F.M. Dostoyevsky’s Characterology and its Artistic Perception Problem in the 20-th Century Literature

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Abstract: The present article is dedicated to Dostoyevsky’s characterology study. This paper presents the historical background, studies the typology of Dostoyevsky's characters available in the modern science and characterizes the main types. Special consideration is given to the problem of Dostoyevsky’s types’ artistic perception in the Russian literary works of subsequent periods. It is concluded that the types developed by Dostoyevsky function as “archetypes” in the twentieth century and they are re-conceptualized in this very function.

Key words: Characterology - Character type - Dostoyevsky - Artistic perception

INTRODUCTION

The appeal to Dostoyevsky’s characterology problem is explained, first of all, by this category importance. The characterology reflects the writer's concept of the world and man and defines the ideological and artistic specificity of works. Researchers have repeatedly emphasized that the “the characterology in Dostoyevsky's works is more logically organized (his repeating types are more noticeable), than in other writers’ works” [1, 235]; that “the image typology is “the essential part of the writer’s art system” [2, 3]; that “the dynamics of human nature discovered by Dostoyevsky “can be expressed through the statics of human types depicted by him (Dostoyevsky) and through the systematization of these types” [3, 6].

Material and Research Methodology: the research was conducted within the framework of the comparative-historical approach and is based on the principles of historico-functional and intertextual methods.

The first type classifications or, according to L.P. Grossman, “the repeating images” have been proposed as early as the 19-th century by A.A. Grigoryev, N.A. Dobrolyubov, N.K. Mikhailovsky and N.N. Strakhov. In the Soviet literary studies, this problem has been accessed by L.P. Grossman, V.Ya. Kirpotin, V.F. Pereverzev and B.M. Engelhardt.

Thus, N.A. Dobrolyubov subdivided Dostoyevsky's characters into “gentle” and “fierce” [4], N.K. Mikhailovsky-into “torturers” and “martyrs” [5], A.A. Grigoryev-into “predatory” and “meek” [6]. V.F. Pereverzev considered “double” the main Dostoyevsky’s type [7]. L.P. Grossman considered, according to G.K. Shchennikov, not only the characters’ psychology, but also their “social portrait”. He also considered “the functional role in the ideological novel” and mentioned such types as: “thinkers”, “dreamers”, “profaned girls”, “voluptuaries”, “voluntary buffoons”, “doubles”, “people from the Underground”, “Russian generous natures”, “righteous persons”, etc. [8]. B.M. Engelhardt identified three types of characters’ ideological and ethical orientation on “environment”, “soil” and “earth” [9].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dostoyevsky’s characterology continues to be developed by modern researchers (A.A. Alekseev, T.A. Kasatkina, V.G. Odinokov, G.K. Shchennikov, etc.). G.K. Shchennikov believes that the writer’s characterology is correlated with his notions of moral and psychological human evolution towards “the law of Christ” (an outline of “Socialism and Christianity” article) and identifies three groups of typical characters that correspond to three stages of this evolution (“patriarchy”, “civilization”, “Christianity”). The researcher distinguishes two large subgroups “with numerous options in each” within the first two groups. Thus, “the spontaneously moral” characters (Sonya Marmeladova, Dasha Shatova,
Khromonozhka (The Lame Girl), Makar Dolgoruky, Zosima) and “the spontaneously immoral” characters (Svidrigailov, Rogozhin, Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov, Gruschenka, Mitya) are related to the “patriarchy” stage. The “civilization era” group is made up by the theoretical heroes: “divided selves” (Raskolnikov, Stavrogin, Kirillov, Versilov, Ivan Karamazov) and business theorists (Prince Volkovskiy, Luzhin, Lebyadkin, Smerdyakov). Primarily, Prince Myshkin refers to “Christian era foreboders” type, but Arkady Dolgoruky and Alyosha Karamazov are also close to him [10].

