

## CHAPTER ONE

### DOSTOEVSKY'S POLYPHONIC NOVEL AND ITS ILLUMINATION IN THE CRITICAL LITERATURE

An acquaintance with the voluminous literature on Dostoevsky creates the impression that the subject under discussion is not a *single* author-artist who wrote novels and novellas (*povestii*), but a whole series of philosophical statements made by *several* author-thinkers—Raskolnikov, Myshkin, Stavrogin, Ivan Karamazov, the Grand Inquisitor, and others. In literary criticism Dostoevsky's work has been broken down into a series of independent and self-contradictory philosophical positions, each defended by one or another of his heroes. The philosophical views of the author himself figure among them as well, though they are by no means accorded primary importance. For some scholars Dostoevsky's voice merges with the voices of certain of his heroes, for others it is a unique synthesis of all of the heroes' ideological voices, and for still others it is simply drowned out by the heroes' voices. The critics indulge in polemics with the heroes; they become their pupils, and they seek to develop their views into a completed system. The hero is ideologically authoritative and independent; he is perceived as the author of his own valid ideological conception, and not as the object of Dostoevsky's finalizing artistic vision. In the consciousness of the critics, the direct validity and significance of the heroes' words destroy the monological surface of the novel and encourage a direct answer, as if the hero were not the object of the author's word, but rather a full-valued, full-fledged carrier of his own private word.

B. M. Engelgardt quite accurately noted this characteristic of the literature on Dostoevsky.

When examining the Russian critical literature on Dostoevsky's works one readily notes that, with few exceptions, it never rises above the spiritual level of Dostoevsky's favorite characters. It does not rule the material at hand, the material masters it completely. It is still taking lessons from Ivan Karamazov and Raskolnikov, Stavrogin and the Grand Inquisitor, and becoming entangled in the same contradictions which entangled them as they came to a bewildered standstill in the face of

the problems which they had to solve, bowing respectfully before their complex and agonizing experiences.<sup>1</sup>

J. Meier-Gräfe has made a similar observation: "Who would ever think of taking part in one of the numerous conversations in *L'education sentimentale*? But we dispute with Raskolnikov, and not only with him, but with every bit-player as well."<sup>2</sup>

This peculiarity of the critical literature on Dostoevsky cannot, of course, be explained solely by the methodological helplessness of critical thought, nor should it be considered the complete destruction of the author's will. Such an approach on the part of the critical literature, as well as the unbiased perception of those readers who are constantly debating with Dostoevsky's heroes, does in fact correspond to a basic structural characteristic of that author's works. Dostoevsky, like Goethe's Prometheus, creates not voiceless slaves (as does Zeus), but rather *free* people who are capable of standing *beside* their creator, of disagreeing with him, and even of rebelling against him.

*The plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses and the genuine polyphony of full-valued voices are in fact characteristics of Dostoevsky's novels.* It is not a multitude of characters and fates within a unified objective world, illuminated by the author's unified consciousness that unfolds in his works, but precisely the *plurality of equal consciousnesses and their worlds*, which are combined here into the unity of a given event, while at the same time retaining their unmergedness. In the author's creative plan, Dostoevsky's principle heroes are indeed *not only objects of the author's word, but subjects of their own directly significant word* (neposredstvenno znachashche slovo) *as well*. Therefore the hero's word is here by no means limited to its usual functions of characterization and plot development,<sup>3</sup> but neither does it serve as the expression of the author's own ideological position (as in Byron, for example). The hero's consciousness is given as a separate, a *foreign* consciousness, but at the same time it is not objectified, it does not become closed off, it is not made the simple object of the author's consciousness. In this sense the image of Dostoevsky's hero is not the same as the usual objectified image of the hero in the traditional novel.

