned by her, he has a wild spree with Grushenka. Here one finds Dmitrij's split ideal of a lofty heaven with its low abyss underneath. But the height of heaven has to be measured from a point of reference and in Dmitrij's case the two extremes are not so far apart. The money he offers Katerina Ivanovna is a bait to lead her astray; it is not designed to protect *her* honour. So the ideal of the Madonna is intertwined with Sodom. Since Katerina Ivanovna feels humiliated by Dmitrij's generosity, she wants to humiliate him in turn by offering him money, well knowing that he will spend it on her rival. While carousing with Grushenka in Sodom's abyss, the lure of the Madonna makes him keep half the money tucked away safely in an amulet hanging on his chest so that he can hand it back. Half the money has the symbolical significance of one half spent in Sodom and the other intended for the Madonna. However, his good intentions are tainted by the ulterior motive of having money in case Grushenka consents to marry him. In Dostoyevskijan terms it seems to mean that his heart, under the amulet, is divided between the two women who represent the two ideals.

Having announced everywhere that he would kill his father, he becomes the prime suspect after the father's dead body is discovered. Subsequently he is found guilty of the murder. Though convicted wrongfully, Dmitrij accepts punishment and penal servitude as atonement for his sinful life. Like Raskol'nikov, he desires the hardships of exile in Siberia because these will expiate his sins and ultimately lead him to divine truth. Dostoyevskij makes it clear that he will probably, similar to the hero of *Crime and Punishment*, be regenerated because of his repentant faith.

Dmitrij considered himself a thorough scoundrel and not worthy of salvation. As a true Dostoyevskijan hero, he was "struggling with his destiny and trying to save himself" from his own evil desires [1984:428]. He longed for virtue and the forgiveness of sin: "About that different, new, and 'virtuous' life ('it must, it must be virtuous') he dreamed continuously and with a kind of frenzy. He yearned for that renewal and resurrection. He had sunk into that horrible bog of his own free will" [1984:430].

The civil court condemns him for an uncommitted crime, but he also suffers an inner spiritual punishment for the real guilt of which he has become aware. As he says to the members of the jury:

"I accept the suffering of my accusation and of my public disgrace. I want to suffer and be cleansed by suffering! I will, perhaps, be cleansed, gentlemen, won't I? But listen to me for the 1st time: I am not guilty of my father's murder! I accept my punishment not because I killed him, but because I wanted to kill him and, perhaps, would, in fact, have killed him" [1984:598].

As a Christian Dmitrij is conscious of his guilt because he (like two of the other brothers) hated his father, and St. John writes in his first Epistle: "Anyone who hates his brother (in the biblical sense) is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him" [3:15]

Already in 1911 Gide observed in his article on *The Brothers Karamazov* [1984:63] that their "colossal figures" (as he calls them) address from Russia itself the contemporary foreign reader and that their discourse sounds as urgent as ever. The three legitimate brothers, so different from each other, haunted by the pitiful shadow of their bastard brother, seem to share a moral world deserted by their shameless old father. These characters are already exercising an indisputable influence on western generations; their voices do not seem strange; one actually hears their dialogue within oneself. There is no ill-conceived symbolism in the novel's construction. Dostoyevskij's significant personalities do not escape one moment from their tangible reality. Instead of being shown where to go, these characters are merely made to doubt or reflect upon a possible negative direction. For Gide [1923:71] the Dostoyevskijan novels are the most charged with meaning, are never abstract, and are the most vitally alive that he has ever come across as author.

However, there are of course, points of disagreement: humanity, as identified by Dostoyevskij, is driven by the need to suffer, "everywhere and in everything". The "most fundamental spiritual quest" of the Russian people is a "thirst for martyrdom" [Dostoyevskij 1954:36]. As Peter Christoff quotes Konstantin Aksakov: "Leaving the kingdom which is of this world to the state, the Russians set their feet on another path - the path of inner freedom [...] That is the reason for their unequalled submission to authority" [1991:234], whether it be State or Church. The self-sacrifice and willingness to suffer implies submission to the authorities that be. Dmitrij's innocent conviction, acceptance of suffering and civil obedience, similar to Dostoyevskij's own experience, evolves into his moral and politico-religious ideology. A guilty conscience, from which all his heroes suffer, seems powerless to prevent wrongdoing. But the criminality and immorality of repentant sinners will be forgiven. Dostoyevskij's concern was not so much with morality per se: he attacked rationalised and self-righteous rebellion against authority.

Here the paradox relating to the two authors under scrutiny becomes very clear. Gide rationally rejected all religious morality, the socio-political structures of his time, submission to any authority and unnecessary suffering.

Despite all the evil described by Dostoyevskij, Russians performing active deeds of goodness loom large in his works and in Russian literature generally. More often than not this good person is a woman. One witnesses the unselfish sacrifice by Liza in *Notes from Underground*, by Sonia, Dunia and Elizaveta in *Crime and Punishment*. In the *Brothers Karamazov* Grushenka tells the story of the woman given a chance for salvation because of her single act of charity: the gift of an onion to a beggar. Grushenka herself is prepared to share Dmitrij's fate in exile, as Sonia does for Raskol'nikov in *Crime and Punishment*.

The typical Dostoyevskijan protagonists are often young adults; youngsters and children play a very important part too. Gide being most interested in the developing stage of a youth, drew attention to this aspect in the great Russian's work. He writes in his *Dostoïevski* that the role of youngsters is neglected in French novels. But:

Dans l'oeuvre de Dostoïevski, au contraire, les enfants abondent; même il est à remarquer que la plupart de ses personnages, et des plus importants, sont des êtres encore jeunes, à peine formés. Il semble que ce qui l'intéresse surtout, ce soit la genèse des sentiments. Il nous peint ceux-ci bien souvent douteux encore, et pour ainsi dire à l'état larvaire [Gide 1923:155-156].

(In Dostoyevskij's work, on the contrary, children abound; it can even be noted that most of his characters, and of the most important, are still young, hardly developed. What seems to interest him most, is the birth of feelings. He depicts these feelings quite often still hesitating and, so to say, in a larval stage).

Small children are usually cast in the role of innocent sufferers by Dostoyevskij. Inspired perhaps by Christ's words in his Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" [St. Matthew 5:8], Dostoyevskij's love for "pure" children comes out clearly in most of his works.

For him the worst crime that can be committed is against innocent children. In this regard Ivan, during his long discussion about the Grand Inquisitor with the saintly Alyosha, brings up the question: how can God exist if children have to suffer? His young brother counters this with: look towards Christ. Sadistic paedophiliacs, such as Svidrigailov and Stavrogin represent sheer evil.

Dmitrij's dream about the plight of a poor, cold and hungry child, epitomising the existence of evil, brought to him full awareness of the problems of human suffering. Like Ivan's hallucination, this dream becomes the turning point of Dmitrij's life. Suddenly he realises that he unwittingly caused the sick little boy, Ilyusha, further suffering and humiliation by assaulting his wayward father, Snegirev.

Shortly after the completion of *The Brothers Karamazov* Dostoyevskij died. Although he had a final novel in mind of which Aliosha would be the hero, *The Brothers Karamazov* is not left as open-ended as it might seem. It is concluded with the above familiar sub-plot of guileless children who will inherit the Kingdom of God. The scene is a group of young boys who are mourning the death of Ilyusha. The third Karamazov brother who manifests his love for children, Aliosha, is being questioned by them: "Karamazov', cried Kolya, 'is it really true that, as our religion tells us, we shall rise from the dead and come to life and see one another again?' 'Certainly we shall rise again, certainly we shall see one another and shall tell one another gladly and joyfully all that has been', Aliosha replied, half laughing, half rapturously" [1984:912].

It should perhaps be mentioned again that André Gide himself was considered to be a "corrupteur de la jeunesse" which would imply being a paedophiliac, an abhorrent being in the eyes of Dostoyevskij.

Christ's prophecy of his own death and resurrection, quoted by St. John 12:24 in the metaphor of the fruit springing from the corn of wheat that has died,

used as epigraph to *The Brothers Karamazov*, is also the miracle of hope born out of despair. This concept applies equally to the fate of Dmitrij who sacrifices himself in order to bring forth fruit as a regenerated soul. It is Zossima's favourite biblical quotation: both he and Dmitrij were sinners but become saints. All self-assertive urges seething through the novel are countered by Father Zossima's doctrine of self-denial and universal love. He is presented as a model for freedom from self.

Zossima teaches that faith should not be born of miracles, but that the latter are caused by faith. His physical death with its decaying body initially disillusioned Aliosha. However, in a subsequent dream Aliosha witnesses Christ's first miracle where at a wedding, water was turned into wine. He sees the resurrected Zossima at the wedding feast, and Aliosha's watery faith turns into vigorous wine. The true miracle is the renewal of faith brought to the three legitimate Karamazov brothers by their spiritual father Zossima. One notices that even the rebellious Ivan yearns for reconciliation with God and the ensuing unity within himself. This could only come about after the death of their own evil father and their bastard brother who carries out the physical act of *kara* (retribution) and who represents the sick Karamazov side of their personality.

Here then one seems to reach the zenith of Dostoyevskij's ideology: the evolution of man's double nature into unity with God, the theme which is studied in *Du double à l'unité* by René Girard. The present thesis starts with *The Double* to finally conclude the research regarding Dostoyevskij with the full integration of self in his *Brothers Karamazov*. As Girard puts it: "Chez Dostoïevski la recherche de l'absolu n'est pas en vaine; commencée dans l'angoisse, le doute et le mensonge, elle se termine dans la certitude et dans la joie" [1963:13].

Towards the end of his sombre life Dostoyevskij achieved his goal as writer to leave to the world his ideology of spiritual rebirth or regeneration in Christ:

physical death is not final. The real death must be unto our ego so that one can overcome one's selfish nature in order to bring forth fruit. If one accepts that, death means to be reborn to eternal unity.

At this juncture one should cast a glance at Gide to establish how he assessed the epigraph to Dostoyevskij's last novel. It might also be good to evaluate Gide as an entity on his own instead of seeing in him a sort of transference of Dostoyevskij's ideologies. In this regard it is necessary to see him as an independent author in order to understand his approach to the great Russian writer.

CHAPTER 7

A GLANCE AT ANDRE GIDE (1869-1951)

Studying Dostoyevskij one has become aware of the inner conflict between his intellectual reasoning about the existence of God and his mystic need to reach out to Him. One has also witnessed in his works a gradual progression towards regeneration (as revealed in St. John 12:24) and resultant divine bliss. Now a glance should be cast at Gide the author in order to understand the latter's evolution as a religious thinker.

An opposite development can be traced in him. His inner conflict is also evidenced in his works whence two figures emerge: Ménalque (the anti-hero of *L'Immoraliste*) and Christ. These exist side by side in Gide himself. He is like a Dostoyevskijan double with his bad and good poles. In contrast to the latter's work Gide's whole oeuvre demonstrates a progressive victory of Ménalque over Christ, which means the idea of earthly happiness triumphing over heavenly salvation. From the ongoing duel between these two extremes his work was born.

