

Anthropological model according to Fyodor Dostoevsky: from »Man-beast« to »Divinely inspired theurgist«

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Modern society, seeing the essence of man only in utilitarian resourcefulness, experiences an anthropological crisis. The work of Fyodor Dostoevsky allows us to consider the coexistence of the existential and the human at the level of meta-anthropological and meta-historical horizons of socio-cultural practice. Dostoevsky created a universal anthropological model based on the conceptual metaphors of »human-beast« and »human-theurgist«. In Dostoevsky's work, the metaphorical concepts of »human-beast« and »human-theurgist« appear as a single socio-cultural phenomenon reflecting man's never-ending endeavour to be human. Dostoevsky provides a religious (Orthodox-Christian) ideal of human personality, theurgic perfection achieved in the process of asceticism. The spirit and beauty of Dostoevsky's theurgic characters are born in the process of dialogue and co-creation between God and man. The transition from the bestial to the human according to Dostoevsky is a creative ascent of man with the support of God to absolute spiritual perfection. The methodological basis of the study is an interdisciplinary approach (linguistics, literary studies, psychology, philosophy, and cultural studies) to expand the understanding of anthropological modeling. The main provisions and conclusions of the study can be used in

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practice to adjust already known and create new principles of anthropological interpretation of literary and artistic texts and to build anthropological models.

Key words: Dostoevsky, anthropological model, human-beast, human-theurgist, human-double, conceptual metaphor, metaphorical concepts.

Introduction

Modern philosophical anthropology in the process of theoretical comprehension of its subject discovers the loss of classical ideas about man. The depth of the anthropological crisis is becoming ever clearer. The need to establish a new anthropological model is becoming more and more acutely recognized. Modeling allows us to involve material from the sphere of the ideal being (spirit, and consciousness) of the individual in the space of research reflection on man.

Fyodor Dostoevsky built the most universal anthropological model, relying on conceptual metaphors in his literary works: »human-beast« and »human-theurgist«. This study undertakes the following tasks:

- consideration of the principles (biological, social, religious, and cultural) by which Dostoevsky creates a universal anthropological model based on the conceptual metaphors »human-beast« and »human-theurgist«;
- consideration of how Dostoevsky reveals the multidimensional unity of the metaphysical depths of the existence of his contemporaries through the image of the »human-beast« as a »natural man«, whose vital-subconscious principle is not limited by culture, upbringing, or law;
- revealing the specifics of the existence of the bestial essence of Dostoevsky's characters as a natural state of their internal doubles, which they keep hidden until a certain eventful moment caused by an external or internal shock;
- concretization of the most important principle of anthropological modeling according to Dostoevsky: the transition from the »human-beast« to the »human-theurgist« through the comprehension of the meaning of sacred values as the essence of Being; through a dramatic dialogue between God and man, allowing one to overcome sinfulness and leading to co-creation with the Creator, and therefore to spiritual asceticism and to a clear designation of the limits of the spiritual-carnal existence of man.

The study is based on the methodological cooperation of different sciences (linguistics, literary studies, psychology, philosophy, and cultural studies), which expands the understanding in the field of studying the processes of formation of anthropological models. The main provisions and conclusions of the

study can be used in practice to modify existing and create new principles of anthropological interpretation of literary and artistic texts and the construction of anthropological models.

The human-beast according to Dostoevsky as a natural man

The theme of Fyodor Dostoevsky's work is one thing — man and all the diversity of human nature. Dostoevsky wrote: »Man is a mystery. It needs to be unravelled, and if you spend your life unravelling it, don't say you've wasted your time, I am studying that mystery because I want to be human«¹.

For the first time, the question of man was most definitely raised in mythology. The mythologeme «human-beast» has become an anthropological constant of culture and the starting point of all interpretations and comparisons of the historical transformation of human being.

From the primitive archaic, the mythologeme »human-beast« dates back to the cycles of ancient myths about the golden age, later transformed by the Greek Cynics into the philosopheme »natural man« and in this form (positive in the Rousseauist interpretation, and negative in the Marquis de Sade interpretation) exists in European culture of the 17th – 18th centuries². Since then, the metaphor of the »human-beast« reflects the morality of the »natural man« as his most important conceptual feature. The nineteenth century traditionally uses the conceptual metaphor of the »human-beast« to refer to and solve the moral problems of the »natural man«, which became especially evident in both Europe and Russia in the 1870s and 1880s.

For Russian culture, these decades became a preparation for the transition to a completely different stage of social development – one in which the being of civilization is determined by capital and machinism, and man is morally confused and affirms egoism, aggression, violence, and the denial of sacred Authority as the value foundations of his own life. In such circumstances, as Evgeny Trubetskoy wrote, »a wolf's muzzle clearly shows through human features (...) a man looks at us with the sharp, angry eyes of a bird of prey« revealing the »bestly« origin³. Dostoevsky considered the problem of a man acquiring the terrible face of a beast from an extremely complex perspective, practically presenting in Russian prose such an anthropological model that anticipated theoretical scientific ideas about a multidimensional man in the 20th – 21st centuries.

¹ Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *O russkoy literature* [About Russian literature], Moscow, Sovremennik, 1987, 317.

² Vladislav BACHININ, »Chelovek-pauk« i »chelovek-zver'«: dve ipostasi »estestvennogo cheloveka« [»Man-spider« and »man-beast«: two hypostases of »natural man«], *Chelovek* [A Man], 15 (2004) 4, 49-66.

³ Evgeny TRUBETSKOY, *Smysl zhizni* [The sense of life], Moscow, Respublika, 1994, 32.