Dostoevsky is the creator of the *polyphonic novel*. He originated an essentially new novelistic genre. Therefore his work cannot be confined within any boundaries and does not submit itself to any of the historical-literary schemata which we are accustomed to apply to manifestations of the European novel. In his works there appears a hero whose voice is constructed in the same way that the voice of the author himself is constructed in the usual novel. The hero's word about himself and about the world is every bit as valid as the usual authorial word, it is not subordinated to the objectified image of the hero as one of his characteristics, nor does it serve as mouthpiece for the author's voice. It possesses an exceptional independence in the structure of the work, standing as if *alongside* the author's word and in a peculiar way combining

with it and with the full-valued voices of the other heroes.

It follows therefrom that the usual material or psychological bonds necessary for the pragmatic development of the plot are insufficient for Dostoevsky's world: they presuppose the heroes' objectivization and materialization as integral to the author's plan and they connect and combine completed images of people in the unity of a monologically perceived and understood world. Dostoevsky's plan presupposes the plurality of consciousnesses of equal value, together with their worlds. In Dostoevsky's novels the usual plot pragmatics play a secondary role and fulfill special functions, different from their usual ones. The final bonds which create the unity of his novelistic world are of another sort; the basic event disclosed by his novel is not amenable to the usual plot-pragmatic (*siuzhetno-pragmaticheskoe*) interpretation.

Further, the very orientation of the narration—whether it is carried out by the author, a narrator, or one of the heroes—must be completely different than in novels of the monological type. The position from which the story is told, the image is constructed, or the information is given must be oriented in a new way to this new world, the world of full-fledged subjects, not objects. The narrational, representational, and informational word must work out some sort of new relationship to its object.

Thus, all of the elements of Dostoevsky's novelistic structure are profoundly original; they are all determined by that new artistic task which only he succeeded in setting and fulfilling in all its breadth and depth: the task of constructing a polyphonic world and destroying the established forms of the basically *monological* (homophonic) European novel.<sup>4</sup>

From the point of view of a consistent monological vision and comprehension of the represented world and of the monological canon of novelistic construction, Dostoevsky's world may appear to be chaotic, and the construction of his novels a conglomerate of alien materials and incompatible principles of design. The profound organicism, consistency and unity of Dostoevsky's poetics can become clear only in light of his basic artistic task as we have formulated it.

This is our thesis. Before developing it on the basis of the material of Dostoevsky's works, we shall retrace the way in which the basic characteristic of his work, as put forward by us, has been interpreted in the critical literature. We have no intention here of giving an even remotely complete outline of the literature on Dostoevsky. We shall examine only a few works from the twentieth century, namely those which, firstly, touch upon questions of Dostoevsky's poetics, and, secondly, come closest to the basic characteristics of his poetics as we understand them. Thus the selection will be made from the point of view of our thesis, and, consequently, will be subjective. But a subjective selection is in this case unavoidable and justified: what we are giving here is not an historical outline and not even a survey. We wish only to orient our thesis and our point of view among the other points of view toward Dostoevsky's poetics which already exist in the literature. In the process of

this orientation we shall clarify the various aspects of our thesis.



Until very recently the critical literature on Dostoevsky has been a too-direct ideological response to the voices of his heroes for it to be able to objectively perceive the distinguishing artistic characteristics of his new novelistic structure. Moreover, in attempting to gain a theoretical understanding of this new multi-voiced world, it has found no other course than to monologize this world according to the usual type, i.e., to perceive a work of an essentially new artistic will from an old and accustomed point of view. Some critics, enslaved by the content of the various heroes' ideological views, strove to reduce those views to a systematic monological whole, ignoring the essential plurality of unmerged consciousnesses, a deliberate part of the author's artistic intention. Other critics, while resisting the charm of unadulterated ideology, turned the full-valued consciousnesses of the heroes into materialized psyches perceived in an objectified way, and perceived Dostoevsky's world as the ordinary world of the European social-psychological novel. In the first instance the result was a philosophical monolog in place of the event of the interaction of full-valued consciousnesses; in the second it was a monologically understood objectified world, correlative to a single and unified authorial consciousness.

