

DOSTOEVSKY AND EAST

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ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the issue of F.M. Dostoevsky's works reading through the prism of Eastern religious philosophy and culture. The methodological basis of the study is presented by system-integrated approach, whose task (among other things) is to expand the problematic field of a desired product, introduce it simultaneously into a wide range of sources in order to understand the mechanisms of an image reception. The authors of the article try to explain the artistic consciousness represented by a text in the aspects of "East centered turn" when the starting point of the analytical reading is not a usual western discourse with the pool of historical concepts and definitions of complex but the eastern knowledge. The modern literary education needs a multivariate understanding of classics based on solid, verified arguments, of course. On the one hand, this is the desire to interest a new reader, to support a developed attention to the legacy of the past. On the other hand, the multivariate approach implements the internal semantic potential which carries all major word-art phenomenon in itself and reveals it within the "long period" according to M.M. Bakhtin's term. The authors of the article take F.M. Dostoevsky's novel "The Idiot" for a detailed consideration. This novel can be interpreted not only in the aspects of Western and traditional Russian ideology, but also in the eastern world. The figure of the protagonist - Prince Myshkin - is the connecting element here. The consideration of the eastern subtext allows to understand the substantive content of his words and deeds more fully.

Key words: F.M. Dostoevsky, oriental culture, dialogue, comparative linguistics, consciousness, text

1. INTRODUCTION

F.M. Dostoevsky belongs to the pool of writers whose creative legacy is studied very thoroughly today. He is represented in Russian and foreign science quite fully as a complete system. Of course, this does not exclude the discussion of the most polemical aspects of his biography and literary writing. F.M. Dostoevsky is a classic, and by this fact the vector of his artistic masterpieces is determined. It is difficult to study classics - especially because an interpreter is forced to look for new approaches to the clearing of an old theme, and is not always possible to be on top of those values, which are defined by a major literary figure in interpretation practice. In this respect, at first glance, the choice of "non-classical" name seems to be more preferred one: the novelty of the work would be subject by the attempt of his aesthetic potential revealing, and the main means will be the set of techniques aimed at an ordinary empirical descriptiveness. Let's repeat that such a strategy is difficult with classics, because classics needs to attract new methodological programs, to find new aspects, to test those interpretations that reveal a writer from a new meaning aspect.

The subject "Dostoevsky and East" is not new, if we talk about it in general terms. Russian studies of Dostoevsky's works are presented by several works, developing the idea of F.M. Dostoevsky special interest to the eastern culture. For example, the presence of Islam forms in the minds of Russian genius was mentioned by V.V. Borisova [Borisova V.V., 1991], G. Krasnov [Krasnov, G., 1998], P.V. Alekseev [P.V. Alekseev, 2013]. Among foreign scholars the similar problem was developed by M. Futrell [Futrell M., 1979]. He also addressed the issue of the Buddhist code implementation in the mechanisms of F.M. Dostoevsky's thinking [Futrell M., 1981]. G.S. Pomeranz [G.S. Pomeranz, 2003] thought about the same, relying on typological parallels and one of this article authors argued, citing the "symbol of faith" by F.M. Dostoevsky [R.F. Bekmetov 2014]. In these studies, F.M. Dostoevsky's East fits rightly into the Russian oriental historical and cultural context, which began with the romantic era of the late XVIII-th - early XIX-th century, which is important, but not enough, in our opinion. One should clarify the methodology of cross-cultural interaction as far as possible, in order to understand in detail the process of creative reception concerning the eastern literary and philosophical imagery in the light of modern comparative approaches.

We believe that the model of comparative literary studies developed in the middle of the XX-th century was exhausted largely. This does not mean that we should decisively abandon it; it only means that it needs to be supplemented - as Newtonian picture of the world was added by Einstein's theory of relativity, clearly delineating the areas of research procedure application. In other words, F.M. Dostoevsky's relation with the world of the East can be described in the conventional contact-genetic aspect, embedding the oriental series into the scheme, offered by A.S. Pushkin and other Russian romanticists. Besides, it is possible to take into account the atmosphere of historical time, to which F.M. Dostoevsky was extremely sensitive: the imperial claims of Russia led it to another territorial acquisitions, where the East (Asia) was the principal one perhaps

(compare the entry from the "Writer's diary": "Asia is the main outcome, perhaps, in our future fates" [Dostoevsky, 2010]). Nevertheless, there is the need to read the texts of the writer through the imposition of the essential oriental element on them, the opening of some unconscious perception aspects from F.M. Dostoevsky involved in a complicated dynamic game of "resonance" roll calls and weaves. In "great time" (Bakhtin's term designating a huge time period where meanings exist in the mode of some kind of preservation, do not disappear completely, but are revived gradually and guide indirectly the creative minds under favorable conditions) actualizes panoramic coverage with an unusual force. The part of this coverage is "the turn to the East" (for more detail read the following: [Bekmetov, 2015]).