In order to evaluate Gide's work at present, it should be recognised that the significance of major writers is constantly redefined as value shifts occur. On the eve of World War II Gide was generally recognised as the dominant figure of his time, widely acclaimed around the world. The well-known term to describe him was the "contemporain capital" as used in the undergraduate text book by Bersani, Autrand, Lecarme & Vercier [1970:185]. He was committed to the cause of the Left, campaigning against colonialism and strongly opposed to fascism. At the time of his death in 1951, he was still considered one of the greatest contemporary writers. He was certainly more read and admired than

Proust, Céline, Cocteau or Genet. But in the course of time these four have gained ascendancy over him. Now he is numbered in the ranks of the have-beens. So, as cultural fashions change and new values emerge, a writer such as Gide, once deemed central to European thought, has become marginalised. Public interest has been fading in his case, mainly because he was a topical writer. He concentrated on the issues of the day, which involved politics, public morality and philosophy of religion.

Few authors were as conscious of literary genre as Gide. Apart from the recognisable genres such as the novel, poetry, theatre, essays, literary criticism, travel narratives, even libretti, he was also responsible for reinvigorating or redefining other genres: the imaginary interview, 'traité', 'sotie', 'récit' and diary. The Pléiade edition of his *Romans; Récits et Soties; Oeuvres lyriques* in which most of these genres appear, was published in 1958. Despite these classifications, there is still hesitation and debate regarding genre definitions by critics of Gide's work. For purposes of this research the foregoing is merely of importance in its relevance to his autobiographical writing, since the focus will be on his personal diary.

In all this varied writing Gide "did not attempt to paint the society of his time; instead he created a moral world and experimented in it with all the stances possible before life as well as with their opposites" [Cap 1990:145].

His first major work, *Les nourritures terrestres* (1897) can be called a gospel of joy, a sort of pagan New Testament. It proclaims the emancipation of the individual, his freedom to enjoy all the opportunities of life to its fullest without fear of sinning or retribution. It is a glorification of the senses, an erotic song dedicated to the exotic Dionysos. Herewith Gide is healed from his nervous tension by liberating himself from all restraints of an oppressively moralistic society (a solution very different from that chosen by Dostoyevskij). Here life becomes the source of earthly delights. It is Adam's joy while beholding Eden.

A later work, the tormented *Saül*, became an antidote to this song of songs. By creating the opposite attitude in a different work, Gide exposes the duality in human nature.

Gide reveals his sexual predilection quite openly in *Corydon* (1924), named after Virgil's shepherd who lusts after Alexis [Virgil 1938:10]. A most anti-Dostoyevskijian concept is expressed in his sympathy with the paedophile's problem. As Edmund White remarks: "[...]like Sisyphus [he] never gets to the end of his work since as each youth wilts into maturity the poor weary paedophile must break in a brand-new child" [1991:1]. Gide was proud of his sexual prowess at an advanced age with a young Arab. In this context Maurice Nadeau writes:

On s'étonnera, sourira ou s'indignera de ce qu'un vieillard de 73 ans, depuis lors Prix Nobel, note ses impressions de 'deux nuits de plaisir' passées avec un adolescent de quinze ans; aveu réconfortant, une marque de liberté d'esprit et de mépris pour la considération publique qui montrent la nature et l'étendue de ce que Gide nomme son 'insoumission' [1952:86].

This insubordination is also in stark contrast to Dostoyevskij's attitude.

To-day one thinks of Gide as the didactic and even moralistic immoralist, revealed mainly in *L'immoraliste* (1902) and its counterpart *La porte étroite* (1909). Both these works have a bearing on Gide's own life. Certainly Gide was the most famous "immoralist" of the day, possibly in reaction to his early Protestant scruples about the expression of nearly every physical urge. Michel, the hero of *L'immoraliste*, discovers the ethics which replace all moral restraints and wants to prove his independent morality in a Nietzschean way. Ultimately he realizes that he sacrificed his wife to his selfish pleasures. Ménalque, the tempter, is a veritable immoralist and looks for the perpetual gratification of his own pleasures. But one must not accentuate too much the liberties and nihilism of a Ménalque who represents an immorality of which

Gide probably disapproved. (Ménalque's role could be compared to the one played by Oscar Wilde in Gide's life.)

In *La porte étroite* (the strait gate of St. Luke 13:24), likewise a semi-autobiographical work, Jérôme and Alissa love one another. However, they resolve to seek refuge from our base world: Jérôme immerses himself in his studies, while Alissa withdraws from her beloved with whom she wants to be spiritually united in God. This religious ascetism leads her to frightful solitude and anguish that culminate in disillusionment and death. A diary, left by her, reveals that she was unable to resolve the tension between human and divine love. Here is the other side of the medal: the ethics of the lovely, admirable Alissa can be destructive and inhuman. She is not able to live within the confines of responsible freedom and her self-denial makes others as unhappy as those close to Michel the Immoralist. How different is Dostoyevskij's idea of self-abnegation in *Crime and Punishment*: his lovely heroine, Sonia, repulsive to herself, "lives in sin", in order to help her needy family which is entirely dependent on her. She reads the Gospels to Raskol'nikov and eventually, by her selfless sacrifice of sharing his fate in exile, achieves the promise of his regeneration.

Whereas Dostoyevskij made it clear that he did not consider any special gift of grace necessary to be regenerated, Gide was influenced by the pessimistic Calvinist view of mankind as largely dependent on predestination and God's grace for any possibility of redemption from wickedness. Russian Orthodoxy places more emphasis on man's free will: Christ's incarnation is sufficient to spur mankind into the eternal struggle against its own limitations. But Gide came to believe that restrictive moral teachings emanate from Saint Paul, whereas Christ's message is Love. At the same time Christian morality, as prescribed by the institutionalised Church, is full of taboos absent from Christ's teachings. On 1 July 1931 he wrote: "Ah! que tout irait bien si l'on avait affaire au Christ! Mais la religion, ce n'est pas le Christ; c'est le prêtre" [1951a:1058]. "Oh, how well off everything would be if we dealt with Christ!

But religion is not Christ, it is the priest" [1949b:172]. Gide illustrated this in *La symphonie pastorale* where the young blind heroine, who regained her sight, commits suicide because the evil around her has become visible. She has to die since she realises that the sin in the characters surrounding her has not died and that she even intensified it, although unwittingly. The fable reminds one of the inability of Dostoyevskij's Idiot to live surrounded by the awareness of evil which he could not overcome. Gide wonders if the Church as an institution is not at fault (*Les caves du Vatican*). This satire presents the squabbles between the Roman Catholic Church and the Free Masons. As epigraph he chose to quote Georges Palante: "Pour ma part, mon choix est fait. J'ai opté pour l'athéisme social. Cet athéisme, je l'ai exprimé depuis une quinzaine d'années, dans une série d'ouvrages" ("For my part, I have made my choice. I opted for social atheism. This atheism has been expressed by me for fourteen years or so, in a series of works"). Although Gide calls this work a "sotie", the epigraph cannot be considered "sotte", since the author quite clearly identifies himself with this opinion. His great admiration of Dostoyevskij's ability to penetrate the abyss of the human soul is reflected in his creation of Lafcadio, one of the main characters, who has a tormented Dostoyevskijan nature. This independent young hero is vividly portrayed with his troubled spirit and his unfathomable, complex personality. Influenced by Dostoyevskij's treatment of the reasoning and arguments Raskol'nikov advanced to account for his crime, the French writer explores Lafcadio's inexplicable motive for murder. Although he advances the concept of "acte gratuit" or arbitrary act, he admits that there is always a secret motivation, as illustrated in *Crime and Punishment*. Dostoyevskij's and Gide's sympathetic criminals react similarly after they have committed murder - both Raskol'nikov and Lafcadio show a keen interest in the investigators of their crime. Each of them demonstrates a pure expression of individual freedom. This irrational behaviour is found in pre-pathological psychology, acknowledged at present by modern psychiatry. Gide must have felt drawn to that, as yet unknown, concept while researching Dostoyevskij. Yet, significantly, the ultimate insight of both fictitious characters is diametrically

opposed the one to the other. Lafcadio's final behaviour, so totally at variance with Raskol'nikov's aim, is indicated by the epigraph to the fifth book of *Les caves du Vatican*, entitled "Lafcadio". Gide quotes Joseph Conrad's words in *Lord Jim*: " - There is only one remedy! One thing alone can cure us from being ourselves!... - Yes; strictly speaking, the question is not how to get cured, but how to live" [1922:187]. Whereas Raskol'nikov wants to be cured by expiating his sin and turns to the Christian religion in order to be regenerated, Lafcadio seems to remain the man of iron who challenges conventional morality and who wants to live. Gide ends his "sotie" with a typically Dostoyevskijan open end: "Quoi! va-t-il renoncer à vivre? et pour l'estime de Geneviève, qu'il estime un peu moins depuis qu'elle l'aime un peu plus, songe-t-il encore à se livrer?" [1922:253] (What! is he going to renounce living, and for the admiration of Geneviève, whom he admires a little less since she loves him a little more, is he still dreaming of handing himself over?)

In a similar vein Gide explains in his *Faux-monnayeurs* Kirilov's suicide (in *The Devils*) as a mystical need to reject the existence of God. Dostoyevskij is far ahead of his time (which Gide understood) because with the creation of a Raskol'nikov and a Kirilov he anticipates surrealism and existentialism. They are in reality an emotional response to the strain of living in an absurd world. Aware of this, Gide inserted an episode in *Les faux-monnayeurs* (1925) with the strong Dostoyevskij flavour of a suicide incited by the demonic political activists. In Gide's scene a gang of school boys, the "Hommes forts" (strong men) led by an evil type, (the "strong man" in Dostoyevskij's oeuvre is Stavrogin) want one of their members to prove himself. The luckless one is a certain Boris who has to shoot himself with a pistol. Noteworthy too is his Russian name. This scene forms part of the novel's general ideological thrust, namely that one has to be courageous and open in maintaining one's stance, even in the face of attack. All those who are not honest enough to proclaim true values in *Les faux-monnayeurs* are exposed as fakes, as counterfeiters. The false, like counterfeit coins, drive out the good ones. In this very readable novel one finds an integration of most Gidean themes. Justin

O'Brien's expresses a valid opinion: "Edouard, the 'normal' pederast who knows himself and does not struggle against his penchant, stands not only far removed from the torment of Michel and Saül, but also just as far removed from the vice of Proust's Charlus. In fact, his character Edouard, rather than Corydon, represents Gide's full answer to Proust [...] And, in perspective, it would seem that *Les faux-monnayeurs*, as probably the most widely read of his works, did more for the tolerance he intended to teach than did *Corydon* and *Si le grain ne meurt* together" [O'Brien, 1953:281-282].