Impassioned co-philosophizing with the heroes and the dispassionate psychological or psychopathological analysis of the heroes as objects are equally incapable of penetrating the artistic archetronics of Dostoevsky's works. The passion of the co-philosophizers is incapable of an objective, genuinely realistic vision of the world of others' consciousnesses, and the realism of the analyzers is "in over its head." It is quite clear that in both cases the artistic problems proper are either avoided altogether or treated merely accidentally and superficially.

The chief method in the critical literature on Dostoevsky is philosophical monologization. Rozanov, Volynsky, Merzhkovsky, Shestov and others have travelled this path. In trying to force the plurality of consciousnesses depicted by the author into the systematic monological limits of a unified *Weltanschauung*, these scholars were compelled to resort either to antinomy or to dialectics. Out of the concrete and unified consciousnesses of the characters (and of the author himself) they mined ideological theses, which they either arranged in dynamic dialectical series or juxtaposed one to another as irreducible absolute antinomies. The interaction of several unmerged consciousnesses was replaced by the interaction of ideas, thoughts and positions adequate for a single consciousness.

Both dialectics and antinomy are in fact present in Dostoevsky's world. The thinking of his heroes is in fact sometimes dialectic or antinomic. But all of the *logical* bonds remain within the bounds of the individual consciousnesses and do not govern the interrelationships of events which relate the

consciousnesses to each other. Dostoevsky's world is profoundly personalized. He perceives and represents every thought as the position of a personality.

Therefore, even within the bounds of each individual consciousness, a dialectical or antinomical series is merely an abstract aspect which is inseparably intertwined with the other aspects of the integral, concrete consciousness. Through this concrete consciousness, embodied in the *living voice of an integral person*, the logical series becomes part of the unity of the event depicted. A thought, drawn into an event, itself becomes part of the event and takes on the peculiar character of an "idea-feeling" or "idea-force" which creates the inimitable uniqueness of the "idea" in Dostoevsky's creative world. An idea, removed from the interrelationship of events of consciousnesses and forced into a systematic monological context, even of the most dialectical sort, inevitably loses its uniqueness and becomes an inferior philosophical assertion. For this reason all the large monographs based on the philosophical monologization of Dostoevsky's works contribute little toward an understanding of the distinguishing artistic characteristic of his world as we have formulated it. That characteristic did, it is true, give rise to all of these scholarly works, but it is in them least of all recognized.

Its recognition begins at the point where a more objective approach not to Dostoevsky's work is attempted, an approach not only to the ideas as such, but to the works as artistic entities as well.

The basic structural peculiarity of Dostoevsky's artistic world was first gropingly—but only gropingly—discovered by Vyacheslav Ivanov.<sup>5</sup> He defined Dostoevsky's realism as being based not on (objectified) cognition, but on "penetration." The principle of Dostoevsky's *Weltanschauung* is to affirm the next man's "I" (*chuzhoe "ja"*) not as an object, but as another subject. The affirmation of another man's "I"—"Thou art"—is, according to Ivanov, the task which Dostoevsky's heroes must fulfill in order to overcome their ethical solipsism, their reclusive "idealistic" consciousness, and to transform the other person from a shadow into true reality. The solipsistic reclusiveness of the heroes consciousness and his seclusion in his own world always lie at the root of the tragical catastrophe in Dostoevsky's works.<sup>6</sup>

Thus the affirmation of the other's consciousness as a full-fledged subject, and not as an object, becomes the ethico-religious postulate which defines the content of the novel (the catastrophe of the reclusive consciousness). This is the principle of the author's *Weltanschauung*, from which point of view he comprehends his heroes' world. Consequently Ivanov shows only the purely thematic aspect of this principle in the content of the novel, and in a predominantly negative way, at that: the heroes are devastated because they cannot completely affirm the other—"Thou art." Affirmation—and non-affirmation—of the other's "I" by the hero is the theme of Dostoevsky's works.

But this theme is altogether possible in a novel of a purely monological type as well, and is in fact more than once treated in such novels. As the author's ethico-religious postulate and as the theme of the work's content, the

affirmation of another's consciousness does not constitute a new form or a new type of novelistic construction.

