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## Crime and punishment: Existential kenosis and revelation in the iconographic chronotope

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***Crime and Punishment: Existential Kenosis and  
Revelation in the Iconographic Chronotope.***

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**in part completion for the degree of,**

**Bachelor of Arts (English) Hons.**

**Submitted at: Faculty of Arts**

**Edith Cowan University,**

**Mt Lawley, W.A.**

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## Abstract

The thesis investigates the notion of an existential dialogism and its relation to the Christian idea of *kenosis* or descent, which is an emptying of selfhood, and the connections between this and ideas of revelation as expressed in the chronotopes of Orthodox iconography and as they appear in *C&P*. The thesis argues that in this novel there is a parallelism in the constructions of time and space. The linear chronotope is accompanied by a descending existentialism: that is, the polyphony and dialogism of the novel, which relativise discursive personae and propel this sense of descent, are constructed within a language of *event* and, at the same time, there can be seen a parallel dimension which appears in the form of *revelation* within the dialogic existentialism and which points to an underlying essentialism. The parallelism of the chronotopic constructions points to an underlying parallelism of existentialism and essentialism in which the existential *eventual* discourse is in service to an essentialist anthropology whose centre is involved in a Kierkegaardian paradox. The connection with Orthodox iconography lies not only in the fact that Dostoevsky is a Slavophile but, in addition, can be seen in the way that his distortions and inversions of linearity are in service to revelation and resemble those constructions found in Byzantine and Russian iconography. This also gives way to trinitarian constructions of dialogism and polyphony rather than exclusively binary constructions of self and other. The overall structural motif, then, can be seen as one of descent, propelled by an existential dialogism. It also includes death and rebirth which constitute a trinitarian way of being in relation to the self, the other and the word itself.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signature: .....~.....

Date: 31 October, 1996

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## Introduction

A theological reading of the work of Dostoevsky, in particular, *Crime and Punishment*, runs the risk of neglecting the existential aspects of his writing. It can become simply an exegetical tract, enumerating the Christian symbolism and the typological discourses, at the expense of the deeply existential questions which seem to drive the narrative forward: *What are human beings that you spare a thought for them, or the child of Adam that you care for him?* (Ps 8: v.4). The novel engages with this question and whilst there is always a glance toward the tragic, and a character is the sum of the history, there is always more.

Eduard Thurneysen's *Dostoevsky: A Theological Study* (1964) approaches the anthropological basis in the novel from a Christian point of view but does so at the expense of structure, which, I would argue, is equally important here. Thurneysen's coming from a Protestant background is probably relevant here. There appears to be little direct theological criticism in more recent times. Geir Kjetsaa, in "Dostoevsky and His New Testament" (1983), demonstrates the relevance of the NT to Dostoevsky in his underlining of many passages, but goes no further and, though little can be gleaned directly from these markings, much can be inferred. David Jasper's more recent work, "The limits of formalism and the theology of hope: Ricoeur, Moltmann and Dostoevsky" (1987), engages with contemporary critical theory and attempts to re-invigorate the sign with referral, using a re-constituted and modified "old criticism". Whilst this critique engages with contemporary existential Christianity and with formalism, the actual reading of "revelation" seems to ignore that which is extrinsic to the text and thereby participates in that which he critiques as "Hellenistic schemes of epiphanies and eternity," as opposed

to eschatological history. In fact, his criticism of the strong Hellenist element of early Christianity, in a sense, undermines the eschatological element he valorises.

On the other hand, existential readings of the novel risk focusing on the tragic in the novel, the suffering and the plight of the poor, but they do this, often using Bakhtinian dialogic interpretations, at the risk of neglecting the aspects of essential humanism and of thereby reducing the character and the history to a nominalism. Thus, within the Dostoevskian critical world itself, there appears to be a species of Manichean dualism, something at variance with Dostoevsky's constructions of his characters which, instead, endorse the mystery of the person as indivisibly body and soul; in his characters there is no body/soul split, unless it is due to the character's self-alienation

Early existential readings have tended to overlook the Christian basis of Dostoevsky's later writing. Shestov highlights the importance of Dostoevsky's polemical attacks against systems, but he fails to note the Christian premises (in Valevicius, 1993, *Lev Shestov and His Times*). Later, both Kaufmann (*Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*: 1975) and Olsen (*Introduction to Existentialism*: 1962) would reject Dostoevsky as existentialist. These critics tend to minimise the possibility of a Christian existentialism or of an existentialism that is not the sole criterion of judgment for every other discourse. In this way, they have overlooked the possibility of seeing the existentialism in Dostoevsky as being in service to revelation. That is, Dostoevsky's Christianity can be seen as an extension of existentialist thought, instead of being submitted to it. Furthermore, his Christianity, in fact, critiques existentialism.

There can be seen, then, at the heart of the problem, a tension between Cartesian dualistic principles of the West and the holistic principles of Dostoevsky's traditionalist background in the Eastern Church. Bakhtin, also having come from such a position, tries

to maintain a holistic vision without falling into fideism but he admits a relativism which, whilst appealing to Western rationalism, does not fully address Dostoevsky's essentialism. "Fideism" is the belief that faith alone can save mankind and it involves a total exclusion of reason and of "works." Caryl Emerson has of course written extensively on Bakhtin and Dostoevsky. "Russian Orthodoxy and the early Bakhtin" (1990) addresses some of the textual issues in relation to Orthodox theology and even mentions the importance of icons and their non-realist modes. However, Emerson does little here, other than to re-state the Bakhtinian notion of complementarity in the self/other paradigm. Emerson, and other students of both Bakhtin and Dostoevsky, tend to emphasise this binarism at the expense of the trinitarian formulations wherein the Word itself can be seen as a third person. This aspect is crucial, I would argue, to the readings of both Dostoevsky and Orthodox iconography. Anthony Ugolnik, too, in "Textual liturgics: Russian Orthodoxy and recent literary criticism", sees the wealth of Bakhtin's dialogic self as a means of overcoming the alienating impasse of Western rationalist criticism. This is done with little critique of Bakhtin's ideas themselves, which seem to be accepted *a priori*, in what seems to be an urge in the West for a saviour in response to the post-structural alienation from meaning. The endorsement here of Bakhtin's dualism is slightly removed from an absolute subjectivism, but only slightly.

In this thesis, instead of beginning with Dostoevsky's demonstrated dialogism and polyphony, I begin with his essentialism and his holistic vision, as an *a priori* condition. It is this tenet that allowed the representation in iconography of the divine person. I then proceed to see how this essentialism remains in an unresolved tension with existential realities. Consequently, there is an existential "becoming" of a "person" but, because there is revelation, there is also "call" or vocation. This essence, in Dostoevsky's work,

can be seen as a seed, as a potential which has to be acted upon. I then move on to discuss the ways in which existentialism in the novel is in service to essentialism and this I have called a “dialogic kenosis.” This is an existential, experiential, descent toward death and rebirth and can be seen as the formal structure of the novel. In this way of descent, the existentialism is a means to an end: epistemology is submitted to ontology and all is submitted to the mystery of the person. Mystery does not bow to science, yet faith is preserved from fideism. It means that, whilst an essential centre can be theorised, it cannot be systematised. Even though the “dialogic kenosis” could be seen as systematic, it is preserved from this by an existential freedom which is the lived, subjective history of the character. Thus, in this novel, Christianity and existentialism are not mutually exclusive; neither is content nor form predominant. In conclusion, Dostoevsky’s demonstrated dialogic binary of self/other can be seen as having a trinitarian third point of referral which is “the theme of a new narrative” (*C&P*: 630). So he refers to a word outside of this word, one that deals with “renewal”, “rebirth” and transition; perhaps he refers to one written in heaven.

## Chapter 1: Images and Discourses

### Introduction

In this chapter I will argue that Dostoevsky's existentialism in the novel is connected with a sense of revelation. Revelation is basically essentialist, and this gives the dialogism a centre, however paradoxically subjective it may be. It can be argued, therefore, that there is a tension between an apparent existentialism and an underlying essentialism. This "central" essentialist discourse may be constructed as a discourse of "reprieve", because it looks beyond the tragic descent of the hero. It would be a reprieve from that which can be described as the existential death sentence and from the absurd. The reprieve can itself be seen as a dialogic response to the sense of death which seems to pervade the novel.

The underlying essentialism, I will argue, is one which participates in certain typological discourses and can be seen as being expressed in certain chronotopic constructions which are also evident in Byzantine/Russian Christian art. Therefore, it can be argued that there is a chronotope of "revelation" which tends to break through the linear construction of time and space, which is itself involved with the existentially tragic. This is evidence of an essentialist anthropology, because that which is "revealed" as the human essence is, in one sense, already present in the form of a potency. The tension between the existential and the essential, I will argue, can be seen as a kenotic, or descending, dialogism. Such a tension means that the internal discourse of a character can be relativised by an external existential discourse of events and this descent, in turn,

can be relativised by the essentialist discourse of “the eternal”. These two discourses are not necessarily constructed in an eternal binary unit, as can be evidenced by the “Epilogue” to the novel.

Dostoevsky’s relativism, regarding discourse, is not necessarily an ideological relativism, for this would conflate the author’s ideology with the polyphonic form of his novel. One could argue, instead, that the polyphonic form is teleological and that it is not an end in itself. It has at the centre of its voices a central idea of revelation. The actual relativising of time, space and discourse is a means of relativising the discourse of the absurd and of death in order that this “other” discourse of life or reprieve may shine through. That is, there can be seen a structure to the novel which expresses the Orthodox faith of descent, death and resurrection<sup>1</sup>. However, it is also a creed which is tested by existential realities.

Thus the hero is called into being through a process of becoming<sup>2</sup> fully human, through acquiring essence, and this is driven by contingencies in a way which accords with existential thought: his free choices in crises determine what he will become so that he exists at a given moment only as a potentially complete being. In an apparent contradiction the “call” itself, by the author-god, necessitates a pre-condition, an essence. It can be seen in the novel that this process of becoming fully human, of actualising potential, presupposes a human essence. However, there is a tension, a paradox and the hero, humanity, cannot be reduced to a reductionist, empirical understanding.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a model of baptism. Cf., fig’s 1 & 2 in the conclusion: p57

<sup>2</sup> I use the notion of “becoming” throughout this thesis. I intend it to mean a state of being which is, paradoxically, not a state as it is impermanent. It can be noted that in existentialist thought there is a negation of pre-existent essence; nothing “is”, without “becoming” that which it is. Moreover, the idea that it should be a “process” is problematic but, it is a useful expression for my purposes here and I invite the reader to bear in mind the limitations of language, especially in a field such as this.

In this way, it appears that Dostoevsky comes out on the side of mystery. There is revelation, as in the “dream” narratives, the confession and the Epilogue, in particular, suggests pre-existent essence but the hero has manifestly not become all that he may become, his potency is not fully actualised and cannot be fully actualised until he chooses to become the being who can only fully manifest himself in the world through the impossibility of love. So the sense of a call to become what one is in essence is expressed in the epilogue in the form of promise and covenant. Abraham is invoked as the epitome of paradoxical love<sup>3</sup> and it is at this moment that Raskolnikov, passively, “was hurled to (Sonya’s) feet. He wept and hugged her knees...and now she was in no doubt that he loved her” (C&P: 629). It is worth noting, too, that this covenant takes place shortly after Holy Week, which is the week of the Revelation. In the Orthodox Church, the icon stand, *iconostasis*, which would normally separate the assembly from the sanctuary is removed at this time as a sign that the Resurrection is a present reality.