V.G. Odinokov aims at highlighting the types that possess the greatest degree of generalization and peculiar “hypertypicality” and mentioned the “dreamer” and “underground” types as follows. According to the researcher, these types form the “proud man” type, which subsequently passes into “positively beautiful” and “demon” [2].

A.A. Alekseev creates Dostoyevsky’s ethical and aesthetic characterology, in which “each of character varieties is solved in the light of a certain aesthetic category (relative or normative).” Thus, the researcher, by his own remark, considers the writer’s historiososophical views as well. Dostoyevsky's characters are divided into people of “golden age”, which are “portrayed by the writer through the normative category of beauty,” and people of “civilization era”, which include the “downtrodden people” (Makar Devushkin, Varenka Dobroselova, the Ihmenyev family, Marmeladov, Snegiryov); “people from two abysses”: rational theorists (Raskolnikov, Terentiev, Kirillov, the Funny Man, Ivan Karamazov) and “moral generous natures” (Svidrigailov, Rogozhin, Dmitry Karamazov); “people of the golden mean” (Luzhin, Lebezyatnikov, Erkel, Herzenstube). While creating the “downtrodden people” images, the key categories are the miserable-and-tragic and the ugly-and-miserable; the aesthetics of rational theorists is dominated by the relative category of the ugly-and-tragic; the images of “moral generous natures” are presented through the category of the extreme; “the people of the golden mean” are combined by the category of “middle” [1].

T.A. Kasatkina uses the character’s emotional and value orientation as classification basis. This orientation is understood as “the man's attitude towards the world and the deep basis of his reactions to the world.” The value orientation type is defined by such concepts as “peace”, “society” and “I”. T.A. Kasatkina offers the type system of value orientations by highlighting several levels of it: epics (Alyosha) and drama, tragedy (Raskolnikov) and humor, heroism (Kirillov) and invective, romanticism (Versilov, Shatov) and satire, sentimentalism and cynicism (Petrushka), irony (Svidrigailov and Stavrogin) [3].

The available characterologies and the bases on which they are formed often cause scientific debates. Thus, V.G. Odinokov, by contesting the character typology proposed by L.P. Grossman, says that it is wrong to separate the typological headings of the “underground” and “thinker” types, because the “underground” is, in the highest degree, the “thinker”. According to the researcher, the “dreamers” and “profaned girls” types have different degrees of generalization. The duplicity is understood by the scientist as the character structure; therefore, he excludes the possibility of separating the “double” type.

G.K. Shchennikov,-by confirming that the main task when creating some characterology is to find “the unified principle of characters’ correlation,”-notices that some “strange association” occurs in the classifications that are built on the basis of “psychological contrast”. For example, Myshkin, Dmitry Karamazov and Stepan Verkhovensky are classified in one group as “martyrs of their own hearts” and Martha Svidrigailova and Marmeladov as people, who “voluntary accept suffering”- in another group.

G.K. Shchennikov calls T.A. Kasatkina’s classification “far from Dostoyevsky’s humanistic belief.” In his opinion, the researcher, based on the writer's creative material, tries to present “the evolution of the entire ethical culture of humanity” not from the earth to God, as stated in “Socialism and Christianity”, but, on the contrary, from primeval paradise to the increasing distance from God [11, 354-355].

The undertaken review convinces us that there is still no single scientific Dostoyevsky’s characterology. Based on the existing classifications, we rely mainly on the characterology proposed by G.K. Shchennikov. In our opinion, the key types are the “positively beautiful person” (L.P. Grossman’s righteous person, G.K. Shchennikov’s “synthesis” character and “Christian era foreboder”) and the ideological hero (“rational theorist” according to A.A. Alekseev’s classification and “theoretical hero” according to G.K. Shchennikov’s characterology), to which we attribute the types (more precisely subtypes) of underground person and demon (according to G.K. Shchennikov’s classification, theoretical divided self and theoretical adventurer respectively).
The “positively beautiful person” type is represented primarily by Prince Myshkin, which is explained by this character exclusiveness in Dostoyevsky’s character system. Thus, G.G. Ermilova pointed to Myshkin’s “uniqueness” as “Prince of Christ” in relation to all other Dostoyevsky’s characters [12]. G.K. Shchennikov, as already noted, considered only Prince Myshkin as the “Christian era foreboder” and the “synthesis” character. The “positively beautiful person” is a superhero and an ideal hero, whose character possesses such defining features as humility, forgiveness, love and compassion on the man.