Vyacheslav Ivanov did not demonstrate how this principle of Dostoevsky's *Weltanschauung* becomes the principle of his artistic vision of the world and of the artistic construction of a *linguistic* unit—the novel. This principle is relevant for the literary scholar only as the principle of a concrete literary construction, and not as the ethico-religious principle of an abstract *Weltanschauung*. And only in such a form can it be objectively dissected on the basis of the empirical material of concrete literary works.

But Vyacheslav Ivanov did not do this. In the chapter devoted to the "principle of form," despite a series of valuable observations, he persists in perceiving Dostoevsky's novel within the bounds of the monological type. The radical artistic upheaval which Dostoevsky accomplished remained in its essence uncomprehended. Ivanov's basic definition of Dostoevsky's novel as a "novel-tragedy" seems to us incorrect.<sup>7</sup> It is characteristic as an attempt to reduce a new artistic form to an already-familiar artistic will. As a result, Dostoevsky's novel appears to be a sort of artistic hybrid.

Thus, while arriving at a profound and correct definition for Dostoevsky's basic principle—to affirm the other's "I" not as object, but as another subject—Vyacheslav Ivanov monologized this principle, i.e., he made it part of the author's monologically formulated *Weltanschauung* and perceived it merely as the contentual theme of a world depicted from the point of view of the author's monological consciousness.<sup>8</sup> In addition, he connected his idea with a series of direct metaphysical and ethical assertions which are not subject to any kind of verification based on the material of Dostoevsky's works themselves.<sup>9</sup> The artistic task of constructing a polyphonic novel, first fulfilled by Dostoevsky, remained undiscovered.

S. Askoldov gives a definition of Dostoevsky's basic distinguishing characteristics similar to that of Ivanov.<sup>10</sup> But he, too, remains within the bounds of Dostoevsky's monologized religious-ethical *Weltanschauung* and the monologically perceived content of his works.

"Dostoevsky's first ethical thesis," says Askoldov, "is at first glance something extremely formal, but at the same time is, in a certain sense, something of utmost importance. By all of his judgements and sympathies he says to us: 'Be a personality!' ("Bud' lichnost'!").<sup>11</sup> Personality, according to Askoldov, differs from character, type, and temperament—which usually serve as the object of representation in literature—by virtue of its exceptional inner freedom and absolute independence from the external environment.

This is, then, the ethical principle of the author's *Weltanschauung*. Askoldov makes a direct transition from this *Weltanschauung* to the content of Dostoevsky's novels and shows by what means Dostoevsky's heroes become

personalities in life and how they manifest themselves as such. Thus the personality inevitably comes into conflict with the external environment, above all in conflict with conventions of every sort. Hence the "scandal"—that first and most external manifestation of the pathos of the personality—plays an enormous role in Dostoevsky's works.<sup>12</sup> Crime, according to Askoldov, is a deeper manifestation of the pathos of the personality in life. He says: "Crime in Dostoevsky's novels is the statement in life of the religious-ethical problem. Punishment is the form of its solution. Therefore the two together constitute the basic theme of Dostoevsky's work."<sup>13</sup>

Thus the methods of revealing the personality in life itself are constantly under discussion here, rather than the methods of visualizing and representing it artistically under the conditions of a specific artistic construction—the novel. Besides, the very interrelationship between the author's *Weltanschauung* and the world of his heroes is incorrectly represented. The direct transition from the pathos of the personality in the author's *Weltanschauung* to the real-life pathos (*zhiznennyychi patos*) of his heroes, and from there again to the author's monological deduction is the typical path of the monological novel of the romantic type. But this is not Dostoevsky's path. Askoldov says:

Dostoevsky, in all of his artistic sympathies and judgements, proclaims one very important proposition: the villain, the saint, and the ordinary sinner, if they have developed their personal quintessence to its utmost, all possess a certain equal worth, precisely in the quality of their personalities, which resist the murky currents of the all-equalizing "environment."<sup>14</sup>

Proclamations of this sort are characteristic of the romantic novel, which saw consciousness and ideology merely as the author's pathos and the author's deduction (*vyvod*), and saw the hero merely as the executor of the author's pathos or the object of the author's deduction. It is precisely the romantics who give direct expression to their artistic sympathies and judgements in the very reality which they are representing, and who objectivize and materialize everything to which they cannot give the accent of their own voice.