In the ontological structure of man, modern scientists distinguish six qualitatively different and irreducible levels: cosmic, biological, social, cultural, existential and spiritual. All these levels in man are interconnected, forming a single whole. Therefore, any model of man is valid only within the narrow limits of applicability of the initial abstractions (historical, cultural, and personal) and the establishment of a logical relationship and subordination between them. Only then do they receive their theoretical justification⁴.

Dostoevsky reveals the multidimensional unity of the metaphysical depths of the existence of his contemporaries through the image of the human-beast.

For Dostoevsky, the transitivity of Russian culture in the 1870s and 1880s was presented as »such a heated and uncertain and most importantly, such an exciting time...« which should give birth to an abundance of positive themes and ideas⁵. »Perhaps I will produce a majestic, positive, saintly figure«, he writes⁶. However, life turns out to be terrible in its extreme manifestations and offers the author other ways of artistically depicting reality. For Dostoevsky, the conceptual metaphor of »human-beast« turns out to be the most vivid expression of the crisis state of the »natural man« and his world. According to Nikolay Mikhailovsky, »no one in Russian literature has analyzed the feelings of a wolf devouring a sheep with such thoroughness, depth, with such, one might say, love, as Dostoevsky«⁷.

In Dostoevsky's works, »human-beast« and »natural man« constitute a single conceptual doctrine. The writer depicts his »human-beast« as close as possible to the standards of elementary »naturalness«. There are no catalysts for the process of »brutality« and irresistible hereditary predisposition to pathological violence. There are only affects-passions, instincts, and vital-subconscious principles that naturally exist in human nature, which manifest themselves without restrictions (from culture, education, and law) and give rise to not only behavioral deviations of the characters of his works from civilized norms, but to real reversion back to a reversion back to a state of furious savagery.

In Russia, the rise of individualism, nihilism, desacralization, bureaucratization, and radicalization has steadily undermined the Russian people's consciousness, national spirit, and spiritual identity. Dostoevsky grapples with a core question: How much does the environment shape a person? Are individuals utterly dependent on it, or can they resist its pull?

⁴ Sergey LEBEDEV, Feliks LAZAREV, *Mnogomerny chelovek: ontologia i metodologia issledovaniya* [Multidimensional man: ontology and research methodology], Moscow, Moscow University Publ., 2010, 96.

⁵ Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *Pis'mo Putsykovichu ot 28 iyulya 1879* [The letter to Viktor Putsykovich, July 28th, 1879], Complete Works in 30 vol., Vol. 20, Leningrad, Nauka, 1980, 370.

⁶ Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *Pis'mo Maykovu ot 25 marta 1870* [The letter to Apollon Maykov, March 25th, 1870], Complete Works in 30 vol., Vol. 20, Leningrad, Nauka, 1980, 354.

⁷ Nikolay MIKHAYLOVSKY, *Literaturno-kriticheskie statyi* [Literary critical articles.], Moscow, GIHL, 1957, 187.

Dostoevsky's stance is profoundly ambivalent. He warns that overemphasizing environmental influence strips away personal responsibility:

»By making man dependent on every mistake in the social structure, the doctrine of the environment brings man to complete impersonality, to his complete liberation from any moral personal duty, from any independence, brings him to the vilest slavery that can only be imagined«⁸.

Yet he also shows how disconnection from one's »soil« – the human community, the people, or God – leaves the individual morally hollow, terrified of owning anything personal.

This inner void manifests in Dostoevsky's characters like Valkovsky, Svidrigailov, Lambert, and Stavrogin. They mask their existential impotence, baselessness, and cynicism: »People wearing a mask have become not rare, sir, and it is now difficult to recognize a person, sir, under a mask«⁹. »Social filth and dirt« – poverty, drunkenness, slums, corruption, starving children, and dehumanized masses – further isolate people, fracturing ethical bonds:

»The main thing in everything is the idea of decay, for everything is apart and there are no connections left not only in the Russian family, but even simply between people. Even the children are apart«¹⁰.

Dehumanizing others severs communal ties entirely. Raskolnikov dismisses his victim as a »pathetic louse«:

»A crime? What crime?« he suddenly cried, in a sudden rage. »That I killed a vile, malicious louse, an old pawnbroker, useless to anyone, whose murder would be forgiven for forty sins, who sucked the life out of the poor – and that's a crime? I don't think about it, and I don't think about washing it away«¹¹.

Dostoevsky illustrates dehumanization's extreme in *Demons* through Shigalev and »Shigalevshchina«:

»He proposes, as a final solution to the problem, the division of humanity into two unequal parts. One-tenth will receive personal freedom and unlimited rights over the remaining nine-tenths. The others must lose their individuality and turn, as it were, into a herd, and, with boundless obedience, through a series of reincarnations, achieve primordial innocence, a kind of primordial paradise, although, incidentally, they will still work«¹².

⁸ Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *Dnevnik pisatelya [A Writer's Diary]*, Complete Works in 30 vol., Vol. 21, Leningrad, Nauka, 1980, 54-55.

⁹ Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *Dvoynik [The Double]*, Complete Works in 30 vol., Vol. 1, Leningrad, Nauka, 1972, 163.

¹⁰ Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *Dnevnik pisatelya [A Writer's Diary]*, Complete Works in 30 vol., Vol. 24, Leningrad, Nauka, 1982, 6.

¹¹ Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *Prestuplenie i Nakazanie [Crime and Punishment]*, Complete Works in 30 vol., Vol. 6, Leningrad, Nauka, 1972, 364.

¹² Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *Besy [Demons]*, Complete Works in 30 vol., Vol. 10, Leningrad, Nauka, 1975, 35.

A diseased, divided society breeds fractured minds, spawning antisocial, immoral ideas that are sinister and destructive. Individuals learn to coexist with evil, even justifying or romanticizing it, reducing humanity to mere animality.

