

The background of the cover is a white surface with a fine halftone dot pattern. It is heavily splattered with bright red ink, creating a chaotic and dramatic effect. In the top left corner, there is a silver coin with the words 'D. F. McNEILL' embossed on it. In the bottom right corner, there is another similar coin. A black marker lies horizontally in the lower middle section. A large, solid red rectangular box is positioned on the left side, containing the title and author information in black text.

Daniel F. McNeill

Dostoevsky, Berdyaev, and Shestov

Three Russian Apostles of Freedom

12+

Daniel McNeill

**Dostoevsky, Berdyaev, and Shestov.  
Three Russian Apostles of Freedom**

«ЛитРес: Самиздат»

2020

**McNeill D. F.**

Dostoevsky, Berdyaev, and Shestov. Three Russian Apostles of Freedom / D. F. McNeill — «ЛитРес: Самиздат», 2020

ISBN 978-5-532-04954-3

Dostoevsky held on stubbornly to only what a free examination of what was human in himself revealed. Lev Shestov wrote, "To enter the world of the human soul in order to subordinate it to the laws that exist for the outside world means to voluntarily renounce in advance the right to see everything there and accept everything". In "The Brothers Karamazov" , Dostoevsky revealed that God himself demands that man be free. Nicholas Berdyaev wrote, "In true humanity not only is the nature of man revealed but God Himself is revealed also." Three great thinkers reveal the authentic path to freedom.

ISBN 978-5-532-04954-3

© McNeill D. F., 2020  
© ЛитРес: Самиздат, 2020

# Содержание

Part One	5
1	5
2	10
3	13
4	16
5	19
6	23
7	24
8	25
9	30
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	31

## Part One Dostoevsky

### 1

Russia geographically is so huge that something inside a Russian feels without limit. No matter how strongly Russians are controlled politically, they still feel that something within them, some sense of themselves that arises freely in their souls, can never be controlled. The soul cries out that it should not be ruled by anything, neither by a power in the outside world nor by some power in the mind. At times something wonderful comes alive in the Russian soul, something infinitely gentle and unworldly. Even when such moments pass, Russians refuse to believe their souls are empty and worthless. This belief gives the soul the strength to endure anything coming at it from the outside world.

Western European values based on materialism and scientific rationality entered Russia in the 18th century. They did not fit smoothly with Russian customs. Tsar Peter the Great imported Italian and French artists and architects to build the city of Saint Petersburg using eighteenth-century technologies. The result was a strange artificial city placed on Russian soil as if from nowhere. Fyodor Dostoevsky, the nineteenth-century Russian novelist, wrote that the Tsar's city, Saint Petersburg, is "the most abstract and intentional city on the whole terrestrial globe". The idea that a city could be produced intentionally stuck in Dostoevsky's mind. If a whole city resulted from a premeditated rational idea, what prevented people in an intentional city from acting intentionally? And if architects could create a city intentionally, why could not he, Dostoevsky, create a novel with a hero who acts only intentionally and refuses to act naturally like those around him?

Let's follow his young intentional hero through the streets of Saint Petersburg in the 1860s. Where is the young man, Raskolnikov, going? He is on his way to visit a sixty-year-old woman, a pawnbroker. He has visited her before and pawned objects for money. He is dressed negligently and is in need of money. He lives in a very small room, has little means and is thin and poorly nourished. He enters the woman's apartment and talks with her about how much money she will give him for a watch.

She gives him one rouble and fifteen kopecks but money this day is not his only object. Raskolnikov intends to experiment intentionally with reality rather than let reality experiment with him as do most people. He is going to test Western European rationalistic culture. Such culture exists inside him because he is perfectly capable as are other Petersburg students of acting rationally. It is in fact the easiest thing in the world to be rational and act rationally but something urges him to carry rationality to an extreme, to test how far rationality can go.

Where did Saint Petersburg come from? Why is Tzar Peter the Great's "intentional" city here? Where is the spiritual freedom and cultural independence of the Russian past? Why are some people around him as he walks to the pawnbroker dressed in Western European style clothes? Don't they see that they look odd compared to the way most people in Petersburg dress? He too when he dresses well is peculiar just like they. And all the socialist agitators in his neighborhood, don't they realize that their ideas are unseemly, that their revolutionary desire to create some new world is illusory? Raskolnikov is going to find out if an action motivated by nothing at all except a rational intention born in his own mind and nowhere else can be authentic. Why should not a rational person, if he must live guided by his reason because he lives in a modern abstract and intentional city, not be allowed to do anything at all that can be conceived rationally? A rational being like young Raskolnikov might act rationally in order to do something that the masses of people think despicable, evil, insane, but could not a man superior to the masses prove his superiority by daring to do something of the sort? He might use his reason to the extreme to establish his superiority just as the rational Western European architects

went to a rational extreme by constructing Peter the Great's "intentional" city. If rationality is the final destiny of all humans, something they must adopt to conduct their lives whether they like it or not, if rationality is everything then everything must be able to be done rationally, and even an insane terrible act should not have an irrational result in a feeling of guilt or shame if it is done intentionally. Raskolnikov has been alone brooding and thinking in his small room for many days avoiding human contact. He visits the pawnbroker not just for money but also to examine the inside of her apartment. One idea dominates his being, the idea of slicing an axe into the skull of the old pawnbroker simply to prove to himself that he could carry out rationally any act no matter how terrible.

Dostoevsky knew that Russian holy men of God are not motivated by the mind but by feelings that come from the heart. But why could he not create a new opposite type of holy man, a sort of holy man in reverse, a man who dares to draw his inspiration not from the feelings within his heart but from the ideas in his mind? Raskolnikov wants to use his mind to go beyond the normal mind. His mind and his self have become the same thing. He does not want to have anything to do with feelings of any kind. The miserable people around him on the streets of Petersburg are full of feelings because in their misery they have no tool to try to escape from their poverty except their feelings which are petty and inspired by their misery and just lead to more misery. Raskolnikov is a creature of bourgeois culture living in his mind and willing to test his mind to the extreme to experience its limitless power. Dostoevsky's ultimate message in his novel *Crime And Punishment* is that to live guided by ideas alone turns you yourself into a kind of abstract being that is no longer your true being. The living soul within you becomes a thing if you become instead of a living human being an idea directing the way you act.

Yet as Raskolnikov walks along the street in Petersburg after his meeting with the old pawnbroker, he feels the need for human contact. He has been alone for many days in his little shabby room avoiding contact with people, living in his mind forgetful of normal life. He comes to the entrance to a cheap tavern and decides to go in and drink a beer. He is a young handsome student whose mind has taken hold of him completely and driven him to try to live in a realm beyond that of normal people. But here in the tavern the side of himself that is normal comes to the surface and he feels "suddenly set free from a terrible burden". His burden, his problem is the power his mind exercises over his actions. A Russian critic of the 19th and 20th centuries, Lev Shestov, put the problem of living as an idea, Raskolnikov's problem, in this way, "Man does not dare or has no power to think in the categories in which he lives, and is forced to live in those categories in which he thinks." Raskolnikov has been living alone, estranged from society, living in the categories where he thinks. It is the problem of the Russian soul. A Russian wants to think only in the categories where he lives and he is horrified when something makes him live in the categories where he thinks. Raskolnikov's passion is to live always where he thinks and nowhere else but drinking his beer in the tavern he does escape for a time living where he thinks because he is among poor drunken common Russians who are incapable of doing anything but think where they live. Raskolnikov feels "suddenly set free from a terrible burden" but he also has "a dim foreboding that this happier frame of mind was...not normal". How long will he be free from his "terrible burden"? He will eventually have to leave his beer and his tavern and the world he faces outside will again make him think and thinking will again make him live in the categories where he thinks cut off from all regular human experience.

Dostoevsky's novel is just his fancy set down in words creating imagined humans in action. But the Russian problem of the soul is real and the problem Dostoevsky treats in his novel is real because it is a problem he never succeeded in solving by using his mind, by thinking. But he thought and thought and he thought like all of us and the more he thought the more he thought that the mind itself was the problem, or rather, that the mind could not ever solve the fundamental problem of Russia and of life. What to do? We must do something but to do something we must first think what we are going to do and then what we end up doing habitually transforms us and we soon become no longer our authentic self but some superficial self that our ego makes up for ourselves using the rational power

of the mind. We give up our freedom and make ourselves objects so quickly and so normally and so automatically that we reach a point where we are not even aware that we have given up ourselves and become other than ourselves. This other alien self should be Raskolnikov's sworn enemy. But the enemy in his mind and in our minds is incapable of appearing to us as anything but our friend and we are afraid to think of him as an enemy from fear of perhaps going out of our minds. Raskolnikov is the kind of man who believes that something in the mind can reach out infinitely and discover something unknowable to the normal frame of mind. In some region of the mind, such men think, there is another dimension of the mind. The world is full of symbols of this transcendent world. All philosophers and scientists and some religious men believe this world, this other world, exists even though they never find it. But the quest for it is satisfying. It delights them that their petty human nature has a kind of divine globe, the mind, and they enjoy knowing that their minds give flashes at times of a world beyond our senses but not beyond our minds. No enemy lives within such men. They delight in thinking. Thinking leads to an absence of life that their ideas magically transform to the illusion of a presence. They think and think but it produces only more thinking not more life, not a release from the burden of life, but just more thinking until, as Lev Shestov wrote, they are not thinking in the categories where they live but living in the categories where they think.