The ideological hero is the main type in Dostoyevsky’s works. The first attempt to create a similar character was made in “The Landlady” (Ordynov’s image) and it was carried out in “Notes from the Underground” (the Underground paradoxicalist); the gallery of ideologists is presented in the novels of the great Pentateuch (Raskolnikov, Terentyev, Kirillov, Shatov, Stavrogin, Arkady Dolgoruky and Ivan Karamazov).

Dostoyevsky called his ideological hero “monoman” and the man “too concentrated on something” [13, 6, 26]. Each of these characters is the ideas carrier and each “has to Fletcherize an idea.” According to G.K. Shchennikov, the theorists do not recognize God and seek to establish morality on the reason; by raising the question of the limits of freedom and man’s responsibility, they have a permanent rift between the beliefs and demands of the heart.

Yu.I. Sokhryakov, by trying to identify the regularities in the process of understanding Dostoyevsky's artistic legacy by the Russian and foreign artistic and philosophical thought, concludes that much attention is paid to the literary types: to the underground person, who “embodied the boundless atheistic willfulness and individualistic beginning”; to the demonic type and demonic as a socio-psychological phenomenon, as well as to the righteous person type, who “embodied the spiritual and moral perfection” [14, 232].

The types developed by Dostoyevsky are often identified as “supertypes” or “metatypes”, i.e. types that possess the greatest degree of generalization. Due to this very property, Dostoyevsky’s types in the 20-th century literary works act as “archetypes” (as noted in the critical and scientific literature). Thus, even Vyach. I. Ivanov called Dostoyevsky's characters “symbolic figures” [15, 284]. Modern researchers also tend to perceive images created by Dostoyevsky as archetypical. For example, the Romanian researcher, A. Kovacs, considers Dostoyevsky’s images “new archetypes of the world literature,” like the characters of the Bible [16, 120]. R. S-I. Semykina confirms that the “underground type”, discovered by Dostoyevsky, appears today as an archetype. “The writer, - continues the researcher, - has created a matrix of special metaphysical world-the Underground, in which labyrinths we can see the heroes-antiheroes of the Russian literary works of the 20-21-th centuries” [17, 10]. S.A. Schultz puts Dostoyevsky’s Grand Inquisitor on a par with Cervantes’s Don Quixote and notes that “the named characters have long become not only specific, but also conditional and symbolic and archetypical figures” [18, 180-181].

The character typology developed by Dostoyevsky had a significant influence on the literature of the subsequent eras. Without claiming to full coverage of the material, let’s consider how the ideological hero (the underground man, the demon) and the righteous hero are perceived in the 20-th century works.

Psychological traits and states peculiar to Dostoyevsky’s ideologists are found in the characters of the 20-th century literature. Such writers as L. Andreev, A. Belyi, I. Bunin, A. Remizov and F. Sologub have inherited the “algorithm” of idea functioning (from idea issue to ideology-justification and then to “practice”), which is characteristic of Dostoyevsky's novels [see more: 19]. Fr. Gorenstein’s “ideas people” are the main characters of “The Place” novel and of “Counterrevolutionary” story, which are associated with Dostoyevsky’s theorists not only by the idea presence, but also by its form, content, emergence causes and characters attitude towards it. The idea emergence, its formation and its “live life” test is traced in each of the named works and in Dostoyevsky’s novels.

