

## Chapter 4

### THE RECEPTION OF DOSTOEVSKI IN PRE-WORLD WAR I GERMANY

The plan of this study was conceived during the last year of the Weimar Republic, and it was during this period that the research data were collected.<sup>1</sup> The study itself was written "in exile" after Hitler had come to power. I make these remarks advisedly in order to warn the reader that the motivation for this piece of work was not so much scholarly interest per se but a political or, if you will, moral concern. Working as a sociologist in a German academic context, I became appalled at the increasing political and moral apathy of Germany's lower middle and middle classes beginning in the twenties—an apathy, if not callousness, which was hidden under the veneer of "cultural" pretensions. I was curious to find out whether a method of scientific access could be developed with which to study this constellation of political and moral decay and cultural magniloquence.

Had I known at the time about advanced methods of opinion research and projective psychology, I would perhaps have never designed this study, for it attempts to accomplish the same ends as these methodologies in a primordial fashion. It assumes that the works of a writer serve as projective devices for the display, through widely published commentaries, of hidden traits and tendencies typical for broad strata of a population. In other words, it studies readers' reactions indirectly through the medium of printed material which is inferred to represent typical group reactions.

The "sample" of this opinion study is very representative as far as it goes. Due to the generous assistance I had as a member of the Institute of Social Research at the University of Frankfurt, I was able to peruse nearly all books, all magazine articles, and even all major newspaper articles ever written on Dostoevski for the time period under investigation. The results of my research, which originally appeared in German, are here presented in a somewhat abridged form.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century, no other modern author received as much literary and critical attention in Germany as Dostoevski. There

have been other writers, of course, who have had greater influence or who have achieved more editions, and the curve of the literary preoccupation with Dostoevski shows considerable fluctuation. But not a single year has elapsed since the end of the eighties without some significant addition to the Dostoevski literature. Nor is this literature restricted to the field of aesthetic criticism. Many political, religious, scientific, and philosophic discussions have appeared along with literary essays and critiques. Examination of the complete German bibliography on Dostoevski (approximately 800 items)<sup>2</sup> reveals an unusual number of important names from literary, religious, and philosophic life, distributed among the most diverse schools (only Goethe is comparable in this respect). The same applies to the diffusion of the Dostoevski literature among periodicals and newspapers. Political organs ranging from the conservative through the National-Liberal to the political left, literary periodicals in the strict sense, even scholarly journals devoted to philosophy, law, and medicine have published discussions of Dostoevski.

Such temporal continuity and social diversity suggest certain problems. Are there some particular features which condition this intensity and breadth of interest? Are there specific elements in Dostoevski's works which appeal to a particular social configuration in all its diversity and change?

This paper is not a study of Dostoevski. Certain ideological peculiarities of the German middle- and lower-middle-class reading public clearly do not apply to Dostoevski at all. In fact, the amount of attention which he has received cannot by any means be explained by reference to the content, composition, or language of his novels, by their subject matter or aesthetic qualities alone. The complete answer must lie in fields other than those which the literary historian ordinarily discusses.

#### THE UBIQUITOUS MYTH

Studying the written reaction to Dostoevski in all of its multiplicity, one is struck by the fact that the same broad categories of interpretation have been retained throughout. The emphasis varies here and there, to be sure, for the taste for particular works changes in time. Certain aspects, such as the religious significance of the man and his work, for example, did not become important until later. If one looks hard enough, diametrically opposed statements can be found within these categories on many specific points. One conservative critic, for example, stresses the nationalism of Dostoevski,<sup>3</sup> whereas a liberal critic tending toward naturalism emphasizes his humanism.<sup>4</sup> But the common viewpoints are far more apparent than any such differences. Whether examining the

commentary of the 1890s or of the 1930s, there are the same typical judgments: Dostoevski is a special kind of psychologist, he preaches the love of man in his own way, he tends to reconcile contradictions among the most divergent theoretical and practical spheres of life, his work expresses the soul of his people, and the like. Our problem is to show the extent to which these judgments contain basic elements of the ideology of the social groups which form the hard core of his readership.

The reception given to Dostoevski, the evaluation of the categories developed in the course of that reception, is positive with a few unimportant exceptions. Dostoevski is acclaimed. One might even say that his popularity is less a matter of literary criticism than of willing and pious adoration. It is significant that there is scarcely one adequate scholarly account of his life and work by a German literary historian, and the few comprehensive treatments which do exist betray their opinionated character by their very design.<sup>5</sup>

From the beginning, Dostoevski is surrounded with an aura of myth. Qualities are added to his personality and works, qualities which transcend verifiable reality and have a super-historical character, and a certain indestructible unity is posited between his life and novels. They are devoid of any connection with the social process, but at the same time they are assumed to make social life meaningful against all historical theory and against every conception of social law.

An examination of mythical speculations in the commentaries on Dostoevski quickly reveals a staggering number of closely related formulations concerning the symbolic nature of the author and his works: "close to primordial conditions,"<sup>6</sup> a nature "full of the Devil and full of God,"<sup>7</sup> a saint on the road "from Nazareth to Golgotha,"<sup>8</sup> a "bottomless pit,"<sup>9</sup> "epileptic genius,"<sup>10</sup> one who weaves death with life,<sup>11</sup> "reason with madness,"<sup>12</sup> chaos with form.<sup>13</sup> Certain common ideas underlie this chaotic abundance.

First, the realm of real being appears in Dostoevski's work, that realm which stands outside mere contingency in human life. With him we approach "the mystical mothers";<sup>14</sup> he "projects for the most part into the new third realm of the human race";<sup>15</sup> "we always carry the abyss with us."<sup>16</sup>

Second, Dostoevski's life has a symbolic meaning. It is not molded by manifold experiences; the latter are themselves only stations in an "existence significantly conceived according to a sinister plan,"<sup>17</sup> stations on his "dark road."<sup>18</sup> "Mysterious forces, which apparently unseen, rule all the earthly destinies of Dostoevski," brought him to prison.<sup>19</sup> Through illness Dostoevski "was thrust into the darkest abysses of unhappiness and could taste the highest transports of ecstasy."<sup>20</sup> And "He was an

epileptic. What does this mean? . . . That he felt a mysterious power within him, the demon, for a brief moment elevating him suddenly, sublimely prostrating him cruelly for days."<sup>21</sup> His death, too, took place under an unearthly sign: "He died like Beethoven in the sacred uproar of the elements, in a storm."<sup>22</sup> If one surveys the development of his personality, one sees that "it grows and is formed from the dark animalic and elementary roots to the highest consummation, and rises to the highest, most radiant peaks of spirituality."<sup>23</sup> Furthermore: "It often seems as if an invisible power presents just that man who is sensitive and receptive above all others with the most terrible of human destinies, so that a man may at length, out of his own experience, show his fellow men how a man of his type can be injured, humiliated, and tortured to death, and nevertheless remain a man. Such mysterious designs guide the destiny of Dostoevski."<sup>24</sup>