In the tavern a man over fifty with a look in his eyes "as though of intense feeling" and perhaps "of thought and intelligence" but also with "a gleam of something like madness" begins talking to Raskolnikov. He moves to a seat at his table to engage him in conversation. He is dressed slovenly and is bloated with drink. He has been drinking for five days and sleeping on hay barges at night on the Neva river. His madness however is real. It is not at all like Raskolnikov's insanity of living as exclusively as possible in his mind. Marmeladov's madness comes from living blind to any thought about his welfare. He has given up everything. He is out of his mind because he has thrown away all interest in any thought that might lead him to some kind of normalcy by thinking and acting rationally. His madness is the kind of Russian madness that Dostoevsky loved. It is the kind that bravely throws overboard completely, as completely as possible, the regular rational thoughts of the mind. Dostoevsky loved such madness. Madness has driven Marmeladov to give up working and providing for his wife, three young children and a daughter of eighteen. Instead he uses what money they might have used to ease their starvation for drink. Living only where you think, or at least living as best you can where you think, is profitable. It is positive. It produces results. Marmeladov mentions, as he begins a long description for Raskolnikov of his sufferings, most of them caused by himself, that a certain Mr. Lebeziatnikov "who keeps up with modern ideas" explained to him the other day "that compassion is forbidden nowadays by science itself, and that that's what is done now in England, where there is political economy." Compassion is forbidden by science itself and this produces political economy. Political economy, science and rational behavior rule the world outside the tavern and produce positive results but inside the tavern in a world hidden from the ordinary world, what is truly alive is Marmeladov's madness, a madness that has its roots in the agony of remorse and human feelings caused by suffering.

Raskolnikov will carry out his idea. He will live ruled by an idea that will result in his murdering the old pawnbroker. His logic is that if one is forced to live where one thinks, then thought can produce an action totally devoid of human feeling. And if this is so, then even an extreme act like killing an old pawnbroker can be done without feeling. A human ruled completely by an extreme idea and willing to carry out the logic of his idea by a concrete action will become necessarily a human more than human, a superman. But testing this logic will happen in Raskolnikov's future. For the present, in our tavern, Marmeladov relates to Raskolnikov an act carried out by his young eighteen-year-old daughter Sonya not because of an idea but by compassion. Compassion, feeling, in the case of Sonya motivates the idea and then the act and not the other way around whereby some inhuman idea produces an act.

Sonya has once lived with Marmeladov and her stepmother, Katerina Ivanova, and her two stepbrothers and stepsister in one room in extreme poverty. They were starving because of Marmeladov's failings and in a rage caused by her extreme sufferings, Katerina Ivanova drove her pure and meek eighteen-year-old stepdaughter Sonya, who can find no legitimate work, to begin selling herself on the streets of Petersburg. In the tavern other men, listening to Marmeladov's conversation with Raskolnikov, laugh from time to time at what he relates. But when he speaks with deep feeling about what will be the ultimate fate of his daughter, strangely those listening are moved. But before we hear what Marmeladov says, inspired by religion, we should examine Dostoevsky's general point of view.

For Dostoevsky Raskolnikov, dressed carelessly, brooding alone day after day in his room barely bigger than a closet, eating little, avoiding human contact, despising the life going on around him, is a pastiche, carried to an absurd degree, of an eastern holy man. He wants to go beyond the life around him by using his mind so exclusively that he loses touch with regular life. He denies life to find life like some eastern holy man and this direction for Dostoevsky leads to nothing, to a transcendence of normal life that is empty and worthless and destructive. For Dostoevsky, all of Western European culture goes in this direction. The mind dictates in Europe how life should be lived. It is the source of truth and goodness. Even refined poetic and aesthetic experience is fashioned into cultural objects by the mind and all scientific and mathematical products are always the result of rational thinking. The Western European ideal of blessedness is the state of the perfectly indifferent mind thinking about itself. Thinkers like Aristotle and Plato and others in the ancient world along with medieval European scholastic thinkers of the Catholic Church as well as renaissance thinkers down to the rule in Dostoevsky's time of European thinkers who exclude experience that does not fit within the boundaries of bourgeois rationalism have fallen all of them into the mind's fatal trap. European thought has led Europeans to live in the categories where they think. Dostoevsky will have none of it. For him Raskolnikov is searching for a separate superior state of being that does not exist except as an illusion created by the power of his mind. Only Marmeladov's madness can lead to real spirituality because it is profoundly human.

At this point in his novel Dostoevsky throws out to us bits of Christian religious truth as an example of truth totally beyond the vision and the soul of his main character, Raskolnikov. He knows that we as well as Raskolnikov will pay no attention to what Marmeladov says. We all live in the categories where we think and we are too fascinated, as we read along, with young Raskolnikov's adventure inspired by his mind. It is where we ourselves look too for adventure and we pass quickly over what Marmeladov says. It is the raving of a madman. It has nothing to do with rational people like Raskolnikov and ourselves.

Marmeladov's daughter Sonya has gone out to the streets to earn money to feed her stepmother and her stepbrothers and stepsister. She even is so humble and self-sacrificing that she gives some of the money so foully earned to her father to continue his five-day drunk. "He will pity us Who has had pity on all men," Marmeladov says with genuine human feeling to young Raskolnikov sitting across the table in the tavern listening. "He will come in that day and he will ask: 'Where is the daughter who gave herself for her cross, consumptive stepmother, and for the little children of another? Where is the daughter who had pity on the filthy drunkard, her earthly father, undismayed by his beastliness?' And He will say, 'Come to me! I have already forgiven thee once...I have forgiven thee once... Thy sins which are many are forgiven thee for thou hast loved much...' And he will forgive my Sonya, He will forgive, I know it...I felt it in my heart when I was with her just now!" But Dostoevsky does not end Marmeladov's passionate words here. He does not let those who live by rationality and without compassion and have achieved "political economy" slip away without throwing them a punch. For as he continues his passionate outpouring of his feelings Marmeladov speaks of what will be said at the final judgment to "the wise ones and those of understanding" and he explains why the meek and the humble and weak will be accepted by Him. "This is why I receive them, o ye wise," Marmeladov

goes on with feeling, “this is why I receive them, o ye of understanding, that not one of them believed himself to be worthy of this.”

Two days later, Raskolnikov will hammer the blunt backside of an axe onto the head of a sixty-year-old woman, a pawnbroker, killing her. A few moments after the murder, while he searches in the dead woman’s bedroom for valuables, the pawnbroker’s half-sister, Lizaveta, comes in the main room of the apartment and discovers the dead body of her half-sister on the floor bloodied. Raskolnikov already knows about Lizaveta and she knows a little about him from the comings and goings of people in that area of the city. Dostoevsky describes her, “She was a single woman of about thirty-five, tall, clumsy, timid, submissive and almost idiotic. She was a complete slave and went in fear and trembling of her sister, who made her work day and night, and even beat her.” Lizaveta sees the dead body on the floor and then Raskolnikov comes out of the bedroom. “And this hapless Lizaveta was so simple and had been so thoroughly crushed and scared that she did not even raise a hand to guard her face, though that was the most necessary and natural action at the moment, for the axe was raised above her face. She only put up her empty left hand, but not to her face, slowly holding it out before her as though motioning him away. The axe fell with the sharp edge just on the skull and split at one blow all the top of the head.”

## 2

What can be done with such people? Isn't the logic directing Raskolnikov's act reasonable? Does an old woman, a pawnbroker scratching out a living for herself on the poverty and misery of the poor, deserve to live? Of course everyone knows what is evil and what is good and she should absolutely not be murdered with a blow on her head from an axe, but isn't it more or less necessary to murder her some way or another? What role can she play in society except to live a miserable life? Isn't misery itself a kind of murder, a slow murder of the poor by those who possess riches and live a higher form of life enlightened by reason? And the hapless Lizaveta, simple and meek and crushed by the burden of living, what can society do with her except find some way to get rid of her, not murder her but at least keep her out of sight somewhere so that enlightened people don't come in contact with her disgraceful poverty? Besides, it was an accident that caused her death. She happened to walk into the scene of her half-sister's murder and confront by accident her killer. Raskolnikov was forced by circumstances to kill her too. Circumstances and chance kill the poor all the time. To be unlucky is disgraceful and all the poor are unlucky. They are incapable of living rationally, of making real progress. They don't think in the proper manner about their actions before they take action. They deserve their fate. In fact, from a larger point of view, the poor are necessary in order to give higher meaning to the lives of the rich and successful. The enlightenment of the mind is a necessary development that superior people seek caused partly by their observation of the miserable lives of the poor. Raskolnikov is an instrument of bourgeois society. He took a drastic step upward to enlightenment by ridding society of two beings whom society in a civilized manner was getting rid of anyway.

The only thing Raskolnikov cares about after the double murder is himself. Two men come to the door of the pawnbroker's apartment. When the bell of the apartment tinkles and then someone begins banging loudly on the door, he has no thought at all of the two dead women near him on the floor. A giddiness comes over him but when a voice on the other side of the door calls out loudly to the pawnbroker, he recovers himself. He thinks and thinks and thinks again of how to escape. He sneaks out to the street unobserved aided by his reason now alive and vital and dynamic. It has become a strange delight for him to now exist safely only by thinking and to be isolated now in a state of supreme detachment from any connection with people he now passes on the street. He is no longer like those around him. He alone counts. His safety, his defiance of all regular habits, his criminal state, this alone now makes Raskolnikov Raskolnikov.

At any moment society can reach out and grasp him like some scared chicken running around a farmyard unless he pretends successfully to be like everyone else. Only his mind is of any use in this new exhilarating drama. He must make himself as enlightened as possible. He is like an actor in a theater separated from the public before him and feeling strangely and magically alive even though his every word and his every act is counterfeited and false. He must be a light shining in the darkness of a society now totally alien to him but a light visible only to himself. Remorse? It does not exist and can not exist in him because his state of criminality must have no influence at all coming from the soul if he is to exist successfully and safely. The problem of the Russian soul no longer exists for Raskolnikov. He is not divided anymore by the influences that drive the soul inwardly or outwardly. He is condemned by his criminal act to live only where he thinks and it excites him to live there with a strange delight that grows more delightful as he escapes again and again from normal humans who are all now his enemies.