According to Rzhevsky, “the truly decisive ideological function performed by Mikhail Dostoevsky and his wife Marya was to provide their son with a very thorough introduction to native religious ideas and values,” and he further adds that “Dostoevsky’s ideological centre was shaped out of his Russian Orthodox background” (1983: 67). In fact, Rzhevsky notes, the young Fyodor was attending church since his earliest infancy, as is suggested by biographical material which tells of how, when he was two years old, a dove flew through the place of worship (1983: 69). He also argues that Dostoevsky’s mother exerted a “crucial influence” on the boy, “by directly demonstrating a strong religious faith and by showing her son an active, everyday expression of Christian values of love, humility, and charity” (1983: 68).

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Footnote # 4, chapter 2.

Rzhevsky goes on to say that the first literature to which Dostoevsky was exposed was his mother Marya's, *One hundred and four holy stories from the old and new testaments* and Metropolitan Filaret's short catechism (1983: 70). Rzhevsky states that the catechism has been greatly ignored in Dostoevskian studies in terms of its effect upon the consciousness of a young child. He states that this was the book from which Dostoevsky learned, word by word, the basic tenets of the Orthodox faith (1983: 70). However, I would argue that, before the catechism, there was the liturgy of the Church itself and, within that liturgy, there has always been, excepting the earlier periods of iconoclasm in Greece, a prominent place for the icon and a very particular notion of what the icon actually is. According to Sendler, the prominent place of icons in the Eastern Rite and the narrative structures, which those icons both presented and embodied, would have formed in religious Russian society a constant and ever-present background among all classes (1988: 48). These items and their narratives, then, would have been Dostoevsky's first exposure to religious narrative. Sendler argues that the prominent place of icons in the Eastern rite is more evident than in the Roman Church, even today, and that the Orthodox were, in fact, commended to place icons "everywhere the faithful lived" (1988: 48).

This semiology, then, which would have quite literally surrounded Dostoevsky since infancy in the Russian Orthodox Church and in the home, where icons would have had an important place in terms of family worship and prayer, could have transmitted the narrative patterns which were to appear again later in his fiction. These narrative patterns include transcendence and revelation. Thus, it can be argued that there was present early in the mind of the young Dostoevsky the idea of what is known in Greek as *kenosis*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Rzhevsky (1983) *The Christian Ego*. University of Illinois Press. The expression comes from St Paul's letter to the Phillipians and refers primarily to the traditional, but anachronistic, understanding of

The narrative and chronotopic structure of icons attempts to express the notion of the immanent and transcendent deity who has entered into the material world, and they can be seen, in that sense, as an attempt to express an essential and revelatory reality. This revelatory aspect appeals to what is essential in the human and calls this into being in a *theosis*. *Theosis* is an actualisation of essential likeness.<sup>5</sup> However, it is important to note in Christian thought that that which is called in to being is already present in a latent sense and is the diminished-through-sin likeness to God that was fully present in Adam and recovered in Christ. Although the icons express a relativity in their chronotopic construction, they also express an essentialism in a metaphysics of presence.

Egon Sendler writes that in Greek, as in Slavonic, one speaks of *writing* an icon and that, as with the written word, the icon teaches Christian truth (1988: 67). So a didactic character has never been far from iconography, even in the first few centuries. Sendler states that icons can be seen also as literary types, for they are a “theology of images” (1988: 67). It was early in the development of Christian iconography that the narrative style became dominant and the source of literary inspiration for the painters was of course the Holy Scriptures, as well as the apocryphal writings and liturgical texts. Sendler notes that the icons, therefore, took as their structure or form the dominant literary types of that time (1988: 67).

Sendler notes that Onash, in his book on iconography, “dedicated a large part of his research to these literary types through which the icon expressed itself.” Onash, he

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Christ's voluntary self-deprivation of the divine glory (Ph 2: 6,7). Source: *New Jerusalem Bible*. Published by Doubleday & Co: London.

<sup>5</sup>“‘God became man,’ Athanasius writes, ‘so that man may become God’”. In this concept, man's role in the created world can be fulfilled only if he keeps intact the “image of God which was part of his [essential] humanity from the beginning.” (Meyendorff, John : 1974: 4. *Byzantine Theology: Historical trends and doctrinal themes*. Fordham UP: New York.)

adds, "pointed out four basic models: the panegyric, the epic, the dramatic, and the dogmatic" (1988: 68). I will attempt to outline the dominant elements of these literary types in relation to the icon. I will then try to demonstrate that these narrative structures are also present in Dostoevsky's *C&P* and to link this to his upbringing in the Russian Orthodox Church. I will later attempt to show that the dominant Christian values represented therein, and the narrative structures and techniques themselves, are integral to Dostoevsky's way of narrating and are an essentialist doctrine of revelation and mystery. In fact, the novel itself can be seen as being directed toward the same end as the icon: the directing of the mind of the interlocutor toward a concrete understanding of the incarnate God in matter, time and space. If God has become incarnate in flesh, then his form can be expressed, however imperfectly, in art.

Having investigated these four literary types, or models, I shall examine the construction of time and space which is present in some icons. This construction establishes a particular hermeneutic system, expressing an understanding of the divine as being both accessible and concrete. My intention, by means of this, is to investigate further whether these constructions of time and space can be seen in Dostoevsky.

### The panegyric model

Sendler says that "the resemblance to Christ is the key which opens to us an intimate understanding of eastern holiness (1988: 69-70). Thus the panegyric icon told in a sequence the life of the saint, as modelled after the life of Christ. The dominating principle is that the attributes of the saint be Christ-like. By "sequence" I do not mean a scientific exposition of history for, as Sendler says, "the faithful of the Middle Ages...would probably not have understood at all the search for historical truth such as it

is conceived by modern science (1988: 70). Sendler explains that the panegyric icon usually had at its centre the face, bust or full length image of the saint surrounded by what were perceived as being important scenes from the life of the saint, which were able to express a Christ-likeness, rather than a historical truth (1988: 70). He adds that, in the classical panegyric icon, each scene from the life of the saint is discrete from the others, as can be seen in the sixteenth-century icon, *St Nicholas*, from the Moscow school (in Sendler, 1988: plate 10)<sup>6</sup>.

It must be pointed out here that, although the circular arrangement of the scenes would suggest a cyclical construction of time, the Orthodox Christian sense of time is always eschatological. This is evidenced in the icon by the presence of revelation in the form of the cross and the Scriptures and also by the fact that the scenes do not necessarily follow a strict chronological order. In this icon it is almost as if the events of the life have been generated from the centre of the saint's life which is devoted to Christ. In any case, the important thing in terms of narrative structure is the way in which, according to Sendler, the icon narrates scene by scene the life of the saint, without subordinating that narrative to an imposing empiricist construction of time (1988: p70). This means that the events of the saint's life, in their quality and likeness to the prototype, Christ, were more important than an objective historicity. According to Sendler, these icons, being panegyric, which is a "speech of praise" from the Greek *logos panegyrikos*, by nature contained a rhetorical element (1988: 69). "Rhetoric", in the classical sense, meant a use of particularly evocative language and it was this oratory style which, according to Sendler, could help to draw out a Christological typology in a saint's life (1988: 68).

In the novel, this can be seen by the way in which Raskolnikov does a repetitive and cyclical tour of St Petersburg. However, he is not trapped within an endlessly

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<sup>6</sup> Appendix 1.

hopeless cycle; there is a direction. According to Cassedy, in many of the accounts of the lives of early saints

it is possible to notice a narrative pattern which resembles Raskolnikov's story. To begin with, many of the early saints did not display exemplary moral and religious characters during their lives. What truly sanctified them in the eyes of the Russian faithful, according to Fedotov, was nothing more than the violent nature of their death and their voluntary submission to it. But there is more to it than this, for it becomes clear from the accounts concerning the earliest saints, Boris, Gleb, and others that combined with voluntary suffering is a recognition, a sudden joyful understanding of the significance of that suffering. And the significance of that suffering is precisely that it brings the subject closer to Christ (1982: 184).

Revelation can be seen, then, in the presence of the cross, which is the town square that Raskolnikov is to kiss whilst admitting his murders, and in the Scriptures, especially in the reading of the *Raising of Lazarus*. Here, the inter-textuality<sup>7</sup> is expository and it is not something uncommon to the Scriptures themselves, nor to iconography.

As well as the panegyric of the main narrative, panegyric in the sense that it meanders around St Petersburg, there are also embedded narratives which can be seen panegyrically in terms of their rhetoric and in the sense that they are circular but also have a direction out of themselves. This is because there is a regression in diegetic levels from which the narrative moves forward until it finishes again in the main narrative, that is, at its starting point. So there is an implicit literary exaggeration in terms of the text's self-reflexivity. This is one element of rhetoric. For instance, there is the embedded narrative of the decorator who is suspected of the crime (C&P: 179-188). Here the narrative is embedded at three diegetic removes from the point of view of the reader. There is the third person narration, the narration by Razumikhin and, then the further narration by

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<sup>7</sup> Derrida argues for "iterability", inter-textual saying-again, against transcendence. But, the possibility of inter-textuality itself within a dialogic weave argues for a transcendent and liberating insight. Cf., Charles Spinoza: *Derrida and Heidegger: Iterability and Ereignis*. in, *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*. Dreyfus, D. (ed.) and Hall, H. (ed.). 1992: Basil Blackwell: 270-297. Also, the theme of transcendence in the subjective reading of Scripture can be found in Kierkegaard's *Judge For Yourself*, Translated by Lowrie, W, 1941: Princeton U.P.

Razumikhin's character, Dushkin. The narrative is cyclical and panegyric in that it ends at its beginning, having traced a path scene by scene, but one is not caught within this circularity because the overall construction of the main narrative is linear. The diegesis calls attention to the narrative itself and is, in this way, rhetorical. It employs a theatricality in its language, as can be seen by the narrative comment, "at that moment the door opened, and there entered a new *dramatis persona*" (C&P: 186).

There is a similarity with iconographic forms in terms of the hermeneutics. It was stated above that the icon, in its multi-perspectivity, attempts to construct a space which is numinous. This space advances toward the viewer in order to share an intimacy with the viewer, instead of separating the object and the subject through a retreating, converging, linear perspective. The reader alone, therefore, shares Raskolnikov's secret and is drawn into a kind of conspiracy with him. Raskolnikov's every gesture and word take on a significance which they do not hold for the other, unsuspecting characters. There is a heightened sense of awareness for the reader regarding Raskolnikov. For instance, when Raskolnikov is startled: "'Behind the door? It was lying behind the door? Behind the door?' (He) suddenly shouted, looking at Razumikhin with a dull, frightened stare." (C&P: 183), only the reader is aware of what the outburst means. For the others, it may as well be a foreign language and, indeed, they allude to his having had a bad dream.

The reader, then, is in a peculiar relationship with Raskolnikov, knowing him better than any, even himself, and because, for Raskolnikov, the words and gestures of the others take on an inordinate significance, due to his fear of their suspecting his crime, the reader is able to hold two simultaneous points of view. That is, there is here a multiple perspective and it is also inverted because it directs itself outward, toward the

reader. It is not thrown back on itself in the universalistic and omniscient way of a singular perspectivity and converging linearity.