Such arbitrariness in the choice of mythical figures, which we meet in Christian and in pagan, in metaphysical and in sentimental form, places public life and the whole of social existence in a context which transcends criticism and dissatisfaction. The enjoyment of works of art casts a veil over reality. Apart from the gratification of the fancy which is achieved by "understanding" the deeper meaning of human life and events in general, one is transported into a sphere in which everyone can experience sublime pleasures. The mechanism which creates ideology also transmutes the lack of a social theory into a profuse wealth of images and fantasies. We shall see again and again that the ideology of the middle class tends to transfigure reality by substituting for it the inner world of the psyche. World history thus becomes private myth.

If myth as super- and prehistoricity serves to bolster the middle class in its relationship to the upper stratum, so also can the life of Dostoevski be interpreted to establish a line of demarcation from the lower classes. The same characteristically private aspect is inherent in the disposition of the life plan of the individual, of the meaning which rules his fate. The glorification of Dostoevski's terrible suffering, his imprisonment, illness, and poverty, in short, every situation to which the propertyless strata are exposed, is in the last analysis an exaltation of passivity. It is absurd to struggle against suffering inflicted by powers which elude every earthly, scientific, or social-reformist effort, and men upon whom such suffering has been imposed acquire a luster of special dignity. Such mechanisms console the middle classes for their own troubles by pointing to still greater ones. By giving full approval to the greater distress and suffering of the lower classes, they also alleviate their anxieties about potential threats from below to middle-class existence.

A third mythical factor is represented by the "meeting of opposites." Through the whole history of the reception there runs the motif that Dostoevski the man, the intrinsic quality of his works, the essence of his most important characters, in short, the whole compass of his life and creation, are characterized by a union of factors generally perceived as contradictory. Great pains are taken to show this union of opposites in the most diverse spheres. *Contradictions in Weltanschauung*: Dostoevski is "a conservative writer, yet also a naturalist."<sup>25</sup> The action in the *Brothers Karamazov* encompasses "heaven and hell";<sup>26</sup> "great saintliness and great wickedness" appear in Stavrogin;<sup>27</sup> Dostoevski "is a nihilist and orthodox."<sup>28</sup> *Intellectual contradictions*: we find the author "attaining the highest peak of reason and falling to the lowest depths of the abyss of mysteries."<sup>29</sup> Dostoevski often "undermines his logically constructed world of ideas in order to dash them down to an unfathomable depth."<sup>30</sup> *Moral contrasts*: "The saint and the sinner . . . are never opposites for him."<sup>31</sup> His countenance bears witness to "diseased passions and endless compassion";<sup>32</sup> the religious fanatic is steeped in guilt and the prostitute is pure.<sup>33</sup> *Contrasts of character*: "We must solve the apparent contradictions . . . in the greatness of his genius and of his heart, and look upon them in the same way as we look upon the contradictions in nature."<sup>34</sup> He "was an epileptic, a man in whom extremes of dullness and lucidity coalesced."<sup>35</sup> His countenance is "half the face of a Russian peasant, half that of a criminal."<sup>36</sup> Finally, there are contradictions which cannot be subsumed under fixed categories: "Every person . . . is only a bit of his immeasurable, indistinct personality . . . the sharply outlined details, the naturalistic element which we think we perceive are blurred. . . . It is the abyss in which mists brew . . . abyss and level ground are the same."<sup>37</sup> "We hesitate to use the formalistic hackneyed word 'harmony' of an author who permits the experience of all manner of blessedness and deviltry with cold-bloodedness."<sup>38</sup> His world is "full of heights and depths, narrow places and spacious extents, abysses and prospects."<sup>39</sup> "Chaos constantly takes on form . . . but at once the form grows soft and melts away."<sup>40</sup>

This mythological element illustrates a central factor in the construction of every ideology, namely, the glorification of existing social contradictions. This is the essence of the mechanism. All other factors are more or less subsidiary and may grow out of the sociopsychological peculiarity of the groups concerned, they may receive their emphasis from the historical situation involved, or they may be determined by material or cultural traditions. But the one constant is the glorification and embellishment of social contradictions.

In the first type of myth, the realm of real being, concrete reality is removed from sight. In the second, the role of the individual within the social process is isolated and overestimated; but in the third, the meeting of opposites goes straight to the social contradictions themselves. The ideological mechanism is developed in such a way that the antagonistic character of a given social order is denied more or less indirectly; an image of harmony within established order is created. The meeting of opposites assumes a unique position within the context of such ideological mechanisms. It does not deny the existence of contradictions in the most diverse spheres of culture and life; yet it justifies the contradictions metaphysically.

The following sentence could stand as a motto for this essay: "Political and social problems were transformed for him [Dostoevski] into problems of soul and faith."<sup>41</sup> Anti-intellectualism could hardly be manifested in more pregnant fashion. It is not a question of carrying out an idea, of admitting a sentiment, of respecting an ethical or political position as the only possible one, but of attributing equal validity to the antithetical idea, to a contrary sentiment, to a completely different position. It is never a question of anything very precise or certain; the diversity of life, its alleged depth and inexhaustibility, gives it its peculiar attraction. This expresses the fantasy life of social groups who cannot derive pleasure from a rational analysis of the external world. By reading fiction, however, they can enjoy the apparent diversity of life and resolve its social contradictions irrationally.