Raskolnikov has now reached, in a strange and unique fashion, the pinnacle of Western European religious and intellectual culture. His mind produced the thoughts that led to his crime but it observed his crime with perfect indifference just as it does all human actions. He can no longer live ever again as a normal human unless the unthinkable happens and he breaks the connection with his

mind that his thinking produces. In order to experience remorse for what he has done, he would have to reach a place in his soul where a mysterious voice that has nothing to do with his mind and his thoughts cries out to him passionately *that he should not have done it*. This is impossible. Remorse is a form of compassion, a kind of compassion that a person feels for himself, a compassion of regret for a wrong he has committed. Modern European science, according to what a man has told Marmeladov, forbids compassion and successful enlightened modern Europeans have forbidden themselves not only compassion but remorse for the sufferings and injuries they inflict on the poor. Dostoevsky resists any attempt on his part to direct his hero towards remorse and instead directs him to imprison himself in his own mind more and more intensely even when influences caused by compassion for him by others should move him towards remorse. Dostoevsky is not out to convert Raskolnikov to the truths of the soul. He has driven Raskolnikov's self so deeply into his mind that there is no place within him anymore for a soul. He does have moments when he is moved by compassion for the poor and he has other emotional moments, especially moments of fear, but these are fleeting moments.

But not all Western Europeans of Dostoevsky's time were without compassion for the poor. The best of the Europeans were against modern bourgeois capitalist culture, as was Dostoevsky, but Dostoevsky by the time he wrote of Raskolnikov had abandoned the solution Europeans had found for the problem, socialism. They had really no answer for the sufferings of "the people" driven to poverty and despair by the bourgeoisie except some new form of society that would force all to become brotherly by working together collectively for common economic benefits. Dostoevsky grew to despise modern Europeans and their modern culture based exclusively on rationality and selfishness. He never ceases throughout his works to invent odd characters like Raskolnikov who have evolved into strange aberrations from everything normal in life except that they usually do not abandon rationality but instead transform it to new, strange expressions. Many of the European socialists saw clearly as did Dostoevsky the decadence of late-nineteenth-century capitalism, but Dostoevsky had given up the socialistic views of his youth and grew to hate all liberal and socialist based thoughts designed to solve Russia's suffering.

Dostoevsky had been a member of a radical group when he was twenty-seven that was inspired by liberal and socialist ideas. Some members of the group met secretly, obtained a printing press, and planned to publish their radical notions for changing society for the better. Dostoevsky was arrested along with others and condemned by the government to be shot by a firing squad. The young writer stood on a platform on a cold December morning waiting for the bullets that would end all his radical thoughts and along with them all his regular human thoughts of whatever kind forever. In those seconds before his death Dostoevsky, to borrow Lev Shestov's expression, received "a new pair of eyes". Never again after he received his new eyes, both during the few seconds that remained to him before his death and in the millions of seconds that remained to him because the Tsar unexpectedly stopped his execution -- never again did he look at anything only with regular, normal eyes. But what changed the sight that came forth from his eyes was what the nearness of death had done to his soul. He would never again look at anything except with the new vision that the eyes of the soul gave him. We can not know ourselves what he experienced in those deadly seconds when his death was certain and about to arrive instantly and certainly. We see it with our normal eyes but our eyes are guided by our minds and not by our soul so we do not see what Dostoevsky suddenly saw and continued to see. We think he gained his new eyes because of some kind of religious experience and since we think of religion as being something above and beyond our normal life, we think that Dostoevsky must have begun looking beyond his merely human life to something divine and spiritual in some hidden world above and beyond the human world. Dostoevsky was a Christian but his Christianity did not change his purely human actions and instead taught him he should not change, that his human nature itself, insulted, injured and suffering, was the only temple in which the true God could be met truly. All types of religious experience that were based on seeking some divine experience achieved through some type of mental discipline became alien to him. He grew to hate all doctrines that tried

to separate a human being from his authentic self. Liberal ideas, socialist ideas, even some Christian ideas – he threw them all away onto the same garbage heap where the experience of facing death had thrown away his old eyes. He despised all Western European thought because it was all based on elevated forms of reasoning that did little more than alienate a human being from his own being. European critics experienced his despite and contempt for them and lashed back at him. The German bourgeois novelist Thomas Mann said that Dostoevsky's works were full of "religious prating". A Russian critic despised him as someone always "looking for buried treasure". In his greatest novel, *The Possessed*, he creates a character, based on the Russian writer Turgenev, and makes him the butt of his satire almost maliciously. Turgenev in turn despised Dostoevsky's Christianity and gave an example of the cruel beating he observed him once giving his servant as illustrating the effect on Dostoevsky of his Christianity. Turgenev believed Dostoevsky was a writer who knew nothing of real freedom, which for Turgenev was based, as among all Western European intellectuals, on the elevating power of the mind. What interested Dostoevsky most was not religion itself, or doctrines of any kind including even Christian doctrine, but humans driven to the point where they might change radically and discover not some divine world off somewhere in the clouds but the new self within them, rooted in their very humanity, that they themselves had been themselves hiding from themselves. The mind made men and women selfish and cruel humans yet Dostoevsky sought God paradoxically only in humans and nowhere else.

Raskolnikov is a holy man in reverse, that is, for Dostoevsky he is not a holy man at all and until he has himself discovered that his human nature when ruled only by the mind is foul, he will never be anything, nothing but a human nothing living in the categories where he thinks. He goes out of his little room a short time after his crime thinking not of the murders but only of walking about and finding some place to get rid of the objects he possesses taken from the pawnbroker that might be evidence of his involvement. He buries them under a huge stone. Then he walks on without resting. "He had a terrible longing for some distraction, but he did not know what to do, what to attempt. A new overwhelming sensation was gaining more and more mastery over him every moment; this was an immeasurable, almost physical, repulsion for everything surrounding him, an obstinate, malignant feeling of hatred. All who met him were loathsome to him – he loathed their faces, their movements, their gestures. If anyone had addressed him, he felt that he might have spat at him or bitten him..."

Who is mad, Marmeladov or Raskolnikov? If they are both mad then they are mad in two different ways completely. Before the murders just after the talk between Raskolnikov and Marmeladov in the tavern, we get a closer look at Marmeladov's type of madness. It is profoundly human. The two leave the tavern and Raskolnikov aids the older, drunken man to walk home. Instead of walking into his one-room home with three starving children and his emaciated, sickly wife, Katerina Ivanova, Marmeladov drops to his knees in the doorway. "Ah!, she cried out in a frenzy, 'he has come back! The criminal! The monster!... And where is the money? What's in your pocket, show me! And your clothes are all different! Where are your clothes? Where is the money! Speak!'" All the money is gone. "She seized him by the hair and dragged him into the room. Marmeladov seconded her efforts by meekly crawling along on his knees." Marmeladov's madness separated him from his family but not by any means from human feeling and he returned to his family to remain with it full of remorse. Raskolnikov's madness is purely of the mind so it is not Marmeladov's kind of madness. It is a separation from human feeling. It is the doctrine of self-isolation taught by the mind whenever an ego submits to it that it wants to be nothing but an ego more powerful than all other egos, an ego that can not see with the eyes of a Dostoevsky that see that such an ego imprisoned by such a mind is worthless.

## 3

After the murder and after hiding the stolen objects, Raskolnikov returns to his small room. He is in a kind of delirium for five days, eating little, sleeping for long periods. His friend, the student Razumihin, looks over him and the servant girl in his rooming house, Nastasya, looks in on him at times offering food or tea. Razumihin informs him during one of his awakened periods that money has arrived from his mother and sister who will soon arrive in Petersburg. Razumihin, a young healthy positive type, uses the money to buy Raskolnikov a new set of clothes and he has brought to his room an acquaintance, the doctor Zossimov, to look over him. Raskolnikov treats them indifferently, even spitefully, paying little attention to them. Only when they start discussing the murders does Raskolnikov revive and give them his full attention. Pyotr Petrovitch Luzhin, a successful government official, arrives to present himself to Raskolnikov. He has recently become engaged to Raskolnikov's sister. He is a forty-five-year-old positive figure. Raskolnikov has found out through a letter sent to him by his mother just before the murders that his young sister has accepted Luzhin's proposal of marriage only to gain a higher more secure place in society for her mother and her brother Raskolnikov whom she loves dearly. Razumihin and Zossimov treat Luzhin respectfully, agreeing in their conversation with some of Luzhin's liberal ideas. Raskolnikov accuses Luzhin, breaking in on the conversation, of putting his mother and sister up in a cheap boarding house in Petersburg. Worse still, influenced by what his mother has reported of what Luzhin said during his courtship, Raskolnikov again breaks in on the conversation. "‘And is it true,’ Raskolnikov asked Luzhin, in a voice quivering with fury and delight in insulting him, ‘is it true that you told your *fiancee*...within an hour of her acceptance, that what pleased you most...was that she was a beggar...because it was better to raise a wife from poverty, so that you may have complete control over her, and reproach her with your being her benefactor?’" After defending himself with some embarrassment, the insult soon drives Luzhin from Raskolnikov's little room "How could you – how could you!" Razumihin says to Raskolnikov just after Luzhin leaves, "shaking his head in perplexity".

"‘Let me alone – let me alone all of you!’ Raskolnikov cried in a frenzy. ‘Will you ever leave off tormenting me? I am not afraid of you! I am not afraid of anyone, anyone now! Get away from me. I want to be alone, alone, alone!’"

Razumihin and Zossimov leave at once but strangely Raskolnikov left alone does not remain in his room alone. His defense of his sister with his stinging insult to the man she is engaged to marry is the first genuinely human experience he has had since the murders and it perhaps motivates him to leave his room and seek some contact with the world outside of his room and his mind. Dostoevsky must bring his character into the everyday world of normal men and women if he is to somehow bring him also towards the world of human remorse which is never discovered in the human mind relying only on itself for guidance.

He dresses in his new set of clothes that Razumihin has bought for him, puts his rubles and his kopecks in his pocket, and steps out into the Petersburg night. It is eight o'clock with the sun setting and he does not think where he is going. Thought now, for some reason, tortures him. He now feels "that everything must be changed ‘one way or another’". We have suddenly left thought, the world of thought, and have begun taking steps towards the world of feeling. He walks toward the Hay Market. He comes to a young man with a barrel organ accompanying the singing of a girl of fifteen hoping to earn a few kopecks. Raskolnikov stops and listens among two or three listeners. He takes out a five kopeck piece and puts it in the girl's hand. He is on the street and among people and the man who sliced an axe onto the head of Lizaveta who "only put up her empty left hand" touches the hand of a girl. It is a sign, a brief sign from Dostoevsky, that his character has taken the first step to the only world that counts because it is the only world that is real, the human world. Dostoevsky will never

read any sign, any of the thousands of signs in the universe without and in the mind within, that lead anywhere “upward” and “beyond” mentally or physically, spiritually or scientifically. He will follow no sign unless it leads to a purely human step.