The purpose of the article is to demonstrate the potential of new paradigm by the point examples, taken from F.M. Dostoevsky's novel "The Idiot".

2. METHODS

The cornerstone research method is the system-integrated approach which combines multiple literary techniques. At that it should be noted that two methods have the greatest value in a specific case: 1) structural-semantic and 2) literary-hermeneutic.

The essence of the first method is reduced to the accounting of the entire palette of relationships within texts. The text in its borders is conceived as the system of informative signs, a hierarchical unit, a special model of reality. This method was developed in due to the search for structural linguistics, as the counterweight to the traditional historical and descriptive trend in literary criticism. The techniques of Russian formalist school made a significant impact on the method development. This school raised the issue not only of things reported in a work, but also about the presentation method.

As for the second method, it is based on the art of utterance meaning interpretation. The fundamental position of hermeneutics is the process of a foreign word understanding, often a written one. At that the understanding is not confined to the field of rational and logical operations. It allows the participation of intuitive aspects of receptive consciousness, the understanding of knowledge subject as a whole, followed by the mastered knowledge rationalization. This helps a reader to overcome the incompleteness of the original understanding of a word, although the interpretation (no matter how fit it is) is not able to reflect fully the truth about a work. Understanding is always relative one and it is close with misunderstanding. Moreover, in hermeneutics interpretation involves the "translation" of a statement into another language (the language of science and descriptive structures), so understanding is an individual creative mastery of a foreign word. Any text provides numerous meanings, explicit and implicit ones, cognized and not cognized ones. The meaning of a statement is not only the meaning embedded in it by an author, but also the fact that he was able to extract an interpreter from it. Hence - a great role of a dialogical factor in hermeneutics. It is necessary to understand the openness of the creative mind, the gift of a lively responsiveness when you talk about a dialogue. According to R. Barthes, the French literary critic of the XX-th century, hermeneutic reading "encourages to savor every word, as if to cling to a text, read it anxiously and get some pleasure from the process of signification (providing each phrase with a meaning)" [R. Barth, 2001].

Let's point out also that the article takes into account some principal results of modern comparative studies, both linguistic and literary ones (see: [Amineva V.R. et al, 2014; Amineva V.R. et al, 2015; Amineva V.R. 2015; Gilazetdinova G.H. et al, 2014; Ibragimov M.I. et al., 2015; Khabibullina L.F., 2014]).

3. RESULTS

F.M. Dostoevsky's creativity would be very incomplete if it was studied from the standpoint of immanent methodology. F.M. Dostoevsky's world shall be presented not only descriptively, with the enumeration of features that distinguish, for example, the writer's St. Petersburg chronotope from the chronotopes of northern capital pictured by A.S. Pushkin, but also "genetically", in a wider cultural review. Thus, a reader will find F.M. Dostoevsky's inclusion into the rhythms of the world literary history, both western and eastern one. Indeed, the novel "Crime and Punishment" reflects the gospel truth, rejecting violence as the way of individual or collective will approval. At the same time the text of the novel bears the traces of interest to the Koran in some positive connotations, about which F.M. Dostoyevsky's researches wrote, revealing the inconsistency of the allegations concerning the writer's opposition to Islam (the use of the name Mohammed served as the basis in the "Napoleonic" series, although this emphasis was set by Raskolnikov - a hero, not the author). Raskolnikov's dream, his "day-dream" shortly before the crime is among the brightest Muslim allusions: "... most often it seemed to him that he is somewhere in Africa, in Egypt, in some oasis. The caravan rests, the camels lie quietly; palm trees are everywhere...; they all dine. He drinks water right from the creek, which flows and murmurs right there. And it is so cool and wonderful blue water, cold one runs along multi-colored stones and along pure sand with a gold glitter..." [Dostoevsky F.M. 1973 (a)].

The Arab-Muslim code is the soul split evidence, the manifestation of latent origins opposing the domination of searing intelligence. A fine hero's soul is thirsty, like a traveler who appeared suddenly in the oasis after a long journey in the desert, in the shade, among the cool and fell down to the living spring weary. There is not only Pushkin's theme here, which became a motivic complex ("The Prophet", "Koran imitation"), and more - a subconscious appeal to the image of the Qur'anic Garden of Eden, "in which [pure] streams flow"

[Quran p. 7, 94, 360], "in the shadow of lotus trees, deprived of thorns, under acacias, dotted with flowers in the eternal shadow, among the flowing streams and abundant fruit" [Qur'an, p. 483].