The variety of tragic life experiences suggests to Dostoevsky that animal qualities (cruelty, bloodthirstiness, and predation) can be found in almost every person. If in someone it overpowers all other qualities, then such a person becomes dangerous both for himself and for others. »There are people«, writes Dostoevsky,

»like tigers, thirsty to lick blood. Whoever has once experienced this power, this unlimited dominion over the body, blood and spirit of a person like himself, created in the same way, a brother according to the law of Christ; whoever has experienced power and the full possibility of humiliating another being, who bears the image of God, with the highest humiliation, somehow becomes involuntarily powerless in his feelings... I stand on the fact that the best person can become coarse and dull from habit to the level of a beast«¹³.

The aggressive desires of the »human-beast« are actualized in destructive behavior, which finalizes the manifestation of all the basic components of his nature and prevails even over something as primitive as sexual instinct.

The sexual meaning of human arousal is prescribed by sexual scenarios and practices of sex, which appear at the level of awareness of one's own physiology within the framework of culture, socio-psychological, and sign-symbolic reality and are embodied in certain forms of behavior, conversation, and discourse¹⁴. »If constructive sexuality is a way of achieving intimacy, then destructive sexuality is a means of protecting oneself from real contact, from intimate communication«¹⁵. A sexually destructive person (especially a sadistically inclined one) identifies achieving sexual satisfaction with causing suffering to a sexual partner, with violence and the desire to subjugate the victim¹⁶.

Dostoevsky examines bestial destructive characters closely and he has plenty of them. Thus, Alexander Blok defined the character of Parfyon Rogozhin as »the most terrible person« in Dostoevsky's novel *The Idiot* (1868)¹⁷. Rogozhin's passionate sexual attraction to Nastasya Filippovna is not at all civilized and bears little resemblance to human love. Rogozhin communicates his feelings with bestial growls, wild behavior, and a headlong pursuit of a sexual goal.

¹³ Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *Zapiski iz myortvogo doma* [The House of the Dead], Complete Works in 30 vol., Vol. 4, Leningrad, Nauka, 1972, 154.

¹⁴ Michel FOUCAULT, *Volya k znaniyu. Istoriya seksualnosti* [La Volonté de savoir. Histoire de la sexualité], Moscow, Kastalle, 1996, 98.

¹⁵ Evgenia KOZLOVA, *Destruktivnaya seksualnost: filosofskiy aspekt* [Destructive sexuality: the philosophical aspect], *Meditsina. Sotsiologiya. Filosofiya Prikladnye issledovaniya* [Medicine. Sociology. Philosophy. Applied research], 10 (2019) 5, 73-78.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁷ Alexandr BLOK, *Bezvremenyie* [Timelessness], Works in 8 vol., Vol. 5, Moscow, GIHL, 1962, 78-79.

Having succumbed to a mad passion for Nastasya Filippovna, he releases destructive instincts: malice, hatred, and a dull, heavy despair. Rogozhin's animal passion is destructive and murderous: Nastasya Filippovna dies from his knife, and the killer himself loses his mind. Subject to only animal instincts up to a certain point, Rogozhin appears before us as a creature born of the chaos of nature and the lack of coordination between internal impulses and drives and the social circumstances of their implementation.

Animal anarchy of desires, dissolution of feelings in sensuality, loss of spiritual dimensions by love also comes to the forefront in the main character of Dostoevsky's most complex novel in the ideological and philosophical sense, *Demons* (1872), Nikolai Stavrogin. Stavrogin's animal nature is activated by his egocentrism, indifference and boredom: »I wanted to kill myself from the disease of indifference«¹⁸. Stavrogin states, »Everything extremely shameful, immeasurably humiliating, vile (...) always aroused in me, along with immeasurable anger, incredible pleasure«¹⁹. Therefore, Stavrogin revels in his own wild unbridledness, plans and commits crimes consciously and with pleasure, invariably reveals vices in different situations: stealing a wallet with a salary from a poor official; a fight in a tavern; playing cards; a date with the maid Nina Savelyevna; revelry; depraved cohabitation with several women at the same time and a particularly cruel »secret crime« against the underage Matryosha – her corruption.

The depravity of Stavrogin's nature deprives his life of ethical content, thereby dehumanizing both himself and all those with whom fate connects him. Nikolai Berdyaev, examining the problems of sex, love and eroticism, asserts,

»Depravity is disunity, and it always turns the object of sexual desire into a means, not an end. The entire physiology and psychology of depravity is built on this transformation of means into an end, on the substitution of attraction to its object for attraction to the sexual act itself or to the art of love itself. Love for love, instead of love for a person – this is the psychology of depravity«²⁰.

Stavrogin's wild way of realizing his own sexuality through the destruction of another person, inflicting moral and physical harm upon others in order to obtain satisfaction from the suffering of his victim and strengthening his own rightness clearly demonstrates the complete absence of not just personal maturity in this character, but also of human principle.

Dostoevsky captures the bestial essence of his characters as the naturalness of their inner doubles, which they keep hidden until a certain eventful mo-

¹⁸ Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *Besy* [Demons], Complete Works in 30 vol., Vol. 12, Leningrad, Nauka, 1975, 11.

¹⁹ Dostoevsky, *Besy...*, 14.

²⁰ Nikolai BERDYAEV, *Smysl tvorchestva* [The meaning of creativity], Vol. 1, Moscow, Iskusstvo, 1994, 209.

ment caused by an external or internal shock. Dostoevsky's characters know about this Other. Some are afraid to show their true nature, which testifies to a deficit of cultural identity (for example, the voyeur Makar Devushkin in *Poor Folk* is afraid to awaken the sensuous animal in himself), while others, on the contrary, act rationally in this direction (the revolutionary Alexei Kirillov in *Demons* maniacally craves destruction and chaos, at the thought of which he experiences painful pleasure).