A middle-aged man is standing idly by Raskolnikov as they listen to the boy and girl singing to music from a street organ. Raskolnikov tries for human contact with a stranger. “‘I love to hear singing to a street organ,’ said Raskolnikov, and his manner seemed strangely out of keeping with the subject. ‘I like it on cold, dark, damp autumn evenings – they must be damp – when all the passers-by have pale green, sickly faces, or better still when wet snow is falling straight down, when there’s no wind – you know what I mean? And the street lamps shine through it...’” “‘I don’t know... Excuse me’, muttered the stranger, frightened by the question and Raskolnikov’s strange manner, and he crossed over to the other side of the street.”

Raskolnikov’s manner is now strange in a way different from what it was before. Before his manner was strange because of his silence and his need to be separate from people around him. Now his manner is strange because of the way he talks to people in his surroundings. His need to talk seems like perhaps the first steps from his former silent madness ruled by his mind towards the Marmeladov kind of madness that has its origin in human feeling. But in Dostoevsky’s understanding of psychology, the mind and the soul are enemies and neither show any mercy to the other until one gives in to the other and commits itself because of its defeat to be the other’s servant. Raskolnikov has felt a minor touch of compassion and pressed five kopecks into the hand of a girl. He has sent off words of feeling and poetry to the astonished ears of a stranger. Something is making him speak. What if this something continues to put pressure on him? What if it presses him not to just talk but to talk about it? He had but one thought earlier when he left his room. His complete thought was “that all *this* must be ended today, once for all, immediately; that he would not return home without it, because he *would not go on living like that*.” Raskolnikov like Marmeladov has now a need to get everything out in the open.

His wanderings this night through the Hay Market and other places around Petersburg where normal people are doing normal things trying to enjoy the evening include a series of accidents. He tries to get information from hucksters in the Hay Market who had dealings with Lizaveta. He speaks to a young man standing before a shop. But he makes no progress with his questions. The young man quickly tires of talking to him and directs him laughing to an eating-house saying “you’ll find princesses there too... La, la”. He crosses a square and pushes his way into a dense crowd of peasants. “He felt an unaccountable inclination to enter into conversation with people. But the peasants took no notice of him; they were all shouting in groups together.” He wandered off silently to a marketplace that he knew well with dram shops and eating-houses. He saw women running in and out of various festive establishments. From one came the sounds of singing, the tinkling of a guitar and shouts of merriment. He passed a drunken soldier swearing and smoking a cigarette. A beggar was quarrelling with another beggar and a drunk was lying right across the road. Life, in other words, the bald unthinking life of real people, humans, is all around him. He is now in the midst of life unfolding not intentionally but accidentally. Two women speak to him seductively. One asks him for six kopecks for a drink and he gives her fifteen. A woman “pock-marked... covered with bruises with her upper lip swollen” but nonetheless alive and, so to speak, greedy to continue living to her last breath sets Raskolnikov to thinking about life. “‘Where is it,’ thought Raskolnikov. ‘Where is it I’ve read that someone condemned to death says or thinks, an hour before his death, that if he had to live on some high rock, on such a narrow ledge that he’d have only the room to stand, and the ocean, everlasting darkness, everlasting solitude, everlasting tempest around him, if he had to remain standing on a square yard of space all his life, a thousand years, eternity, it were better to live so than to die at once! Only to live, to live and live! Life, whatever it may be!’” But Raskolnikov is still thinking not living and his thinking has him in such a firm grip that it will not allow him to live like those around him.

He remembers why he has come out, to get some newspapers to read what has been written about the murders. He enters a spacious and clean restaurant and orders tea and newspapers. Suddenly, as he searches the newspapers, the head clerk of the police station that he has recently visited on a matter not related to the murders, sits down smiling at his table. Zametov tells him that he has visited him recently at his room when he was lying on his couch sleeping. Raskolnikov talks to him strangely and insultingly. He accuses him of drinking champagne at others expense. He accuses him of taking money corruptly and profiting from everything. Zametov has sat down for friendly conversation and tells Raskolnikov he is speaking strangely and must still be unwell. The conversation goes on back and forth argumentatively with no normal human connection between the murderer and the police official. They begin on the subject that Raskolnikov has just been reading about in the newspapers, the murders of the two women. Raskolnikov gives a long description of what he would have done if he were the murderer to hide the objects that were stolen from the dead pawnbroker. But he describes to Zametov in great detail how he actually hid the objects under a stone without admitting to Zametov that he was the murderer and as though he were simply imagining for Zametov's benefit how he would have hidden the objects. Zametov calls him a madman because he is fed up with Raskolnikov's wild, strange imaginings. "And what if it was I who murdered the old woman and Lizaveta?" he said suddenly and – realized what he had done." Zametov decides Raskolnikov is merely joking or playing with him maliciously and refuses to believe him. But Raskolnikov has really said it! He has gotten the truth in his mind out in the company of men! It jolts him and he soon leaves the restaurant. "He went out, trembling all over from a sort of wild hysterical sensation, in which there was an element of insufferable rapture." But this touch of sudden, intense life comes from a daring intentional act of the mind not from a sudden touch of remorse in the soul.

## 4

A series of accidents happen to Raskolnikov but his behavior is so intentional, intentional to the extreme, that when he sees evidence that a young girl, Sonya, the daughter of Marmeladov, possesses something infinitely gentle and unworldly in her soul, some hidden spiritual power that protects her from the world around her – – even when Raskolnikov sees clearly that such a spirit lives within her and he also understands that because of what is in her soul he himself is permanently joined to the young woman forever, even at such a moment that has all the appearance of a miracle, it does not affect his feelings because his rational madness, even in the face of a miracle, will not let him set his soul free.

Raskolnikov's meeting with Marmeladov in a tavern after his visit to the old pawnbroker was the first accident. They do not know each other, yet Marmeladov is moved somehow to talk to young Raskolnikov and pour out his remorseful feelings to him without any restraint. We accept it as a reasonably possible occurrence because Raskolnikov is a completely believable character, an intelligent young student pursuing some odd adventure. Marmeladov's ravings present us with a nice contrast to Raskolnikov's rationality to such an extent that we do not hear with any feeling the odd things the father says about his daughter Sonya who has been driven to prostitution by her miserable poverty. Yet what a superb accident it is to set a young man soon to become an axe murderer of two women at the same table in a dismal tavern with a madman! The religious language Marmeladov uses appears to us to be nonsense. The concrete belief he expresses, that his daughter Sonya's sins will be forgiven, is nonsense and the absurd reasoning he uses to explain why Sonya will be saved is nonsense carried to the extreme. Sonya will be saved because she has "loved much". It is such nonsense that our minds do not allow us to see that something has already slipped secretly into Raskolnikov's soul and our souls. Love! But we do not feel this love and our minds automatically reject it as nonsense. Marmeladov does feel it but he is nothing but a madman. His dear daughter is on the streets prostituting herself and he dares to say that she will be forgiven because she has loved! "Thy sins which are many," Marmeladov raves, "are forgiven thee for thou hast loved much." We are happy when the scene moves on and we are past such nonsense about the power of "love". We must soon also hear mad talk from Marmeladov of people, drunkards, "made in the image of the beast", who will be received into Christ's kingdom, not because they love but because "not one of them believed himself to be worthy of this". It is all nonsense that serves only as a nice contrast to the refined rational madness of Raskolnikov. We do not look for any new development of "love" in our story because it is about murder.

The next accident is that Marmeladov is so weakened and so drunk that he can not walk home unassisted. Raskolnikov is thus diverted from his extreme adventure of the mind by the practical job of helping his new acquaintance home. Because of his help, he finds out accidentally the address of Marmeladov's family and even enters the room where his wife and three stepchildren live. Sonya, Marmeladov's daughter, is not there and there seems little chance that Raskolnikov will ever meet her since she lives in another residence. He leaves on a window unnoticed the last few kopecks he has in his pockets for the starving family. On the stairs as he leaves the building, he regrets leaving the money thinking of the absent Sonya and her profession. He thinks not of how she will be saved by love but instead that money earned by her profession will provide food for her family and that leaving her family his last kopecks was stupid.

Later, after his five days spent in his room sleeping and in a delirium, when Raskolnikov puts on his new set of clothes and goes out walking through Petersburg at night, he is no longer acting as intentionally as a murderer should. His talk with people in the street is loose and unordinary. When he blurts out to the police clerk Zametov in the restaurant, "And what if it was I who murdered the old woman and Lizaveta?" he reveals that he is not fully in control of himself. He is now accident

prone. As he leaves the restaurant, he “stumbled against Razumihin on the steps. They did not see each other till they almost knocked against one another.” He does not want to be with his friend. They talk back and forth and he breaks free from his company. He stops on a bridge and while looking at the setting sun and the dark water of the river, he accidentally views an intentional act of a woman in despair. She jumps off the bridge. She is pulled out of the water but Raskolnikov looks on “with a strange sense of indifference and apathy. He felt disgusted.” He leaves the river and walks towards the police station to “make an end” but on his way, he “turned into a side street and went two streets out of his way, possibly without any object, or possibly to delay a minute and gain time.” This accidental or intentional change of direction takes him to “the very gate of *the* house”. He goes in and up to the fourth floor and enters again the apartment, the scene of the crime. Does he return accidentally or intentionally? It is difficult to say but in any case it is a nice play between the accidental and the intentional if he returns by accident to the place of the murder that he committed intentionally. However when he leaves the house, he does have a very clear intention “for he had fully made up his mind to go to the police station and knew that it would all soon be over”. But on his way, he sees a crowd forming and went up to it. There has been an accident!