### The Epic Model

Sendler claims that “for the epic story, historical faithfulness was the dominant requirement” (1988: 70). The icon of *St Sergius of Radonezh* is a classical example of this type (in Sendler, 1988: plate 14). In this icon we see the depiction of the events of the saint’s life according to a historical truth. These events are thus concrete, rather than panegyric. Probably the most popular of the epic type is that of *The ascension of Elijah in a fiery chariot*.<sup>8</sup> As Sendler notes, this scene occupied the centre of the composition and was surrounded by the events of Elijah’s life, as narrated in the Scripture, for example: the prophet in the desert, God’s angel giving to him his command, raising the son of the widow, and the crossing of the Jordan on dry land (1988: 71). Once again, the events, even though narrated in a time sequence, are not subordinated to time as, for the Christian, there is a victory over time and over the tragic<sup>9</sup> in the resurrection of Christ. In the ascension of Elijah, we see that time has a direction and that human beings are not destined to live out an endless cyclical existence but, at the same time, history is not complete. The prophet ascends in time and history, whilst not being subject to them entirely. This icon thus expresses fully the Christian construction of eschatological time for, in demonstrating that time has a direction, that life indeed has a direction, which is toward heaven, it does not do what cyclical constructions do: that is, to close time in on itself in an eternal closure within which hope can have no logical place. Thus there is an essentialism which does not dominate history; it exists, instead, like a dormant seed within

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<sup>8</sup> Appendix 2.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Karl Jaspers’ *Tragedy Is Not Enough*, Translated by Reiche, Moore and Deutsch: 1969: Anchon Books. USA.

an existential process of becoming and can only be fully realised within an existential historicity of freedom. The possibility of the essential not being realised remains and the history is saved from determinism.

Once more, the epilogue is important. It even works against the linearity of the crime/punishment causality, showing forgiveness and love as transcendent revelation. What has gone before is tragic in itself, but it is not the end. According to Cassedy, it is in Raskolnikov's acceptance of suffering that

the tragic logic of *C&P* is complete. All steps of the form have been played out: 1) the ambiguous criminal act, 2) recognition/understanding, 3) reversal in fortune, and 4) suffering. They have been played out, moreover, in the same legal and historical terms as in Greek tragedy, and victory has been given to the primitive pole of the ethical conflict. As far as tragedy is concerned, nothing further is needed. It is easy to see where this model is incomplete, however, and the reasons are both formal and historical...For Christian suffering or passion (*stradanie* in Russian means both), in terms of the Gospel narrative, is not a finality but a prius to a finality: rebirth...Suffering in the Christian sense is an intrinsically incomplete activity, since it is necessarily directed towards an end (1982: 183).

Thus, as it is for the epic icon, the hero is not subordinated to time but has instead the possibility of transcendence. Raskolnikov suffers because of his history but he is not condemned to it; there remains the possibility of a new direction, of new life, despite his history. His suffering, also, is not rationalised in terms of a justifying theodicy of necessity; the suffering remains as suffering.

### The Dramatic Model

Sendler asserts that "painters also...highlighted, conflicts, surprises and contradictions" and, in doing so, were trying to capture what he describes as the "dramatic element inherent in all human reality" (1988: 72). A dramatic tension was thus infused into these paintings by means of these conflicts, contradictions and surprises.

Through this type, the icon intended to bring to life the concrete events and persons of history.

For example, in the icon, *The Transfiguration*, we see a typical dramatic icon (in Sendler, 1988: plate 27).<sup>10</sup> There is a sharp contrast between the standing figures of Christ, Elijah and Moses and those of the kneeling or prostrate apostles. There is also evident a contrast of emotions with the joyful Christ and the fearful apostles. And there is a contrast of colour and light and this, together with the inversed perspective, precipitates movement, bringing the icon to life and moving out, toward the viewer. Once again in the icon, *The Doubting Thomas*, we see the dramatic contrast of figures which also precipitates movement. Thomas, whilst looking upward with the other disciples looking on, leans forward to touch the wounds of Christ (in Sendler, 1988: plate 32).<sup>11</sup> This icon also illustrates, through its use of light and perspective, a construction of time and space which is in sharp contrast with that of Renaissance art.

According to Sendler,

in order to determine the most probable origins of Byzantine perspective, we must turn to the ideas which formed the worldview of that era. Here we cannot help but think about the philosopher and theologian who, under the pseudonym Dionysius the Areopagite, so greatly influenced the Middle Ages. In his system, everything is determined by the shining of the divine light through all creatures. Through the icon the truths of the faith shine out to those who contemplate it. Thus, the movement which in the naturalist painting leads toward the vanishing point reverses itself and moves out toward the person who is looking at the work. This is to say that the ordinary structures and the laws of the representation are overthrown and reversed (1988: 148).

In *The Doubting Thomas*, cited here, therefore, we see the use of isometric perspective in the building on the viewer's right. This type of perspective, in which parallel lines do not converge toward the horizon, can also be seen in relation to the heads of the standing

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<sup>10</sup> Appendix 3.

<sup>11</sup> Appendix 4.

figures depicted in this icon. Those who are logically further from the viewer appear as the same size as those which are closer to the viewer. There is also the use of an inverted perspective in the platform on which Christ is standing, making it appear that he is moving forward, out of the icon. Each of these perspectives has its own space and there is no single vanishing point in the picture. It is in fact constructed with vanishing points outside of the picture, that is, within the viewer's own body or in a space between the icon and the viewer. This sense is amplified by the fact that, in Byzantine iconography, framing was rarely, if ever, used.<sup>12</sup> The light in the picture also has no single source and so there is a complex interplay of light and shadow. This illustrates the point, above, that the whole of creation is, in a sense, bathed in the light of God, that God is present everywhere in creation and is not only transcendent, but also immanent. The icon shows that God does not exist beyond in a platonic realm or a fixed point in space from where his light can shine. This means that the viewer, too, shares this light and so there is again an interplay between the observer and the observed; the icon and its viewer are in a sort of dialogue. Thus, the attempt at communion, by constructing a space in which the presence of the viewer and that of the spirit of the icon can meet in a type of hypostasis where neither presence is completely relativised, presupposes the possibility of communion and, thereby, of essence.

In the novel, then, the sense of the dramatic can be seen in relation to the crisis and the contingent requirement of choice. Here again it is possible to see a tension between a point of view which deals with revelation, and thereby with concomitant essence, and another point of view which deals with existence. Dostoevsky does not

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<sup>12</sup> It can be noted here that the novel begins at a point in which Raskolnikov has already plotted his crime and it ends outside of itself in its allusion to "another narrative" (C&P: 630). In other words, it is unframed, unlike a naturalistic novel such as *Madame Bovary* where Flaubert seems to spend a great deal of time initially framing that which is to come.

appear to want to reduce this tension in the narrative and so polyphony and multiplicity of perspective remain a constant safeguard against the reduction of the irreducible mystery of being. This will be further discussed in the next chapter.

I make this analysis in order to demonstrate that the world view of the Eastern Christian, as embodied in these artefacts, would have been one that was, up to a point, anti-rational, or that it at least imposed limitations upon reason and rationalism. Hence the representation of reality in Eastern icons is one in which the delineation of reality by the senses, and the sort of empiricism to which that can lead, is overthrown in favour of a "spiritual" or "unseen" reality, or better, by a reality which is not seen only with the eye of the senses, but also with the eye of the soul. If this is true in the novel, it seems to indicate that Dostoevsky privileges essence over existence. For there to be a revelation or a "call", there has to be something to reveal and someone to call. For instance, Raskolnikov is called in the epilogue to a theosis, a transcending of the human split self to a oneness in the transcendence of love which is expressed, paradoxically, in the existential language of failure and impossibility. Whilst it appears, therefore, that the novel is existential, that Raskolnikov is "coming into being," acquiring essence within his history and trying to manifest himself as a presence in the world, this sense of revelation and transcendence indicates something of an essence. This is because the crisis-driven choices that he makes seem to be attuned to the possibility of his manifesting this essence, which is his likeness-to-God, in the possibility of choosing love.

The revelation, therefore, is connected to the theosis; the revelation calls him to become what he is in essence. This, too, has implications for the constructions of language for, in the same way, literary texts may be viewed, not only from an empiricist, logical point of view, but also as an interplay, exchange or dialogue between the observed and the observer so that one may see/hear, as in the case of the holy pictures, with the

eyes/ears of the soul. The interlocutor is involved in and participates in the revelation, and is also “called” in a certain sense, making the possibility of seeing the book as iconographic more apparent. Moreover, the most important aspect of dialogism in the novel can be seen as that between the reader and the novel; the reading of the novel in this way involves a commitment to the possibility of having one’s own discourses relativised. In this way, the novel shows a perspective of immanence and transcendence which involves the reader and, unlike Western realism in painting and literature, the reader is not alienated from the scene in a total objectivity, but neither is the reader alienated within the self in a complete subjectivism. Once more, there is a tension, a paradox, a mystery. These theories of perspective, both Western and Eastern, are discussed in great detail in Sendler’s book (cited) and elsewhere and I have only tried here to highlight the main points. I have simply attempted to make their applicability to Dostoevsky’s *C&P* apparent in this paper.

### The Theological Treatise as Model

From the beginning of Christian iconography, icons contained two basic elements: the concrete and the theological, ie, the theological as it was expressed in concrete events and persons. Sendler points this out and also notes that even the early panegyric icons contained a theological element but, he adds, it was under the influence of Western rationalism that the dogmatic element began to dominate the icon (1988: 73-76). In a dramatic icon such as *The Doubting Thomas*, the focus is on the person of the risen Christ in the presence of his disciples, but in the theological icon we see a shift toward an emphasis on the meaning of an event, rather than a simple depiction,

For instance, in the Rublev icon, *The Trinity*, we see a reduction in the prominence of the concrete elements present in the meeting of Abraham with the three men who passed him at Mamre, such as the oak tree, the supper and indeed Abraham himself (in Sendler, 1988: plate 29).<sup>13</sup> In this icon it is evident that there is present a dogmatic teaching: the three who passed Abraham were traditionally seen as a sign of the Trinity and, in this icon, this teaching becomes explicit. The dogmatic element is even more in evidence in the icon, *Paternitas*, which attempts to show directly and explicitly the Trinity, rather than a symbol of it, with the procession of the three divine persons (in Sendler, 1988: plate 31).<sup>14</sup> Thus, we can see that these icons begin to take on the form of a theological treatise, rather than an expression of an event. In this sense, they are unlike the Scriptures which always tend to narrate in terms of events, places and people, rather than in direct dogmatic expressions of meaning and truth.

In terms of literature, then, it is important that in Dostoevsky's *C&P* there is little direct, explicit expression of the Orthodox faith, but there is indeed much indirect expression of Christian values and beliefs. Often this takes place in an ironic way, by means of showing what Christianity is not. For instance, the internal discourse of Luzhin reveals that his motives are all too human: "He had thought with rapture in deepest secret of a chaste and pure young girl...who had experienced a great many misfortunes...the kind of girl who would all her life consider him as her salvation" (*C&P*: 365). Thus, Dostoevsky is able, indirectly, to initiate a soteriological debate. In this sense, Dostoevsky's novel is closer to the dramatic icon than to the theological. His expressions of morality, truth and spirit occur within the framework of a narrative, involving concrete places, peoples and times, both political and historical. In this way, the reader is also

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<sup>13</sup> Appendix 5.

<sup>14</sup> Appendix 6.

given the freedom of remaining "outside" the text, of being non-committal, and is not proselytised.