Finally, the national or folk myth assumes the most varied forms in the Dostoevski reception. "His literature is Asia . . . and even the impossible is entirely possible for him. . . . In the last analysis Russian mysticism is . . . yearning and fulfillment at the same time."<sup>42</sup> Or it is simply announced that "theory and life are one and the same to the Russian."<sup>43</sup> The historian Heinrich Friedjung makes a particularly open confession of his acceptance of this national mythology when he refers to Dostoevski's creed of the Russian soul: "If one applies the rules of logic to the religious and political views of Dostoevski, they crumble into contradictions. Here, too, the elementary is more powerful than the mere rational."<sup>44</sup> This statement recalls another typical element of the national myth, the ever-repeated assurance that Dostoevski is "one of the greatest manifestations of the Russian folk spirit,"<sup>45</sup> that "in him . . . the Russian soul has found its most powerful and at the same time most intimate expression,"<sup>46</sup> that "in Dostoevski we learn to understand the Russian and through him the Russian people."<sup>47</sup>

Closer inquiry into the nature of this Russian nation leaves us in somewhat of a quandary. We learn of the "Russian soul which splits its

thirst for God into earthly pleasure and negating reverie."<sup>48</sup> We are told that there is no other nation "which is so religious in every stratum as the Russian,"<sup>49</sup> that the soul of the Russian manifests "itself more directly, more impetuously, more unreservedly than ours."<sup>50</sup> Apart from such vague and intangible characterizations, however, we must be satisfied with the knowledge that Dostoevski and his work offer us "a solution of the problem of Russia,"<sup>51</sup> that he "depicts with particular purity the essence of the Russian people, wondrously rich in strength and weakness, riddles and contradictions,"<sup>52</sup> in short, that he leads us into the "secret of the national existence."<sup>53</sup>

The most important documentation of this national mythology is to be found in the writings of Moeller van den Bruck, who edited the most widely circulated German editions of Dostoevski's works. Forerunner of German National Socialism, his comments represent a classical example of the social interpretation of the national myths of today. At the beginning of his introduction to *The Possessed*, van den Bruck speaks of the Russian soul, for which "man himself is a dark yearning after intuition and knowledge."<sup>54</sup> In contrast to the German, the "born carrier of ideas" who can often enough "return as Plato or Kant," the Slavs are "born heralds of faith." "If some day evening comes to Western humanity and the German is at rest, only a Slavic mother could again bear Buddha or Jesus out of the Eastern world."<sup>55</sup> The Russian *Weltanschauung* was transformed into great literary art for the first time in Dostoevski. "The expression of Russian madness, of the tragedy in Slavdom, the incarnation of all its mystical internalizations and hectic tension,"<sup>56</sup> he gave Russia its proper mythology of the soul. Russian life is determined by the "overly particularistic, constantly decentralizing racial developments," and on the other hand by the Russian national character—dreamy, sentimental, and resigned to fate, not active and determined. This internalized Russian nature finds expression everywhere, "even when it is unfolded in mad, and even atrocious, deeds."

Dostoevski, van den Bruck continues, was one of the very few novelists of the nineteenth century to say something new, more than Balzac, Flaubert, Zola, or de Maupassant. Only Goethe is comparable. Goethe "imbedded realism further in the spiritual and eternal by giving it a foundation of nature and the rising natural science."<sup>57</sup> Dostoevski went still further and, as "a complete naturalist, showed how modern life too has its mysticism and fantasies." He apprehended life "in its inner demonism . . . with its new beauties and ugliness, its new moralities and immoralities . . . and, instead of degrading naturalism into a mere copy, he again resolved it into a vision."<sup>58</sup> *The Possessed* reveals the

demonism in the Russian conception of state and history, which, in view of degenerate social conditions, feverishly drives Russian youth to politics.

The year 1906, in which this introduction to *The Possessed* appeared, marked a definite stage in growth of monopoly, industrial and political, and the essay itself is a symptom of this ideology. If giant economic and political structures were to be accepted by the people, the ideal of competition among men through the development of reason and will had to be replaced by veneration of nonrational ideals removed from the forum of critical verification. It is one of the inherent contradictions of modern society that the growing dominance of rational planning in the economic and political structures should be accompanied by increasing suppression of rational and critical elements in the social consciousness.

Van den Bruck's essay on Dostoevski prepared the way for the development of a false legend about the nineteenth century. This is particularly clear in his over-simplification of the concept of naturalism. He extends it into a visionary, artistic conception of the world, a distortion which has been widely perpetuated, often with the help of references to the widely circulated introduction to *The Possessed*.<sup>59</sup> Van den Bruck denies the relationship of Dostoevski to the great tradition of European, and particularly French, realism and naturalism, and postulates an untenable connection with Goethe. Dostoevski is thus torn out of the real context of the human qualities which the nineteenth century developed, in a succession of artistic figures from Balzac to Zola, all of whom Moeller van den Bruck summarily dismisses. Realism and naturalism in the novel, which acknowledged the necessity for taking an unequivocal stand on the social conflicts, was one of the most important achievements of the nineteenth century. The artistic products of this naturalism, precisely because they strive to reflect real life, constitute an appeal for change.

But for Moeller van den Bruck the decisive element to be gleaned from the traditions and products of the nineteenth century appear under the vague title of "national mythologies." It is no longer history when he asserts that Dostoevski "encompasses in a thousand new answers not only the whole of Russia, but also the whole Slavdom in all its various nationalities, castes, and types, from the simple *mujik* to the Petersburg aristocrat, from the nihilist to the bureaucrat, from the criminal to the saint."<sup>60</sup> There is not the slightest scientific or even rational ground for asserting that the German is a "born carrier of ideas" (even though Plato is reckoned among the Germans), that the Slavic soul can, in its dark, yearning fashion, create a Buddha or a Jesus, or that the Russian national character is dreamy, sentimental, and submissive to fate rather than

active and determined. More recently, such ideologies flourished in the powerful ideologies of totalitarian cultures.

The concept of the mythical, especially the myth of the community, comprises the most essential feature of the Dostoevski reception in Germany. But the material also affords concrete expression for several other basic factors of the social consciousness of the middle class. We shall first examine a factor which may be called *passivity*. This stance reflects the growing impotence of the middle class, and it is expressed in the glorification of the concept of duty and suffering, in the renunciation of any moral action which might be directed against social abuses. Here one comes much closer to social praxis than in the mythical, and the fact that important elements are most noticeable by their absence should not be cause for wonder. Specifically, it is the sphere of activity, and especially moral and political activity, which is missing or, at best, devaluated.