This applies to F.M. Dostoevsky's novel "The Idiot". The novel contains the references to the eastern figurative-symbolic meta-language which needs to be explained. In fact, there is a view according to which F.M. Dostoevsky portrayed "a positively beautiful face" in "The Idiot", correlating with Christ, but without the loss of touch with the literary characters (Don Quixote by Cervantes, Pickwick by Charles Dickens). It does not make sense to challenge this view, because it is an obvious one and it is fixed in the epistolary heritage of the writer. However, the image of a holy man is so universal value that it would be appropriate to read it from Muslim tradition traditions, in an undeniable dialogue with the Christian one. Thus, the "non-Christian" aspect is specified by Myshkin's age: he is not thirty at the time of the "fatal madness" ("a young man of twenty-seven years..." [Dostoevsky F.M. 1973 (b)]). Then he suffers from "falling sickness". The reference of this disease has an autobiographical element, which is true, but in the field of cultural cooperation external correlations are important, and they emphasize the similarity of Myshkin and Muhammad: the prophet suffered from epilepsy according to individual assumptions. It is noteworthy that the highest clarity of the hero's consciousness during the last minute before the "seizure" recalls the mind harmony, which opened to Muhammad [Dostoevsky F.M. 1973 (b)].

It looks like evidence that this relationship is supported by such a random detail as the cloak. The writer noted that Prince Myshkin "had quite wide and thick cloak without sleeves and with a huge hood. Travelers use such often during winters" [Dostoevsky F.M. 1973 (b)]. The sleeveless cloak is found in Muhammad's description (this is an attribute of a Middle East suit: it is indispensable in desert at night, or during a strong wind). Of course, Myshkin's "cloak with a hood" can be treated in a more pragmatic way, "more materially". Moreover, F.M. Dostoevsky clearly specifies what European countries wear such clothes: Switzerland and Northern Italy. It is true, but the interpretation of the text is not always based on domestic pragmatism; sometimes in order to get to the "super-idea" of the work, one should relate the figurative components on a much higher plane without the primary level rejection. Similarly, we can interpret Myshkin's passion for calligraphy. On the one hand, we learn about his calligraphic preferences during his visit of General Yepanchin's family - they are geographically and chronologically localized (the medieval period, Russian and Western European font). On the other - the elegance of written characters and the professional work on it is also associated with the East. "Idiot" Myshkin's secret passion for intricate letters writing is amazing one. And the discovery of the inclination to reading by illiterate Muhammad at the behest of the Almighty was also amazing. This inclination brought the Arabs the creation of the figurative literal style, and hence, calligraphy as a science and art.

4. CONCLUSIONS

All provided judgment give the reason to assume that the semantic point which complements Myshkin's image is Sufism - a mystical-philosophical current in Islam.

Myshkin is similar to the Sufi saint (It is noteworthy that Myshkin's cloak reminds *hyrku*, the clothes of Persian dervishes). He is an ascetic, but not in the Christian sense of the word, when a man looks for an opportunity to go to the monastery to save his soul. He remains in the world, performs preaching, acts like a missionary by the "fire" of words and deeds. Neither way appeals the hero because he is Sufi righteous man, he stays on earth, lives among people, in the midst of various, often confusing, relationships, and reveals "wrongness" of the social environment by the fact of its existence in the mode of an other behavioral logic. He is a stranger, and this position opens a special intuition for Myshkin: he sees a foreign responding heart. There is quite a specific episode, when General Yepanchin hurried to part with an uninvited guest and preventing the absence of family ties changed the tone suddenly when he looked into Myshkin's eyes! "Prince's view was so gentle at that moment, and his smile was without any shade of a hidden hostile feeling that the general suddenly stopped and somehow suddenly looked at his guest otherwise; he started to look at Myshkin differently in an instant" [Dostoevsky F.M. 1973 (b)]. This dramatic change occurred at the preverbal level, when the soul, being freed from social conventions and "dark" nature flaws, dropped out of the flow of everyday troubles, showed the best of ourselves that is dormant under a bushel of external strata. In Sufi teachings this state comes from the heart, determined by it, and the holy acts as a mirror, which reflects his companion as a person in the confrontation of "good" and "bad", "pure" and "turbid". M.M. Bakhtin believed that Myshkin is the carrier of "carnival worldview"; he "can't enter life completely... he remains on the verge of the circle of life", it helps him to "enter" through the live flesh of other people into their souls" [M.M. Bakhtin, 1972]. These properties must be interpreted not only aesthetically, but also religiously and philosophically, relying on the "oriental text" of Russian culture.

5. SUMMARY

These examples can be multiplied. Perhaps their interpretation seems a game, a "strange" experiment. We hope that common calculations will be able to convince in the opposite: that the classical literature needs a living context reading and any interpreting idea is realized truly in the mode of relaxed complementarity.

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