In conclusion, what I have argued for is a connection between Dostoevsky's constructions of time and space and those of the Christian icons, revealing a possibility of accord in their respective world views. It appears that Dostoevsky rejects the empiricist narratives of the West, which had abolished the self, as well as the Romantic Idealism, which had abolished the other, in order to present his essentialist subject-in-relation. This would seem to be at odds with the existential aspects of the novel, revealing Dostoevsky's essentialism to be somewhat illusory, a point which I will discuss in the next chapter.

## Chapter 2: Existentialism, Dialogism and Kenosis

### Introduction

In this chapter I will argue that *C&P* has existential qualities which could appear to upset essentialist notions but which are, instead, at the service of an essentialism. In his book, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, Walter Kaufmann states that he “can see no reason for calling Dostoevsky an existentialist” (1975: 14). This is despite his enumeration of the traits of existentialism which, he admits, Dostoevsky demonstrates.

These include:

The refusal to belong to any school of thought, the repudiation of the adequacy of any body of beliefs whatever, and especially of systems, and a marked dissatisfaction with traditional philosophy as superficial, academic, and remote from life - that is the heart of existentialism (1975: 12).

Perhaps it is Dostoevsky’s Christianity which excludes him, in Kaufmann’s scheme of things, from the title of *existentialist*, a scheme which would be in that case far too rigid, as I will argue. In other words, Dostoevsky does not stop at existentialism until he arrives back at essence.

In this chapter, I will argue that *C&P* constructs the notion of the existential dilemma as being a type of death sentence. I will argue that this is evident in the novel through the constructions of suffering and the way in which discourses which try to rationalise or justify suffering are relativised within a dialogic system of counter-discourse or contradiction. These constructions of meaninglessness, or perhaps mystery, may be crucial to an understanding of the dialogic as kenotic. In this dialogism, the shedding of

discourse, like the garments of the catechumen who prepares to enter the baptismal waters of death, can be likened to the religious notion of *kenosis*, or descent, especially in the light of Dostoevsky's Russian Orthodox heritage. In this way, Dostoevsky's dialogism can be seen as anti-Romantic and, if there is an overall kenotic structure or motif to the novel, it would be diametrically opposed to the idea of the picaresque. Furthermore, in the Christian religions of both east and west, converts may not commune until they are baptised into a community of believers and, in this sense, Dostoevsky's existential dialogic kenosis can be seen as a prelude to communion, and he would not, therefore, presuppose a Christian truth but, instead, arrives at one in the Epilogue. I asserted in the previous chapter that this sense of descent, of emptying out, is interconnected with the sense of revelation in the novel, that the one accompanies the other and that this is clearly connected with essentialist constructions. There can be seen, therefore, a parallelism in the constructions of time and space and revelation: a linear chronotope underlies a kenotic, existential discourse, whilst a sense of the eternal, which is *achronotopic*<sup>1</sup>, underlies the aspect of revelation in an essentialist discourse. From this it can be argued that Dostoevsky's existentialism is not an end in itself, but a departure.

It is against the background of a real, lived suffering that Dostoevsky's novel can be seen as dialogic. The ironic relativisation of discourse takes place against this existential reality and can be seen as an indictment of the schemes that would pose as "enlightened" discourses. These "enlightened" discourses would exchange the ideal of Christian charity, love, for *rational self interest*. N G Chernyshevsky, one of the leading intellectuals of the day, had, seemingly, tried to answer to the social problems, the

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<sup>1</sup> By this I mean that the eternal is outside, or beyond, the chronotope, seeing as it can not be known categorically. Its representation within experiential categories can only ever be approximation of, or, attitude-toward, the eternal. That is, it is only a hint of a possibility.

suffering, by setting himself up as a new St John the Baptist. By announcing the coming of the socialist kingdom, and by using the same words that had been asked of the Baptist, he attempted a rhetorical response in his book, *What's to be done?*. What he advocated was a kind of secular theodicy, a rational system for answering to the social problems, in which Man could be rationally explained to himself. Dostoevsky's "Underground Man" launches an ironic and sarcastic attack on this position:

But all these are golden daydreams. Tell me, who was it who first declared, proclaiming it to the whole world, that a man does evil only because he does not know his real interests, and if he is enlightened and has his eyes opened to his own best and normal interests, man will cease to do evil and at once become virtuous and noble, because when he is enlightened and understands what will really benefit him he will see his own best interest in virtue, and since it is well known that no man can knowingly act against his best interests, consequently he will inevitably, so to speak, begin to do good. Oh, what a baby! Oh, what a pure innocent child! (*Notes from The Underground*: 29).

Thus, Dostoevsky's narrator argues against rationality in relation to human whim. He also says that anything can be said about history but "there is only one thing that you can't say - that it had anything to do with reason" (ibid: 37). He argues that there is a point at which a person will be completely unreasonable simply in order to demonstrate their moral right to stupidity:

Shower (Man) with all earthly blessings, plunge him so deep into happiness that nothing is visible but the bubbles rising to the surface of his happiness, as if it were water; give him such economic prosperity that he will have nothing left to do but sleep, eat gingerbread, and worry about the continuance of world history - and he, I mean man, even then, out of sheer ingratitude, out of sheer devilment, will commit some abomination. He will jeopardise his very gingerbread and deliberately will the most pernicious rubbish, the most uneconomic nonsense (ibid: 38-39).

It would be a mistake automatically to attribute all the opinions of Dostoevsky's narrator to Dostoevsky himself, but it is reasonable to attribute some of those discourses, which are also found in the personal diaries, to Dostoevsky's own sense that the progressives and rationalists were headed in the wrong direction. In one of Dostoevsky's

typical and polemical tirades against Chernyshevsky et al., he highlights the importance for him as an artist of the place of images in cultures, in reference to the human desire of representing itself to itself:

You want to force humanity not to explain itself in images (cut off your nose). Man from the very earliest of times has explained himself in images. Every language is full of images and metaphors you infringe upon figurative exposition of thought, you are conspirators against progress, poor, unfortunate ignoramuses (*The Unpublished Dostoevsky: Diaries and Notebook 1860-1861*: 129).

Chernyshevsky and the progressives of his ilk were essentially pragmatic. Chernyshevsky rejected art entirely as nonsense and Dostoevsky's attack was in relation to Chernyshevsky's thesis about the real apple versus the painted apple (editor's note #12 notebook 5: 146) Thus, it can be argued that the modes of representation of self were crucial for Dostoevsky, as well as the actual forms of self-representation, whilst Chernyshevsky and other progressives represented a new type of iconoclasm. The iconoclasm of the progressives, however, is one that is connected to utility and productivity. Dostoevsky's notes on Utility and Morality demonstrate clearly how he takes the word of the other and uses it polemically; contradiction appears, at first, as reddiction: "Shakespeare. His uselessness. Shakespeare as a backward person" (notebook #1: 3).

At this point, then, it is necessary to ask how Dostoevsky represents humanity to itself in *C&P*. In the first place, a distinction must be drawn between the way in which a character such as Raskolnikov may perceive himself and the way in which Dostoevsky may perceive humanity. For instance, Raskolnikov has a certain view of himself as a "World Historical Figure". But his view of himself is relativised, rendered inadequate by the events in his life. In this way, there can be seen at play one aspect of the Dostoevskian dialogic function. Raskolnikov's internal discourse, his image of himself

involved in the story, which he tells himself about himself, enters into conflict with the discourse of his lived history and with the society around him, with his own and others' irrationality, revealing his internal discourse as being untrue and in need of modification. At the same time, through all of this, it must be said that Dostoevsky himself is saying something about this process and is also constructing a particular view of humanity, a view in which incomplete or imperfect modes of representations do battle with the exterior events of life and of historical progress, or lack thereof. The author figure can be seen as the type of God figure who would intervene in the history of the character with events which would relativise that character's own grandiose notions of himself

Kant argued that there were certain things which existed *a priori*, that is, within themselves, and that there were other things which were received into human consciousness through the mediation of categorical principles and laws of perception that were themselves already present in the mind. He thus, according to Olsen, drew a distinction between the world of the noumenal and that of the phenomenal and he was also trying to build a bridge over the Cartesian mind/body split (1962: 38). The conscious world which people experience is generally that of the phenomenal, for it is governed by categorical principles, including time and space, whilst the noumenal world is beyond the reach of consciousness because it cannot be categorised or experienced. This, perhaps, marks an anti-essentialism, except that it still posits an essence, only it is one that cannot be known.

It is possible, here, to read Dostoevsky's polyphony as the relativisation of essential notions of the self. However, the challenging of notions of identity and personality in the pluralism of polyphony does not necessarily mean *less*. Instead, it could be *more*, because the shedding of discursive personae itself alludes to an essence, a

spirit, rather than an annihilation in the literal sense. Thus, a chronotope is necessary which not only relativises the discursive thought of the interlocutor but, also, involves a hermeneutics whose action is inclusive. In Dostoevsky's wrangles with the nihilistic empiricists of the West, then, the tradition of Russian iconography, which probably also would have appealed to a Slavophile for its embodiment of national sentiments and virtues, could provide such a chronotope. Another way this can be seen in the novel is in terms of irony, because it not only relativises discourse, it also presupposes a shared understanding; it is inclusive at the expense of something else. Thus, the polyphony and the irony which are directed to the heart, at the expense of what is false and vain, can be seen as a dialogism of spirit.

Olsen points out that Kant saw people as being "comfortably installed in the phenomenal world" and that this marks the great divide between him and the modern existentialists (1962: 38). This is because, for Kant, as Olsen notes, "the noumenal world is in principle beyond the reach of human consciousness, there is no danger that it will ever erupt into the phenomenal world to upset its orderly pattern" (1962: 38). In contrast, Sartre, Olsen adds, sees people as living in their own worlds; consciousness is subjective and there are as many phenomenal worlds as there are people. In addition to this, Olsen says that the noumenal world, or the "in-itself"<sup>2</sup>, the "being-in-itself", is constantly threatening an interruption to the cosy phenomenal order (1962: 39). This "interrupting" can then be seen as an interrogation or even as a devastating event which could dislocate or even destroy the individual world or consciousness. This "interrogation" is interesting because it seems to be accomplished by a word which is not pronounceable, as it exists outside of categories. However, if it is accepted that the

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<sup>2</sup> Olsen remarks, too, on the difficulties of using such language (1962: 39). I will use the word "in-itself" and "numinous" interchangeably to signify that which in Kant is the *noumenal*, in Sartre is the *in se*, in Heidegger is *Dasein*, and in Kierkegaard is the *absurd*.

individual worlds and consciousnesses here are discursive (ie, that they exist within, and are created by, language) and that, because they also exist within the phenomenal world of space and time, this interruption will necessarily carry a dislocation or destruction of the temporal consciousness, then it should follow that this interruption comes from a place which is no place and can be qualified in phenomenal language only by a distortion of what is ordinarily perceived as a linearity of space and time.

Thus, the *parole* of this language is event and the expression of this *parole* in linear language is distortion. This means that the meeting between the phenomenal and the "in-itself" is not characterised simply by a new categorical construction and imposition of a temporal model. It means, rather, that this meeting of the temporal and the eternal can only be expressed in the phenomenal world through phenomenal language or categories. The expression of this interrogation of temporality, then, is the crisis, which is governed by the event rather than a crisis which is a completely internalised anguish within the subject. So the discursive consciousness is interrogated and interrupted by another word whose phenomenal representation is linear distortion and, thereby, a vague acknowledgment of the ineffable world beyond the conscious "I"

These events are generally beyond the control of the character who is subject to them. For this reason, the archetypal, existential event which undermines individual autonomy is death, since all mortal creatures must die and all creatures are mortal creatures. Thus the prospect, the view and the *possibility*, of death, of not-being, can be seen as the word on the eternal horizon which relativises *all* temporal words. So, in *C&P*, there can be seen all the events of death which appear to ironise Raskolnikov's self-immortalising discourse. Then, at the centre of the novel, there is the archetypal death of Lazarus which ends in the latter's resurrection. This could mean that this relativising

process is experienced as a loss of control but also as an end of isolation, as seen in the case of Lazarus who is restored to, and in a new relation with, his family. Thus, for Raskolnikov, the kenotic descent is also linked to his own restoration as seen in the *Epilogue*. It is linked first to sanity, then to a new sense of relationship in which he is no longer the centre of everything, where he becomes aware of the presence of the other and of love. This event-word of resurrection is, then, the only word that can respond to the event-word of death.