Dostoevski is used as an intellectual weapon against efforts to reorganize society. When his political doctrines are discussed, a malicious or uneasy voice is frequently heard applauding the opponent of revolutions and revolutionaries, the man who warned against political upheavals which bring distress, illness, and unnaturalness in their train. Political action is either condemned as a sin against the universal duty to submit, or transformed into mere inner exaltation, which is declared to be the essence of man. Dostoevski is a prophet of darkness, it is repeatedly said, who "foresaw the nihilist assassinations."<sup>61</sup> It was after the Revolution of 1905 and after the publication of the German translation of *The Possessed* in 1906, that his "baleful prophecy" revealed the future of Russia most strikingly.<sup>62</sup> "Many scenes from *The Possessed* are conceived as prophetic as if they were written during the revolution and today."<sup>63</sup> The point is repeatedly made that he "stood up so passionately and relentlessly against socialism."<sup>64</sup> Or: "Socialist Utopias were not only foreign to his nature, but directly counter to it. What inspired him . . . to the strongest loathing for socialism . . . was the moral materialism of this doctrine."<sup>65</sup>

It might be argued that one must not expect an activist approach from the apostle of love and compassion for mankind. Nearly all the literary critiques of Dostoevski do, in fact, revolve about the theme of love and compassion—in elegant formulations such as the "surpassing calm, through which only a sort of deeply secret sorrow vibrates, an endless compassion,"<sup>66</sup> or in painfully popular statements, such as "his heart trembles with sympathy, compassion."<sup>67</sup> Or censoriously, "His predilection for the oppressed and the depraved gradually assumes the morbid form of . . . 'Russian compassion,' that compassion which excludes

all upright, honest working men, and extends only to prostitutes, murderers, drunkards, and similar blossoms on the tree of mankind."<sup>68</sup>

This statement may be crude, but it underscores the fact that in Dostoevski's work love remains a weak disposition of the soul. We have here a situation similar to the meeting of opposites. The demand for love and compassion could mean a realization of the existence of social contradictions and the need for change; it could lead to the recognition of the value of justice. But the idea of action cannot enter into the consciousness of persons in a relatively impotent social stratum, any more than they can accept a principle of justice which destroys their solidarity with the upper class and points to their common interests with the masses.

It has often been said that Dostoevski had no inner relation to politics, that he was really no political theorist.<sup>69</sup> But how rarely has it been pointed out that the demand for social justice is never proclaimed in his political writings.<sup>70</sup> The irrelevance of this category, a category which finds powerful expression in the outstanding works of European naturalism, that is to say in the most advanced artistic camp, is a clear sign of the reactionary attitude of Dostoevski, and it is still more characteristic of social groups which approve this silence.

#### UBIQUITOUS PSYCHOLOGY

The most frequent of all attributes of Dostoevski, acknowledged in his reception in Germany before World War I at least, is that of psychologist. The "most learned psychologists" could "take lessons from him."<sup>71</sup> He was a "most subtle psychologist,"<sup>72</sup> and "all the psychological skill of the world" pales before Raskolnikov.<sup>73</sup> *The Possessed* penetrates with "overwhelming genius into all the depths of the human soul and its demonism."<sup>74</sup> There are three answers to the question of the precise nature of these extraordinary psychological accomplishments:

1. Dostoevski brings new, hitherto secret and dark psychological facts to light. He knows "the most secret psychic movements of the human soul."<sup>75</sup> He has an extraordinary talent for revealing "unperceived stirrings of the soul."<sup>76</sup> He "divines . . . all the unconscious, atavistic, and brute forces which stir the dark depths of faltering souls."<sup>77</sup>
2. Dostoevski is a specialist on diseases of the soul, an incomparable "master of pathological psychology."<sup>78</sup> Some of his works are all "psychological pathology."<sup>79</sup> A theologian claims that Dostoevski has "depicted the gradual outbreak of a mental illness more accurately" than any other novelist.<sup>80</sup> The same sentiment is expressed by a

specialist: "a better expert in the sick psyche, a greater psychopathologist, than Dostoevski" has probably never existed among novelists.<sup>81</sup>

3. Dostoevski provides a "unique psychology of crime."<sup>82</sup> Once again we find a specialist saying that in "Dostoevski's works we possess quite a complete, faithful description of diseased mental states and criminal types."<sup>83</sup>

The extent to which Dostoevski may actually have enriched psychological knowledge is a separate question. Like all great novelists, he is passionately interested in psychological problems, and many of his characterizations are masterpieces even when considered against the more highly developed knowledge of today. What is important is that Dostoevski as psychologist reinforces the interest of the middle class in psychological problems. This interest has its own significant history. Before the middle-class revolutions in France and Germany, when there were sharp cleavages between the economic mechanism and the forms of political domination and between the intellectual maturity of the bourgeoisie and the feudal cultural apparatus, the protest of the bourgeoisie was expressed in literature as a fiery profession of faith in great passions and the importance of the independent life of the soul. This glorification of passion is, for example, clearly manifest in Goethe's *Werther*. It was a progressive attitude toward life, yet it was incapable of adequate social concretization. The security of feudal economy and its regulated market had disappeared, and a well-developed psychology was a necessary presupposition for a liberal economic system. One must know one's business partner; one must know with whom one is dealing. The producer, now opposed by other producers, merchants, and consumers, must know them, must be fully acquainted with their psychology, in order to calculate their possible reactions to himself and his enterprise. This is one of the social origins of the important role played by conversation and discussion in the modern novel and drama. Conversation is one indication of the psychological knowledge which competing individuals in a modern society possess. He who is rationally superior, more adroit, and more dexterous because of his knowledge of the ways in which his conversational partners react, has at his command one of the necessary conditions of economic success.

What was true in the period of middle-class absolutism is being repeated, to a certain extent, in a later phase of German society. Broad strata are again turning to the inner life for satisfaction, particularly in Germany, where liberalism never really gained control because of the merger between the feudal political power and the industrial bourgeoisie. It is an ideological consolation for the middle classes to indulge in

psychological "discoveries" (a pleasure limited to the inner life) in precisely the same way as they enjoy the splendor of the German empire and, more recently, the Third Reich—as a satisfaction of imagination.

Pleasure in psychology fits this picture. The restriction of pleasure to one's own inner life acquires luster the more one loses oneself in an orgy of psychological interpretations. In this connection, the enjoyment of psychopathology and criminal psychology has an ideological significance of still another sort. The middle class cannot question the existing social organization as a whole, but must accept and approve it. This system, therefore, is "healthy." Crime and disease are overheads which are inevitable in the operation of the organism, but they are the exceptions of a temporary or peripheral nature which prove the rule, that is, the benign state of the whole.