An accident that brings him once again accidentally into the world of the madman Marmeladov. A carriage has run over him. Only Raskolnikov knows his identity and his address. Marmeladov is so extremely wounded that Raskolnikov urges the police to call for a doctor and help him carry the injured man who is near death to his residence that is nearby. He shouts that he will pay the expenses. At the room of his wife, Katerina Ivanova, it is revealed by the doctor who examines Marmeladov that there is no hope. Marmeladov dies ten minutes later. His wife has sent her daughter Polenka, a child of eleven, to run to her stepsister’s residence. Marmeladov’s daughter Sonya arrives. Her father is able to raise himself up a little and beg her forgiveness. He dies embracing her. Raskolnikov confesses to Katerina Ivanova that Marmeladov was his friend. He gives the impoverished widow all the money he has, twenty roubles, and leaves.

The appearance of Sonya, “a small thin girl of eighteen with fair hair, rather pretty, with wonderful blue eyes” is a miracle. Or rather, her accidental appearance in Raskolnikov’s life gives him the opportunity, as we will see, of perceiving later when he gets to know her that a miracle, a miraculous indescribable *something* lives within her that is a source to her of divine strength. For the present however she does communicate something to Raskolnikov by her unexpected action that touches him deeply, something that can be described truly, given the absurd rational intentionality of our axe murderer, as a miraculous influence. As Raskolnikov is leaving the building and on the last steps, Polenka, the eleven-year-old stepsister of Sonya, calls after him to wait. Sonya has sent her after him to find out his name and where he lives. “Who sent you?” asks Raskolnikov. “‘Sister Sonya sent me,’ answered the girl, smiling... brightly.” “I knew it was sister Sonya sent you,” says Raskolnikov. “Mamma sent me too... when sister Sonya was sending me, mamma came up too and said, ‘Run fast, Polenka’” “Do you love sister Sonya?” asks Raskolnikov. “‘I love her more than anyone,’ Polenka answered with a peculiar earnestness, and her smile became graver.” “And will you love me?”, asks Raskolnikov.

A series of accidents has led an axe murderer, the murderer of Lizaveta who raised only one hand up as he was about to slice his axe into her head, to ask a child to love him. He certainly does not deserve her love but he receives it anyway in spite of what he has done: that is what makes it miraculous.

“By way of answer he saw the little girl’s face approaching him, her full lips naively held out to kiss him. Suddenly her arms as thin as sticks held him tightly, her head rested on his shoulder and the little girl wept softly, pressing her face against him.”

Sonya has sent a little angel to Raskolnikov and we will see that, despite her foul profession, Sonya is a divine woman or at least a woman whose soul is permanently influenced by something divine. But we should be careful and not begin thinking that Dostoevsky is out to show us angels

or divine women as symbols of a divine world beyond and above us. He is not after some divine world up in the clouds. He is after what is inside humans and only what is truly inside them, holy or unholy. He has no eyes to look into the souls of people like Raskolnikov's sister's fiance, Luzhin, or bourgeois rational people in general because they have covered themselves over with layer after layer of stuffed-shirt rationalism and intentional behavior. They don't look ever into their own souls and have condemned themselves to being soulless. But people like Sonya, degraded and humiliated by her poverty, defenseless, have nothing at all coming from the outside world or coming from what is superficial in their own nature to help them construct some kind of strong practical ego. Everything around them insults their nature and makes them suffer. They can be looked into by Dostoevsky because they have nothing left to give themselves except their soul. He is not against angels and saints but he is not interested in them. He is passionate about trying to see if there is anything divine on earth and he knows for certain that if there is it can only be found in the human soul, a place that accidentally became visible to him when the Tsar of all the Russians cancelled at the last moment his execution and gave him a second pair of eyes.

## 5

During a scene at Raskolnikov's room between his friend, Razumihin, his sister Dounia, and his mother, Pulcheria Alexandrovna, Sonya opens the door and walks in. She has come to invite Raskolnikov to her father's funeral and also to the dinner her stepmother is preparing that will take place after the burial. She is extremely embarrassed and her child-like "kindliness and simplicity in her expression" touches Raskolnikov. Sonya is also touched by him. He asks her for her address and promises to come to see her. Her appearance in the room of the murderer is angelic and something passes between the two that comes into Raskolnikov's soul from a world that for him does not exist. She in turn feels a mysterious connection with Raskolnikov. "Never, never had she felt anything like this. Dimly and unconsciously a whole new world was opening before her." When Raskolnikov comes to her residence later the same day, he has a long talk with the angelic Sonya and has a chance to enter this "whole new world" that has opened before Sonya. Something during this their second meeting attaches him permanently to her but something else prevents him from entering her world.

It is a main theme of Dostoevsky's novels to bring characters struggling mightily with mental problems of various kinds to the point of belief. But most of them never make a magical leap of faith. What blocks them for the most part is an extreme reliance on the power of the mind although the influence of their mind does not completely explain their inability to reach the baptism that awaits them by a discovery of an independent, blessed power in their soul. Their isolation in their minds is strange, mysterious. An interesting way to understand the direction that Dostoevsky's characters take is to compare them with the direction of Shakespeare's Hamlet. Hamlet at the beginning of the play is an emotional mystic who talks to a ghost, the supposed spirit of his dead father who urges him from somewhere beyond the grave to avenge his murder by his brother. Hamlet is unable to rely sufficiently on this mystical revelation to avenge his dead father by murdering his uncle. In fact, he does not know certainly, objectively that his uncle has murdered his father until the third act. Finally, at the end of the play, Hamlet's development leads him to rely solely on his rationality to direct him. "Readiness is all", he announces in act five. Raskolnikov on the other hand is ready for all at the beginning of his drama and he never gives up his reliance on his reason. Hamlet's youthful madness at the beginning of the play when he talks to a spirit develops to a sane reliance on reason to keep him ready to face the world realistically. Raskolnikov develops from an extreme reliance on reason to an insane reliance on it. His development should be from the rational to the mystical, the very opposite of Hamlet's development, but, in the main body of his story, Dostoevsky will not allow him to go in that direction and discover the relief waiting for him in his soul. Raskolnikov's rational aberrations from the normal use of reason will be repeated often in other characters in other Dostoevsky novels taking other forms, but it is always the same theme and the same judgment on their author's part: an extreme reliance on reason alone becomes an insane aberration and drives a human completely away from any solace that can come to him from the soul. Sonya offers Raskolnikov during their interview a way to reach down into his soul and drink the gentle waters of his soul's salvation but he does not go in the direction she offers.

In a dark room lit only by a candle, Sonya and Raskolnikov sit and talk. It is eleven at night. She is frightened by his unexpected visit at a late hour but happy to see him. He says that her stepmother, Katerina Ivanovna, used to beat her insinuating that the two have a bad relationship but Sonya explains that she loves her stepmother and that they are a close family. She expresses compassion for the sick woman with feeling as she speaks of the hardships of her life. Raskolnikov asks if she knew Lizaveta, the girl he murdered, and she answers that she did. As the talk goes on, he asks himself how she can live with such suffering, her own and her family's. He paces up and down the room thinking for five minutes in silence. "His eyes were hard, feverish and piercing, his lips were twitching. All at once he bent down quickly and dropping to the ground, kissed her foot." He explains that he has not bowed

down to her but to “all the suffering of humanity”. He says after a few moments that “your worst sin is that you have destroyed and betrayed yourself *for nothing*”. He is now “almost in a frenzy”. “Tell me how this shame and degradation can exist in you side by side with other, opposite, holy feelings?” It appears that he is going in the direction of the soul. He can not resist trying to know how she can be such a good person and live such a foul life. He cried to himself, “How can she sit on the edge of the abyss of loathsomeness into which she is slipping...? Does she expect a miracle?”

“So you pray to God a great deal, Sonya?” he asked her.

Sonya did not speak; he stood beside her waiting for an answer.

‘What should I be without god?’ she whispered rapidly, forcibly, glancing at him with suddenly flashing eyes, and squeezing his hand.

‘Ah, so that is it!’ he thought.

‘And what does God do for you?’ he asked, probing her further.

Sonya was silent for a long while, as though she could not answer. Her weak chest kept heaving with emotion.

‘Be silent! Don’t ask! You don’t deserve!’ she cried suddenly looking sternly and wrathfully at him.

‘That’s it, that’s it,’ he repeated to himself.

‘He does everything,’ she whispered quickly, looking down again.”

The conflict is the same throughout most of Dostoevsky’s works. It fascinates him to put side by side the angelic opposite the unholy, the good opposite the loathsome, faith opposite unbelief, the mystical opposite the rational. Usually there is somewhere a hint of a divine and miraculous world that flashes light very dimly towards his characters, a light that never quite reaches most of them, that never becomes a bright flash into their soul that might save them. Sonya is clearly an angel despite her profession and Raskolnikov is clearly a devil supported by the unrelenting power of the mind. They meet in a dark room lit only by a candle. Sonya’s soul is bright with love. Raskolnikov’s soul is a dark abyss and his mind a solid bridge above it.

Then a miracle takes place. Raskolnikov understands with his mind, objectively, that a secret divine presence is within Sonia. He accepts with his mind that God is alive within her protecting her even though he is unable or unwilling to jump across the gap between his mind and his soul, influenced by Sonya, to repent and to be saved. He asks himself, “What held her up – surely not depravity? All that infamy had obviously only touched her mechanically, not one drop of real depravity had penetrated to her heart; he saw that.” He noticed a book on the top of a chest of drawers as he paced up and down the room. He picks it up and sees that it is a copy of the New Testament. She reveals that Lizaveta, the murdered young woman, brought it to her. He asks her to read the story of Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead. She hardly dares to read it to him because she says he does not believe but he insists and she reads. “Raskolnikov saw in part why Sonya could not bring herself to read to him and the more he saw this, the more roughly and irritably he insisted on her doing so. He understood only too well how painful it was for her to betray and unveil all that was her *own*. He understood that these feelings really were her *secret treasure*, which she had kept perhaps for years, perhaps from childhood, while she lived with an unhappy father and a distracted stepmother crazed by grief, in the midst of starving children and unseemly abuse and reproaches.” He sees with the eyes of his mind inside Sonya’s soul. He sees miraculously without feeling anything miraculous that a miracle is the source of her life, a hidden source.