Bakhtin argues that in Dostoevsky's novels there are "several worlds and several autonomous consciousnesses; they are not presented within a single field of vision, but within several fields of vision, each full and of equal worth" (1984, p.16). I would argue that this is not true, at least in *C&P*, otherwise every voice would carry the same weight and there could not be parody or irony. This is a relativism that simply ignores the fact that some voices are privileged in that they are not relativised by another consciousness. All the voices do not get the same treatment. If it is true that some voices are privileged and that other voices are relativised by what I have described above as the interruption of the "noumenal" or "in-itself", then it follows that these interruptions, which come from no-place and which can best be represented by events that break into discursive consciousness, are active; they act. It would follow from this that the "in-itself" has a consciousness but that that consciousness, being beyond categorisation, can only realise itself in the language of events. It is a language that is sacramental; its significance and its being merge. In this way, its immediacy also interrogates the lie. The "gap" which exists in phenomenal or categorical language between the sign and the signed, through which can slip truth, is the point of entry and of disturbance by the immediate language of event and contingent being.

By "contingent being" I mean the brute fact of being. This contingency is generated from the "in-itself" and its phenomenal language is death. According to Olsen, it causes the anguish "one experiences at the thought that nothing and nobody might ever have come into existence or that everything and everybody might go out of existence in an instant" (1962: 31). This anguish is often provoked by the thought or prospect of death. Thus death as an event, or as an immediate possibility, is the primary language of the "in-itself" contingency of being and, at the same time, induces a secondary language which is the language of anguish. This anguish can then find an expression, however poor, in the verbal artform. I am saying this to show that the optimum way in which the "noumenal" can interrupt, interrogate, or destroy the phenomenal, ordered and categorical consciousness is through the event-language of actual or imminent death. I am not arguing that death itself is numinous; it is, instead, a dialogic and relativising word which comes from the "noumenal", and its own language is that of anguish. Little wonder, then, that if a novel is to speak about the eternal, it will do so through the event language of death. So death does not *have* the last word; it *is* the last word. Obviously, all this depends upon a Western temporal construction of creation *ex nihilo*; it is eschatological.<sup>3</sup>

For an atheist, this "in-itself," even if it were active, could not be conscious but, instead, as Olsen notes, "is an absurd or contingent being of which we are constantly aware, be it only dimly" (1962: 39). For a Christian, it can be seen as the God whose active word is the event of Jesus Christ. The "noumenal" acts, interrogates or interrupts the phenomenal world, only in the sense that it is made manifest through the language of

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<sup>3</sup> Eschatology deals with the "last things" and with revelation but it is not necessarily so that the end of time subjectively must arrive at the end of time objectively. That is, there is a personalistic dimension involved, again Heidegger is useful here when speaking of "clock time" and "personal time". Thus, I treat the interrogatory interruption of the event into linearity as revelatory.

phenomenal world events and not through an event taking place within itself. Of course, here, one comes up against a mystery, which is not a mystery because it cannot be known; it is, rather, a mystery because it cannot be fully known in a rational way. We see in the epilogue of *C&P* that Raskolnikov is finally confronted, in Sonya, with the mystery of the other, the fact of the other and it is here that he recognises the true significance of his crime of murder, which has been a violation of that mystery, and he is thus able to leave his discursive world in a free gesture toward the other; and so he weeps.

According to Randall, and in terms of a discursive self that is complex, Chernyshevsky's "new men" displayed a "no-nonsense, it's-all-simple-in-theory, let's-get-on-with-the-no-quarter-struggle" characteristic; that is, they are constructed as pragmatic, scientific men (1967: 149). In contrast, "Dostoevsky conceived of man as sinful, split, sick, tormented, senselessly aggressive, masochistic, and constantly shifting" and one could add in-need-of-redemption. Dostoevsky's attacks on the young radicals, Randall points out, were famous and his construction of the human being left no room for Chernyshevsky's "new men" and their "rational egoism" (1967: 151). I have proceeded in this line of argument in order to demonstrate some of the ideas that re-appear in *C&P*, one of which is the sometimes absurd irrationality of the human being. Dostoevsky's "Underground Man", whether or not he expresses the personal opinions of Dostoevsky, openly ridicules the progressive discourse. In *C&P* the ridicule is often, but not always, more subtle.

It appears, then, that Dostoevsky's relativising dialogism is performative, that it has a function and this function is, I would argue, directly linked to Dostoevsky's worldview as a Christian. This would not necessarily make Dostoevsky a monologic

author. It is, rather, that Dostoevsky's Christianity is not something systematic, as I have argued above. The direction of the relativising polemics is against those systems, or worldviews that would seek to present a Christianity without a Christ, ie, liberal humanism.

According to Shestov, these were embodied in "liberals and progressives of every hue" (in Valevicius, 1990: 39). Kabat cites Waliki in relation to the hallmarks of Russian populism. These included a desire to avoid the capitalist phase of development, a strong emphasis on the peasant commune and the possibility of direct transition. It included also an emphasis on the price of capitalism, a critique of the mechanistic view of social development and a belief in the possibility of learning from the mistakes of the West. (1978: 7). Kabat argues that, although Dostoevsky did not see himself as a populist, he nonetheless conforms to the hallmarks of populism (1978: 8). This is problematical, given Dostoevsky's stylisation of populist dialogue, which is, in essence, his distancing of himself from these dialogues, and there is also his anti-ideologism in general.

Kabat's argument is that Dostoevsky's "world view," or view of history, shares a common perspective with the hallmarks that Waliki has isolated as the core of populism and that these views had a profound effect on his thinking and writing in his last twenty years. I would argue, though, that Dostoevsky's world view was profoundly influenced by Christianity and the particular anthropology contained therein, and that any incidence of similarity or shared view with the popular socialism of his day was superficial. This is clearer in the light of the appropriation of the Gospel values by some socialists who constructed socialism and the people's democratic republic as the fulfilment of the eschatological kingdom on earth. With regard to this, Chernyshevsky's use of the gospel for his manifesto is once again significant. This view of Christ was again circulated in the recent Russian elections (1996) where the communist candidate claimed, most

unoriginally, that "Jesus was the first communist." There is also the evidence of Dostoevsky's disenfranchisement with certain socialist intellectuals such as Belinsky, as well as the evidence in the novel itself of Dostoevsky's parodying of these same populist discourses (cf. both Leezyatnikov and Luzhin in *C&P*: p429). Therefore, if there is a point of contact between Dostoevsky and the socialists in the latter part of his career, it is within the Gospel and the view of Man therein, rather than in a utopian socialism. What I am arguing is that Dostoevsky's anthropology is Christ centred and that he at no time, in *C&P*, subordinates the view of man as a spiritual being to the view of man as an economic or rational being; it is the contrary. Raskolnikov's descent, ending in ignominy and prison is paralleled by a type of ascent toward love of the other.

I have argued for a kenotic structure to the novel but it is important to remember that the kenosis is not an end in itself; it is the journey toward death and rebirth, which in the primitive church would be sacramentalised - ie, "signed" and actualised - by a baptism. If the novel only demonstrated Raskolnikov's "fall", in the failure of his internal discourse to match the concrete events of his life, then the novel would simply participate in a typology of tragedy. However, the novel has an epilogue and it is here that the question of freedom is addressed. Raskolnikov's freedom has not consisted in his decision or his ability to murder two defenceless old women; nor has it consisted in his finally assenting to the demands of a burdened conscience. His freedom lies in the fact that he chooses love in impossible circumstances and does so, even though he appears to be a complete failure, incapable of love. Thus, the novel transcends the tragic and it is in this moment that Abraham<sup>4</sup> is invoked: "time itself seemed to have stopped, as though

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<sup>4</sup> For Kierkegaard, Abraham was the epitome of the paradox, the absurd. This was because Abraham "hoped against all hope" that the impossible, whilst remaining impossible, would happen. Kierkegaard argued that Abraham, as a subject, transcends the universal aesthetically and ethically and that the subjects' freedom to choose the impossible demonstrates this. Thus, any Hegelian universalistic moral/ethical system is limited by the subjective paradox (cf. *Fear and Trembling*).

the days of Abraham and his flocks had never passed" (*C&P*: 628). This is also important because, whilst I have argued for a kenotic structure or motif in the novel, there is a tension between the subjective and the objective which should not be completely resolved in either direction. That is, the model itself is paradoxical because it bows, so to speak, to subjectivity and is not casuistic. The particular circumstances and events remain particular; there is no formula but there remains a model or pattern, otherwise typology would be impossible. There is also a tension in the fact that the relativising kenotic descent is, at the same time, revelatory.

In conclusion, there can be seen in *C&P* a parallelism in the constructions of time. On the one hand, discursively, time is constructed as linear and directional, leading ultimately to death. It is within this context, the radical contingency of being, that parody and irony are possible, also anguish and terror, and these can then point to this other dimension of objective existence that can, in turn, be performative in the kenosis (descent) of the hero. This is not only a tragic descent; it results in the hero's birth out of the purely discursive and subjective world of self-aggrandising fantasy into the objective world (or subject-in-relation) of the other. There is the possibility of interruption or interrogation of the linear construction of time by another construction which is connected to a consciousness that is eternal, that is not moved by the infinite, the linear, or the rational. This second construction, existing side by side with the first and which can only be vaguely acknowledged, can be seen in certain events themselves and the chronotopic constructions of these events. The language of these constructions is that of distortion of linearity, as the absurd cannot itself be expressed directly in phenomenal language.<sup>5</sup> These chronotopic constructions point to the uncreated consciousness which

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<sup>5</sup> Kierkegaard notes: "Every moment, like the sum of the moments, is a process (a going-by); no moment is a present, and in the same sense there is neither past, present nor future...it is because we spatialise a moment...visualising time instead of thinking it" that we think it is possible to maintain such divisions.

manifests itself in the epiphanic language of eschatological event which I have treated in the previous chapter in relation to early Christian art. Thus, I would argue that the attempt at distortion of temporal linearity which can be seen in Eastern iconography, and which is an attempt in itself of revelation, has had a direct influence on the modes in which Dostoevsky, as a writer, has also tried to express the “in-itself” or the absurd paradox, the radical contingency of being, but preserves in its typology and traditionalism the notion of essence. What I have tried to show in this chapter is that there is, in this work of Dostoevsky, a parallelism at work. There is a sense of the descent of the hero (kenosis), which is accomplished by the relativisation of the self-constructive discursive consciousness, a ritual death, and a re-birth into new relationship. Furthermore, there is an apparent contradiction because existentialism is nothing more than a denial of essence,<sup>6</sup> whereas Dostoevsky seems to posit both existence and essence in a discursive system of *call* and *revelation*. In fact, it appears as though that which is existential is in service to that which is essential. The existential dialogic kenosis has a purpose, which is to reveal the glorious and mysterious essence of the human likeness to God. Dostoevsky’s Christianity does not appear, therefore, to be as illusory or anti-rational as it might have at first appeared. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

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“So time is an infinite succession...(but) the eternal is the present as an annulled succession” of time and thus the eternal exists in the present (annulled succession). To give time shape, however, in a spatial sense, would be impossible in the way in which space is ordinarily (or, traditionally) conceived, especially as is evident in Renaissance and Enlightenment art (*The Concept of Dread*, Translated by W. Lowrie, 1973, Princeton UP, p.77).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Sartre’s *Existentialism and Humanism*.