The study of the reception of works of fiction thus becomes important from a new point of view. It contributes to the study of those factors which, over and above the mere power apparatus, exercise a socially conservative and retarding function through their psychological power. Desires do not disappear entirely, but they must be diverted, and art may help to transform the instincts. The effects of such conversion, the satisfaction of the fancy which the work of art gives, remain enclosed within the sphere of the inner life.

The German commentary on the writings of Dostoevski identifies the following psychological factors:

1. As a psychologist, Dostoevski proceeds "with the cold-bloodedness of an anatomist."<sup>84</sup> The so-called psychology of Dostoevski reminds one of a mighty laboratory with the finest, most precise tools and machines for the measurement, investigation, and testing of the human soul.<sup>85</sup> This "anatomization of human souls"<sup>86</sup> is "almost gruesome"<sup>87</sup> and "exceedingly cruel."<sup>88</sup> No "corner of the soul"<sup>89</sup> escapes him.
2. From the beginning, attention was directed to the "naked realism and naturalism,"<sup>90</sup> the scrupulous fidelity with which Dostoevski portrays the most "depraved characters" and the "most ghastly scenes."<sup>91</sup> His genius gives him insight into the "cesspools of mankind."<sup>92</sup> There is something tawdry about society in all his books. "They contain nothing but usurers, liars, double-crossers, grovelling upstarts, bloated fools, drunkards, and gamblers."<sup>93</sup> In his "repulsive images of dissolute fancy," and in his "splendidly realistic portrayal of national types of criminal and moral monsters,"<sup>94</sup> Dostoevski always "sees the soul naked before him in its anxiety and its agitation."<sup>95</sup>

3. An early critic remarks that *Crime and Punishment* lays "an incubus on the breast" of the reader by its "portrayal of a soul burdened with guilt,"<sup>96</sup> and this motif of being "breathlessly" clutched by "wild visions"<sup>97</sup> has been maintained throughout. The precise formulations vary, so that one writer states "that a cruel delight permits Dostoevski to torture his reader,"<sup>98</sup> another confesses "a very peculiar desire to creep on all fours" after reading Dostoevski,<sup>99</sup> still another experiences "genuine Gothic humility,"<sup>100</sup> and to a fourth it signifies that "the horrible possibility of the fall often lives in our dreams. This abyss is Dostoevski."<sup>101</sup> Through all these variations, however, one thing always remains true of Dostoevski and his success—the atmosphere "oppresses the heart and racks the brain."<sup>102</sup>

The picture of the cruel, torturing anatomist, with a predilection for the unclean and the forbidden, appeals to impulses which take pleasure in hurting and tormenting. It also reveals a peculiar contradiction in the reception. The mythical spell cast over the world, the emphasis upon its enigmatic character and upon the "irrationality of the human soul which no knowledge and no culture can set straight,"<sup>103</sup> cannot be reconciled with the picture of the anatomist who seeks clarity in the darkest corners. This contradiction symbolizes the contradictory social situation under discussion. The tendencies which transcend reality by making it the symbol of a higher meaning oppose the tendencies which create a sense of imagined power by permitting the experience of aggressions which have no real significance. This contradiction expresses the interrelation of the feelings of resignation and rage.

The social basis of the hymn of overflowing love and endless compassion in Dostoevski now becomes clear. These emotions are not associated with any desire to transform reality, but remain mere inner experiences. Men love or feel compassion, but no consequences are drawn. Such feelings neither remedy a deficiency, nor demand a remedy. Ideal nobility of the soul becomes the reflection of social impotence. It contributes to the satisfaction of the fancy of social groups who have been driven to the wall by reality. Love and compassion are mere social illusions in this context.

Our discussion of the mechanisms of psychological mediation is not complete. We have merely shown how certain impulses and needs are transformed and achieve satisfaction in fancy. These elements of the Dostoevski reception, however, and especially the combination of anatomist and painter of the impure meet with the restraints raised by the Freudian censor. Their nature is such that they are threatened with complete repression by the requirements of morality and conscience. In the make-up of the individual, prohibitions against the satisfaction of

impulses may lead to neurosis. This neurosis can be quite typical for specific social strata, and to that extent, it is meaningless to speak of illness. A large section of the middle class has just such neuroses. But the art form of the novel, its social position, is, as it were, the reward for getting around the restraints of the censor. The formal elements in fiction corrupt the conscience, and, in the garb of fancy, permit the satisfaction of impulses which would be unthinkable outside the protective covering of aesthetic value.

Other psychological factors are also at work in the Dostoevski reception to permit the vicarious enjoyment of censored impulses.<sup>104</sup> Sadism acquires still greater luster if it is supposed to contribute to the fulfillment of worthwhile human impulses. If it is crime, prostitution, and the perversions associated with them that present an opportunity to practice love and compassion, then they have been legitimized. The difficulty still remains, however, that, despite all rationalization, novels afford a vicarious enjoyment of the unclean and the repugnant. The final justification for speaking of such things at all lies in the fact that the common, unclean, and loathsome are assigned to declassed outsiders. In this way, pleasure in degradation can be satisfied in the fancy, and this satisfaction and glorification appears in the sphere of politics today. In the political ideologies which are widely accepted by the lower-middle class, great emphasis is laid on dragging the dirty linen of one's opponent into the light so that its "stench" may no longer defile the air of a particular social circle. These opponents are characterized as unclean criminal elements, as riff-raff who shun the light of day.

#### UBIQUITOUS RECEPTION

Our discussion of the reception of Dostoevski into the ideology of the middle classes requires at least a reference to the reception by other groups. We shall illustrate the Dostoevski reception outside the middle classes by examining the attitudes of three critics of Dostoevski: (1) Rollard, contributor to a widely circulated middle-class family journal;<sup>105</sup> (2) the anonymous author of a postscript to the *Brothers Karamazov*,<sup>106</sup> employed by a rather progressive bourgeois publishing house; (3) Zabel,<sup>107</sup> contributor to one of the leading bourgeois political journals (which was working for a unification of all conservative and right-liberal forces),<sup>108</sup> a member of the upper bourgeoisie by his whole demeanor and social consciousness (in 1914 he still designated himself as National-Liberal).<sup>109</sup>

The culture represented by Rollard remains within the framework of simple family life when he restricts himself to the observation that Dostoevski "was the most faithful portrayer of his contemporaries and

of the present conditions of his fatherland"; and that "a thorough study of Dostoevski might perhaps be more appropriate for shedding light on Russian conditions . . . which is in many respects quite unlike the conditions of the rest of Europe." Rollard speaks of Russia almost as if it were a wild tribe.