Unlike Proust, Gide was courageous enough to avow his true nature boldly in the face of attack. He declared that he had a horror of lying. So he had to come into the open about the nature of his sexuality. His autobiographies trace his evolution as a homosexual apologist in a chronological way. However, for the purposes of this thesis only his religious ideas will be discussed.

Gide, like Dostoyevskij, was tormented by the question *Is there a God?* In Gide's religious journal, *Numquid et tu...?*, he reveals his anguished search for faith; he was willing to sacrifice his personal liberty for the comfort and support of complete belief. He must have understood Dostoyevskij's religious conviction as emphasised particularly in *The Devils* and *The Brothers Karamazov*: if there is no God, then everything is permissible. The negation of God means the fatal affirmation of Man.

At this juncture Gide's autobiography *Si le grain ne meurt* should be examined in order to establish his evolution towards atheism.

CHAPTER 8

GIDE'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Having concentrated on Dostoyevskij's use of the novel as vehicle to express his ideology, one now turns to Gide and his self-revelations in the genre of the autobiography.

Here the term autobiography will be used in a rather extended way in order to include mémoires, confessions, recollections and journals. In the past the term "mémoires" was generally used for this type of first person writing, loosely considered by the Russian Formalist, Jurij Tynianov, to be extra-literary. From the nineteenth century onwards it was substituted by the term "autobiography" which implies a serious literary act. However, this distinction is hardly honoured by Gide who refers to his autobiographical writing also as mémoires and confessions, probably indicating that he wants to retain a tone of intimacy and spontaneity. At the same time he certainly arranged his text in such a way that it creates an aesthetic entity. There is a tendency in the twentieth century autobiography to be so preoccupied with psychological revelation that "sincerity" appears to become more important than veracity, whereby, generally speaking, the distinction between autobiographical "fact" and subjective "fiction" can become very vague. Gide, on the contrary, supplies the truthful rendering of facts and events which the reader expects.

Roy Pascal in his *Design and Truth in Autobiography*, as quoted by Tolton [1975:8], insists that the

autobiographer gives an account "which involves the reconstruction of the movement of a life, or part of a life, in the actual circumstances in which it was lived". He emphasizes the fact that an autobiography's

centre of interest must be the narrator's self rather than the outside world, granting that the outside world must indeed appear in the work in its double role as both backdrop to and partner with the narrator's actions and the evolution of his personality.

The focal point of this treatise will be Gide's above-mentioned writings. Since human thought is an incessant process, private individual reflections are often collected in this genre where there is complete personal freedom of expression. In Gide's case his journals (which contain *Si le grain ne meurt*) document the development of his innermost self as well as an entire epoch as seen by this keen observer who took an interest in all major events and reacted to them. They are considered his most original and remarkable work.

Even more than in his other writings, the directness and honesty, with which Gide records his liberation from false and inadequate manifestations of self, are particularly valuable. For him autobiographical writing became a self-exploratory function. He obviously took pleasure in expressing himself about his own conscience while at the same time he attempted to reconcile his self-accusatory and self-excusing tendencies. His public avowals are essentially egocentric and, despite their self-denunciation, obviously intended either to diagnose the author's "moral malady" or to justify it by reason of natural inclinations beyond his control. These texts bring us amazingly close to all the facets of his being from which he emerges as an unrepentant, inveterate egoist, independent, lonely and unhappy. For example, he tells the reader about his "[...] crises de dépression, que je n'ai que trop connues, pareilles à celles que je traversais alors, (quand) je prends honte de moi, me désavoue, me renie, et, comme un chien blessé, longe les murs et vais me cachant" [1926:581]. ("[...] fits of depression like the one I was then passing through (I am only too liable to them), I feel ashamed of myself, disown, repudiate myself, and like a hurt dog try to creep out of sight" [1951:293]. During the scrutiny of such a morbid mood, particularly after sleeplessness, the neurotic hypochondriac is also revealed. These conditions remind us of a Dostoevskijan psychological landscape.

Compared to Gide's autobiography, Dostoyevskij's *Diary* contains few personal revelations. The author's "I" is bashfully hidden behind the impetuous narrative; only now and again does it appear as a mere casual allusion to something of general importance or in the treatment of a vital subject. The emphasis here is not on "I" but on "you", on the things that are common to everyone, to all strata of society. Autobiographical material is found mostly in his correspondence.

Though Gide wrote volumes of journals, the spotlight falls in particular on his *Si le grain ne meurt (If it die...)* published in 1926. Enid Starkie thinks that this work "ranks amongst the great autobiographies of the world, though it is nearer in form to confessions" [1953:38]. She also states that it contains passages of Gide's finest writing [1953:39].

It is a disturbing document which recalls the first twenty-five and a half years of Gide's life. Sometimes referred to as "Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse", it records his innermost self from his early youth onwards, haunted by his "abnormal" desires. It also manifests the psychic urge to define himself and his place in society. One of the most striking features here is the intense preoccupation with self. It is evident that he required an audience and felt the need to be accepted, both as a human being and as a writer. However, like Dostoevskij, Gide regarded himself as alienated from society.

This work can be considered completely realistic and non-fictional: he explores events experienced by him and real people. His direct confessional writing is predominantly descriptive. Due to his dislike of conformity, this creative composition is fresh and original. In a limpid, sensitive way Gide tells his personal story, dividing it into two parts. The first intimately relates his youth with complete frankness. Here, by the leisurely presentation of events, Gide tries to prove that somehow his childhood had been relatively normal. The sexual discoveries on the opening page are a factor in unifying

the two parts, but the tone, style and tempo bring a complete change to the second part. Whereas certain passages of the first part are slow-moving and sometimes become irritatingly affected and effusive, there seems to be an urgency about the latter part, as though Gide cannot wait to reveal his intention in a clear and straightforward way.

The entry of 19 January 1917 hints at his controversial reason for writing his autobiography: "Je n'écris pas ces Mémoires pour me défendre. Je n'ai point à me défendre, puisque je ne suis pas accusé. Je les écris avant d'être accusé. Je les écris pour qu'on m'accuse" [614]. ("I am not writing these Memoirs to defend myself. I am not called on to defend myself, since I am not accused. I am writing them before being accused. I am writing them in order to be accused" [1948:194]).

Why this title? Like Dostoyevskij's *Brothers Karamazov*, the epigraph to Gide's autobiography is: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" [St. John 12,24]. The French text reads: "En vérité, en vérité, je vous le dis, si le grain de blé qui est tombé en terre ne meurt, il reste seul; mais s'il meurt, il porte beaucoup de fruit". Why does Gide leave out two thirds of the Gospel quotation in his title? It is apparent that he refers to the whole biblical verse but obviously this complete text is too long. Why then does he concentrate only on "Si le grain ne meurt"? The "ne" after a conditional "si" implies "à moins que" [Thomas 1956:383]. So, unless it dies, the corn of wheat remains alone. In the English translation, "If it die...", the three dots indicate that the reader is invited to complete the verse, but there seems to be a paradox in this English title. The question arises what Gide and what the translator had in mind, particularly because the latter quotes from the second part of the verse whilst Gide quotes from the first. The reason could be that the King James Version uses the word *Except* instead of *Unless*, or *If* plus the negative. *Except a corn die* is somewhat archaic, whereas the other two words are immediately understandable to the modern English reader. Perhaps the translator does,

however, obscure Gide's intended meaning by using the affirmative instead of the negative form. On 18 February 1916 Gide clarifies his thought by making the following entry in his *Journal*, *Numquid et tu...?* which refers to St. John 12:24:

La vie éternelle n'est pas seulement à venir. Elle est dès à présent toute présente en nous; nous la vivons dès l'instant que nous consentons à mourir à nous-mêmes, à obtenir de nous ce renoncement qui permette la résurrection dans l'éternité [...] Quelle tranquillité! Ici vraiment le temps s'arrête. Ici respire l'Eternel. Nous entrons dans le Royaume de Dieu [1951:591]. (Eternal life is not only to come. It is right now wholly present in us; we live it from the moment that we consent to die to ourselves, to obtain from ourselves this renunciation which permits resurrection in eternity [...] What tranquility! Here truly time stops. Here breathes the Eternal. We enter into the Kingdom of God [1948:172-173]).

The notion of time that stops reminds one of Kirilov who "undid time" [see Cussons in Chapter 5 above] gazing at his leaf. When Gide refers to the next verse, St. John 12:25 (*He that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life*), he writes on 4 March 1916: "Celui qui aime sa vie, son âme, - qui protège sa personnalité, qui soigne sa figure dans ce monde - la perdra; mais celui-là qui en fera l'abandon, la rendra vraiment vivante, lui assurera la vie éternelle; non point la vie futurement éternelle, mais la fera déjà, dès à présent, vivre à même l'éternité" [1951a:594]. ("He who loves his life - who protects his personality, who is particular about the figure he cuts in this world - shall lose it; but he who renounces it shall make it really living, will assure it eternal life, not eternal life in the future, but will make it already, right now, live in eternity" [1948:175]).

But what was the author's intention ten years later when *Si le grain ne meurt* was published? Evidently the title for this early autobiography transfers St. John 12:24 into allegory. It seems a rather paradoxical fusion of the Christian (and Dostoyevskijan) concept of redemption through renunciation with Gide's awakening realisation that he can no longer be insensitive to his own instincts and therefore, in biblical terms, he will be left alone and he will not receive

regeneration and eternal life. Barclay explains the biblical verse very crisply: "The grain of wheat was ineffective and unfruitful so long as it was preserved, as it were, in safety and security" [1975:123]. So the title of this work appears to indicate that Gide foresaw the impossibility that his earthly desires would die. However, according to Christ, only by death comes life: only by sacrifice of our worldly life can we reach eternal life. Gide eventually saw the solution to his problem only in casting aside his guilt feelings and thereby allowing his contradictory passions of love and desire to live in him. In this sense the title could be explained by seeing the rest of his life as the fruit of the harvest to come, grown from the seed of his dead past, all the distress and self-torture of his earlier years. This "angst" had to die so that he could start a new life of freedom and serenity.

Gide was in constant inner turmoil and conflict, as he explained himself in the preface (dated 1930) to *Les cahiers et les poésies d'André Walter*:

[...] souvent, ce que je prenais pour la plus sincère expression de moi-même n'était dû qu'à ma formation puritaine qui, comme elle m'enseignait à lutter contre mes penchants, satisfaisait un goût de lutte et de spécieuse austérité [...] la lutte même bientôt me parut vaine. Il m'apparut que le plus sage triomphe était [...] de ne s'opposer plus à soi. Cette découverte que je raconte dans *Si le grain ne meurt*, fut pour moi de la plus haute importance" [1952:10]. ([...] often, what I considered the most sincere expression of myself was due only to my Puritan background which, as it taught me to fight against my inclinations, satisfied a propensity for fighting and for specious austerity [...] the fight itself soon seemed hopeless. It seemed to me that the wisest triumph was [...] in opposing oneself no longer. This discovery which I relate in *If it die...* was for me of major importance).