She reads the whole story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. In the night, in the dark room lit just by a candle, the murderer watches a saintly young girl reading “distinctly and forcibly as though she were making a public confession of faith”. When she finishes her long reading, the two are silent in the dark room for five minutes. They have known one another since Marmeladov spoke of his daughter to Raskolnikov in the tavern saying passionately that her salvation is certain because she “has loved much” and they have been joined mysteriously since Sonya entered his room

suddenly and angelically to invite him to attend her father's burial and her stepmother's reception, joined perhaps also when Sonya sent to him her stepsister Polenka with her childish love, and now joined forever because Raskolnikov has uncovered her secret strength, the divine love that lives in her soul, joined forever because now he has seen her faith as she read to him the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from death. But joined as they are they are also separated! It is a kind of miracle in reverse that Dostoevsky has invented. They are joined miraculously but at the same time they are adversaries. Raskolnikov will not move an inch from his imprisonment in his mind and believe. The truth is that he is so locked in the embrace of his mind that he is powerless to move to the other part of his being, the place where in Sonya's being she lives truly. But Sonya will not move an inch either. She accepts him as the partner of her life forever but never does she accept his condition of unbelief. A silent war goes on between the soul of one and the mind of the other.

Breaking the five minute silence, Raskolnikov confesses to her that he has broken completely with his family. "I have only you now," he added. "Let us go together... I've come to you, we are both accursed, let us go our way together!"

"Go where?" she asked in alarm and she involuntarily stepped back. "How do I know? I only know it's the same road, I know that and nothing more. It's the same goal!"

They go on talking feverishly back and forth, joined and separated, talking words that come from different centers of being. Sonya has read to him from the New Testament, read as a public confession the words of belief that Martha said to Jesus, words that she read as though they were her own and words that she read as though if Raskolnikov could say them as his own, his heart might open to love and he might believe. She said before him with religious feeling, "Yea, Lord: I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God which should come into the world."

But Raskolnikov will not say such words as his own. She asks him after talking much what is to be done.

"What's to be done? Break what must be broken, once for all, that's all, and take the suffering on oneself. What, you don't understand? You'll understand later... Freedom and power, and above all, power. Over all trembling creation and the antheap!... That's the goal, remember that! That's my farewell message."

He is soon off away into the night after admitting to Sonya that he knows who murdered her friend Lizaveta and that if he comes back the next day, he will tell her who it is. But not for a moment does the idea enter her head that the murderer could be Raskolnikov. She is as extremely good in her thoughts as he is extremely bad in his.

He visits Sonya again at her room with the intention of confessing to her that he is the murderer of Lizaveta, her friend. But he is unable to confess the truth at once and instead tortures her with questions about who is worthy to live and who to die.

"You better say straight out what you want!" Sonya cried in distress. "You are leading up to something again... Can you have come simply to torture me?"

But he is still unable to speak the truth. He is in a kind of delirium. He leads up to the confession but does not confess. Finally he makes her guess the truth. She is shocked but abandoning him is as far from her mind as the awful truth is now solidly established in her mind.

"There is no one – no one in the whole world now so unhappy as you!" she cried in a frenzy... She begins weeping.

"A feeling long unfamiliar to him flooded his heart and softened it at once. He did not struggle against it. Two tears started into his eyes and hung on his eyelashes.

"Then you won't leave me, Sonya?" he said, looking at her almost with hope.

"No, no, never, nowhere!" cried Sonya. "I will follow you, I will follow you everywhere..."

But for a few moments she can not believe he did it and asks him how it could have happened. He in turn has moments when he regrets letting her know the truth. She asks him to explain why he did it and he struggles to give her answers. She has touched his heart and brought tears to his eyes

but he still is far from true redemption which is only possible if she can influence him to follow the feelings of his heart and discover the love that exists in his soul.

He goes into a long ramble to explain why he did it. ““And you don’t suppose that I went into it headlong like a fool? I went into it like a wise man and that was just my destruction...I wanted to murder without casuistry, to murder for my own sake, for myself alone!...It wasn’t to help my mother I did the murder...I wanted to find out something else; it was something else led me on. I wanted to find out then and quickly whether I was a louse like everybody else or a man. Whether I can step over barriers or not, whether I dare stoop to pick up or not, whether I am a trembling creature or whether I have the *right*...’

‘To kill? Have the right to kill?’ Sonya clasped her hands.

‘Ach, Sonia!’ he cried irritably and seemed about to make some retort, but was contemptuously silent.”

Sonia argues that he must go to the police and confess his guilt. But he has doubts about doing what she wants because at bottom he does not believe he is guilty. He has done the murder so intentionally, so rationally that guilt is impossible and redemption and divine forgiveness just as impossible. Sonya haunts him, following him in his movements around Petersburg whenever she can. Dostoevsky thus reverses the usual kind of haunting. Instead of the devil haunting a good soul, a good soul haunts a devil. She will not leave him ever. When Raskolnikov enters the police station finally to confess, he has second thoughts and leaves the building. Outside he sees Sonya standing not far from the entrance, “pale and horror-stricken. She looked wildly at him. He stood still before her. There was a look of poignant agony, of despair, in her face. She clasped her hands. His lips worked in an ugly, meaningless smile. He stood still a moment, grinned and went back to the police office.”

At his trial he expresses no remorse or guilt for his crime. He is condemned to penal servitude in Siberia for eight years. Sonya follows him to Siberia and lives in a town near his prison. She lives only for him and does not bother him with thoughts about religion. Raskolnikov himself asks her after a year to lend him her copy of the New Testament. “It was the one from which she had read the raising of Lazarus to him.” But he does not take it up and start reading it right away. Its influence may be in his future but only his imprisonment is now sure and Sonya haunting him and waiting for him nearby with nothing to sustain her except her *secret treasure*.

## 6

A main character in Dostoevsky's last novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan Karamazov, says that if there is no God then we are free to do anything. The European existentialist philosophers took up this idea and held that all human acts must result from free choices since in a godless universe human being has no foundation. The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre went so far as to say that man is "condemned to be free". Dostoevsky held that freedom must be the supreme human value, but instead of denying the existence of God in order to act freely like some existentialists, he reasoned that finding God is possible if we reach a state of spiritual and intellectual freedom. The groundless freedom Dostoevsky felt in himself inspired him to create any kind of character ready to think or to do anything at all. Logical thought and free will result in human choices that create a world where human behavior is forced to follow a premeditated pattern dictated by reason. The more man accepts to live a life ruled by his reason and a knowledge arrived at using the same logic used by scientists, the less able he is to discover the world within him of God's divine grace which has nothing to do with reason and knowledge. God can control everything but he will not. He will not interfere with man's freedom to do and think whatever he wants. For Dostoevsky grace is a divine gift, a *secret treasure*, but total freedom is also a divine gift, perhaps a more important one. God gives humans his divine grace freely but he can not give it or he will not give it to people who live enslaved by a rationalized intentional way of living. Dostoevsky's rootless creations are enslaved by a power that does not originate in God.

Raskolnikov fascinates us because he appears free in a way that is far beyond normal freedom. But his thoughts are transitory and negative. They rise up but are soon gone replaced by new thoughts and new ideas. His freedom grounded in his mind leads him nowhere, to an unreal inhuman state. He ultimately reveals that he is a fiction, a self freely created uselessly by a mind based on nothing. Sonya is free because the cruelty and the injustice of the world force her to be free. Insults, suffering, loathsomeness do not allow her mind to create for her some comforting fictitious but practical self based on nothingness. Everything has been taken from Sonya. The hatred and cruelty around her in the world have stripped her of normal human falsity and forced her to retreat into her soul. Because she must give up everything, she finds everything. The meek and the suffering inherit the world because the powerful of the world despise them and crush them. The world forces Sonya to flee into the nothingness in her soul where she discovers miraculously *a secret treasure*.

Some of Dostoevsky's other characters, like Sonya, give evidence of secret treasure within them but most of them are groundless, on their own, disconnected from the normal world and also from the world of God. He constructed characters from nothing and delighted in watching them try to assert their extreme individuality among regular, normal people. He created a comedy so divine that the more he created living beings from nothing, the more he became sure that God was helping him create them in order to show the world that nothing can ever be as vital as a divine presence in the human heart. For Dostoevsky life for humans must be free and without any foundation *because there is a God*.

## 7

In one of his early novels published in 1846, *The Double*, his hero Mr. Golyadkin, a minor government official, discovers the appearance of another Mr. Golyadkin, another being exactly like himself. At the beginning of the novel before his double appears, he consults a doctor because he feels mentally unbalanced. It is natural to think as his strange story develops that he loses his reason. In reality he never loses his reason and he becomes more and more unbalanced and delirious because he is horrified that he is losing not his reason but his self. His self appears to him in a form exactly like himself in every detail, as a living foreign himself exactly like himself. His double arrives on the scene and this other alien self that is also himself becomes more dominant in their relations with one another than himself. Reason is always able to guide us to some logical and practical end. We feel it is a necessary integral part of our normal behavior that helps us directly. But when our imagination runs wild for some unknown reason, when our emotions start going berserk and we appeal to our reason, we find that our reason is still present but is indifferent to our trouble and of no help. Mr. Golyadkin's reason tells him with indifference that he is the real Mr. Golyadkin and that the other Mr. Golyadkin is also the real Mr. Golyadkin. Reason does not abandon the poor man at all and merely remains a useless presence in his mind indifferent to the delirious state of his feelings. As the other false Mr. Golyadkin becomes more and more dominant and as the reason of the real Mr. Golyadkin is without any power to distinguish between the two and establish who is real and who is unreal, the feelings of the original Mr. Golyadkin go more and more berserk as he begins doubting that he is in fact real. He is forced to enter a mental hospital. His double walks behind the carriage bringing the original Mr. Golyadkin to his new home and as he arrives there, disappears. Dostoevsky's message is that Raskolnikov's self, Mr. Golyadkin's self, our selves may not be real. Our reason allows our imagination to create a self for ourselves and on our journey through life we must carefully keep presenting our invented self to others in a conventional package with few deviations. We feel comfortable with ourselves because other selves around us accept our invention of our self as real. Poor Mr. Golyadkin can not feel authentic facing his double's invention of himself because it is in fact himself and only he should have the right to invent himself! By way of contrast, Sonya's self is barely imaginable to herself. The self she constructed for herself naturally has been humiliated, crushed, destroyed. The world will no longer let her invent, it will only let her be. But normal being causes her suffering that is relieved only by the *secret treasure* she feels living in her heart. Unfortunately Raskolnikov and Mr. Golyadkin, who care nothing for the life of the heart, must rely only on themselves for strength and they discover that their inventions of themselves are not as reliable as they think.