Dostoevsky's originality lies not in the fact that he monologically proclaimed the worth of the personality—others had done so before him,—but in the fact that he was able to see and to show it with artistic objectivity as another, a foreign, personality, without lyricizing it or merging it with his own voice, while at the same time not reducing it to materialized psychic reality. The high appraisal of the personality's worth did not appear for the first time in Dostoevsky's *Weltanschauung*, but the artistic image of a foreign personality (if we accept Askoldov's term) and of multiple unmerged personalities joined in the unity of a given spiritual event, was realized for the first time in his novels.

The astonishing inner independence of Dostoevsky's heroes, correctly mentioned by Askoldov, is achieved by specific artistic means. It is achieved above all through the heroes' freedom and independence vis-a-vis the author in

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE HERO AND THE AUTHOR'S POSITION IN RELATION TO THE HERO IN DOSTOEVSKY'S WORK

We have advanced a thesis and given a rather monological (in light of our theory) revue of the most pertinent attempts to define the basic features of Dostoevsky's art. In the process of this critical analysis we have made our point of view clear. Now we must move on to a more detailed and conclusive development of that point of view, based on the material of Dostoevsky's works.

We will concentrate consecutively on the three aspects of our thesis: on the relative freedom and independence of the hero and his voice in the framework of the polyphonically conceived novel; on the special means of stating ideas in the polyphonic novel; and finally on the new principles of connection (*svyaz'*) which bind together the whole of the novel. The present chapter is devoted to the hero.

The hero interests Dostoevsky not as a manifestation of reality possessing specific, fixed social-typical and individual-characterological traits, not as a specific figure constructed of unambiguous and objective features, an aggregate answer to the question "Who is he?" No, the hero interests Dostoevsky as a *particular point of view* in relation to the world and in relation to the hero himself, as the semantic and judgement-passing position of a man in relation to himself and to surrounding reality. For Dostoevsky the important thing is not how the hero appears to the world, but, most importantly, how the world appears to the hero and how the hero appears to himself.

This is an important and fundamental characteristic of the hero's perception. The hero as point of view, as position vis-à-vis the world and vis-à-vis himself, requires unique methods of development and literary characterization. That which must be developed and characterized is not the hero's specific milieu nor a fixed image of him, but rather the *sum total of his consciousness and self-consciousness*, in the last analysis *the hero's final word about himself and about his world*.

Therefore the elements from which the image of the hero is constructed are not the facts of reality—the reality of the hero himself and of his environment,—but rather the *significance* of those facts for the *hero himself*, for his self-consciousness. All of the hero's fixed, objective qualities, his social position, his sociological and characterological typicality, his habitus, his spiritual mien and even his physical appearance, i.e. everything usually employed by the author in creating a concrete and substantive image of the hero—"Who is he?"—in Dostoevsky becomes the

object of the hero's own reflection, the subject of his own self-consciousness. Thus the *function* of the hero's self-consciousness becomes the subject of the author's vision and representation. While self-consciousness is usually only an element of the hero's reality, merely one aspect of his integrated image, here all of reality becomes an element of the hero's self-consciousness. The author does not retain for himself, that is exclusively for his own field of vision, a single essential definition, a single characteristic, a single trait of the hero. He introduces all of these into the hero's field of vision, casting them all into the crucible of the hero's self-consciousness. This pure self-consciousness in its totality remains within the author's purview as the matter of his vision and representation.