The human-double rushes, according to Valerian Pereverzev, »between flashes of pride and flashes of self-abasement, love and hatred for himself, which inevitably presupposes love and hatred for others«²¹. Moreover, if male characters are subject to this duality in general, in females' characters it is found »precisely in love«²².

In Pereverzev's view, the instinctive »self-willed« type of Dostoevsky's female characters is the most dual and is in a constant struggle of opposing drives – tenderness and cruelty, submission and lust for power, self-denial and cynical egoism. This type is characterized by determination, associated exclusively with its base and momentary desires, asociality and immorality of behavior. This subtype lives exclusively by instinctive, almost animal passions and momentary needs of nature. It is no coincidence that, according to Berdyaev, women in Dostoevsky's novels are bearers of the natural elemental principle and for the same reason are depersonalized: »A woman is only an inner male tragedy«²³.

Thus, the image of Aglaya Epanchin from *The Idiot*, thirsting for love and possession, is instinctively destructive. The images of Sonechka Marmeladova from *Crime and Punishment*, Nastasya Filippovna Barashkova from *The Idiot*, Sofia Andreyevna Dolgoruky from *The Adolescent* are woven from a multitude of explosive hysterical-self-destructive affective states and elemental passions. These female characters, with the unlimited manifestation of the features of their innate nature, reveal an internal fracture; their actions remain mysterious to those around them; and the pillars and values of society and its centuries-old traditions, become not an obligation, but a challenge for them.

Dostoevsky's artistic experiment is the harsh testing of the limits of humanity through his characters, their transition from Self to beast, which confirmed the writer in the idea that a person often, not under the pressure of circumstances, but quite independently, turns his life into a vale of shamelessness. Even after death, a person, having received the opportunity to rethink his life in a kind of purgatory, uses it not for repentance before the Court, but for the final liberation from moral norms. This is evidenced by the behavior of the

²¹ Vassily PEREVERZEV, *Tvorchestvo Dostoevskogo* [The works of Dostoevsky], Moscow, Sovremennye problemy, 1912, 168.

²² Pereverzev, *Tvorchestvo...*, 164.

²³ Nikolai BERDYAEV, *Mirogled't na Dostoevsky* [Dostoevsky's Worldview], Sofia, Publ. University »Sv. Kl. Ohridsky«, 1992, 103.

characters in Dostoevsky's story Bobok (1873), the sixth chapter of A Writer's Diary, There is no last beautiful human Word from them, there is only spiritual barrenness and beastliness: »We will all tell our stories out loud and no longer be ashamed of anything (...) Let's live these two months in the most shameless truth! Let's strip naked and bare it all!«²⁴

Dostoevsky's profound psychologism, intense conflicts, and portrayals of extreme mental states often strike readers as gloomy and depressing – a perception that persists today. Yet literary critic Nikolay Strakhov captures the deeper intent:

»Dostoevsky so boldly brought pitiful and terrifying figures, all manner of spiritual wounds, onto the stage because he knew, or acknowledged, the ability to pronounce the highest judgment upon them. He saw the spark of God in the most fallen and perverted person; he watched for the slightest flicker of this spark and discerned traits of spiritual beauty in those phenomena we are accustomed to regard with contempt, ridicule, or disgust«²⁵.

This vision infuses Dostoevsky's works – and his life experiences like his mock execution, Siberian hard labor, and illnesses – with »tragic optimism«: the bold courage to expose human vices while envisioning spiritual and eschatological redemption.²⁷

At its core, Dostoevsky insists that moral self-determination trumps even the ugliest social environment. His analysis of environment versus personality traces a civilizational pivot from transcendent faith (God beyond the world) to immanent belief (God within humanity), exposing crises of faith and anthropological rebellion. He perceives redemptive potential in »vicious and crude natures« scarred by life, living »without any meaning... simply an animal life, in the sense of a lower type«²⁸. In moments of profound despair, they glimpse the sublime, as »their nature, perhaps unbeknownst to them, has long been yearning for the higher goals and meaning of life«²⁹.

Dostoevsky populates his novels with such figures: the »little people« like Golyadkin (*The Double*), Marmeladov (*Crime and Punishment*), Makar Devushkin (*Poor Folk*); the »St. Petersburg dreamers« from *White Nights* and *Netochka Nezvanova*; and »ideal« heroes like Prince Myshkin (*The Idiot*), Alyosha Karamazov and Elder Zosima (*The Brothers Karamazov*). These characters

²⁴ Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *Dnevnik pisatelya* [A Writer's Diary], Complete Works in 30 vol., Vol. 21, Leningrad, Nauka, 1980, 53.

²⁵ Sergey SHAULOV, The Structure of the Negative Reception of Fyodor Dostoevsky in Contemporary Culture, *Liberal Arts in Russia*, 5 (2014) 3, 404-412.

²⁶ Nikolay STRAKHOV, *Iz Vospominaniya o Fedore Mikhayloviche Dostoyevskom* [From the Memories of Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky], Moscow, Direct-Media, 2022, 172.

²⁷ Stefano Maria CAPILUPI, »Tragicheskiy optimizm« khristianstva i problema spaseniya: F. M. Dostoevskiy [The »tragic optimism« of Christianity and the problem of salvation: F. M. Dostoevsky], Saint Petersburg, Aletaya, 2013, 288.

²⁸ Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *Dnevnik pisatelya* [A Writer's Diary], Vol. 9, Moscow, AST, 2007, 534.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

wrestle moral dilemmas, embody human contradictions, chase lofty ideals, teeter on madness or despair – yet cling to a resilient humanistic core.