### Chapter 3: Systematic Paradox.

#### Introduction

This final section will deal with some conclusions and implications of what I have argued as Dostoevsky's relativising dialogism and its contradictory essentialism.. The first of these is that Dostoevsky reveals in this novel the possibility of a centre within a subjectivist relativism and that this centre reveals a definitive anthropology which is basically Christian. There is a paradox in that the dialogism itself appears to be anti-systematic, whilst at the same time, reading it as kenotic and performative, there appears to be a system: a direction and an intention. This can be seen as a genuine desire for communication beyond a superficiality and, because of this, the author must be aware of a possibility of communication at some deeper level. At the same time, he seems to be aware of the difficulties of such communication. Firstly, people tend not to listen to one another because of the investment in one's own internal discourse. Therefore, to listen to the other is to risk one's own personality, which is tied up in the discourse one narrates about oneself to oneself. And, secondly, each person has a preconception about the truth of the other. Hence, a relativistic dialogism can be seen primarily as a preparation to listen to the other and this necessarily involves the threat of losing one's own personality, one's own life.

Having prepared for the other, having descended from his own (false) idea of himself, Raskolnikov is faced with the full reality of the other in Sonya and it is only then

that he begins to atone for his crime. Until then, his repentance had only been nominal and legalistic. Therefore, all of what precedes can be seen as a preparation for the Epilogue and the revelation therein. In this sense, there has been, paradoxically, a direction in the relativism as well as a vertical dimension in the kenosis. This paradox of an anti-systematic system, a relativism that has a centre, argues against certainty and therefore has implications for nineteenth-century Russia, whose politically influential progressives were looking to the Empiricists and Rationalists of the West for precisely such a certainty.

Rather than speaking of Dostoevsky as being excluded from the ranks of the existentialists, it is perhaps better to broaden the boundaries posited by Kaufmann and to ask what sort of existentialist Dostoevsky would be if he were one and in what ways do his departures from existentialism challenge existentialism itself? If Kaufmann's view is accepted, that existentialism is the repudiation of systems, and contrasted with Dostoevsky's concepts of Christianity, it must follow that, for Dostoevsky, if his elements of existentialism are considered, Christianity is not something systematic; it is not an epistemology. In "Hume on evil", Nelson Pike discusses some of the characteristics of certain theodicies: "As Philo himself suggests, when the existence of God (in a theodicy) is accepted prior to any rational consideration of the status of evil in the world, the traditional problem of evil reduces to a noncrucial perplexity of relatively minor importance" (in, *God and Evil: Readings on the Theological Problem of Evil* 1964: 102). It follows from this statement that if the problem of evil is treated as crucial and/or perplexing, or is given much importance, then an *a priori* existence for God has not been admitted without a rational consideration of the existence of evil in the world. A serious treatment of evil in the world in the work of an author, such as Dostoevsky, implies that

there has been no *a priori* acceptance of the existence of God. Evil is not easily explained away in terms of a reasonable necessity.

If it is true in the case of Dostoevsky that there is no *a priori* acceptance of the existence of God in *C&P*, then it should follow that he is able to give a truly existential account of suffering, without the rationalising interference of a theodicy that may tend to minimise such an account. Thus, having accepted nothing *a priori*, the novel is then given the potential of a true dialogism. Nonetheless, I would also want to argue that there is a centre in Dostoevsky's dialogic wheel and that this centre involves the divinity of human beings, as in the Christian sense, and is revealed through a parallelism in the constructions of the temporal and the eternal. Significantly, Dostoevsky does not begin with the centre but, instead, arrives there. Therefore, I would be forced to argue that Dostoevsky's dialogic centre, if it does exist, whilst not involving an *a priori* assumption, must rest, instead, on a contingent assumption that awaits further revelation. This can be seen, for instance, in the juxtaposing of chronotopic constructions and the inter-textual "moment" of the raising of Lazarus scene which, incidentally, takes place almost at the formal centre of the novel. Here, Sonya hopes that Rodion will really "hear" the narrative (*C&P*: 385). That is, she wants him to identify himself with Lazarus so that he will hear the Gospel story of resurrection as a possibility for himself because, ontologically speaking, he is dead. This is connected with what I argued in relation to the dialogism of the icon. There is an invitation to "meet" in the space between the subject and the object, to "commit" to the text, at the risk of having one's own discursive self relativised.

It is possible to express the existential "dilemma" as a death sentence. A person, in front of the concrete, existential situation of death is horrified and unable to escape

and systematic epistemologies, philosophies and doctrines are simply attempts to escape from this fundamental fact: this person is a person who will die. Shestov notes this when he asserts that, once a crisis happens, “a person throws himself into idealistic morality. Similarly, positivism promises happiness but, when happiness does not come, one can no longer get by without the help of idealism” (in Valevicius, 1993: 79). The fact that Dostoevsky had been sentenced to death but had gained an eleventh-hour reprieve seems to have been generally overlooked in some readings of his fiction but can be seen as primarily important from an existential point of view and as a way itself of “reading” *C&P*.<sup>1</sup> Now, in front of this existential reality of an ultimate death, a person may begin to ask many questions: who am I, who made me, why do I go on living, what is the meaning of my existence? It is from here that this person may retreat into a comfortable zone of rationalisation, away from an apparent meaninglessness. However, the discourse of meaninglessness depends somewhat upon a linear construction of time: linearity and infinitude announce death to that which is finite. The non-linear, especially in the eternal, as opposed to the cyclical, which can be seen as a type of complicated linearity, tends to undermine the discourses of death and meaninglessness because it is not wedded to the duality of being or non-being. Therefore, it does not engage with the awesome prospect of never-having-been. Thus, the parallelism of two chronotopic constructions can be seen in itself as dialogic, where the eternal word answers to the anguished word of radical contingency. However, if this becomes simply a rationalisation of death and suffering, if it denies mystery, then the parallelism fails and everything sinks back to a hopeless linear infinitude.

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<sup>1</sup> Coming face to face with death, the person who lives an authentic experience of what constitutes the self, anticipates death, is, in fact, already dead. Heidegger has noted this when he speaks about “authentic resolution” and the anticipation of death as the life-giving possibility (*Being and Time*, 1978, translated by Macquarrie and Robinson, published by Basil Blackwell: Oxford, p. 298-307).

Shestov, a Russian Jew, described Dostoevsky as his “maître” and admired him for the way in which he would not let “ideas” mask or conceal the “horrors of life” (in Valevicius, 1993: 74). Dostoevsky uncompromisingly accepts reality and suffering as it is, without a retreat into the safety zone of a justifying rationalism, be it spiritual or political. For instance, in *C&P* there is the scene of the death of Katerina Ivanovna:

What had happened was that Kolya and Lyonya, frightened beyond the limits of endurance by the street crowd and the behaviour of their mentally disturbed mother, and having, moreover, caught sight of a soldier who looked as though he was going to capture them and take them off somewhere, had suddenly, as if by some tacit agreement, seized each other by the hand and rushed off in flight. Sobbing and wailing, poor Katerina Ivanovna dashed off to catch them up. As she ran, weeping and gasping for breath, she made a pitiful spectacle...As she ran at full speed she tripped and fell. “She’s cut and bleeding! O merciful Lord!” Sonya exclaimed, stooping over her...But when they had a proper look at Katerina Ivanovna, they saw she had not cut herself on a stone, as Sonya had thought, and that the blood that was staining the pavement was welling up from inside her by way of her throat (501).

Here, the linearity of this discourse is contrasted against the sense of compressed and accelerated time which helps to generate a sense of confusion that, in turn, undermines the very reliability of the linear discourse. One notes, then, in this short paragraph the profusion of present participles and intransitive verbs, which give the impression of suspending the linear chronotope. As stated above, temporal linearity, time, announces death. Thus, the linearity of the perfect past tense is itself a type of “death sentence” in its finality. Here, instead, there appears to be an attempt to express that which goes on, which does not die and which, therefore, gives value to the life itself. If Katerina’s value is measured only in terms of the gruesome facts of her death, she is very poor indeed.

The children are thus orphaned and one may be horrified at the prospect of their fate. So, as Shestov argues, the main premises in Dostoevsky are: that the horrors of life confront one, that suffering *per se* cannot be rationalised or justified by any means of

*reasonable necessity*, and that any rationalising system of philosophy is an evasion of the fact that one cannot know with certainty, why? Valevicius adds that

Shestov's early works on Tolstoy and Nietzsche have one central theme, the horrors of life and two of them, Tolstoy and Nietzsche, broke down. Only Dostoevsky was able to confront them. Tolstoy began preaching and Nietzsche reacted to his earlier writings on philosophy and art and began developing his cruel theories of the *Übermensch* (1993: 76).

So, Shestov argues, claiming Dostoevsky as a comrade, that "philosophy is a conscious falsification of reality" (in Valevicius, 1993: 77). It would, therefore, be difficult to interpret Dostoevsky's links with Russian Orthodox Christianity as a rationalisation of death and suffering, or to treat the novel as an exposition of the theology of *reasonable necessity*. It follows that, for Dostoevsky, as is evident in this novel at least and as stated above in relation to Hume, Christianity must be something other than casuistic. Dostoevsky's essentialism does not dominate his protagonists but, at the same time, if there is no essence, then the death of Katerina Ivanovna, the fate of her children, the situation of Sonya, of Raskolnikov and the murder of the two old women are ultimately pointless.