Already in the earliest, the "Gogolian" period of his literary career, Dostoevsky depicts not the "poor government clerk," but the *self-consciousness* of the poor clerk (Devushkin, Golyadkin, even Prokharichin). That which in Gogol's field of vision was given as the aggregate of objective traits forming the hero's fixed social-characterological image is introduced by Dostoevsky into the field of vision of the hero himself and becomes the object of his agonizing self-awareness. Dostoevsky even forces his "poor government clerks," whose external appearance was depicted by Gogol, to contemplate themselves in the mirror.<sup>63</sup> As a result of this method all the concrete features of the hero, while retaining their content, are transferred from one descriptive plane to another and take on an entirely new artistic significance: they can no longer finalize and enclose the hero, giving the artist's answer to the question "Who is he?" We see not who he is, but how he perceives himself; our artistic vision focuses not on the reality of the hero, but on the pure function of his perception of that reality. Thus the Gogolian hero becomes Dostoevsky's hero.<sup>64</sup>

The following somewhat simplified formula could be given for the way in which the young Dostoevsky revolutionized Gogol's world: he transferred the author and the narrator with the totality of their points of view and the descriptions, characterizations and definitions of the hero given by them, to the purview of the hero himself, thereby turning the finalized integrated reality of the hero into the material of the hero's own self-consciousness. It is not without purpose that Dostoevsky causes Makar Devushkin to read Gogol's "Overcoat" and to perceive it as a story about himself, a slander against him. Thus Dostoevsky literally introduces the author into the hero's field of vision.

Dostoevsky caused, as it were, a small-scale Copernican upheaval by making what had been the author's firm and finalizing definition of the hero an aspect of the hero's self-definition. Gogol's world, the world of "The Overcoat," "The Nose," "Nevsky Prospect" and "Notes of a Madman," remains in content unchanged in Dostoevsky's first works—in *Poor Folk* and *The Double*. But the distribution of Gogol's material among the structural elements of the work is in Dostoevsky completely different. The functions that were performed by the author are now performed by the hero as he elucidates himself from all possible points of view; the author no longer elucidates the reality of the hero, but rather his self-consciousness as reality of a second order. The dominant of the entire literary vision and structure was shifted, the world took on a new visage, despite

the fact that Dostoevsky introduced almost no essentially new, non-Gogolian material. 95

Not only the reality of the hero himself, but also the external world and way of life surrounding the hero are drawn into the process of self-awareness and are transferred from the author's field of vision to that of the hero. They no longer reside in the same plane as the hero, beside him and external to him in the official world of the author. Therefore they cannot be the causal, genetic factors defining the hero and cannot fulfill an explanatory function in the work. Only another consciousness can stand as equal in the same plane with the all-encompassing consciousness of the hero; only another point of view can stand equal to the point of view. *Only the objective world—the world of other equal consciousness—can be counterposed by the author to the all-engulfing consciousness of the hero.*

One must not think of self-consciousness in the social-characterological plane or see it simply as a new trait of the hero, or see Devushkin or Golyadkin, for example, as Gogolian heroes with self-consciousness added. Belinsky perceived Devushkin in just that way. He was impressed by the passage with the mirror and the popped button, but he did not catch its structural literary significance. Self-consciousness for him merely enriches and humanizes the portrait of the "poor clerk," taking its place beside the other characteristics in the concrete image of the hero, constructed within the author's ordinary field of vision. Perhaps this hindered Belinsky in correctly assessing "The Double" as well.

Self-awareness, as the *artistic dominant* of the hero's construction, cannot lie in the same plane as the other features of his image; self-awareness draws the other features into itself, taking them as its material and depriving them of any power to define and finalize the hero. Self-awareness can be the dominant in the portrayal of any individual. But not all individuals provide equally favorable material for such a portrayal. In this respect Gogol's clerk offered excessively narrow possibilities. Dostoevsky sought a predominantly perceiving hero, a hero whose entire life was concentrated in the pure function of perceiving himself and the world. Thus the "dreamer" and the "underground man" appear in his works. "Dreaminess" and membership in the "underground" are both social-characterological traits, but they fit into Dostoevsky's artistic dominant. The consciousness of an unfulfilled dreamer (who is also incapable of fulfillment) or of an underground man is such favorable soil for Dostoevsky's artistic purposes that it allows the author to unite the artistic dominant of the portrayal with the social-characterological dominant of the person portrayed.