Thus, the transfer of life phenomena accompanies according Dostoevsky, the transition of man to a new stage of civilization from the transcendental sphere to the immanent sphere. In the course of this process, the transcendent is exhausted and formalized, the world begins »from the beginning« again. This puts man in an extra-ethical situation, breaks the line between good and evil, fair and unfair, legal and illegal. In such circumstances, a person »to the highest degree arbitrarily and consciously...returns to the masses, to immediate life, therefore, to the natural state«³⁰. At the moment when Dostoevsky realized the complete transformation of the world of his time, it was the metaphor of »human-beast« as the embodiment of the essence of »natural man« that became the most effective way for the author to conceptually construct an anthropological model that was adequate to the times. In Dostoevsky's work, the concepts of »human-beast« and »natural man« appear not as different stages of human development, but as a single socio-cultural phenomenon, reflecting the generic aspiration and constant effort of man to be human. However, what completes the anthropological portrait? What makes a man human?

Human-theurgist according to Dostoevsky: The highest hypostasis of natural man

Dostoevsky is convinced, »It is impossible to become a man all at once, but one needs to develop as a man«³¹. Dostoevsky, anticipating global changes in world and national culture, saw a way out of the civilizational crisis through the religious salvation of humanity in man and worked on the upcoming new anthropological type in the ontological perspective peculiar to Christianity.

Dostoevsky's faith took root in his family's devout ways: »We in our family knew the Gospel practically from early childhood«³². His deep immersion in Orthodox Christian history and daily life – forged during Siberian exile – supplanted his earlier utopian socialism. As he confessed, »I don't believe in Christ and profess Him as a boy, but my hosanna passed through a great crucible of doubt«³³.

His religious struggles hinged on Orthodoxy's binaries: faith amid intellectual denial, sin intertwined with holiness, innocent suffering alongside free

³⁰ Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *Zapishnaya knizhka 1864-1865* [The notebook 1864-1865], Complete Works in 30 vol., Vol. 20, Leningrad, Nauka, 1980, 192-193.

³¹ Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *Dnevnik pisatelya* [A Writer's Diary], Complete Works in 30 vol., Vol. 25, Leningrad, Nauka, 1983, 47.

³² *Ibid.*, 51.

³³ Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *Pis'mo Maykovu ot 25 marta 1870* [The letter to Apollon Maykov, March 25th, 1870], Complete Works in 30 vol., Vol. 20, Leningrad, Nauka, 1980, 354.

will. Dostoevsky's theodicy (»justification by God«) rejected rational excuses for evil, embracing suffering as the road to spiritual perfection. For him, Christ embodied beauty, love, goodness, and meaning – triumphing over chaos and the moral void spawned by unfettered human freedom.

Yet this embrace of freedom's dual postulates – freedom demands obedience to truth, and truth emerges only through free paths – flaws in his anthropology:

- Extreme existentialism: The »underground« as total alienation from the world.
- Mimesis of evil: Mimicking humanity's darkest impulses.
- Justification of self-will: Elevating »whim« over Christian humility.
- Fixation on suffering: A morbid fascination with torment.
- »If God does not exist, everything is permitted«: Free will veering into theomachy rather than faith.

These traits render Dostoevsky's view of humanity starkly realistic yet fraught—challenging classical church theology, cultural universality, and practical application. His Orthodox realism prioritizes ideas over empiricism, risking a schematized humanity where inner conflicts resolve not organically, but through dualism, irrationalism, and characters' desperate psychological quests to affirm their essence.

For Dostoevsky, the transition from the bestial to the human is the creative ascent of man, with the support of God, to absolute spiritual perfection. For a Russian personified in the God-Man Jesus Christ, this path involves many great struggles to overcome his own weaknesses and the temptations of the world, and not everyone can do it.

It is no coincidence that the natural existence of the bestial in man determines in Dostoevsky's work not an enlightening understanding of human nature (as moderately kind, selfish, intellectual, creative, aggressively sexual and destructive), but a mythical one. The mythical is a phenomenon even »more insidious« than the myth itself and remains after the disappearance of the myth »as such«³⁴. It was the mythical that, reflecting in artistic form the mythologeme »human-beast« as man's worship of nature preserved for centuries his theurgic aspirations to change the course of events, subordinating to his will, first, the actions of the gods. According to Dostoevsky, the »Human-beast«, comprehending the meaning of sacred values as the essence of Being, acquires the qualities of a theurgist, which means creative and truly human features.

³⁴ Roland BARTHES, *Izbrannyye raboty: Semiotika. Poetika* [Selected Works: Semiotics. Poetics], Moscow, Progress, 1994, 125.

Theurgy (from the Greek *θεουργία*) means »miracle, divine action« and is understood as magic that affects the change in the course of events. Theurgy is »the path to salvation, to bliss, the path of communion with the very nature of the deity, when man becomes a demiurge and creates what only God can do (miracles). Theurgy »finds its expression not only in the visions of the theurgist (visionary) ... but also in certain symbols, the function of which is to be a link between the divine and human worlds«³⁵. According to Aleksei Losev, »all the components of theurgy are aimed at achieving one goal – complete or at least partial union with the deity«³⁶. The meaning of theurgy is to affirm the idea of the realization of the Beauty of the Absolute in the sensory world, through the creativity of man as a co-creator.

Theurgy as »literally 'bringing the divine into action' spiritualizes practically all artistic human quests«³⁷. The pathos of any theurgic author's project lies in the person's awareness of his cosmic mission to overcome the world's isolation from the divine fullness. In this case, the highest manifestation of human activity is not knowledge, but creativity, which, combining experience and reason, is interpreted by the author in the broadest possible terms: creativity as the theurgic service of humanity is a continuation of the act of divine creation. In creativity, man must and can overcome the fundamental antinomy of the divine and the extra-divine in the world, the antinomy of God's transcendence and immanence to the world and man. »Creativity«, wrote Nikolai Berdyaev, »is not allowed or justified by religion; creativity is religion itself«³⁸. Theurgy is a joint creative action of the Deity and Humanity for the re-creation of the latter from the carnal or natural to the spiritual and divine³⁹. The theurgist creatively prolongs the process of world-creation, thereby responding to God and enriching divine life itself. Spiritual unity with the Absolute, active transcendence as an inevitable moment of religious experience gives the theurgist multidimensionality.