The anonymous author of the postscript to the *Brothers Karamazov* has a more enlightened and highly developed interest. He links the book to the pan-Slavic movement, and even adduces it for an understanding of the *Dreikaiserbund*. Though he regrets that Dostoevski left us in doubt "about the main lines which he had in view for the future organization of the nation," he believes that after the assassination of Alexander II "ideas made headway among the Slavophiles to which Dostoevski, the most illustrious of all the pan-Slavists and Slavophiles, gave living expression in his *Brothers Karamazov*." This political approach reflects a social conviction that learning can bring profit.

Zabel's approach to Dostoevski as a source of knowledge is still more ingenious and adequate. He ranks Dostoevski as "a highly significant phenomenon in modern literature and a completely indispensable tool for judging the Russian mind." The "recent terrorist movement has shown us how youth takes recourse to assassination." In *Crime and Punishment*, written in 1867, "Dostoevski introduces us to the beginnings of this movement," and provides "an important document for the history of our time" which "must arouse the interest of every cultured person." Here the attitude shows decided partisanship. A spokesman for the upper classes discovers a friend, so to speak, whose "life force and originality" can be praised, whose characters "are properly crammed full of real life." Even Zabel's stylistic tools (like this particular expression, "crammed full"), his emphasis upon the "living element," and his recognition of the "extraordinary force of his fancy and his power of description," of his grasp "of the complete life of man," of his "fully matured artistic nature," lead to a completely different social atmosphere. It is ruled by the possibility of great enjoyment, not limited by the need for regression into more primitive, purely illusory psychic pleasures, nor by weak and irresolute efforts to struggle upward, as expressed in the perpetual accumulation of knowledge. Zabel is the first German who gives the impression that he has read Dostoevski very carefully. And it is precisely this attentiveness, with its feeling for nuances, with its accurate understanding of what can be accepted and what must be rejected, in short, an attitude which, unlike the great mass of the reception, is without psychic inhibitions and which grasps and judges things as they are, that is characteristic of the social consciousness of the ruling strata. Zabel finds conditions in his own country entirely sound, and though he shares

with the rest of the critics the stock phrases about Dostoevski's "endless sympathy for the oppressed and demonic hatred of the oppressors," the conditions which arouse these feelings in Dostoevski are for him historically and nationally determined. He refers to the "horrible cruelty of Russian justice," to the "pan-Slavic bias, the provoking insistence upon Russian manner and custom." It is noteworthy that not a single reference can be found in Zabel's essay to the whole sphere of mythical ideology.

This example of reception by the upper class finds its counterpart at the other extreme, in proletarian circles. At first, the literary spokesmen of the proletariat remained quite faithful to the conventional bourgeois picture. Rosus, for example, in his article in the *Neue Zeit* for 1884, has a purely didactic approach and uses the traditional literary categories. Apart from his remark that Dostoevski portrayed the Russian Socialists and Communists as mere "babblers and numbskulls," Rosus repeats the stock phrases, "cold-bloodedness of the anatomist," "case history of disease," "naked realism." The theoretical understanding of proletarian writers had to reach a higher level before they could formulate a clear and correct statement of the Dostoevski problem.

When we turn to Korn's essay in the *Neue Zeit* for 1908,<sup>110</sup> we find that all ideological character has vanished. From a proletarian position, Korn gives a better class analysis of Dostoevski than Zabel, with his upper bourgeois attitude. He calls *The Possessed* a "reactionary poisoner" (with all due recognition of "Dostoevski the novelist and *Weltanschauung*-visionary"). It is absurd to look to this work of Dostoevski for an understanding of the Russian Revolution of 1905, since there was no "revolutionary, i.e., class conscious proletariat" in the book (nor did such a proletariat exist in Russia at that time), but only "declassed nobility and petty bourgeoisie, a rabble between the classes." Korn perceives the deeper ideology-forming factors in this novel, and he notes "the paradox, bewildering at first sight, that an ideology, which in its original form may have been an accurate reflection of the economic and political situation of Russia in the '50s and '60s, is experiencing a rebirth in monopoly capitalist Germany of the twentieth century." He realizes how little Dostoevski's novel contributes to a real knowledge of historical and social relationships, how little the treatment reflects even the prerevolutionary social conditions, and how its atmosphere is "pure intellectual and ethical chaos." It is precisely those blurred tones in the development, motivation, and style of the book which give it its ideological value for the bourgeois German public: "What the literary spokesmen of our bourgeoisie have recently proclaimed as a discovery, namely, that it is

not man's consciousness but his subconscious which is important, that everything worthwhile in the soul begins where the mind ends and the depths open up—that was, in fact, the programmatic psychology, the *Weltanschauung* of Dostoevski fifty years before." It must be remembered that Korn is not attacking the scientific activities of psychoanalysis, which was itself subject to the unanimous opposition of the official scientific world; he is attacking the anti-intellectual currents which appear in the myth of the demonism of the soul, in the enchantment of personalization of reality.

In the post-World War I reception of Dostoevski we find the same ideological factors as before the war, with even more abundant documentation. Immediately after the war, the myth of the inner life was predominant because of the general breakdown of social organization in Germany and, more specifically, because of the final dispossession of the middle class. More recently, however, the national myth has come to the fore as a model for the growing heroic-racial ideology. The radical tendencies of Dostoevski, though badly distorted in his writings, exercised a measure of influence upon the young German intellectuals immediately after the war, but this was an influence for socio-political radicalization only where other more powerful forces had already set in. The great mass of these intellectuals were confined to middle-class conceptions, and Dostoevski could perform a particular ideological service for them. Since he was labelled a product of the Russian nature and since the study of his works was supposed to give a clear insight into that nature, it followed that the key to the understanding of Bolshevism had also been found. Dostoevski can be put to extensive use in providing an imaginary solution whereby such middle-class groups can avoid a real analysis of the problem of transforming the social system, by satisfying anal-sadistic drives in the fancy and, at the same time, condemning them with the help of rationalizations buried in Dostoevski's writings.