Regarding this discovery and triumph, it would appear that he wanted to prove himself free, beyond good and evil (like his Lafcadio - see Chapter 7 above). In that event the grain of wheat does not die but remains alone. Gide does not want to punish himself because of his aberrant nature and certainly does not look forward to suffering in order to be regenerated, as does Dmitrij Karamazov. He is the atheistic intellectual like Ivan who fights his devil. But

Gide does that only for a certain period in his youth; thereafter he gives up the struggle. Indeed, he comes to regard the fight against his "devil", his untamed instincts, as senseless. Thereby he creates a paradox, because the Russian author he admired so much abhorred that type of personality. Moreover, *The Brothers Karamazov*, which he considered to be Dostoyevskij's greatest religious novel, presents the case for Christianity even more strongly than the latter's other works. When Gide decided to use as the title of his autobiography the epigraph that Dostoyevskij used in this last novel, he must have wanted to create another paradox. The Russian writer's great theme is the dying of the corn of wheat in order to be reborn into a new life. Gide concentrates on the other part of St. John's verse: if the grain of wheat does not die, it remains ineffective. Herewith he seems to parody Dostoyevskij, as he did while mentioning the raising of Lazarus (see Chapter 3 above). He indicates that he himself has the moral courage to live and die without divine support because there is nothing after death. But he is looking forward to his new life of freedom after the "death" of his guilt. Perhaps his future literary output could have been seen by him as the "fruit" of this "rebirth".

Despite his undisputed importance as artist, Gide considered himself first and foremost to be the great polemical writer coming forward with audacious ideas. In that respect Pierre de Boisdeffre stresses the ideological dimension by referring to *Si le grain ne meurt* as: "[...] un document inoubliable: 'Si le grain ne meurt', confessions d'une impudeur de la pensée, non du style, - et d'une sincérité redoutable" [1963:113].

On the other hand, Philippe Lejeune, the well-known scholar on autobiography, maintains [Lejeune 1974:5] that Gide wanted his work to be judged from the artistic point of view. Although this thesis aims at exploring the religious ideology, the structure and stylistic functions of a text should not be overlooked because these aspects are inextricably linked to the content by indicating the way in which to approach it.

A specific genre does not prescribe style and construction, but it does indicate how to evaluate their "force". So Lejeune concentrates on the style and narrative procedures which in *Si le grain ne meurt* are used mainly to create ambiguity and allusion. For him ambiguity is linked to Gide's discovery of the Devil who is at the root of *Si le grain ne meurt*. The Devil's role is essential but at the same time most discreet; he is one of the elements of the discourse, ambiguous and allusive; he is wrapped up and unwrapped in the narrative. Like many others Gide had an ambiguous relationship with his devil: admiration for his shrewdness while hating his deviousness. This the devil understands perfectly and he makes good use of it by suggestions in inner discourse, indicating how to ignore disturbing aspects of one's nature, how to deceive oneself. Gide spent his life fighting these deceptions within himself. When he construes an ambiguous discourse in which he plays with the devil, that is when the author has the upper hand because the devil derives his strength from a disguised form which creates the illusion that he does not exist. The ability to expose him in full light, to mock him by understanding one's contradictory impulses, rocks the foundations of his might. So ambiguity is a form of exorcism. Ambiguous discourse is the opposite of misleading discourse in that contradictions are not used with the purpose of deceiving but representing full authenticity.

It becomes clear that during the last eleven years described in *Si le grain ne meurt* Gide had a long struggle to gain mastery over the devil. He could only achieve this by identifying himself gradually with him and using his language, only to realise finally that what he gained from him was what he lost from himself and that this was exactly what the devil wanted. Ambiguous discourse allows for the simultaneous appearance of opposite poles, and whilst it is not a deceptive discourse, it presents complications. On the other hand, the reader is inevitably caught in a trap, invited to understand and to judge an autobiography which leaves any explanation open and any judgement ambiguous - it charms and exasperates the reader. By pleasant games in style, by the flow of ambiguities, in its very form Gide exposes his own pleasurable

sensations. Through frequent use of allusion the reader is prompted to wonder about the outcome. The discourse, full of suggestive premonitions, makes one wish to understand the hidden meaning and to bring an end to the ambiguity.

Si le grain ne meurt begins with an account of Gide's childhood. Despite his pronounced sexual curiosity about other boys, which was frowned upon in his strict Calvinistic environment, the first part of his life was fairly normal. The normalising element in his early life was evidently his cousin's influence. The most important "theme" of this autobiography is Gide's pure adoration for this angelic cousin Madeleine to whom he refers as Emmanuèle (God with you) or Em. (which is also her own initial), as against the lure of the devil. Just before the word "angelic" is mentioned, the devil appears for the first time (at the end of Chapter IV). Intricacies of text that have bearing on Gide's religious ideology can be pondered here:

Décidément le diable me guettait; j'étais tout cuisiné par l'ombre, et rien ne laissait pressentir par où pût me toucher un rayon. C'est alors que survint l'angélique intervention que je vais dire, pour me disputer au malin. Evénement d'infiniment modeste apparence, mais important dans ma vie autant que les révolutions pour les empires; première scène d'un drame qui n'a pas achevé de se jouer [Gide 1954:430]. (Decidedly the devil was on the watch for me; the shades of night were gathering thick and fast and no sign gave warning there was any rift through which a ray of light might reach me, It was then that occurred the angelic intervention that came to snatch me from the Evil One - an event infinitely slight in itself, but as important in my life as revolutions in the history of empires - the first scene of a drama which is not yet played out [1951:105]).

In this important text, scrutinised à la Lejeune, the narrator clarifies and judges his own narrative, as witnessed by the word "Décidément". Then he creates false suspense with the words "rien ne laissait pressentir", only to change it into the authentic "C'est alors que" of a happening which would be recounted. It is followed, in rather simple but effective terms, by the struggle between the devil and the angel fighting for a youngster who is reduced to the

object in this discourse. Gide the hero has become the object with relation to two characters whom he does not know as yet, but whom Gide the narrator knows. The reader is not yet acquainted with those two opposing protagonists either, but he is certainly made to understand that they are of the utmost importance in the hero's life, "as revolutions in the history of empires". From the beginning of the narration there are allusions to both - they are a further link in the chain of obscurity from his childhood onwards. The significance remains ambiguous because the obscurity still reigns supreme although there are references to small transgressions which the narrator takes very seriously. This is probably due to the young hero's strictly moral Puritan upbringing. It becomes clear that the youth will eventually understand what the narrator knew from the start. But before he can comprehend an abstract conflict between Good and Evil, he has to know the illumination of love. Shadow is a negative state that light will dissipate and this light is the positive and permanent principle. The struggle between light and shadow becomes the drama directing the development of *Si le grain ne meurt* up to the "grande finale" of the marriage between heaven and hell. The two actors in the drama are the angel and the devil. However, the distinction is not clear-cut; at times it becomes obscure.

The young hero discovers his love for Em. when the latter discovers her mother's infidelity. But he can only understand her grief and recognise his own love by simultaneously identifying himself with her mother's culpability. He is only sorry for the victim because he is the victimiser - here are strong Dostoyevskian overtones. There is ambiguity too because the profanation of the loved one is implied. So the scene of the mother's adultery, bringing in its wake the end of an obscure childhood, causes more ambiguity - it starts a new dramatic life. But far from dispelling the shadows, the young hero senses the emergence of something secretive and clandestine.

With the different levels of reading, from confused impressions up to a semiotic deciphering of all the indications in the text which could lead to

various interpretations, it should be kept in mind that in this thesis the emphasis is on Gide's religious ideology. As such, parts of the narrative will be followed along more clearly defined lines.

As adolescents André and Em. used to go along together hand in hand, in Christian worship of nature, in awe of God's creation (see Introduction, above). He writes: "Nous marchions à pas légers, muets, pour n'effaroucher aucun dieu, ni le gibier, écureuils, lapins, chevreuils, qui folâtre et s'ébroue, confiant en l'innocence de l'heure, et ravive un éden quotidien" [1954:497]. ("We stepped light-footed and silent, for fear of startling god or game, rabbit or squirrel or roe-deer, at their play in the glad confidence of the innocent hour, when every morning they create their Paradise anew" [1951:187]). The English translation for "aucun dieu" as just "god" (despite the small letter) does not create the same paganistic impression as in the French text. Nevertheless, the word "god" is important since Em. becomes for him a sort of icon, in her he finds an image of God: in his posthumous journal *Et nunc manet in te* he confesses: "Mon amour enfantin se confondait avec mes premières ferveurs religieuses; ou du moins il entraînait dans celles-ci, à cause d'elle, une sorte d'émulation. Il me semblait également, en m'approchant de Dieu, m'approcher d'elle et j'aimais, dans cette lente ascension, sentir le sol, autour d'elle et de moi, se rétrécir" [1954:1126]. ("My childish love fused with my first religious fervours; or at least they contained, because of her, a sort of emulation. Likewise it seemed to me that by approaching God I was approaching her and, in that slow ascent, I liked to feel the ground, on both sides of her and me, narrowing"). This is a strong indication that he wanted to be with her on the straight and narrow path leading to Heaven.

While writing about the fervent love for his cousin in *Si le grain ne meurt*, he announces the significance of the Greek culture: "C'est en ce temps que je commençai de découvrir les Grecs, qui eurent sur mon esprit une si décisive influence [...] c'était au temps précisément de ma préparation chrétienne que cette belle ferveur païenne flambait" [1954:497]. ("It was about this time that

I began to discover the Greeks, who have had such a decisive influence on my mind [...] This brave pagan fervour flared so brightly in me at the very time I was being prepared for Confirmation in the Christian faith" [1951:188]). Again the confusion of two opposite and simultaneous attractions - in the same sense that he discovered his love for his cousin when she was grieving over her mother's adultery which made him feel guilty. The reader becomes subtly aware of a premonition that for him Greek paganism is going to gain ascendancy over Christianity. Gide often expressed his admiration for the Greeks whose gods represent various ideals. Not only in the multitude of their statues but also in themselves they left a beautiful image of humanity and they recognized as many gods as there are instincts. For them the problem arose how to keep the inner Olympus in equilibrium, neither subjugating nor subduing any of the gods [O'Brien 1953:7].