The basis of Dostoevsky's theurgism is not visionary work, but religious revelation. Olga Soina writes,

»A visionary is a person who has been given supersensory things in a sensory form. For example, Vladimir Solovyov ('who saw' Sophia – Divine Wisdom), Emanuel Swedenborg (Christ Himself supposedly appeared to him) were visionaries. The facts of the sensory appearance of supersensory things in the

³⁵ Alexander OGURTSOV, Teurgia [Theurgy], in: Vyacheslav STYOPIN, Abdusalam GUSSEYNOV, Gennadiy SEMIGIN, Alexander OGURTSOV (ed.), *Novaya filosofskaya entsiklopediya* [New Philosophical Encyclopedia], Moscow, Mysl', 2010, 59.

³⁶ Aleksei LOSEV, *Istoria antichnoy estetiki. Poslednie veka* [History of ancient aesthetics. Last centuries], Moscow, AST, 2000, 319.

³⁷ R. A. NORRIS, Theurgy, in: Lindsay JONES (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion, Second Edition*, Detroit, Macmillan Reference USA, 2005.

³⁸ Nikolai BERDYAEV, *Filosofia svobody. Smysl tvorchestva* [Philosophy of Freedom. The Meaning of Creativity], Moscow, Pravda, 1989, 339.

³⁹ Vladimir SOLOVYOV, *Filosofskie nachala tsel'nogo znaniya* [Philosophical principles of integral knowledge], Complete Works in 20 vol., Vol. 2, Moscow, Nauka, 2000, 185.

Christian tradition are defined as charm, the seduction of demonic spiritual forces. That is why Fyodor Dostoevsky cannot be considered a visionary. He was truly given a revelation: he contemplated supersensory reality with spiritual eyes. A person who experiences a religious, spiritual revelation is spiritually transformed, a transubstantiation of his personality occurs in him, leading to deep, ontological changes in human nature⁴⁰.

Therefore, at the basis of the architectonics of Dostoevsky's anthropology lies theurgy as the experience of the presence of imperfection, disharmony of the sensory existence of man, dialectically connected with a special attitude to the universe as transcendental and highly spiritual, eventful and frank fusion of the creative subject with God.

Dostoevsky poses the question of the creative essence of man so radically and penetratingly that it inevitably becomes for the reader a question about God; a question of the co-creation of man and God; a question about man, posed by God himself: Adam, where are you? The spiritual journey of many of Dostoevsky's characters is, in essence, different stages in the development of the theurgic idea of man-creator in a specific personality. Human-theurgist creates form through art, and beauty through the Highest Principle, forming that living space where the moral finally and undividedly dominates the aesthetic. Human-theurgist is not a self-exalted man-god. Human-theurgist is the one who makes a daring transition from purely human, culturally symbolic creativity to divine-human, religious creativity. Nikolai Berdyaev calls the man-god »the religion of earthly bread« and the God-man – »the religion of heavenly bread«. He believes that the »religion of heavenly bread« is the religion of the »great and strong«, and the »religion of earthly bread« is the religion of people of »momentary desires« and the »weak«⁴¹. Dostoevsky interprets the God-man as God, and in the image of the human-god he embodies the Antichrist.

Vladimir Solovyov writes in *Three Speeches in Memory of Dostoevsky*,

»Imagine a crowd of people, blind, deaf, crippled, possessed, and suddenly from this crowd arises the question of what to do? The only reasonable answer here is to seek healing; until you are healed, there is nothing for you to do, and while you pass yourself off as healthy, there is no healing for you«⁴².

Dostoevsky embodies the understanding of such a person – who is in a creative search and finding higher meanings with the goal of spiritual healing of himself and/or others – in »spiritually rich« characters⁴³.

⁴⁰ Olga SOINA, *Chitaem Dostoevskogo* [Reading Dostoevsky], Novosibirsk, Nauka, 2005, 12.

⁴¹ Nikolai BERDYAEV, *Mirisozertsanie Dostoevskogo* [Dostoevsky's Worldview], Prague, YMCA Press Ltd., 1923, 143.

⁴² Vladimir SOLOVYEV, *Tri rechi v pamyat' Dostoevskogo* [Three Speeches in Memory of Dostoevsky], Moscow, Mysl', 1988, 315.

⁴³ Elena KORZHOVA, Tipologia lichnosti v tvorchestve F. M. Dostoevskogo [Typology of personality in the works of F. M. Dostoevsky], *Psichologicheskii Zhurnal* [Psychological Journal], 42 (2021) 3, 64-74.