Bakhtin's view of Shestov *et al.* was less than flattering: "The path of philosophical monologisation has been the fundamental path followed by critical literature on Dostoevsky. It was the path taken by...Shestov. In (the) attempt to squeeze the artist's demonstrated plurality of consciousness into the systemically monologic framework of a single worldview," he was forced to "resort either to antimony or to dialectics" (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 1984: 9). Bakhtin's view of Shestov is based largely on the latter's *Dostoevsky and Nietzsche*, which was published in 1903, and he therefore fails to take into account the later, more mature of Shestov's works (*PDP*: 319). Valevicius notes that

by 1929 (Shestov) had acquired a vast knowledge of Western philosophy; ancient, medieval and modern, and had changed his outlook somewhat. One of his favourite quotations, which figures in almost all of his later writings, is Plato's *Phaedo* (64A): "Other men seem not to have noticed that those who truly embrace philosophy concern themselves with nothing but dying and death." (1993: 35)

But, even so, Bakhtin's classification of *antimony*, paradox, seems cursory. A move to a paradoxical view is not necessarily linked with monologisation and, even if it were, Bakhtin does not seem to allow the possibility of a general, pervasive consciousness that can envelope a general polyphony. Perhaps he did not want to concede anything to the Soviet regime under which he was working. However, this possibility need not objectify the hero into what he calls "a simple object of the author's consciousness" and neither would it follow that what he describes as the "plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world," would cease to exist (*PDP*: 6-7). Bakhtin notes that in Dostoevsky the *event* does not result in the merging of singularly integral consciousnesses into a single unity (*PDP*: 6).<sup>2</sup> However, I am arguing that the event (the meeting of one consciousness by another) results in the relativisation of one word by the word of another and that if there is a relativisation, then there must be a relativisation *in relation* to something else. If one word is only relativised in relation to the word of the other, with no objective standard, no groping toward a truth, then the result can only be an absolute subjectivity in which inter-subjectivity and dialogism itself become meaningless and irrelevant. In this case, Bakhtin's criticism of Shestov would apply equally to himself in relation to the latter's description of Dostoevsky as "a great mystic, one who rejected human morality and sought God in irrationality and subjectivity" (*PDP*: 319). However, as I am arguing, inter-subjectivity is clearly important in the novel and in

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<sup>2</sup> Emerson's discussion of the *event* in Bakhtin (*The Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*: 6) is important but will not be treated here.

the *event* there must be some sense of merging and of a directional relativisation, otherwise one is left with a model of inter-subjectivity somewhat akin to Democritus' theory of solid atoms, which are like balls of clay that collide and rebound within an infinite vacuum. Even Bakhtin's idea of *complementarity* does not save him from an absolute subjectivism; it may even reinforce that, as it does not acknowledge the necessity of a third party. Bakhtin was perhaps reacting to Descartes's *sum* which had, in part, generated a rationalism that denied the existence of the other, but in his positing of a *sumus*, Bakhtin is still outside of the trinitarian consciousness of Dostoevsky's novel which posits the two in relation to a third. In addition, Dostoevsky's humanism, which is Christian, escapes the futurism of the liberal humanists who would posit the "third" as the next generation. Bakhtin, of course, was writing at the time of the oppressive and extremely monologic Soviet regime and so some of his ideas can perhaps be seen as partly reactionary.

Existentialists would refer to the notion of an indefinable and unreachable paradox as the "absurd" or, the "in-itself".<sup>3</sup> For most of them, however, this realm of pure being, which could only be vaguely acknowledged, was not conscious and it could only be approached through a sense of anguish, often produced at the prospect of death. However, to argue for the consciousness of this entity in *C&P*, that it is an entity that can intervene and that has a language which is the event itself, raises the problem of freedom in relation to the characters and the "author-god". Clearly the novel is an invention and its plot and characterisation have been guided by some consciousness and, clearly, the freedom or autonomy of the characters is at a fundamental level, artificial. The problem is how to reconcile the sense of freedom which the characters have, in relation to a

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<sup>3</sup> I have borrowed these terms, respectively, from Kierkegaard and Sartre. Cf. footnote #2, Ch2.

polyphony which grants each one an integral voice, with the existential reality, the brute fact of the novel's existence and its status as an organised and ordered fiction.

In relation to this, Emerson notes the dramatic element present in Dostoevsky's work, quoting Steiner: "The essence of drama...is concentration, compression, 'moments': all effects are piled into a single mass confrontation [and thus the] 'law of composition' in a Dostoevskian novel is dramatic in that it is 'one of maximum energy, released over the smallest possible extent of space and time'" (1994: 82-83). In speaking of time in Dostoevsky, it is equally important to note this question of freedom, a moral question with which Dostoevsky would have been extremely concerned, especially in terms of his Christian heritage. The direct analogy of drama with life would limit free will or choice because, in drama, the conclusion is already determined. However, Dostoevsky's dramatics do not do this because, according to Steiner, the compression and energy always convey the sense that "things could be otherwise" (in Emerson, 1994: 84). Thus, there exists simultaneous levels of time and action with multiple possibilities such that even the author seems to grant autonomy to his characters and plot.

This is, of course, in the final analysis, an illusion as the text is finite but the very possibility of such an illusion argues for a much more complex construction of time than the linear or the absolute. Thus the author-god consciousness, the pervasive consciousness which grants individual consciousness to the characters but can also intervene and relativise, seems to allow the greatest amount of freedom that is logically possible, given the form. Bakhtin's analysis of polyphony in the novel, therefore, seems to neglect too much the possibility of a generous author who, whilst having an interest in the outcome, allows a polyphony and an integrity which an obviously monologic novel would not.

So, in the novel, the problem is stated: the human is doomed to suffer and to die and this is horrible but true, there is no evasion<sup>4</sup>. For instance, in the first of Raskolnikov's dreams, before the murder, there is the figure of the small boy, who represents Raskolnikov in his youth but can also be seen as representing the archetypal, innocent interrogator of life's absurdities. The boy asks: "Papa! The poor little horse... Why did they... kill it?" (C&P: 94). This can be seen as the fundamental question of why evil exists. The "poor little horse" is an image of the suffering of the poor who, in the discourse of the progressives, strain under the yoke of a burdensome socio-economic system that makes them the brunt of all the injustices inherent in that system:

It was a strange thing, however, that in the present instance one of these massive carts had been harnessed up to a small, thin, greyish peasant jade, one of the kind which - he had often seen this - sometimes overstrain themselves when hauling a tall load of hay or firewood, particularly if the cart gets bogged down in the mire or in a rut, and which the muzhiks always beat so viciously, so viciously (C&P: 90).

Obviously, the dream has psychological interpretations. The boy is Raskolnikov but so is the jade. The burden is Raskolnikov's guilt, in which case the dream becomes prophetic, but the burden is also Raskolnikov's self-assumed mission to the role of "World Historical Figure". On the other hand, what I am arguing is that in this, the first dream, the narrative seems to pose the fundamental problem of suffering and evil, but does not try to justify this human condition with any rational or systematic epistemology. Instead, those epistemological discourses that would try to answer the boy's question are dialogically relativised and one is seemingly left with a vacuum, with the absurd. Furthermore, Raskolnikov's self-aggrandising discourse is relativised, not by a philosophical or

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<sup>4</sup> Olsen's discussion of Sartre on *inauthenticity* reveals some subtleties in terms of evasion or escape (1962, p139-147). Two modes of inauthenticity are both negation and affirmation: in negation one denies the possibility of freedom and in affirmation one can also objectify oneself in a type of self-determinism that also denies freedom. In between, or outside, of these possibilities is the possibility of the *authentic*, or, *morally responsible* person, which is, I would tend to argue, what Raskolnikov is striving for as he steers through the self-limiting, incarcerating, possibilities of moral self-justification and self-lacerating, prideful guilt.

dialectical discussion, but rather by the events that happen to him and around him. Mostly, these are the events over which the hero has no control and, as I will argue, form the text of the language of the existential “in-itself”, the numinous. Furthermore, the evident essentialism in the novel, and its Christian basis, do not turn the suffering into something else. Whilst a character’s suffering may lead to redemption, the suffering itself is suffering. That is why I would disagree with Shestov on the point that Dostoevsky “preaches a love of suffering” (in Valevicius, 1993: 81).

The more important of the rationalising epistemologies, which I will discuss in relation to the novel, is that of progressivism. Dostoevsky’s polemical attacks on the progressives are legendary. His personal diaries seem to be filled with vitriolic accusations against the Hegelian men and their systems. Shestov admired Dostoevsky for his criticism of these professional philosophers, who “were more likely than others to succumb to the mermaid-call of reason, to betray the living mystery of their lives in favour of a clear concept of man” (in Valevicius, 1990: 74). According to Kabat, however, Dostoevsky and the populists shared some common positions in relation to their “concept of man”:

Central to Dostoevsky’s world view are certain oppositions -between Russia and Europe, between the peasantry and the educated class in Russia; between Russia’s past and her future - and certain questions: How can Russia avoid repeating the experience of Western Europe with its class struggles and warring nationalisms? How is Russia to overcome her division into two classes and her alienation from herself? What is it that binds a society together and gives people a sense of identity, of a foundation, of a connection with one another? All Dostoevsky’s writings are concerned with these and related questions (1978: pref. ix).

Thus both Dostoevsky and the progressives were concerned about Russia’s direction in this transitional phase, but they seem to have had widely varying answers to those questions. Kabat suggests this when he says that “Dostoevsky’s fiction...rather than

programs or formulas, rather than immediate change,... offers an alternative view of reality based on an image of totality, community, inter-connectedness" (1978: pref. xii).

According to Kabat, the years preceding emancipation were of "unprecedented optimism" and there was, he adds, a "determination to transform Russia from a primitive empire into a modern European state" (1978: 2). However, adds Kabat, the coming of emancipation was a major disappointment. Due to economic circumstances, the foreign debt and the balance of trade, many of the former serfs were living in far worse conditions than they had been prior to emancipation. Kabat argues that this was due to the fact that, in order to "modernise", Russia needed to go through a period of "primitive accumulation" and therefore had to finance its budget at the expense of the newly liberated peasantry (1978: 5). Thus in post-emancipation Russia there was, according to Lionel Kochan:

chronic undernourishment (and an) increased mortality rate. By and large, the Russian masses completely failed to participate in the rise of the popular standard of living that elsewhere characterised the latter part of the nineteenth century. On the contrary, the acquisition of some degree of personal freedom was accompanied by a decline in living standards, by land hunger, and by rural over-population (in Kabat, 1978: 5).

Kabat adds that Russian social thinkers of the day had hoped to skip this capitalist (decadent, accumulative) phase of development and move immediately to the people's democracy and they claimed that this was possible through a reliance on the indigenous peasant institutions (1978: 6). Obviously, from this, it can be seen that the Russian intelligentsia was under the sway of Hegelian models of progress, models that were not living up to a diverse and unexpected reality. It is within this context that Dostoevsky confronts the reality of the poor.

As Shestov had noted, Dostoevsky does not appear to try to rationalise or justify suffering but, as I argued above, the novel, in terms of having an Epilogue, argues for

there being a direction, a purpose in suffering. In this sense, the novel is teleological but the individual is not subjected or dominated by that teleology. Nor is the individual imprisoned in an absolute subjectivity and discursive relativism. There is a kenotic descent, but it is not systematised because the character is not subordinated to such a degree that the personal history becomes irrelevant. At the same time, the character is not deified outside of a context of *the other* and of God.. Thus there remains a subjective/objective tension and paradox or mystery. Raskolnikov is re-constituted in the Epilogue, but he is now in a new relationship to the Law. Not being subordinate to it, he has no need to prove to himself that he transcends it, as he had tried to do in committing murder. Dostoevsky, whilst not denying existential factors and retreating into a casuistry, arrives at an essentialist and transcendent construction of the human person that remains constantly within a paradoxical mystery and a subjective/objective tension.

This means that, in a political and cultural environment in nineteenth-century Russia, when it seemed that the Progressives would have their way in leading the Russians into the reductive ideologies of the West, Dostoevsky was able to find in the discourses and chronotopes of traditional Orthodox iconography a way to speak which neither participated in rationalist subjective discourses, nor in empiricist objective discourses. Furthermore, he was able to reject the Kantian and Hegelian attempts to unite the subject and object within a universalistic system. He endorses, instead, a discourse of incarnation and hypostasis,<sup>5</sup> wherein the Word-Event enters into the existential reality of the person and is eschatologically manifested in a paradigm of descent, death and rebirth. Moreover, the rejection of the West by Dostoevsky could have involved, as it had done for Kierkegaard, a rejection of Christendom which the latter saw as a betrayal of the true

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<sup>5</sup>The doctrine of hypostasis (person) holds that the soul and the body are indistinguishable and inform the whole person: there is not a dualism. St John Chrysostom says, "God's body is God because it is joined to his person by a union which will never pass away" (in, Sendler 1988: 81).

religious values of Christianity<sup>6</sup>. Perhaps Dostoevsky believed that the Russian kenotic tradition had preserved these values and that this was because they had not been tainted by the Jesuits, whom Dostoevsky despised. In any case, Dostoevsky's essentialism does not advance to an irrational or anti-rational fideism and his models of descent, death and rebirth remain grounded within existentially subjective realities.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf., *Judge for yourselves* and *For self examination*: Soren Kierkegaard. Translated by W. Lowrie, 1941.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, in the light of Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky's polyphony can be seen as a relativisation of the universal in combination and contrast with a universalisation of the relative. In this case, the polyphony fuels the paradox; it is not an end in itself and Dostoevsky's cross can be seen as the meeting of the ascending and descending ways.