At this stage just after his Confirmation, his youthful Christian zeal still triumphs; in fact it seems to increase, although there is a vague premonition again when André states that the Eucharist did not bring him any fresh ecstasy. The first part of *Si le grain ne meurt* reaches its luminous climax here, far from the obscure childhood. The adolescent does not seem to doubt his religious fervour, but the narrator seems to have indistinct doubts, expressed by the allusion that his happiness is part of self-delusion, being unconscious of his own complicated nature, and the hero exclaims: "Mais l'Évangile...Ah! je trouvais enfin la raison, l'occupation, l'épuisement sans fin de l'amour." (But the Gospels...Ah! At last I found the reason, the occupation, the inexhaustible spring of love). The exclamation indicates an upward movement towards what the hero believes to be a climax. He continues:

Le sentiment que j'éprouvais ici m'expliquait en le renforçant le sentiment que j'éprouvait pour Emmanuèle; il n'en différait point; on eût dit qu'il l'approfondissait simplement et lui conférait dans mon cœur sa situation véritable. Je ne buvais à pleine Bible que le soir, mais au matin reprenait plus intimement l'Évangile; le reprenais encore au cours du jour. Je portais un Nouveau Testament dans ma poche; il ne me quittait point; je l'en sortais à tout instant, et non point seulement quand je me trouvais seul, mais bien aussi en présence

de gens précisément qui m'eussent pu tourner en ridicule [...] Je me maintins alors, des mois durant, dans une sorte d'état séraphique, celui-là même, je présume, que ressaisit la sainteté [1954:499-500]. (The feeling I had here made clear to me and at the same time strengthened the feeling I had for Emmanuèle; it did not differ from it; it seemed merely to deepen it and give it its true place in my heart. I fed upon the Bible as a whole only in the evenings, but in the mornings, I turned with deeper intimacy to the Gospels; I turned to them again and again in the course of the day. I carried a New Testament in my pocket; it never left me; I took it out every moment, and not only when I was alone, but when I was in company with the very people who were most likely to laugh at me [...] For months on end now, I lived in a kind of seraphic state - the state, I suppose, attained by saintliness [1951:190-191]).

The narrative rises slowly towards an expected height of extreme happiness. But is this a real impression or an illusion? When he exclaims a little later: "Ah! je voudrais exténuer l'ardeur de ce souvenir radieux!" [1954:500], the perspective changes somewhat. In the English translation the sense of ambiguity is suppressed: "Ah? would that I could express to exhaustion the ardour and the radiance of those memories!" [1951:192]. The semantics of Gide's own language betray the hero's unconsciousness about himself, the duplicity of which he is unaware but which is revealed in the text. This last exclamation "Ah!" (which is for some or other reason translated as "Ah?" in the English text) seems to indicate that Gide's last sentence quoted should be considered together with the previous "Mais l'Évangile...Ah!, je trouvais enfin la raison, l'occupation, l'épuisement sans fin de l'amour". With these two exclamations a dramatic premonition is created. Seen in its context the verb "exténuer" (i.e. "to extenuate" in the sense of "to reduce the strength of") has rather pejorative connotations in contrast with "ardeur" and "radieux". The verb implies an unpleasant complement, like casting a shadow on the radiant memories. It becomes an anticipation and preparation for something forbidding, announced by words in the following sentence such as "futiles", "duperie" and "usurper". There is the realisation that the narrative will develop in an unforeseen direction, where happenings will be futile, where they will usurp a place which does not belong to them and that the naïve hero

will be duped by the shadows of the text. Subsequently one reads: "O coeur encombré de rayons!" (badly translated as: "O cumbersome radiance!" [1951:192]). Whereas "ah" in the previous exclamation is a happy sound, "o" sounds mournful and "cumbersome radiance", though contradictory, creates the impression of light obscured or hampered by complications. The discourse is allusive and unclear up to the next sentence where "flesh" is mentioned as diametrically opposed to "heart". Now the reader can understand the "encumbrance" in relation to the flesh and the "radiance" of the heart. For Gide the encumberment of heart rays resides less in their projection of shadow on his natural desires as in the ignorance of it, because he is still not quite sure that his fervent love for his cousin is divorced from the flesh.

The first part of *Si le grain ne meurt* reaches its end with his uncertainty and doubt about religious morality:

La morale selon laquelle j'avais vécu jusqu'à ce jour cédait depuis peu à je ne savais trop encore quelle vision plus chatoyante de la vie. Il commençait à m'apparaître que le devoir n'était peut-être pas pour chacun le même, et que Dieu pouvait bien avoir lui-même en horreur cette uniformité contre quoi protestait la nature [1954:542]. (The moral rule, according to which I had hitherto lived, had of late begun to give place to what I felt, vaguely as yet, was a richer, more varied, more coloured vision of life. It was beginning to dawn on me that duty was perhaps not the same for everyone, and that possibly even God Himself might loathe a uniformity to which all nature was in contradiction" [1951:244]).

Finally the last sentence: "Déjà sans doute n'ai-je épaissi que trop l'atmosphère de cette selve obscure où j'égarais, au sortir de l'enfance, les aspirations incertaines et la quête de ma ferveur" [1954:547]. "I am afraid I have already overdone the density of that 'selva oscura' in which I lost myself on emerging from childhood, with all my vague aspirations and the eager questioning of my fervour" [1951:250]).

After this last note about a past childhood the Second Part begins with an epigraph quoted in the English translation but which does not appear in Gide's *Journal*, from Fénelon's *Lettres spirituelles*: "...For that matter I cannot explain my deep-seated self. It escapes me; it seems to me to change at every hour of the day" [1954:251]. The sentiments expressed in this epigraph remind one of Ivan Karamazov who is "impenetrable" and a riddle to Aliosha (see Chapter 6 above); they even remind one of the "impenetrable" Stavrogin (see Chapter 5 above).

The Second Part opens with a solemn declaration of intent which sounds like the real start of the autobiography:

Les faits dont je dois à présent le récit, les mouvements de mon coeur et de ma pensée, je veux les présenter dans cette même lumière qui me les éclairait d'abord, et ne laisser point trop paraître le jugement que je portai sur eux par la suite. D'autant que ce jugement a plus d'une fois varié et que je regarde ma vie tour à tour d'un oeil indulgent ou sévère suivant qu'il fait plus ou moins clair au-dedans de moi. Enfin, s'il m'est récemment apparu qu'un acteur important: le Diable, avait bien pu prendre part au drame [1954:549]. (And now I have to relate facts, motions of my heart and mind, which I desire to set in the same light in which I first saw them, without letting the judgment I afterwards brought to bear on them be too apparent. Especially because that judgment has varied more than once and I look on my life with an eye that is alternately indulgent or severe, according as my inward sky is bright or clouded. And lastly, though it has occurred to me of late that an actor of considerable importance - namely the Devil - may perhaps have played a part in the drama [1951:253]).

The text commences on the same circuitous, ambiguously allusive tone as the first part, with a feeling of illusion and a diabolic presence. But the words "à présent" underline the difference between the two parts. Here it seems that one treads on new ground to reach the essential. The verb "devoir" would seem to suggest that there is a compulsion to admit something that should be judged subsequently. "Les faits" with which the narrative starts, are obviously connected with the avowal and the judgment. So it seems these facts are to become the pivotal point of the Second Part. It is also a continuation of

certain passages where Gide told the reader that the time was not yet ripe to talk about certain matters. Suspense having been built up, one wonders about what. It is a strategy that evokes the reader's curiosity so that one really wants to know what the object of it all is and at the same time it prevents prejudice.

The slow narrative, having long and suggestive preliminary explanations, gradually develops an increasing tempo to accompany the new jubilant sexual "liberation" of the hero while the consequent conjugal drama remains in suggestive shadows. What the hero admits now is that the evil one influences him. While he starts understanding his ambivalent nature, an inexplicable discovery occurs to him, leading to the crucial question: why has God made him the way he is?

Au nom de quel Dieu, de quel idéal me défendez-vous de vivre selon ma nature? Et cette nature, où m'entraînerait-elle, si simplement je la suivais? - Jusqu'à présent j'avais accepté la morale du Christ, ou du moins certain puritanisme que l'on m'avait enseigné comme étant la morale du Christ. Pour m'efforcer de m'y soumettre, je n'avais obtenu qu'un profond désarroi de tout mon être [1954:550]. (In the name of what God or what ideal, do you forbid me to live according to my nature? And where would my nature lead me if I simply followed it? Up to the present, I had accepted Christ's code of morals, or, at any rate, a kind of Puritanism which I had been taught to consider as Christ's code of morals. By forcing myself to submit to it I had merely caused a profound disturbance in my whole being [1951:254]).

The passive acceptance of deviating characteristics is in stark contrast to the Dostoyevskijan Christian ideology which rejects the concept of inertly accepting one's nature as a cross, without striving for improvement, because then it merely becomes a peg on which to hang one's shortcomings. Christianity teaches one to take up the cross and carry it. Dostoyevskij adhered to this doctrine as illustrated in the characters of Raskol'nikov (see Chapter 3 above) and Dmitrij Karamazov (see Chapter 6 above). They struggled with themselves in order to find ultimate divine peace and regeneration. Later Gide wrote: "J'entrevis enfin que ce dualisme discordant pourrait peut-être bien se résoudre en une harmonie" [1954:550]. ("It dawned

upon me at last that this discordant duality might possibly be resolved into harmony" [1951:255]). Gide found that harmony by simply accepting his discordant duality.

At this juncture André proposes marriage to his cousin Emmanuèle (Madeleine), but she refuses him. He mentions her spiritual influence on his life and that his love was of a quasi-mystic nature [1954:256]. In a journal entry, dated 4 January 1892, he wrote: "Je te remercie, Seigneur, de ce que la seule influence de femme sur mon âme ravie et qui n'en souhaite plus d'autre, que l'influence de Em. ait toujours guidé mon âme vers les vérités les plus hautes" [1951a:29]. ("I thank thee, O Lord, that the only feminine influence on my delighted soul, which wishes for no other, that the influence on Em. has always guided me toward the highest truths" [1949:19]). In his eyes she became a Madonna-like figure. The female characters in his works who resemble his beloved cousin are reminiscent of Dostoyevskij's meek and saintly women figures. These creations by Gide remain on a more palpable plane than most of his male characters.

Gide considered anything carnal in this exalted love to be a profanation and resigned himself to dissociate pleasure and love, so that "le plaisir était ainsi plus pur, l'amour plus parfait, si le coeur et la chair ne s'entregageaient point" [1954:552]. ("pleasure would be purer and love more perfect if the heart and senses were kept apart" [1951:256]).

When Gide left on his first trip to Africa with his friend Paul the decision not to take his Bible was of the greatest importance to him, though to the reader it might seem a trifle. For him it became a sort of symbolical gesture, since up till that time not a day had gone by without his reading the Holy Book in order to find in it a source of inspiration.