The spiritually rich contain within themselves the fullness of personal existence in accordance with the internally integral model of personality (»pure in heart«; »images of folk holiness«; »Russian monasticism«)⁴⁴. »The pure in heart« realize the ideal of Christ in their own lives through the search for harmony of existence in faith, in the acceptance of spiritual values and in the affirmation of virtues (meekness, humility, kindness, and simplicity). These are: Prince Myshkin, who is compassionate to all, comforts and reconciles everyone (The Idiot); Sonya Marmeladova, who sacrifices herself for the sake of her father's family (Crime and Punishment); a naive eleven-year-old »semi-teenager«, »savage«, »little hero« who at his age already knows how to distinguish, appreciate and protect spiritual beauty (The Little Hero). »Folk holiness« and »Russian monasticism« presuppose natural holiness; spiritual strength; foolishness as a combination of physical ill-being with inner beauty and spiritual grace of the individual, with his spiritual wisdom and foresight. Dostoevsky's characters move from salvation to righteousness and then through the final overcoming of passions and sin to the co-creation of the beauty of spiritual life. Thus, the life of the unfortunate cripple Marya Timofeevna Lebyadkina (Demons) and the simple-minded stepsister of the old woman-pawnbroker Lizaveta (Crime and Punishment) flows towards »holiness through sin«⁴⁵. Natural holiness is demonstrated by the peasant Marey, who reveals love to the child as the space of the birth of the Lord (A Writer's Diary) and the noble wanderer, who found the order and beauty of the world in God, Makar Ivanovich Dolgoruky (The Adolescent). The religious ideal of the Russian people is demonstrated by the images of »Russian monasticism«: monastic elders, Saint Tikhon (Demons), the hesychast elder Zosima and Alyosha Karamazov (The Brothers Karamazov). The conscious efforts of these characters to overcome life's adversities led them to faith in Christ, to inner harmony, to spiritual vision, filled them with the Spirit of God and gave them the opportunity for spiritual mentoring.

Thus, the elder hesychast Zosima prepares with his »conversations« the appearance of the image of Jesus Christ in the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor (The Brothers Karamazov). The sacredness of the feelings that accompany the elder's words are based on faith in the openness and goodness of life, in the bright sides of Being, in the interconnection of all components of the world, in »universal love« as »the feeling of God« and the need »to love man even in his sin, for this is the likeness of divine love and the height of love on earth«⁴⁶. The image of the elder Zosima affirms the idea that human life cannot take place without relying on a connection with God and following the path of Jesus Christ. However, in this movement there is no place for two deviations that

⁴⁴ Ibid., 72.

⁴⁵ Grigory POMERANTS, Unikal'ny zhanr [Unique genre]. *Dostoevsky I mirovaya kul'tura* [Dostoevsky and World Culture. Almanac], 1 (1993) 1, 22.

⁴⁶ Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *Bratya Karamazovy* [The Brothers Karamazov], Complete Works in 30 vol., Vol. 14, Leningrad, Nauka, 1976, 289.

corrode the moral foundation of Russian life – »spiritual Judaism« (an irreconcilable judicial attitude towards one's neighbor based on the principle of »an eye for an eye«) and »spiritual Pharisaism« (replacing a genuine inner aspiration to Christ with indifferent, routine participation in church rites)⁴⁷. »For the Western consciousness«, writes Sergei Khoruzhy,

»the key and main task was seen rather in the development of Christianity as a teaching that could answer all doctrinal questions in a well-founded manner. Although the Orthodox, Eastern Christian consciousness was the leader in creating the dogmatics of Christianity, the center was not the theoretical task of developing the teaching, but the practical task of achieving a certain experience: namely, this mysterious experience of union with Christ, which has already become a union with the other Being«⁴⁸.

Zosima's »conversations« for both the characters of the novel and the reader are a practical guideline, allowing inexperienced minds not to be seduced by the manipulative ideas of the Grand Inquisitor and to see in him not a »great humanist«, but an »Advocatus diabolic«.

The Grand Inquisitor, it would seem, both speaks and acts in accordance with the true reality obtained by his life experience and suffering: he opposes the primitive power of instincts to spiritual values, the harsh elements of the human masses to the ideal of the heroic personality, the need to earn daily bread every day as an inner freedom, and the bloody horror of historical reality to the ideal of beauty. However, Dostoevsky asserts that »it would be better to remain with Christ than with the truth«⁴⁹, and he is completely right, because sooner or later man will leave the material world; and he who chooses Christ gains both Him and the heavenly world forever and ever. Therefore, Christ warns, »For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?« (Matthew 16:26).

For Dostoevsky, Christ is not an abstract moral ideal, not an abstract philosophical truth, but an absolute Good that surpasses all personal goodness, perfect Beauty and Love. Christ responds to the Inquisitor's apostasy, expressed in a false word, with silence and a kiss, responds with love that is above all words. The kiss of Christ is the beginning of possible deification as the embodiment of the image of God in man and his deeds through the acceptance and fulfillment of the Laws given by Him: »But he suddenly silently approaches the old man and quietly kisses him on his bloodless ninety-year-old lips. That is the whole answer. The old man shudders. Something moves at the corners of his lips«⁵⁰. The Inquisitor's main mistake – his censure of calling love and its redemptive

⁴⁷ FEODOR (BUKHAREV), *O Svyatom Apostole Pavle* [About Saint Apostle Paul], Saint Petersburg, Korolev & Co., 1860, 8.

⁴⁸ Sergey KHORUZHYY, *Ocherki sinerghiynoy antropologii* [Essays on Synergetic Anthropology], Moscow, St. Thomas Institute, 2005, 151.

⁴⁹ Dostoevsky, *Besy...*, 194.

⁵⁰ Dostoevsky, *Bratya Karamazovy...*, 239.

value – cut short his personal spiritual transformation, which had barely begun to be realized by means of the Supreme Creative Power. Love as compassion and salvation is the essence of Christian ethics. The psychological mechanism of identification, which means not just sympathy for one's neighbor, but the identification of his experiences with one's own, is the basis of such love. To love one's neighbor and even one's enemy in Christianity is a way to defeat evil (Matthew 5:44). In Legend Dostoevsky preserves the most important premise of Christ's teaching: the good news of man's free appeal to God and man's free response to God's love. The light of love emanating from Christ, before which rational thinking is powerless, is for Dostoevsky the only guide to correctness and humanity:

»On earth, we truly seem to be wandering. Moreover, if there were no precious image of Christ before us, we would perish and become completely lost, like the human race before the flood«⁵¹.