"Oh, if only it were out of pure laziness that I don't do anything. Lord, how I would respect myself then. I would respect myself precisely because then I would at least be capable of being lazy; then I would have at least one definite trait which I myself could be sure of. Question: 'Who is he?' Answer: 'A lazy lout.' How awfully pleasant it would be to hear that about myself. That would mean that I'm definitely defined, that would

mean that there is something to say about me. 'A lazy lout!'—that's already a calling and a purpose. That's a career!" (IV, 147)

The "underground man" does not merely dissolve in himself all possible concrete traits of his image by making them the subject of his own reflection—he has no such traits at all, he has no fixed definition, there is nothing to say about him; he figures not as a person taken from life, but rather as the subject of consciousness and dream. And for the author he is not a carrier of qualities and characteristics which are neutral in relation to his self-consciousness and capable of finalizing him; no, the vision of the author is directed precisely at his self-consciousness and at the inescapable unfinalizability and vicious circle (*durnaya beskonechnost'*) of that self-consciousness. Thus the social-characterological definition of the "underground man" and the artistic dominant of his image merge into one.

Only in the classicists, only in Racine, can one find such a deep and total concurrence between the form of the hero and the form of the man, between the dominant of the hero's image and the dominant of his character. The comparison of Dostoevsky with Racine sounds paradoxical because the material upon which, in each respective case, the completeness of artistic compatibility is built is too diverse. Racine's hero is all objective existence, stable and firm, like a sculpture. Dostoevsky's hero is all self-consciousness. Racine's hero is infinite function. Racine's hero is equal to himself. But artistically the Dostoevskian hero is as precise as Racine's. Self-consciousness as the artistic dominant of the hero's image is enough in itself to break down the monological unity of the artistic world, given the condition that the hero as self-consciousness is in fact "depicted," and not "expressed," i.e. that the hero does not merge with the author, does not become his mouthpiece. Consequently, monological unity is broken when the accents of the hero's self-consciousness are in fact objectivized and when in the work itself a distance between the hero and the author is maintained. If the umbilical cord binding the hero to his creator is not cut, then we have before us not a work of art, but a personal document.

In this sense Dostoevsky's works are profoundly objective. Having become the dominant, the hero's self-awareness breaks down the monological unity of the work, without destroying, of course, the artistic unity of a new, non-monological type. The hero becomes relatively free and independent because everything in the author's design which defined and, so to speak, predestined the hero, everything which qualified him once and for all as a completed image of reality,—now all of that functions no longer as a finalizing form, but as material of his self-consciousness.

In a monological design the hero is closed and the limits of his meaning are sharply outlined: he acts, experiences, thinks and perceives within the boundaries of what he is, i.e. within the boundaries of his image defined as reality; he cannot stop being himself, i.e. he cannot exceed the boundaries of his character, his typicality and his temperament without in the process violating the author's monological

design. Such an image is constructed in the world of the author, which is objective in relation to the hero's consciousness; the construction of the author's world, with its perspectives and finalizing definitions, requires a firm external position, a firm authorial field of vision. The hero's self-consciousness is presented against the fixed background of the external world and is contained within the fixed framework of the author's consciousness, which defines and portrays the hero and remains inaccessible to him from within.

Dostoevsky renounces all of these monological premises. Everything that the monological author retained for himself and used to create the ultimate unity of the novel and of the world portrayed in it Dostoevsky presents to his hero, turning it all into an aspect of the hero's self-consciousness.

There is literally nothing we can say about the hero of *Notes From the Underground* that he does not already know himself: his typicalness for his time and social position, the sober psychological, or even psychopathological, definition of his inner constitution, the characterological category of his consciousness, his comicality and tragicness, all the possible moral definitions of his personality, etc. In Dostoevsky's design he knows all of these things perfectly well himself, and he persistently and agonizingly absorbs all of these definitions from within. The external perspective is, as it were, made impotent in advance and deprived of the final word.