Africa awakened Gide sensuously and, after his erotic discoveries there, he noted: "Je rapportais, à mon retour en France, un secret de ressuscité, et

connus tout d'abord cette sorte d'angoisse abominable que dut goûter Lazare échappé du tombeau" [1954:575]. ("I brought back with me, on my return to France, the secret of a man newly risen from the grave, and suffered the kind of abominable sickness of heart that Lazarus must have felt after Christ's miracle" [1951:285]). (See Chapter 3 above re Lazarus). This translation by Bussy misses Gide's point that Lazarus had escaped from the tomb. Does Gide indicate that Lazarus had indeed been in another type of life which brought with it the pangs of Hell from which he wanted to erase the memory? But why should he use such a comparison? Since he knew Dostoyevskij so well and based his figure of Lafcadio on the hero of *Crime and Punishment*, Gide's image seems to parody the biblical theme of this great Russian novel. According to the Bible Lazarus was one of Christ's good friends, whom the Latter raised not from Hell, but to serve a new purpose in life where he could give witness to the redeeming power of God.

On his return from Africa, Gide's family started looking on a marriage with Emmanuèle more favourably, seeing in it a means that might lead towards a more settled way of life for him. His uncle Charles wrote to André's mother: "[...] s'il ne se fait pas, l'un et l'autre probablement en seront sûrement malheureux, en sorte qu'il n'y a guère que le choix entre un mal certain et un mal éventuel" [1954:580]. ("[...] if it does not take place, they will very likely both be sure to be unhappy, so that the only choice lies between a certain and a probable evil" [1951:292]).

On his second trip to Africa Gide linked up with the infamous lovers Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas, whom Wilde called Bosy. Gide remarks: "A dire vrai, Bosy m'intéressait extrêmement; mais 'terrible' il l'était assurément et je crois bien que c'est lui qu'on doit tenir pour responsable de ce qui, dans la carrière de Wilde, fut désastreux" [1954:587]. ("To tell the truth Bosy interested me extremely; but "terrible" he certainly was, and in my opinion it is he who ought to be held responsible for all that was disastrous in Wilde's career" [1951:300]). With them he met suave, seductive young Arab boys.

His mother became anxious and implored him to come back, to sever links. It was good that she was ignorant of the real facts: "La vérité, si elle avait pu la connaître, l'eût effrayée bien davantage; car on rompt des liens plus aisément qu'on ne s'échappe à soi-même" [1954:606]. ("The truth, if she had known it, would have frightened her still more; for it is easier to break ties than to escape from oneself" [1951:320]).

After wild debaucheries Gide felt the anguish of Hell and he was ready to ask for Christ's intervention in his life: "[...] à confier au Christ la solution du litige entre Dionysos et Apollon" [1954:607]. ("[...] to submit to Christ the settlement of the dispute between Dionysos and Apollo" [1951:321]). But then he started wondering about the Church's deformation of Christ's message and the beauty of His Gospels:

Comment, par delà ce désert où mon adoration m'entraînait, m'enfonçant toujours plus avant à la recherche de ma soif, comment et avec quels transports d'amour je pus retrouver l'Évangile - le temps n'est pas encore venu d'en parler, non plus que de l'enseignement que j'y puisai lorsque, le lisant d'un oeil neuf, j'en vis s'illuminer soudain et l'esprit et la lettre. Et je me désolais et m'indignais tout à la fois de ce que'en avaient fait les Eglises, de cet enseignement divin, qu'au travers d'elles je ne reconnaissais plus que si peu [...] notre monde occidental périt [1954:607]. (In what manner and with what transports of love, after what wanderings through the desert into which my worship led me, after what insistent pursuit of my own thirst, I returned once more to the Gospels - of all this the time has not yet come for me to speak; nor of the teaching I found in them when I re-read them with a fresh eye and saw them of a sudden illuminated, both in the letter and the spirit. And I was grieved and indignant too to see what the Churches had made of this divine teaching, which, in their interpretation of it, I could barely recognise. Our Western world is perishing [1951:321].

Certainly Dostoyevskij would have agreed with the last remark.

The Second Part of the autobiography is constructed around Christ and his Gospels in a modern world where they are misrepresented. Gide undergoes a new birth or regeneration in a retrogressive way: he discovers the fruits of the earth in Africa where he seems to have renounced his religious fervour: he

left behind in France both his Bible and Em. There is no mention of either. But Christ reappears in his life, only with a different antagonist: Christianity. Gide plans to write a book *Le Christianisme contre le Christ*. There is ambiguity again in the two presentations of a drama cast into one - the drama arranged by the devil while the vision of the luminous liberation from restraints shows the real face of Christ as opposed to Christianity.

After his mother's death the only security left in Gide's life was his love for his cousin. *Si le grain ne meurt* ends with their engagement, while Gide has hidden ominous forebodings. The following pertinent quotation creates an illusion and at the same time a luminous experience. The strategy of ambiguity coordinates all the contradictory aspects of the past. Stylistically Gide tries to create art where dark and light touch each other. In this way a human being can be accepted in his totality with the shadow of his light:

Une fatalité me menait; peut-être aussi le secret besoin de mettre au défi ma nature; car, en Emmanuèle, n'était-ce pas la vertu même que j'aimais? C'était le ciel, que mon insatiable enfer épousait; mais cet enfer je l'omettais à l'instant même: les larmes de mon deuil en avaient éteint tous les feux; j'étais comme ébloui d'azur, et ce que je ne consentais plus à voir avait cessé pour moi d'exister. Je crus que tout entier je pouvais me donner à elle, et le fis sans réserve de rien [1954:613]. (A fatality led me; perhaps also the secret desire to set my nature at defiance; for in loving Emmanuèle, was it not virtue itself I loved? It was the marriage of Heaven with my insatiable Hell; but at the actual moment, my Hell was in abeyance; the tears of my mourning had extinguished all its fires; I was dazzled as by a blaze of azure and the things I refused to see had ceased to exist for me. I believed I could give her my whole self and did so without any reservation whatever [1951:328]).

Upon this ambiguous and allusive note the young couple becomes engaged. The ominous nature of the text quoted is not without substance: his devoted, ardent love for Madeleine remained chaste because his sexual desires were restricted to boys. After their marriage, when she became aware of his perversities, she reacted like Dostoyevskij's meek and humiliated characters: without any reproach, she alienated herself from him and society in general.

Her belief that France was being lost through tolerance, indulgence, and welcoming the foreign [Gide 1954:52], reminds one of Dostoyevskij's views on this topic.

Gide's *Journaux* repeatedly bear witness of his deep love for her: that she is the only one in the world he loves, that he really cannot love anyone but her, and that he cannot live without her love. He could accept having the whole world against him, but not her. When he discovers that she burnt all his letters to her, he is left in utter despair. On 10 September 1922 there is an entry in his *Journal* about dreadful days and having to pretend to be happy in front of others, which is followed by a line of asterisks. He feels forsaken by her. Everything good, generous, pure that she aroused in him relapses, and that abominable ebbing draws him down toward hell [Gide 1951a:742]. This is also described in his *Journal Intime* [1954:1145].

It has been shown that, like Dostoevskij, Gide was aware of the presence of evil and that at times he seemed haunted by his personal devil. In his *Journal des faux-monnayeurs* he cries out to the Lord in this heartfelt passage: "Ah, ne laissez pas le Malin dans mon coeur prendre votre place! Ne vous laissez pas déposséder, Seigneur! Si vous vous retirez complètement, il s'installe. Ah! ne me confondez pas tout à fait avec lui!" [quoted by Boisdeffre 1963:158].

After Paul Claudel's efforts to lead Gide to catholicism he writes that he is not converted, that he is neither a Protestant, nor a Catholic; he is simply a Christian. This semi-final religious stance on Christianity was taken in 1925. As noted above, he did not take too kindly to Christianity (represented by any institutionalised Church) either. In that year Claudel noted with regret: "Longue et solennelle conversation. Il me dit que son inquiétude religieuse est finie, qu'il jouit d'une sorte de félicité" [Boisdeffre 1963:152]. And Gide wrote in his *Journal 1939-1949 (Feuillets d'Automne)* [1954:310] that he would have accomplished much if he had removed God from the altar and put man in his place - as did Raskol'nikov (see Chapter 4 above), the Possessed (see

Chapter 5 above) and Ivan Karamazov (see Chapter 6 above). He was referring to another important Catholic writer, François Mauriac, who never ceased to admire and to acknowledge his debt to Gide, but who expressed his regret about Gide's definitive affirmation that man must be put in the place of God. Subsequently on the same day Gide writes that it seems inadmissible, even unthinkable that the life of the soul would be prolonged beyond the dissolution of the flesh. It is noteworthy that this remark is in direct conflict with Dostoyevskij's ideology as found in his epigraph to *The Brothers Karamazov* quoted from the full verse of St. John 12:24.

Henceforth Gide's horizon would be limited to the earth.

What Pierre de Boisdeffre observes in this connection is very interesting:

Le 'christianisme' d'André Gide? D'aucuns trouveront ce titre paradoxal: l'étrange n'est pas que Gide ait été, dans son oeuvre et dans sa vie, marqué du sceau du christianisme, mais qu'il ait été infidèle, infidèle à cette vocation qui fit de lui, dès ses premières années, un disciple du Christ. Sans doute Gide fut-il, avec Dostoïewski, un des écrivains que l'Évangile a le plus hantés, un faux prophète peut-être, et plus sûrement un dangereux éducateur, mais un chrétien tout de même: un chrétien, c'est-à-dire un homme que Dieu n'a pas cessé d'inquiéter [1963:111].

CONCLUSION

Though Gide had no immediate success at the start of his career, his importance steadily increased during his long life. He became renowned not only as a leading literary figure but especially as a most daring and controversial polemicist.

Dostoyevskij's case is somewhat different. After his early meteoric rise as author, his importance gradually faded away. During his exile in Semipalatinsk, after his release from the hard labour camp, while he was not allowed to publish anything, he disappeared from the Russian literary scene where other writers were emerging. Nevertheless his talent was recognised by baron Vrangal, the young lawyer who became Dostoyevskij's lifelong friend and benefactor. He wrote from Semipalatinsk in 1856 to his father:

Destiny has brought me into contact with a man of rare intellect and disposition - the gifted young author Dostoevsky. I owe him much; his words, counsels, and ideas will be a source of strength to me throughout all my life [...] Dostoevsky was now terribly affected by his malady; often he feared for his reason. He clearly perceived the aim of his life to be literary work. But so long as he was in exile, he would not be allowed to publish his works [...] For many years he had suffered the direst need; who knows - if Dostoevsky had not taken that step for which his stern critics so severely blame him, one of the greatest Russian writers, the pride of Russia, might have languished to death in the deserts of Siberia [1961:308-310].

Vrangal was right. In the Preface to Dostoyevskij's *Diary* Boris Brasol records that the famous Russian writer

died in St. Petersburg, on January 28, 1881. Enormous crowds attended his funeral: men and women from all walks of life - statesmen of high rank and downtrodden prostitutes; illiterate peasants and

distinguished men of letters; army officers and learned scientists; credulous priests and incredulous students - they were all there [1954:viii].

Henry Gifford quotes Strakhov as mentioning that the best conversations he was ever lucky enough to have in his life were with Dostoyevskij [1990:36]. Yet, at the time of his death Dostoyevskij was unknown in the West.