The post-World War I phase of the reception points in two directions: (1) Dostoevski was placed in the intellectual context of Kierkegaard, Karl Barth, and the whole of dialectical theology. Indifference to earthly things, glorification of the individual, his inner world, and his relation to God, thus acquire extraordinary importance. This view is bound up with a social consciousness which hopes for nothing more from the present; it belongs to the circle of resigned strata. (2) The other tendency represents the politically dominant groups. It endorsed the national element in Dostoevski, but with limits imposed by the prevailing German ideology of Dostoevski's "racial" inadequacy.

## NOTES

1. Comprehensive documentation is limited to the period ending 1918.
2. Good but incomplete bibliographical references are to be found in Theoderich Kampmann, *Dostojewski in Deutschland* (Münster: 1931, first published in 1930 as a dissertation).
3. Franz Sandvoss, "F. M. Dostojewski," *Preussische Jahrbuecher*, XCII (1899), pp. 330-41.
4. Hermann Conradi, "F. M. Dostojewski," *Die Gesellschaft*, V (1889), pp. 520-30.
5. See, for example, the chapter headings in R. Guardini, *Der Mensch und der Glaube; Versuche über die religiöse Existenz in Dostojewskis grossen Romanen* (Leipzig: 1933): "The People and Its Way to Holiness," "Silence and the Great Acceptance," "Ecclesiastics," "The Cherub," "Revolt," "Godlessness," "A Symbol of Christ." Cf. titles like "Faith as the Will to Spirit," "The Experience of Real Being for Man: in His Relation to the Whole Egoless Thou: to God," in K. Nötzel, *Das Leben Dostojewskis* (Leipzig: 1925).
6. K. Weiss, review of several of Dostoevski's novels, *Hochland*, VI (1908), p. 364.
7. O. J. Bierbaum, "Dostojewski," *Die Zukunft*, XVIII (1909), p. 186.
8. O. Kaus, "Dostojewskis Briefe," *Die weissen Blätter*, I (1913/14), p. 1353.
9. L. Beer, "Quo vadis," *Die Nation*, XVIII (1900/01), p. 793; and K. H. Strobl, "Dostojewski, Russland und die Revolution," *Die Gegenwart*, XXXVI (1907), p. 87.
10. Georg Brandes, *Dostojewski, ein Essay* (Berlin: 1889), p. 3; cf. Strobl, op. cit. and Bierbaum, op. cit.
11. H. Coralnik, *Das Russenbuch* (Strassburg: 1914), p. 20.
12. W. Scholz, "Dostojewski," *Westermanns Monatshefte*, XXXIII (1888/89), p. 766.
13. Hermann Bahr in Bahr, D. Mereschkowski, and O. J. Bierbaum, *Dostojewski: 3 Essays* (München, 1914), p. 15.
14. Bierbaum, op. cit., p. 197.
15. Leo Berg, *Der Übermensch in der modernen Literatur* (Leipzig: 1898), p. 111.
16. Strobl, op. cit.
17. O. Stossel, "Die Briefe von Dostojewski," *Der neue Merkur*, I (1914), p. 499.
18. Adolf Stern, *Geschichte der neuen Literatur* (Leipzig: 1885), VII, p. 550.
19. Mereschkowski, *Tolstoi und Dostojewski als Mensch und als Künstler* (Leipzig: 1903), p. 39.
20. Frieda Freiin von Bülow, "Dostojewski in Deutschland," *Das Literarische Echo*, IX (1906), p. 204.
21. Bierbaum, op. cit.
22. Stefan Zweig, "Dostojewski, Die Tragödie seines Lebens," *Der Merker*, V (1914), p. 106.
23. Mereschkowski, op. cit., p. 222.
24. K. Nötzel, "Dostojewski," *März*, V (1911), p. 301.
25. Stern, *Geschichte der neuen Literatur*, VII, p. 550.
26. M. Necker, "Dostojewski," *Die Grenzboten*, XLIV (1885), p. 349.

27. Mereschkowski, *Tolstoi und Dostojewski*, p. 92.
28. Strobl, *Die Gegenwart*, XXXVI, p. 87.
29. R. Saitschik, *Die Weltanschauung Dostojewskis und Tolstois* (Halle: 1901), p. 9.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
31. Coralnik, *Das Russenbuch*, p. 20.
32. Brandes, *Dostojewski, ein Essay*, p. 3.
33. Kurt Eisner, "Raskolnikov," *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, V (1901), p. 52.
34. N. Hoffmann, *Dostojewski, eine biographische Studie* (Berlin: 1899), p. 2.
35. F. Servaes, "Dostojewski," *Die Zukunft*, XXXI (1900), p. 258.
36. Brandes, op. cit.
37. Strobl, op. cit.
38. Weiss, *Hochland*, VI, p. 364.
39. Bierbaum, *Die Zukunft*, XVIII, p. 196.
40. Bahr, *Dostojewski: 3 Essays*, p. 15.
41. Hoffmann, op. cit.
42. Strobl, *Die Gegenwart*, XXXVI, p. 87.
43. Joseph Müller, *Dostojewski—ein Charakterbild* (München, 1903), p. 183.
44. Heinrich Friedjung, *Das Zeitalter des Imperialismus* (Berlin: 1922), III, p. 142.
45. Joseph Melnik, introduction to A. S. Wolynski, *Buch vom grossen Zorn* (Frankfurt: 1905), p. v.
46. Theodor Heuss, "Dostojewskis Revolutionsroman," *Die Hilfe*, XII (1906), p. 9.
47. M. Schian, "Dostojewski," *Die christliche Welt*, XXVI (1912), p. 205.
48. Hoffmann, *Dostojewski*, p. 425.
49. Müller, op. cit.
50. Bülow, *Das Literarische Echo*, IX, p. 204.
51. Weiss, *Hochland*, VI, p. 364.
52. Bülow, op. cit.
53. Melnik, op. cit.
54. Moeller van den Bruck, introduction to Dostoevski, *The Possessed*, Piper-Verlag edition (München: 1906), reprinted in *Die Zukunft*, XIV (1906), p. 66; we shall cite the article in *Die Zukunft*.
55. Moeller van den Bruck, *Die Zukunft*, loc. cit.
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
58. *Ibid.*
59. Thus Heuss, *Die Hilfe*, XII, p. 9, speaks of the "spiritual character" of Dostoevski's naturalism. Strobl, *Die Gegenwart*, XXXVI, p. 87, says that naturalism is transformed into mysticism in Dostoevski: "The naturalistic . . . becomes phantomlike as soon as we seek to focus our eyes upon it."
60. Moeller van den Bruck, op. cit.
61. A. von Reinholdt, *Geschichte der russischen Literatur* (Leipzig: 1886), p. 695.
62. L. Brehm, "Dostojewskis 'Dämonen,'" *Der Deutsche*, V (1906), p. 342.
63. Weiss, *Hochland*, VI, p. 364.
64. Müller, *Dostojewski*, p. 131.
65. Mereschkowski, *Dostojewski: 3 Essays*, p. 33.
66. Conradi, *Die Gesellschaft*, p. 528.