The young Dostoevsky wrote *The Double* around the age of 25, two or three years before he received his second pair of eyes. As he stood before rifles pointed at him waiting for death, his reason at last allowed his imagination to abandon completely its duty to invent a self adapted to the selves of our world and let it go free to invent a self suitable to any world at all. A self for any world! But why not a self that did not fit in any world and that did not even need to make rational sense as a self? Bullets would fly at him in a few moments and when they arrived he would no longer have time or being or mind. The ground below his feet in seconds would no longer feel like ground. He would be timeless and groundless and his mind would no longer be able to pretend that rational forms of behavior were the only true basis of his true self.

## 8

Eighteen years after *The Double*, after four years of imprisonment at hard labor in Siberia, he wrote the short novel, *Notes From The Underground*, in which he takes up for treatment the subject of groundlessness. A man from the underground, from a corner of a room where he lives, like Raskolnikov, in self-isolation from the outside world, addresses us in a way that is extremely egotistical, proclaiming his complete freedom and his right to be irrational. He declares himself against not only all the normal customs of social life but also against all the natural laws of science and of mathematics. Unlike Raskolnikov, he uses his reason against reason, his logic against logic. “Merciful heavens!,” he shouts at us, “But what do I care for the laws of nature and arithmetic when, for some reason, I dislike those laws and the fact that two times two makes four?” In other words, to hell with all laws! He lives in a corner of his room hidden away underground for forty years from the world outside. He has difficulty explaining to normal people the “strange enjoyment” that results from his lonely struggle. “But it is just in that cold, abominable half-despair, half-belief, in that conscious burying of oneself alive for grief in the underworld for forty years, in that acutely recognized and yet partly doubtful hopelessness of one’s position, in that hell of unsatisfied desires turned inward, in that fever of oscillations, of resolutions determined for ever and repented of again a minute later – that the savor of that strange enjoyment of which I have spoken lies. It is so subtle, so difficult of analysis, that persons who are a little limited, or even simply persons of strong nerves, will not understand a single atom of it.”

They will not understand that their selves hang floating in nothingness and that they can, like the man in the underground, strip themselves of every normal and decent and rational mental structure that creates for themselves and for others what they are. But the nothingness that the underground man opens up within himself when he kicks away both his normal invented self and the normal way people live does not fill up with some sort of blessed goodness. No, it fills with “half belief, half despair” and a “hell of unsatisfied desires turned inward”. If you throw away the structures that make you yourself, you become defenseless. You become morbid and the world outside you that you despise and reject starts kicking you in the face because it no longer recognizes you as a normal person like all the normal persons around you who all resemble one another. Keep working at making your self yourself intentionally! It is what your mind tells you you must do!

The man from the underground shouts at us from Dostoevsky’s pages daring, irrational, extremely egotistical thoughts. He hates the people around him and wants nothing to do with their normal, practical lives. “Advantage! What is advantage?” he asks us defiantly. “Can you possibly give an exact definition of the nature of human advantage? And what if *sometimes* a man’s ultimate advantage not only may, but even must, in certain cases consist in his desiring something that is immediately harmful and not advantageous to himself?” There are some things, some experiences that escape all possible rational classification and when modern life will be so rationalized that all experience will have been rationally determined in advance, even then the man from the underground will not do automatically what he is supposed to do. He will not only not do what is to his advantage but he will seek what is not to his advantage. Against the whole world, against all the laws of society and science, against the power that tells us all *you must do this*, he, in his corner, he in his self-imposed prison, he will hold out against the power of two-plus-two-makes-four. He, when everyone else in the universe is doing only what reason tells them they must do, he will act willfully. He will will what he wants even if it is not to his advantage. Especially when it is not to his advantage because only then does he find a “strange enjoyment”!

“Well, can you expect a man who tries to find pleasure even in the feeling of his own humiliation to have an atom of respect for himself?” Humiliation humbles us. It makes us feel low and common. Someone just as low and common as ourselves suddenly inflicts an emotional wound on us that makes

us feel painfully that we are even more low and common than everyone else. Our phony self is all at once sent flying out a window. Suddenly we no longer respect ourselves! What can be worse?

How can we live without respect for ourselves? Self-respect and self-esteem are the same thing and is there anything in the rationalized world we live in more necessary to be done with the power of love that exists in all of us than to love ourselves? The underground man not only has no self-respect but doesn't want any. Respect for himself will make him not only respect himself but respect others. To respect himself and to respect others means to respect a world ruled by reason. "You see, gentlemen," he tells us, "reason is an excellent thing. There is no doubt about it. But reason is only reason, and it can only satisfy the reasoning ability of man, whereas volition is a manifestation of the whole of life, I mean, of the whole of human life, including reason with all its concomitant head-scratchings... For my part, I quite naturally want to live in order to satisfy all my capacities for life and not my reasoning capacity alone, that is to say, only some twentieth part of my capacity for living. What does reason know? Reason only knows what it has succeeded in getting to know, whereas human nature acts as a whole, with everything that is in it, consciously, and unconsciously, and though it may commit all sorts of absurdities, it persists... man can deliberately and consciously desire something that is injurious, stupid, even outrageously stupid, just because he wants *to have the right* to desire for himself even what is very stupid and not to be bound by an obligation to desire only what is sensible." The underground man has no respect for his self unless it asserts itself on some occasions by acting willfully and he has come to enjoy willing what no one else dares to will. His humiliation has a "strange enjoyment" for him because when someone as common as himself puts him down, the pain to his wounded vanity also revives the life of his will that his reason tries to keep asleep.

He is now forty. Years before, when he was twenty-four, he was humiliated by an army officer. He goes by a small pub one night. He sees through a window some men having a fight with billiard cues and "one of them being thrown out a window". He feels "envious of the fellow who had been thrown out the window". Clearly it is not to his advantage to go into the pub and start a fight so that he can be himself thrown out a window. But that is what he wills, that is what he wants! He wants to teach his self the lesson that he does not respect it by acting willfully rather than rationally. But inside the pub he stands near the billiard tables and nothing happens. He does not start a fight. He does nothing to make someone throw him out a window. Without being aware of it, he is standing near a billiard table blocking the way. He is a "short, thin little fellow". An army officer over six feet, without any warning or explanation, picks up the underground man bodily and carries him to another place out of the way "as if I were a piece of furniture". He is "treated like a fly". His wounded vanity makes his heart burn with resentment and he can not rest until he dares to walk on purpose into the path of the officer one day on a crowded street bumping directly against him. He gets the worst of the bumping but he is nonetheless strangely satisfied. He gets enjoyment by daring to act willfully and unreasonably in a way that upsets normal behavior.

Such strokes of the will against the world are impossible as long as the underground man hides alone in his corner brooding. He too, like Raskolnikov, gets up, goes out, and tests whether or not his thoughts and what he wills count for anything in a world where humans think very little and very rarely accomplish what they really and truly will. In fact, he is in no hurry to rush out and involve himself in the real world. Instead, he passes three months dreaming, dreaming of what he calls "salvation through the good and the beautiful". "But how much love, good Lord, how much love I used to experience in those dreams of mine." "...fantastic though that sort of love was and though in reality it had no relation whatsoever to anything human, there was so much of it, so much of this love, that one did not feel the need of applying it in practice afterwards..." However, after three months of dreaming, he feels "an irresistible urge to plunge into social life". That the man from the underground will meet real love in the real world seems impossible but for Dostoevsky that is the only place real love can exist. The love that the underground man has been experiencing in his dreaming is an unreal result

of poetic fantasy and for Dostoevsky there is no such thing as “salvation through the good and the beautiful”. However, he never rules out anything happening to anyone in the real world, even love for a “short, thin little fellow” like his underground man.

He decides to contact former schoolfellows whom he has not seen for years. He despises them all, Simonov, whom he suspects loathes him, Ferfichkin, “a little fellow with the face of a monkey” who was one of his worst enemies from their earliest days at school, Trudolyubov, an army officer, “a great admirer of every kind of success and only capable of discussing promotions”. He visits Simonov and finds the three of them discussing a dinner party for a fourth, Zverkov. They make plans for the dinner party in his presence without inviting him. He is forced to invite himself and the three are forced to accept him unwillingly. The underground man describes the four of them hatefully and scorns them for their lack of intelligence and for their lack of respect for himself. But he is by no means a model of goodness and polite behavior! He uses the dinner party as a scene to display his willfulness with continuous critical words and strange acts that are clearly not to his advantage or anyone’s advantage. He insults them and even challenges one to a duel. The four end up not speaking to him at all. All of them eat and drink a great deal. After dinner the four leave the table and sit at a sofa drinking and talking and ignoring the underground man. He decides to pace up and down the room opposite the sofa. “*They* paid no attention to me. I had the patience to pace the room... right in front of them from eight till eleven o’clock, always in the same place, from the table to the stove, and back again.” Acting willfully in the real world requires a will willing to experience anything no matter how painful. In comparison, rational behavior is as gracious as it is boring.