Till Gide introduced Dostoyevskij to the French reading public in 1908, the latter was still an unknown quantity there. But when the new symbolist writers of the early 20th century discovered him, a Dostoyevskij fever started sweeping the West. The acceptance of his individualistic and tragically resigned view of life (*Weltanschauung*) inaugurated this new direction, also for the young Russian authors. This later symbolist movement tended towards a Dostoyevskijan philosophy which encouraged the great Russian writers of this period, Blok and Bely, to strive for a metaphysical mysticism, a sort of theurgy: the immortality of man's soul with unlimited splendour; the life-giving principle, undying and eternal, perceived by those who want perception.

Dostoyevskij was venerated by the Soviets, mainly because he was the champion of the downtrodden masses in 19th century Russia. Henrietta Mondry studies the "manner of interpretation in Soviet literary criticism" in her doctoral thesis. In its Abstract which sums up her opinions, she evaluates "the sociological and psychological reasons motivating the Soviet critics for turning to one of the most controversial and problematic writers of Russian literature". According to her research critics in the Soviet Union found their task "complicated by the effort of reconciling Dostoevsky's views and opinions with the precepts of the Socialist concept of literature". She came to the following conclusion:

Although purportedly attempts at ideological objectivity are now (1984) made, in practice ideological confusion is increased and the image of the writer blurred. The prevailing tendency in the new Soviet

approach centers on the rehabilitation of the writer and the adjustment of his writing to the social and political needs of contemporary Soviet reality [1984:iii-iv].

She found this tendency also prevalent in the interpretation of Dostoevsky's religious, metaphysical and political views. His attitude towards Socialism and revolution had to be readjusted too.

However, the spiritual quality of his Christian ideologies was totally disregarded, and the theoretical artistic dimension was also neglected. But the literary élite amongst the Russian intellectuals during that period secretly honoured all these traits with the enthusiasm so special to their nation. For Western readers, Dostoyevskij needs no act of rehabilitation or the type of defence that was needed in the Soviet Union. What requires defence in the West, according to Booth in his Introduction to Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*, is "the very idea of superlative genius and of a criticism that claims to demonstrate, with reasoned discourse rather than mere assertion, the grounds for greatness" [1984:xxvii]. He is certainly acclaimed as a superlative genius in the West. After World War I when the first and complete translation of Dostoyevskij appeared in France, this country, according to Cherny, "threw herself at Dostoevsky's feet (and she has not risen since)" [1975:23]. This observation probably applies to most Western countries. As a youngster Cherny "along with the young Frenchmen, was at once shattered and maddeningly exalted by that bizarre genius" [1975:23].

However, the grounds for Western veneration of Dostoyevskij vary. Most critics, according to Todorov, "focus enthusiastically on his 'ideas', forgetting that these ideas come embedded in novels. Furthermore, even if the biographers had adopted a different perspective, they could not have avoided the danger in its inverse form: one can hardly study Dostoyevskij's 'technique' without regard to the great ideological debates that animate his novels" [1993:72-73]. Todorov considers Dostoyevskij's innovation to be "far greater

on the symbolic than on the psychological level, which here is only one element among others. Dostoevsky alters our ideas of ideas and our representation of representation" [1993:80]. Although this thesis concentrates on Dostoyevskij's ideology, one has tried not to ignore the artistic presentation of his works discussed above while demonstrating his greatness as author.

In Russia great writers are worshipped as deliverers and prophets. To the public they are sages, endowed with superior insight into the nature of reality, and spokesmen on controversial matters. Dostoyevskij's evolution as thinker and author took him to profound nationalism. As a typical Russian artist he was very conscious of his responsibility towards society. Like Russian writers in general, he took his vocation more seriously than most of his foreign counterparts.

Gide felt an affinity for the Russian spirit which manifested itself already in his boyhood. In *Si le grain ne meurt* he mentions the teasing by his class mates and how he loathed them, with the exception of a fair Russian boy whom he admired and wanted to protect against the others. Then, while he could not have known much about Russia, on the first stage of his trip to Africa, he observed the welcoming of the Russian squadron in Toulon. Later in Africa he and Paul were travelling in a carriage like Russian nobles: "Enfouis sous un amoncellement de burnous et de couvertures, Paul et moi, nous avions l'air de deux boyards" [1954:556]. ("As we sank back in a heap of rugs and burnouses, Paul and I looked like two Russian boyards" [1951:262]).

In 1936 Stalin invited well-known liberal European writers to his country. Amongst them, apart from Gide, were Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, Romain Rolland, Henri Barbusse and Lion Feuchtwanger, but Gide seems to have been the perspicacious one. Among his own travelling companions three had a good command of Russian. So, having seen all the showpieces of Stalin's achievement in the Soviet paradise, they managed to stray off the official path searching for truth. At Maxim Gorkij's funeral Gide pronounced a moving

eulogy, but unbeknown to him Gorkij had probably been poisoned on official orders. Despite his negative experiences with the Soviet hierarchy, he felt very attracted to the Russian people. A prompt, natural cordiality he had already sensed in the people of Dostoyevsky's fiction, stirred in him with a sudden warm feeling of brotherly love and intense, spontaneous sympathy [Brachfeld 1959:132].

Gide was drawn to communism because it seemed to be taking Christian morality literally. His communist dream was to see emerging in the future a free society, without poverty and suffering, where everything would be done for the betterment of the human race. A civilised country where a writer could communicate directly with his readers. But right from the start of his arrival in the Soviet Union, he felt the pressure of conformism. When what he later called his "honeymoon" with this utopian system had come to an end, he recognized that his own communism was a form of Christianity without God: "when he thought himself a Communist he was merely a Christian without faith" [O'Brien, 1953:323]

Stalin's excesses under communism distressed him. In his *Afterthoughts on the U.S.S.R.* he wrote of the Siberian deportees:

I see and hear those victims; I feel them around me. Their muffled cries wakened me last night; their silence prompts these lines. I was thinking of those martyrs when I wrote the words against which you protest, because their tacit gratitude, if my book can reach them, is more important to me than the praises or imprecations of *Pravda* [O'Brien, 1953:333].

His *Journal* (30 August 1940) records the stagnation and demise of culture in the Soviet Union:

X..., le seul de l'U.R.S.S. avec qui j'ai pu me sentir "en confiance", me racontait un entretien qu'il eut avec Lounatcharski. Celui-ci le consultait sur les moyen de sauvegarder la culture qu'il sentait en grand péril. "Pourquoi chercher à la protéger?" lui disait alors X...: "Ceux qui travaillent à sa ruine, laissez-les faire. Et même, aidez-les." Sa

voix tremblait et c'est avec un pathétique bégaiement qu'il ajoutait: "C'est seulement ainsi qu'il y aura quelque chance, plus tard, d'en trouver des débris dans les catacombes."

Elle aussi, la culture, comme le grain de l'Évangile, a besoin de s'enfermer dans le tombeau pour resurgir [1954:51].

(X..., the only one from the U.S.S.R. with whom I have been able to feel "comfortable", told me of a conversation he had with Lunacharsky. The latter was consulting him about the means of protecting culture, which he felt to be in great danger. "Why try to protect it?" X asked him. "Let those who are working to destroy it go ahead. And even help them." His voice was trembling, and with a touching stammer he added: "That is the only way that there will be some chance, later on, of finding some remains of it in the catacombs"

Culture, too, like the seed in the Gospel, needs to sink into the tomb in order to burst forth again [O'Brien 1951b:43]).

With this observation Gide expands on Lunacharskij's foregoing remarks by returning to the message contained in St. John 12,24.

In the same *Journal* (15 January 1945) Gide wrote that, despite the negative impressions created by the Soviet regime, he loved the Russian country and its people:

L'U.R.S.S....J'étonnerais bien des gens, à leur dire qu'il n'est sans doute pas de pays au monde où je désirerais plus retourner[...] En dehors de ces 'manques', tout me plaisait là-bas. Nulle part encore plus beaux paysages, ni, pour les habiter, peuple avec qui je me sentisse en état de sympathie plus prompte, en état de communion... [1954:281].

(The U.S.S.R.... I should astonish many people by telling them that there is probably no country in the world where I should more like to return..." Apart from the abuses he described, that had sickened him, "I liked everything there. Nowhere yet more beautiful landscapes, nor, to inhabit them, a people with whom I felt more readily in a state of sympathy, in a state of communion... [O'Brien 1951b:251]).

In contrast to Gide's enthusiasm for Russia, Dostoyevskij decidedly did not have any such feeling for France or the French. To him the Western European influence was pernicious - his fictional characters who loved

speaking French (the older Verkhovenskiĭ and Stavrogina) were those who stimulated total chaos and evil in *The Devils*. Ivan Karamazov's devil also delighted in speaking French. Moreover, it certainly seems unlikely that he would have appreciated Gide as ideologist.

Towards the end of his life Gide had become an international celebrity. His controversial ideologies were discussed in many countries. Although his influence has steadily waned, Boisdeffre's opinion about Gide's wide interests and his inquiring mind is still valid:

Il était le plus grand écrivain à la charnière de ces deux siècles, il avait remué le plus d'idées, fait connaître le plus de livres, aimé les meilleurs musiciens, connu les civilisations étrangères, traduit Conrad et Tagore, commenté Nietzsche et Dostoïewski. Il avait réussi ce tour de force d'être et de rester le témoin, l'ami, et presque le contemporain moral de plusieurs générations successives, il avait épuisé tous les systèmes et plusieurs religions, embrassé les politiques les plus opposées [1963:196].

When reading Gide's journals we are witnessing his effort to decalvinise and decatholicise Christ, to isolate Him from His church and to believe in His human values. He felt that in general terms the Christian religion failed in its original purpose because it smothered Christ's real message and distorted the spirit by hiding it under church dogma. Initially Gide believed that humanity could only be improved from within, in every individual. Later he came to realise that man could only better himself through inner reform with the practical applications of Christ's teaching. Here Gide introduces the man-god versus the God-man concept as exposed by Dostoyevskij in the conversation between Kirilov and Stavrogin (see Chapter 5 above).

Gide's entry of 16 June 1931 in the first *Journal 1889-1939* deals with the evolution of his thought. There one reads:

Sans une première formation (ou déformation) chrétienne, il n'y aurait peut-être pas eu évolution du tout. Ce qui l'a rendue si lente et difficile, c'est l'attachement sentimental à ce dont je ne pouvais me

délivrer sans regrets [...] Sans cette formation chrétienne, sans ces liens, sans Em. qui orientait mes pieuses dispositions, je n'eusse écrit ni *André Walter*, ni *L'Immoraliste*, ni *La porte étroite*, ni *La symphonie*, etc.... ni même, peut-être, *Les Caves* et *Les faux-monnayeurs* par regimbement et protestation... [1951a:1051-2].