67. Brehm, op. cit., p. 346.
68. C. Busse, *Geschichte der Weltliteratur* (Bielefeld and Leipzig: 1913), II, p. 595.
69. Cf. Thomas Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (Berlin: 1920), pp. 532-44.
70. In the *Politische Schriften* (München: 1917), the word "just" occurs only once, if I am not mistaken—and then in a quotation from Tolstoi (cf. pp. 232 and 234). Belief in "the solidarity of men" also appears but once—and then it is a matter of establishing that "peace brutalizes much more than war" (pp. 415-16). A plea for "active love" is also made—but when it is put into concrete form, it never rises above the level of vague exhortations: "Be but straightforward and sincere" (p. 247).
71. E. Brausewetter, "Der Idiot," *Die Gegenwart*, XXXVI (1889), p. 73.
72. O. Hauser, *Der Roman des Auslands seit 1800* (Leipzig: 1913), p. 165.
73. Emil Lucka, "Das Problem Raskolnikows," *Das Literarische Echo*, XVI (1913/14), p. 1099.
74. Johann Schlaf, in *Buchbesprechungen des Piper-Verlags* (1914)—appendix to Bahr, Mereschkowski, and Bierbaum, *Dostojewski: 3 Essays*.
75. P. von Wiskowatow, *Geschichte der russischen Literatur* (Dorpat and Fellin: 1881), p. 44.
76. Stern, *Geschichte der neuen Literatur*, p. 550.
77. E. Hennequin, "Dostojewski," *Die Gesellschaft*, XVI (1900), p. 337.
78. W. Henckel, "Dostojewski," *Das Magazin für die Literatur*, LI (1882), p. 78.
79. G. Malkowski, "Der Hahnrei," *Die Gegenwart*, XXXIII (1888), p. 408.
80. J. Leipoldt, *Vom Jesusbild der Gegenwart* (Leipzig: 1913), p. 339.
81. F. Münzer, "Dostojewski als Psychopathologe," *Berliner Klinische Wochenschrift*, XXVII (1914), p. 1943.
82. Necker, *Die Grenzboten*, XLIV, p. 344.
83. W. von Tschish, "Die Verbrechertypen in Dostojewskis Schriften," *Die Umschau*, V (1901), p. 961. Cf. J. Stern, "Über den Wert der dichterischen Behandlung des Verbrechens für die Strafrechtswissenschaft," *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Strafrechtswissenschaft*, XXVI (1906), p. 163.
84. Rosus, "Ein russischer Roman," *Die neue Zeit*, II (1884), pp. 2-12.
85. Mereschkowski, *Tolstoi und Dostojewski*, p. 236.
86. Scholz, *Westermanns Monatshefte*, XXXIII, p. 766.
87. Saitschik, *Die Weltanschauung*, p. 9.
88. Bülow, *Das Literarische Echo*, IX, p. 204.
89. Münzer, *Berliner Klinische Wochenschrift*, XXVII, p. 1945.
90. For example, J. J. Honegger, *Russische Literatur und Kultur* (Leipzig: 1880), p. 146. Rosus, op. cit., p. 2.
91. *Magazin für die Literatur des Auslands*, XXXVI (1867), p. 317.
92. Brandes, *Dostojewski*, p. 7.
93. Brausewetter, *Die Gegenwart*, XXXVI, p. 73.
94. Reinholdt, *Geschichte der russischen Literatur*, p. 693.
95. R. M. Meyer, "Das russische Dreigestirn," *Oesterreichische Rundschau*, XVI (1908), p. 39.
96. Henckel, *Das Magazin*, LI, p. 73.
97. Brausewetter, op. cit., p. 72.

98. A. Garbell, "Ein Dostojewski-Gedenktag," *Das Magazin*, LXV (1898), p. 183.
99. Max Harden, *Literature and Theater* (Berlin: 1896), p. 80.
100. Nötzel, *März*, V, p. 309. Cf. Bierbaum, *Dostojewski: 3 Essays*, p. 192.
101. Strobl, *Die Gegenwart*.
102. G. Malkowski, "Die Besessenen," *Die Gegenwart*, XXXIII (1888), p. 42.
103. Hoffmann, *Dostojewski*, p. 398.
104. See Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," *Collected Papers*, trans. supervised by Joan Riviere (London: 1924-25), IV, pp. 152-70.
105. G. Rollard, "Dostojewskis Roman 'Raskolnikow,'" *Das Magazin für die Literatur*, LI (1882), pp. 291-92.
106. "Dostojewski," in *Brüder Karamazov* (Leipzig: Grunow-Verlag, 1884), IV, 328-31.
107. E. Zabel, "F. M. Dostojewski," *Die Gegenwart*, XXV (1884), p. 307 ff. reprinted, characteristically enough, in the extreme upper bourgeois *Deutsche Rundschau*, LIX (1889), pp. 361-91. For a discussion of the social role of the latter journal, see *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, II (1933), pp. 59-62.
108. Cf. Erich Leupold, *Die Aussenpolitik in den bedeutendsten politischen Zeitschriften Deutschlands 1890-1909* (Leipzig: 1933), especially pp. 9-10.
109. *Wer ist's?* (Berlin: 1914), p. 1900; note the list of his extensive travels.
110. E. Korn, book review of *Die Dämonen*, in *Die neue Zeit*, XXVI, (1907/08), I, pp. 503-4.