“The literary archetype” of the underground person is realized in the works of V. Garshin, L. Andreev, A. Kuprin, F. Sologub, B. Bryusov, Yu. Olesha, I. Ehrenburg, E. Zamyatin, L. Leonov, G. Ivanov, Ven. Erofeev, V. Makanin and others [see: 20, 21, 22, 14, 23]. For example, the character of Ven. Erofeev’s “Moscow-Petushki” poem can be assigned to this type. Both the Underground and Venichka are “self-conscious and deeply suffering from the enhanced self-consciousness” natures, nihilists and ideologists. The “behavioral paradigm of the characters: melancholy, foolishness and intoxication” is the same. R. S-I. Semykina considers that the character image of “Moscow-Petushki” poem reveals the characteristic features of two Dostoyevsky’s types—the underground

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person and the "positively beautiful". Venichka is both the "suffering nihilist" and "voluntary fool" [see: 17]. Note that the feature association of two mentioned types is also characteristic of Gorenstein's characters (for example, Volemir from the same name play). However, if Erofeev's underground character is endowed with the saving ability to love and trust, peculiar to Dostoyevsky's "positively beautiful" characters, then Gorenstein's righteous hero is, on the contrary, assimilated to the theorist or idealist.

The Grand Inquisitor's image (mainly in its socio-historical aspect) had a significant influence on the 20-th century literature (the works of E. Zamyatin, M. Gorky, N. Narokov, V. Astafyev, V. Rasputin, Ch. Aitmatov) [see: 14, 24, 25]. The features of this Dostoyevsky's character are clearly shown through the images and real historical figures and fictional characters (for example, The Benefactor in E. Zamyatin's novel-"We"). The first of the tendencies specified here is found in Fr. Gorenstein’s creativity as well ("The Spark" story and "The Winter '53" short novel), where Stalin's image is stably associated with the Grand Inquisitor.

The writers of the last century (B. Mozhaev, V. Dudintsev, V. Bykov, D. Granin) continue to explore the psychology of the demon type discovered by Dostoyevsky [see: 14]. Thus, in B. Mozhaev's novel-"Peasant Men and Women", the orientation on the ideas and images of "The Demons" is "deeply understood and openly declared." Mozhaev's characters can be perceived as Peter Verkhovenskiy and Shigalev's ideological heirs [see: 26]. The underground figures from "The Place" novel are modern demons as well.

According to contemporary researchers' observations, Dostoyevsky's "positive type" had an impact on the "cathedral personality" ideal formation in the Russian literature of the early 20-th century. The works' characterology of A. Remizov, I. Shmelev and B. Zaitsev are focused on the "quite beautiful person" type [see: 19]. The works of B. Pasternak, G. Gazdanov, V. Sorokin and D. Galkovsky revealed the characterological and narrative imitations of Dostoyevsky's novel-"The Idiot". The righteous heroes who embody the ideal of meekness and humility, like Myshkin, can be called: V. Shukshin's "cranks" ("Alyosha Beskovnoyny", "Bright Souls", "Crank", etc.), Ch. Aitmatov's Obadiah ("The Scaffold"), B. Vasilyev's Yegor Polushkin ("Do Not Shoot at White Swans"), A. Solzhenisyn's Matryona Timofeevna ("Matryona's House"), A. Vampilov's Valentina ("Last summer in Chulimsk"), N. Narokov's Evlampiya ("Imaginary values") [see: 14].

CONCLUSION

Dostoyevsky’s reception problem can be viewed in different ways: from the perspective of genre, which implies the tradition analysis of Dostoyevsky’s "ideological novel" in contemporary prose and from the perspective of artistic method, in which case, the influence of "realism in the highest sense" on the development of the subsequent literature methodology is studied.

The chosen approach to study this problem (concerning the characterology aspect) suggests itself. The perception analysis of the main Dostoyevsky’s types, which was undertaken in the present article, gives the opportunity to expand the understanding of Dostoyevsky’s reception features in the 20-th century literature.

REFERENCES

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