(Without a first Christian formation (or deformation), there would perhaps have been no evolution at all. What made it so slow and difficult was the sentimental attachment to what I could not cast off without regret [...] Without that Christian formation, without those bonds, without Em., who oriented my pious inclinations, I should not have written *André Walter*, or *L'Immoraliste*, or *La Porte étroite*, or *La Symphonie pastorale*, etc.... or even, perhaps, *Les Caves du Vatican* and *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* as a revolt and a protest... [O'Brien 1949a:167].

Later Gide was happy to believe no longer in God: "délivré de toute inquiétude, il en arrivait maintenant à se dire: 'Heureusement, je ne crois pas!'" [Boisdeffre 1963:184]. With this statement he meant believe in God, since his true affirmation of faith had become atheistic. In order to reach that stage, Gide wrote in *Feuillets d'Automne*, he needed much courage ("vertu"): "cet état d'athéisme complet, il faut beaucoup de vertu pour y atteindre" [1949b:71]. Here Gide uses the French word "vertu" which is derived from the Latin "virtus", meaning "courage". Obviously Gide meant that a great amount of courage is required to be alone in a vast universe without believing in the protection of any divine power. But the anxiety about his existence had disappeared; he was at peace with himself. Like Gide's old and lonely Thésée in his *Oedipe* (*Oedipus in two Legends: Theseus and Oedipus*) who built his city, he could die without regret.

For the French existential writers his final rejection of God was of the greatest importance. Sartre, in particular, praised Gide for his fearless perseverance in distancing himself from God despite the agonies it caused him: "Mais Sartre, surtout, louait Gide d'avoir vécu jusqu'au bout l'agonie et la mort de Dieu" [Boisdeffre 1963:191]. In this respect it is significant that if God is dead, so is the Christ whom Gide had adored, as one part of the tripartite Godhead.

Contrary to Dostoyevskij's aversion to insubordination, Gide held that the world needed rebels. After his intense disillusionment by communism and thereafter by his pacifism regarding Nazi Germany, it became evident to him that the world did not require subordinated people as was put forward in Dostoyevskij's novels. If the world could be saved at all, it would be by rebels only, and on February 24, 1946, he writes in his Journal: "Le monde ne sera sauvé, s'il peut l'être, que par des *insoumis*" [Gide 1954:296]. (The world will be saved, if it can be, only by the unsubmitive [O'Brien 1951b:164]).

A paradox is created by Gide's conclusion which is diametrically opposed to Dostoyevskij's. It appears that Gide definitely wanted to prove Dostoyevskij's ideology wrong although he certainly could not have stopped admiring Dostoyevskij as a novelist and thinker. From the research done it becomes clear that despite the great veneration he felt for the Russian and the strong influence exerted by him, he could not accept Dostoyevskij's religious views. Gide's own ideological development obviously hinged on his personal experiences which were totally different from those of Dostoyevskij. It is also ironical that what had attracted him initially to Dostoyevskij's mystic "âme slave" with its striving towards regeneration into eternal life, would generally not apply to Western European readership with its incredulity and disillusionment, as was proved in his own case.

Paradoxically, Dostoyevskij gradually started eclipsing his great French admirer. And the Russian has continued to grow in stature. At the moment there is a veritable international Dostoyevskij cult. He has become the latest cultural idol.

His protagonists, who so often wrestle with repressed aspects of their personality, who suffer from psychopathological deviations, foreshadowed the development of psychoanalysis. They proved to be a treasure trove for Freud and his followers. Freud was already fascinated by the Russian novelist in 1920 when he wrote about him to Stefan Zweig who considered the enigmatic

Russian author to be a mad genius [Frank 1976:379 and 381]. Many readers of Dostoyevskij may find that he creates the impression of being disturbed and that he himself could have been an interesting psychological case history. It is known that doctors consider an epileptic to be of unsound mind just before, during and for some time after a seizure. However, and here one can find some affinity with Zweig's opinion, many geniuses are recognised to be unstable. Moreover, the ancient Greeks considered madness to be a gift of the gods.

In this disturbed writer two opposite poles can be detected. While Dostoyevskij reveals his fearless surge towards goodness, unselfishness and ardent love, the other side of the coin is that good has to know evil in order to combat it. The reader notices that Dostoyevskij seems to delight in describing cruelties, whether inflicted on defenceless children, young girls, women of all types or docile horses. Turgenev referred to him as a Russian de Sade [Watson 1994:48]. Dante and Cervantes also manifested this same tendency, but they adjusted it to their theme with greater discipline. Dostoyevskij's cruel streak may be the reason for his unlimited talent to create evil heroes full of sadism, spite and sin. His Raskol'nikov, Rogozhin, Piotr Verkhovenski, Stavrogin and father Karamazov are vibrantly alive. His full "dramatic" narrative power is unleashed on them. They are exciting, passionate, fascinating, inspiring and they grip the reader's imagination. Dostoyevskij seems imbued with the passion of the guilt-ridden, the despairing, the damned. Here customary divisions between the normal and the pathological, between pleasure and pain, become very vague. On the other hand his good characters appear bloodless; they are created with far less conviction and expressiveness. Prince Myshkin, the only good character who does not know sin, wavers between two women in love with him and, in so doing, unwittingly torments both of them. He fails in his mission to make them happy; where he should have saved them, he has an epileptic fit. The women who love Stavrogin are looking forward to being tormented and to suffering. And a scene such as described by Stavrogin in his Confession can

only be conceived by a writer with a perverted imagination. But Dostoyevskij realised that nothing places man so directly and immediately before God's eyes as vice and sin. Christ came to earth to deliver the sinners, not the benevolent, the law-abiding and the lukewarm. After all, Dostoyevskij's great theme is crime-punishment-redemption-regeneration as announced in his *Crime and Punishment* and finally reaching its climax in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

It stands to reason that not everyone appreciates Dostoyevskij. He himself notes the reaction to his article *Verdict*: "[...] a certain author, a Mr. N.P., sent me a brief and politely denunciatory article [...] He condemns my article and ridicules it." Then Dostoyevskij quotes Mr. N.P. in his *Diary*:

[...] what was the purpose of printing in this issue the "deliberations" of a suicide from tedium? Positively, I fail to understand the reason. These "deliberations" - if thus may be noted the delirium of a half-crazy man - are well known, of course, somewhat differently worded, *by everybody whose concern this is*, and, therefore, their appearance, *in our day*, in a diary of such a writer as F.M. Dostoievsky, serves as a ridiculous and miserable anachronism [...] Every suicide who dies with deliberation similar to that recorded in Mr. Dostoievsky's *Diary* deserves no sympathy; he is a coarse egoist, a man seeking honors, and a most harmful member of human society [1954:537].

On the next page in Dostoyevskij's *Diary* he counters that Mr. N.P. did not understand his article, because a certain inevitable suicide "refers to the basic and loftiest idea of human existence - the necessity and inevitability of a belief in the immortality of the human soul." Dostoyevskij distinguishes this from the "logical suicide" committed because of aimlessness and the conviction of the utter absurdity of man's existence on earth.

It should also be pointed out that a great writer such as the erratic and flamboyant Nabokov neither liked nor appreciated Dostoyevskij. Ironically, his deep psychological explorations of the human soul and his unbalanced

fictional characters are reminiscent of Dostoyevskij. This is witnessed particularly in the protagonist of his *Lolita*, the paedophiliac with a split personality.

Both Dostoyevskij and Gide are at the centre of their epoch: the first is right in the middle of the nineteenth century and the latter straddles the turn of the century. The oeuvre of each captures a crucial phase in the development of modern consciousness. Since both writers were outsiders, they could regard in a detached way the current trends which enabled them to create their own reality. As artists they were aware of a deterioration in their contemporary consciousness, an erosion of values and an impoverishment of inner resources. However, whilst Gide was the typically cultured cosmopolitan European, the Russian was a most orthodox patriot who despised foreigners and foreign culture. Yet, notwithstanding his unsophisticated chauvinism, he understood better than any European the traumas and dislocations which Western civilisation had wrought upon the human psyche. He sensed intuitively the unease caused by it without quite pinpointing it. He predicted the coming of an age of terror in *The Devils*. The modern reader can find very valuable lessons in the depiction of character disintegration due to intense stress and anxiety. With the understanding afforded by hindsight many critics point out that all modern literature is following in Dostoyevskij's footsteps. To speak of Dostoyevskij means to speak of the deepest and most urgent issues of our present life. His astonishing novels announced the crisis of values in Western culture which dominated the latter half of the twentieth century. Contemporary thinkers discovered in his philosophy, mysticism and ethics a great spiritual revolution. Through his dark life, which was one of search and steady progress towards light, we discover Dostoevskij's genius in four dimensions: the human horizontal, the divine vertical, the metaphysical depth and universal timelessness. Dostoyevskij is great because he has no limits.

André Malraux praised Gide as "a spiritual director". François Mauriac, a leading Catholic novelist, said: "Gide's mission is to throw a torch into our depths, to collaborate in our spiritual self-scrutiny" [O'Brien, 1953:311]. Mauriac repeated this thought even after Gide's unblessed death.

However, opinions about Gide varied greatly. His pacifistic attitude during World War II embittered many French. For example Gide read Goebbel's Diary "with a most lively interest" [Gide 1951b:302]. In the same journal Gide records with his usual honesty the Proceedings of the Provisional Consultative Assembly (Algiers, 7 July 1944):

[...] this artificial writer who has exercised such a murky influence over young minds indulges in defeatism in the midst of the war. His craze for originality and exoticism, his immoralism and his perversity make of him a dangerous individual.

Today literature is a weapon. That is why I demand prison for André Gide and public prosecution of the managing editor of *L'Arche* [1954:309].

Gide's development can be traced in a steady direction from a fervent Puritan religion towards the rejection of God and eventually of Christ. The French title of his autobiography *Si le grain ne meurt* could be paradoxical and the English title *If it die...* even more so. In the biblical text: "...si le grain de blé qui est tombé en terre ne meurt, il reste seul; mais s'il meurt, il porte beaucoup de fruit", Christ's words are in themselves an "amazing paradox" [Barclay 1975:123]. The text says that only by death comes life. Paradoxically it could be found that the "grain" of Gide's religious fervour died so that it brought forth much fruit - however, these are, again paradoxically, fruits of the earth. On the other hand, the acceptance of his homosexuality being coupled to his loss of faith, the "grain" of his egocentric nature fell into the earth where it stayed snugly, did not die and did not bring forth fruit: it brought forth widespread condemnation.

It is paradoxical too that Gide drew the best aspects of his work from Christianity which he rejected; "c'est à l'inquiétude chrétienne qu'il emprunte le trouble, le remuement, le gémissement inénarrable" [Boisdeffre 1963:127]. Whereas the proud and troubled spirits of Dostoevskij's fiction are able to accept God, to be regenerated and to find their way back to the idyllic peace of Paradise, Gide's heroes do not appear to find that peace. It seems a paradox that Gide himself ultimately finds peace in death as an atheist.

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