Since in this work the dominant of the portrayal coincides perfectly with the dominant of that which is portrayed, the author's formal task finds clear expression in the content. The "underground man" thinks most about what others think or might think about him and strives to keep one step ahead of every other consciousness, everyone else's thoughts about him, every other point of view toward him. At all essential points in his confession he strives to anticipate possible definitions and assessments of him by others, to guess the sense and tone of those assessments, and to carefully formulate the potential words of others, interrupting his own speech with the imagined remarks of others.

"'Isn't that shameful! Isn't that degrading!' perhaps you would say to me, scornfully shaking your heads. 'You thirst for life, but you solve the problems of life with jumbled logic... Yes, there is some truth in you, but no modesty; out of the pettiest pride you make a show of your truth, you expose it to disgrace, to the market place... You do indeed have something to say, but out of fear you hide your final word because you haven't the courage to pronounce it; you possess only cowardly insolence. You boast of your consciousness, but you vacillate because, although your mind functions, your heart is clouded over with depravity, and without a pure heart a real consciousness is impossible. And how unfortunate you are, how you force yourself on people, how you put on airs! Nothing but mendacity and more mendacity!

Of course I've made up all of your words myself. That's also from the underground. For forty years straight I've listened through a crack in the

*underground to these words of yours. I thought them up myself, but they were the only ones that came to me. It's no wonder that I've learned them by heart and given them literary form...*" (IV, 164-165).

The hero from the underground listens in on every word said about him by others, he looks in all the mirrors of others' consciousnesses and knows all the possible refractions of his own image in those mirrors. He is aware of his objective definition, neutral both to foreign consciousnesses and to his own self-consciousness, and he takes into account the viewpoint of a "third party." But he also knows that all of these definitions, both biased and objective, rest in his hands and cannot finalize him, precisely because he himself perceives them; he can go beyond their limits and make them invalid. He knows that he has the *final word*, and he seeks, come what may, to retain for himself this final word about himself, the word of his self-consciousness, in order through it to become what he is not. His self-consciousness lives on its unfinalizedness, its open-endedness and indeterminacy.

And this is not merely a characterological trait of the "underground man's" self-consciousness; it is the dominant of his construction by the author. The author indeed leaves the final word to his hero. And precisely it, or, more exactly, the tendency toward it, is necessary to the author's design. The author constructs his hero not out of words that are foreign to him [i.e. to the hero], and not out of neutral definitions, he constructs not a character, a type, a temperament, not an objectified image of the hero, but precisely the hero's *word* about himself and about his world.

Dostoevsky's hero is not an objectified image, but rather an autonomous word, a *pure voice*; we do not see him, we hear him. Everything that we see and know independently of his word is non-essential and is swallowed up as material by the word, or remains outside it as a stimulative and provocative factor. We will further see that the entire artistic construction of the Dostoevskian novel is directed toward the exposition and elucidation of the hero's word, and fulfills a provocative and directive function in relation to that word. The epithet "a cruel talent" applied to Dostoevsky by N. K. Mikhailovsky has a basis, though not so simple a one as Mikhailovsky imagined. The sort of moral torture to which Dostoevsky subjects his heroes in order to force from them the word of ultimate self-consciousness allows him to expose in the portrayal of a character all that is material and objectified, all that is firm and immutable, all that is external and neutral, within the sphere of the character's self-consciousness and his self-utterances.

A comparison with recent enthusiastic imitators of "the cruel talent"—the German expressionists Kornfeld, Werfel, etc.—provides sufficient evidence of the artistic depth and subtlety of Dostoevsky's provocative artistic devices. In most cases the imitators cannot progress beyond the depiction of hysterical frenzies, because they are incapable of creating around the hero that particularly complex and subtle social atmosphere which causes him to reveal and explain himself