The love of Christ initiates transformative energy, and its demonstration becomes both an act of love and an act of creativity. Love as theurgy invades the territory of characters' personal destinies, capturing the zone of social expectations. Love organizes personal creativity as a spiritual feat inseparable from life. The energy of love is charged with the will to actively re-create man's ideas about God, the material world and himself. Man's saving communion with God through love continues the work of Creation, since he actively creates a blessed life for himself. The goal of such creativity is existential ascent. Man's free creative act of changing being is theurgy; it creates a world in which the word becomes flesh, and culture becomes Being. The fullness of creation in love is the sought-after deification: man's creation of a new spirituality, which is only one-step removed from divine creativity. In this case, man is burdened with creative functions that are disproportionate to his powers and experiences a duality: he not only continues God's creation, but also claims to be the creator of the era of the Spirit. Duality, according to Dostoevsky, is a spiritual illness that accompanies the fallen, sinful state of man on earth, in accordance with church doctrine. The Orthodox ideal of the integrity of the personality can be achieved in the ascetic process of deification. Such preachers and practitioners of deification are the elder Zosima and Alyosha Karamazov. They transform the empirical »earth« through theurgy – the gracious »co-work« of God and man in the work of Christian salvation; combining the work of acquiring grace with life in the world, with a living touch of its cares and sorrows, with the wealth of interpersonal ties.

Thus, Dostoevsky offers a religious ideal of the human personality, theurgic perfection, achieved in the ascetic process of »deification«. Mikhail Bakhtin wrote about Dostoevsky's world,

⁵¹ Dostoevsky, *Bratya Karamazovy...*, 290.

»If we are to look for an image for it, to which this whole world gravitates, an image in the spirit of Dostoevsky's own worldview, then the church is such an image, as a communion of unmerged souls, where both sinners and the righteous will come together«⁵².

The spirit, meaning and beauty of Dostoevsky's theurgic characters are born in the process of dialogue between God and man. The distance separating natural man from the transcendental, according to Nikolai Berdyaev, is sinfulness. It can be overcome through the joint creativity of God and man, generating high personal meanings⁵³. Such co-creation in its ultimate meanings is theurgic – it is a transformation and leads to the deification of a new type of contemplation; spiritual asceticism; immersion of the mind in the heart, which represents the place of God's presence. Social humility, moral purity of Dostoevsky's theurgic characters turn out to be not identical to poverty of spirit – they only testify to man's attempt to overcome the internal gap between the real and the ideal image in earthly existence. As metropolitan Kallistos (Ware) noted: »Apart from God, I am not a real man, but a sub-man. There is no 'natural man' without God – we, people, cut off from God, are not in a 'natural' but in a very unnatural state«⁵⁴.

Conclusion

Dostoevsky, based on the conceptual metaphors of »human-beast« and »human-theurgist«, created a universal anthropological model, which he brought to life in the artistic text with the help of many levers and determinants: biological, psychological, social, spiritual-moral, metaphysical, religious, national, and universal. The writer's understanding of the ontological closeness of man with God allowed him to define the Divine principle as the primary element of humanity and theurgy. In Dostoevsky's Christian anthropology, man is natural, in a relationship with God, not a closed and not an autonomous being. By accepting with all his heart the meaning of Christ's commandments, the natural man departs from the state of brutality and becomes a multifaceted personality – worth keeping of uncreated Divine energies, containing both Christ and the entire Holy Trinity. The Perfect Love and Beauty of Christ initiate transformative energy, changing the disharmony of human existence to theurgic harmony, that is, to co-creation with the transcendent. The theurgic

⁵² Mikhail BAKHTIN, *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo* [Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics], Moscow, Hudozhestvennaya literatura, 1972, 45.

⁵³ Berdyaev, *Smysl tvorchestva...*, 67.

⁵⁴ KALLISTOS (WARE), *Theological Resources for Understanding Christian Anthropology in the Orthodox Tradition* (14.09.2009), https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Kallist_Uer/bogoslovskie-resursy-dlja-ponimaniya-hristianskoj-antropologii-v-pravoslavnoj-traditsii/#source (14.08.2025).

component as a person's experience of his own imperfection in Dostoevsky's anthropological model is dialectically connected with a special attitude to the universe as a highly spiritual fusion of the creative subject with God. The transition from the bestial to the human according to Dostoevsky is a creative ascent of a person with the support of God to absolute spiritual perfection, the development of new ethical regulators of virtue, a clear designation of the limits and possibilities of the spiritual and carnal existence of a person.

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*Antropološki model prema Fjodoru Dostojevskom: od »čovjeka-zvijeri« do
»božanski nadahnutog teurga«*

Sažetak

Suvremeno društvo, videći bit čovjeka samo u utilitarnoj snalažljivosti, doživljava antropološku krizu. Djelo Fjodora Dostojevskog omogućuje nam da razmotrimo supostojanje egzistencijalnog i ljudskog na razini metaantropoloških i metapovijesnih horizonata sociokulturne prakse, u kojima se metaforički koncepti »čovjeka-zvijeri« i »čovjeka-teurgista« pojavljuju kao jedinstven sociokulturni fenomen koji odražava čovjekov stalan napor da bude čovjek. Duh i ljepota teurgijskih junaka Dostojevskoga rađaju se u procesu dijaloga i stvaranja Boga i čovjeka, a razvoj od zvjerskog prema ljudskom jest kreativni uspon čovjeka uz podršku Boga do apsolutnog duhovnog savršenstva. Metodološka osnova istraživanja je interdisciplinarni pristup proširenju razumijevanja antropološkog modeliranja, ispravljanju već poznatih i stvaranju novih principa antropološke interpretacije književnih i umjetničkih tekstova.

Ključne riječi: antropološki model, čovjek-dvojnici, čovjek-teurgist, čovjek-zvijer, Dostojevski, konceptualna metafora, metaforički koncepti.

(na hrv. prev. Georgy Tananykin)

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