The four decide to leave the restaurant for an adventurous evening of vice. They do not invite the underground man who hesitates to follow them. When he finally decides to follow them and arrives at their destination, the four have gone. He falls asleep and wakes up seeing “two wide-open eyes observing me intently and curiously. The look in those eyes was coldly indifferent and sullen, as though it were utterly detached, and it made me feel terribly depressed.” “I suddenly saw clearly how absurd and hideous like a spider was the idea of vice which, without love, grossly and shamelessly begins where true love finds its consummation.” He remembers that for two hours he “had never said a word to this creature, and had not even thought it necessary to do so”.

Now however he does talk to her. He asks her name. “Lisa’, she replied, almost in a whisper, but somehow without attempting to be agreeable, and turned her eyes away.” He finds it “hideous” to talk to her and he goes on asking details about her life “almost angry with her”. She gives him information about her background speaking “more and more abruptly”. He tells her of a burial he observed of a girl her own age who had been living in a similar set of circumstances. This makes her curious but she asks him questions about the burial “speaking even more abruptly and harshly than before”. Something however eggs him on to carry on the conversation. Will he speak willfully with her? Will he speak egotistically and hostilely to her as he has been speaking to his school fellows a few hours before at the dinner party? Will he test his highly individualistic antisocial amoral ideas on her to perhaps influence her to live as he does delighting in groundlessness and irrationality? What kind of talk will come from the underground man now that he has left his hiding place and must talk to a real woman in a real world? If he does not continue his wild and crazy antisocial talk, will he not prove to us that he has been nothing but all talk? But on the other hand, he can not be humiliated by her in the present situation where he is dominant and she is a young woman with a lowly status. Since he can not find a “strange enjoyment” from some humiliation caused him by a prostitute, he tries to influence her to rise above her lowly state.

In the presence of the young woman, the underground man turns into a run of the mill idealistic moralist! He turns himself into a new man, a regular honest middle-class man, as he begins describing for her the joys possible if she changes and lives a pure and honest life! “Come, get back your senses while there’s still time. You’re still young, you’re good-looking, you might fall in love, be married, be happy...” He is disgusted with the way he is talking. He regrets that he is “no longer reasoning

coldly” and that he himself was feeling what he was saying and “warmed to the subject”. But he goes on and on painting for her verbal images in long moralizing speeches about the joys of a normal life with love, marriage and the love of children. He tells us that his “moralizing” is “ridiculous” and that she probably doesn’t understand any of it but he goes on anyway. “Though you are now young, attractive, pretty, sensitive, warm-hearted, I – well, you know, the moment I woke up a few moments ago, I couldn’t help feeling disgusted at being with you here!... But if you were anywhere else, if you lived as all good, decent people live, I should not only have taken a fancy to you, but fallen head over heels in love with you.”

“I knew I was speaking in a stiff, affected, even bookish manner, but as a matter of fact I could not speak except ‘as though I was reading from a book’. But that did not worry me, for I knew, I had a feeling that I would be understood, that this very bookishness would assist rather than hinder matters.” Eventually he sees that he has made an impression on her and it frightens him because her body “was writhing as though in convulsions”. She sobs and “broke out into loud moans and cries”. He can not go on with his “bookish” talk because he sees fearfully that it is having a real effect on a real human being. He is about to tell her that he is sorry, that he should not have talked to her so long in such a positive moralistic idealistic fashion but he stops realizing that he has had a real effect on her and that now it would be wrong to try to undo what he has done. He gives her his address and tells her to come and see him. She will not let him go until she relates a story about how she once was loved by a young man before she sank to her present condition. Her story proves that now because of the underground man’s positive sermon she has hope for a changed future. He is sorry for what he has done and is happy to leave.

Away from Lisa, he is “overcome with embarrassment” for what he has said to her. How could he have talked for so long so sentimentally with romantic nonsense about goodness and love and hope? He gave her his address and now is worried that she will come to visit him. Even as days pass and she still does not come, he remains worried. “If not today, then tomorrow, but come she will! She’ll seek me out! For such is the damned romanticism of all those *pure hearts*!... How could she fail to understand? Why, anyone would have seen through it!”

When Lisa visits him and they sit together with tea, he has a nervous attack and begins sobbing. “She was frightened. ‘What’s the matter? What’s the matter?’ she kept asking, standing helplessly over me.” He resents her presence and there are long silences between them. Finally she speaks. “‘I—I want to get away from that place for good,’ she began in an effort to do something to break the silence, but, poor thing, that was just what she should not have spoken about at such a stupid moment and especially to a man who was as stupid as I.” Another five minutes of silence passes between them. He asks her suddenly what she has come for and she does not answer. “I’ll tell you, my dear girl, what you have come for. You’ve come because I made *pathetic speeches* to you the other night. So you were softened and now you want more of these pathetic speeches. Well, I may as well tell you at once I was laughing at you then. And I’m laughing at you now.... I had been insulted before, at dinner, by the fellows who came before me that night.... So to avenge my wounded pride on someone, to get my own back, I vented my spite on you and I laughed at you. I had been humiliated, so I wanted to humiliate someone... I wanted power. Power was what I wanted then. I wanted sport. I wanted to see you cry. I wanted to humiliate you. To make you hysterical.... And do you realize that now that I’ve told you all this I shall hate you for having been here and listened to me?”

He crushes her and humiliates her but his actions strip her of any power to defend herself and because she is now without anything even approaching a reasonable well-ordered respect for herself, because he has forced her to slip into the irrational side of her nature and come directly in contact with her soul, she loves! The eyes of her soul let her see that behind all his negative talk against her and against himself, is *a man who is suffering*. She loves! She holds out her hands to him. She rushes at him, throws her arms around him, and bursts into tears. He begins sobbing “as I had never in my

life sobbed before”. He falls on the sofa and sobs for a quarter of an hour. She clings to him and puts her arms around him and seems “to remain frozen in that embrace”.

So the underground man has been all talk! His reason and his heart and his soul live in him harmoniously with one another as they do in us and just like we he too can love and love will certainly change him and teach him self-respect! Two lost unhappy souls are now saved! The “bookish” idealistic world is the true world! The world of the “good and the beautiful” is real! Groundlessness and irrationality and willfulness have no place in the world of goodness and love! The real world has finally revealed itself to Lisa and the man from the underground!

He lies on the sofa and is ashamed to look at her. He is ashamed! It occurs to him “that our parts were now completely changed, that she was the heroine now, while I was exactly the same crushed and humiliated creature as she had appeared to me that night – four days before”. He envies her! “I cannot live without feeling that I have someone completely in my power, that I am free to tyrannize over some human being.” In his heart blazes up a feeling of domination and possession. “I clasped her hands violently. How I hated her and how I was drawn to her at that moment!...At first she looked bewildered and even frightened, but only for one moment. She embraced me warmly and rapturously.”

A quarter hour later Lisa is sitting on the floor leaning her head against the edge of the bed crying. The underground man is impatient with her and wants her to leave. “This time she knew everything. I had insulted her finally...She guessed that my outburst of passion was nothing but revenge, a fresh insult for her, and that to my earlier, almost aimless, hatred, there was now added a *personal, jealous* hatred of her...However, I can’t be certain that she did understand it all so clearly; what she certainly did understand was that I was a loathsome man and that, above all, I was incapable of loving her.”

Just as Raskolnikov cannot simply love Sonya, the man from the underground cannot seize the love that Lisa offers him and love her! He too is gone, removed like Raskolnikov from the human, because he is incapable of ruling himself as normal people do with his reason. Even when the body of a young attractive woman embraces him weeping full of love, he must act willfully. He insults her with his lust when he should have respected her and himself by giving way not to lust but to love. But even as Lisa cries leaning her head on the edge of the bed, all is not lost. Moments of lust do not kill love if it is real and Lisa despite his hatred and jealousy does love him. In spite of his need to be willful, how can he resist a miracle when it falls on him from out of nowhere? It is perhaps only the second act in the drama of Lisa and the underground man and other acts can still follow and can produce a happy ending.

She comes from the bed and looks at him hard. He smiles at her maliciously. She says goodbye and goes to the door but before she can reach it, he runs up to her and puts money in her hand. Then he rushes away from the door. She leaves. He says that he put what he put in her hand “not because my heart, but because my wicked brain prompted me to do it”. But soon, overwhelmed with shame, he rushes out the door after her. He calls to her down the staircase but receives no answer. When he returns to his rooms, he discovers on the table near the door the five-rouble note which minutes before he had pressed into her hand.

He acts willfully with the world and experiences a strange enjoyment but he acts rationally with a woman who loves him and learns that his heart is empty. But he is a hero nonetheless the underground man. The world demands that he act moderately and rationally and women demand that he love. He can do neither and he refuses to live falsely. Groundlessness is painful but it is at least free. The underground man lives where he must live, underground where the struggles to reach the deep things of the soul live and where the idealistic and “bookish” lights from the world of the “good and the beautiful” never shine.

## 9

Dostoevsky confessed that his belief came from “the fire of doubt”. His belief in God went hand in hand with doubt but his belief in Russia and his belief that without the Russian Orthodox church there could be no Russia were not subject to doubt. How could Sonya with little education and experience have found the *secret treasure* within her if there were no church that transmitted from generation to generation religious practices and kept the possibility of goodness and genuine religious experience alive? The religious experience offered by church rituals and the unity of Russia politically under the Tzar seemed essential to Dostoevsky even if the political system was far from perfect and even though the rituals of the church produced only lukewarm experience. But the goodness that resulted from the public presence of the church did not lead him to the mystery of creation. His “second pair of eyes” drove him to look for truth against nature and in what was behind and hidden from normal eyes.

However in his novel, *The Idiot*, Dostoevsky tests for us the fate of a man who is genuinely and totally good. His hero, Prince Myshkin, is so good that his extreme goodness is as much a flaw in his character as was extreme rationality in the case of Raskolnikov or extreme willfulness in the case of the Underground Man. The Prince returns to Russia after a long absence in Switzerland and becomes directly involved with several normal people in Saint Petersburg society who are relating to one another trying to resolve regular problems of life. The Prince gets caught personally in their emotional conflicts. He interacts with them with such complete honesty and total goodness that he ends by not helping them but harming them. He is so good he can not fit in regular society. His Christian goodness erodes the power of his human will and isolates him tragically from normal people.

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.