The thesis has argued, with originality, that Dostoevsky's typology and his Orthodox Christianity can be theorised within an existential discourse. In addition, since the hermeneutics of iconography involve the possibility of "presence", of dialogue and of relativisation, the chronotopic constructions in the novel can be seen in a similar light. That is, the novel constructs an immanent space in which it is the author and the reader who are in dialogue. That is why I have shown in the thesis that in *C&P* there is a real desire for communication in the religious sense of the communion of persons. This desire reveals, then, an endorsement of ontological "presence" and of meaning, without which revelation would not be possible, since there would be nothing to reveal. The thesis has, thus, opened up new areas of inquiry for future students. This is especially relevant in terms of Christian typological eschatology and existential discourse. There is, then, the possibility of future research in terms of the tensions between an existential and a sociological faith.

The thesis has demonstrated that there is a model of dialogism which can be seen as linear and descending; it recovers an eschatology and thereby an ultimate purpose. In the linear model, there remains a tension in terms of mystery or paradox. This tension remains because, in the descent out of the abstract into the concrete and finite, that which propels the dialogism in a linear way comes from outside of the linearity and cannot be fully known within linearity, within language. Yet there is an underlying "chord" which

supports a general polyphony, giving rise to the possibility of reading Dostoevsky in relation to the “aural” as well as with respect to his heritage of eschatological Christianity in which hearing was the most important sense. The thesis has opened up for further investigation this area of a linear, descending dialogism, its connections with eschatology and its connections with absolutist models of progress. The chronotopic distortions, as evidenced in both the icons and the novel, as well as the participation in typological constructions, can be seen as an attempt to express, or to translate, in discursive linearity that which is *achronotopic*, as I defined it in this thesis. One of these typological constructions, which can be seen clearly in the novel, is that which I described as “existential kenosis” and this, as the thesis has argued, participates in the typology of baptism.

The originality of this thesis, therefore, lies in having shown that Dostoevsky’s connections with Russian Christian art are deeper than have been noted by Emerson and Ugolnik. In fact, the thesis has argued, with originality, that there is a direct relationship between iconographic chronotopes and the structure of *C&P*. This has been particularly evident in the dramatic and panegyric iconographic forms. Bakhtin had noted the Word-Event consciousness in Dostoevsky but he tended to minimise the role of the author himself and saw each event-consciousness as detached from the author and in a dialogue only with the other. In contrast, this thesis has shown that the event-word is integrally tied to the author in conformity with Christian doctrine. There is obviously a Trinitarian formulation here and Dostoevsky’s deep connections with Orthodox Christian theology are, therefore, significant.

The originality of the thesis also lies in having shown the connections in the typological relationship between the structure of the novel and forms of Christian

literature and liturgy, especially baptism. Nonetheless, I have also shown in the thesis that the revelation of that which is present in essence is accomplished existentially and dramatically, not dogmatically. There is the descent of kenosis and an ascent in rebirth as well as conversion in the ontological death at the cross(roads). Thus, there is clearly a typological model in the formal structure. Moreover, it is a model of baptism as it would have been in the primitive Church. Dostoevsky's structure, however, does not dominate the novel because of the generous polyphony which he, as author, allows.

The thesis has shown, therefore, that the other is an eternal presence within the discursive linearity of the self, relativising the discourse of the self. This type of dialogism, then, is presupposed by a relationship of the self to the eternal and the other to the eternal. This is such that, within the relationship, the eternal is the constant and, so there is a Trinitarian inter-relatedness. Moreover, in the novel, the chronotopic distortions are not merely interruptive to a linear and discursive self, they are also revelatory and eschatological, narrating a call or vocation to become fully what the human is in essence; that which was, is and will be in the eternal. In Bakhtinian terms, one could say that the monologue of essence and the dialogue of existence form a "trialogue". As an area for further investigation in the reading of Dostoevsky, there are, therefore, the Trinitarian formulations and typologies of the Russian Church. Finally, it is possible to investigate this and other texts in the light of this existential, descending dialogism of revelation in which the essential subject is or is not revealed, having been first relativised. This can be approached by means of the *eventual* and existential language which I have discussed here.

I began this thesis by saying in the introduction that there is a Christian centre in Dostoevsky's polyphony, albeit one that is mysterious and inexhaustible in terms of

systematisation and theory. I also noted in the thesis the way in which polyphony and dialogism could be seen as linear and eschatological, even though there are many spheres of consciousness and, therefore, many centres. I noted, too, that this multiplicity does not necessarily entail a relativism but, instead, can be seen in the light of a kenotic process of relativisation, which is in service to revelation. I shall conclude, then, first quoting Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, one of the leading "existential" theologians, speaking about the teleological *Omega*: *Omega, considered in its intimate essence, cannot be other than a distinct irradiating centre in the heart of a system of centres.*<sup>1</sup> The most important thing, however, is not the system, but the dynamism, the Life, as Dostoevsky himself said: *When I look back on my past and think how much time I wasted on nothing, how much time has been lost in futilities, errors, laziness, incapacity to live; how little I appreciated it, how many times I sinned against my heart and soul - then my heart bleeds. Life is a gift, life is happiness, every minute can be an eternity of happiness! If youth only knew! Now, in changing my life, I am reborn in a new form. Brother! I swear that I will not lose hope and will keep my soul and heart pure. I will be reborn for the better. That's all my hope, all my consolation!"*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> From, *Il Fenomeno Umano* (1955), trans. by F Ormea, Milano, 1968, pp346-360, Il Saggiatore: Reproduced in, *Le Filosofie del Novecento*, Paola Rossi (Ed.), 1974, pp340-348: Sansoni, Firenze (my translation).

<sup>2</sup> Dostoevsky, in a letter to his brother Mikhail, after coming so close to execution that the firing squad had taken aim. Source: *Dostoevsky Page* - <http://www.maths.nott.ac.uk/~pmyjaw/stuff>

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## Appendices

Appendix 1



*St Nicholas and scenes from his life*, 16th C., Moscow School.

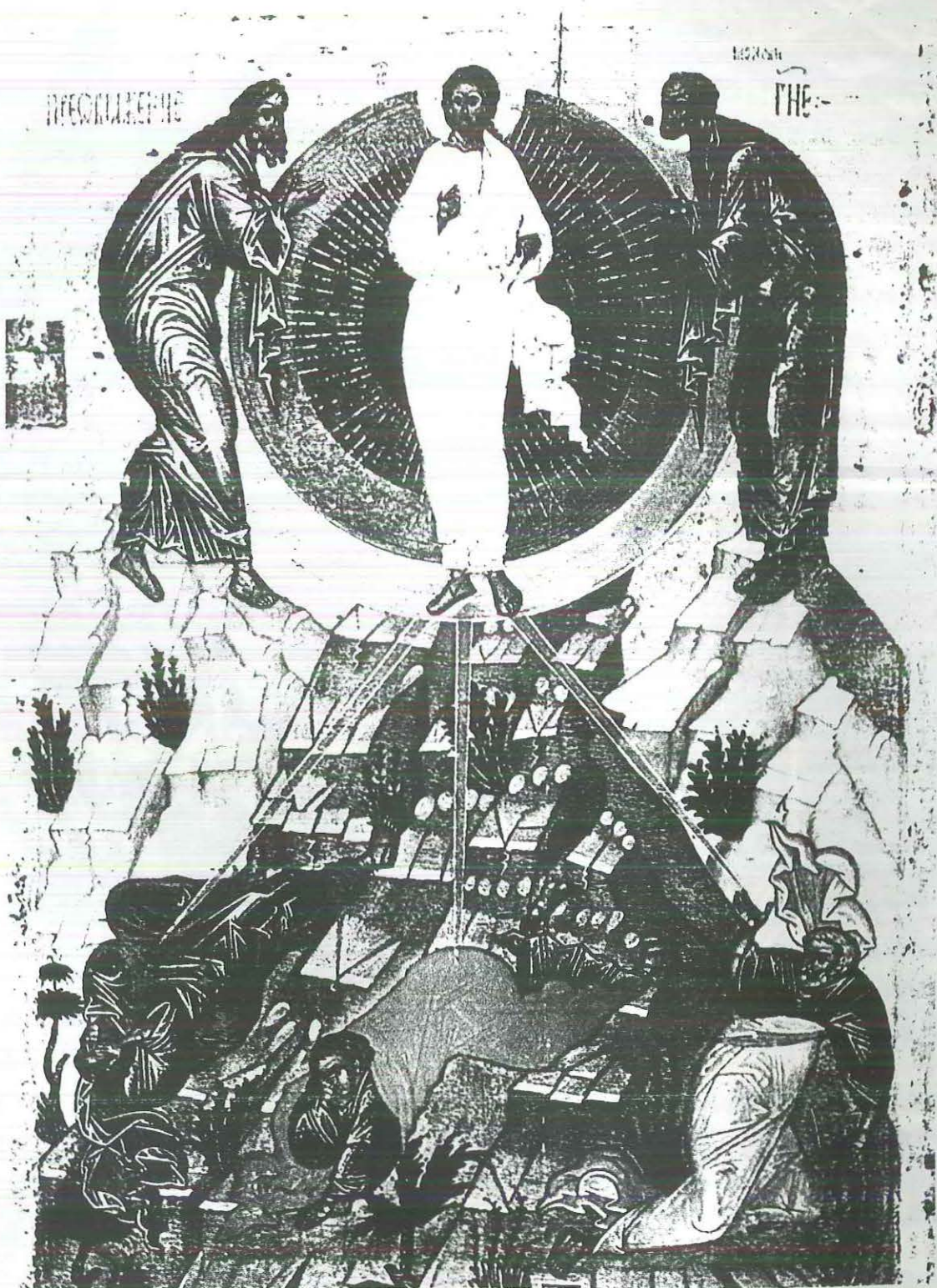
Panegyric icon: Vatican Museum, Rome. [Reproduced in Sendler (1988), cf. Bibliography for details.]

## Appendix 2



*The Prophet Elijah and scenes from his life*, 18th C., Palekh School.  
 Epic icon: Meudon, France. [Reproduced in Sendler (1988), cf. Bibliography for details.]

Appendix 3



*The Transfiguration*, 15th C., Novgorod School.

Dramatic icon: Novgorod Museum. [Reproduced in Sendler (1988), cf. Bibliography for details.]

Appendix 4



*Doubting Thomas*, 15th C., Novgorod School.

Dramatic icon: Novgorod Museum. [Reproduced in Sendler (1988), cf. Bibliography for details.]

Appendix 5

*The Trinity*, Andrei Rublev, Holy Trinity Monastery, Zagorsk, 1411. Dogmatic icon with epic elements: Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. [Reproduced in Sendler (1988), cf. Bibliography for details.]

Appendix 6

*Paternitas*, 14th C., Novgorod School.

Dogmatic icon: Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. [Reproduced in Sendler (1988), cf. Bibliography for details.]