Introduction: Fiction beyond Fiction: Dostoevsky's Quest for Realism

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Discussing historical processes leading to the development of nations, Ivan Pavlovich Shatov, a character in Dostoevsky's novel *The Devils*, expresses his profound skepticism about modern science and rationalism:

There is no nation that set itself up on the foundations of science and reason; there has never been an example of it, unless for a second only, out of stupidity . . . Science and reason have, from the beginning of time, played a secondary and subordinate part in the life of nations; so it will be till the end of time. Nations are formed and moved by another force which orders and rules them, the origin of which is unknown and inexplicable . . . It's the spirit of life, as the Scriptures call it . . . It's the aesthetic principle, as the philosophers call it; they also identify it as the ethical principle. "The seeking of God," as I call it more simply . . . God is the synthetic personality of the whole people, taken from its beginning to its end . . . Reason has never been able to define good and evil or even to distinguish good from evil even approximately. On the contrary, it has always confused them, shamefully and pathetically; science, in its turn, provided only fist-enforced solutions. Half-science, unknown to humanity till our century has excelled at that in particular, being the most dreadful scourge of humanity, worse than plagues, famine, and war. Half-science is the despot, of a kind that has never been imposed upon humanity before. This despot has its priests and slaves, before

this despot everyone bows with love or superstition hereto unimaginable;
the science itself trembles before it, while shamefully condoning it.¹

Although the question of national formation and nationalism is not the focus of the present volume, the connection between science, religion, philosophy, and aesthetics is. Shatov's voice is not Dostoevsky's own. However, the way Shatov identifies "the spirit of life" (*dukh zhizni*) with aesthetics (*nachalo esteticheskoe*), moral philosophy (*nachalo npravstvennoe*), and with theology (*iskanie Boga*) as the history-shaping forces, is indicative of Dostoevsky's awareness of the intense interaction between diverse spheres of knowledge and modes of inquiry. Shatov does not simply dismiss rationalism and empiricism for their inadequacy in resolving moral questions. Instead, he targets science's "fist-enforced solutions" (*razresheniia kulachnye*), that is, the doctrinaire imposition of scientific truths as absolute and final truths, and criticizes the blind application of scientific principles to all aspects of human life, or the practice referred to by Shatov as "half-science" (*polunauka*). The ascending power of scientism was a serious intellectual threat that Dostoevsky—along with his numerous contemporaries—had to confront. Dostoevsky's art and his search for "realism in a higher sense,"² represent his response to the pressures and challenges of this despotism. By aspiring to provide a counterpart to merely scientific and rational inquiry, Dostoevsky's "realism," therefore, assumed an extraliterary task. In this sense, Dostoevsky went a step even further than such nineteenth-century luminaries as Pushkin, Gogol, and Tolstoy, all of whom strove to transcend the boundaries of fictionality and were therefore perceived as more than "authors," more than mere fiction writers.³

It might be a risky proposition to claim that Russian literature is inherently more intergeneric and interdisciplinary than its Western counterparts, that it is

1 F. M. Dostoevsky, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh* [PSS], ed. V. G. Bazanov et al. (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972–1990), 10:198–99; hereafter cited as PSS by volume and page. All translations are ours unless otherwise specified.

2 PSS, 27:65.

3 Russian writers' stubborn denial of generic indebtedness, their insistence on their ability to transcend and transform the inherited Western literary patterns, was typical of Russian culture in general, and of its literature in particular. It is not surprising then that Russian readers routinely perceived the great classic authors of Russian literature as thinkers and visionaries, philosophers and gurus who shaped Russian national and cultural identity.

more deeply involved with other areas of human knowledge than literary traditions of other countries, or even that it has created distinctly new forms of literature. It is of paramount importance, however, to explore how the writings of such powerhouses of Russian cultural development as Dostoevsky are interconnected with other domains of human knowledge and discourse. What is there in Dostoevsky's fiction that is "more" than fiction or that goes "beyond" fiction? Dostoevsky's ambition to create realism "in a higher sense" should be considered precisely in the context of his struggle to transcend the boundaries of fictionality and to respond to the pressures and challenges posed by modern science. In line with Russian cultural tradition, Dostoevsky was relentless in his drive to go "beyond" fiction by engaging not only with major contemporary issues (including questions of social justice, philosophical, and theological debates) but also with various methods of inquiry. Indeed, Dostoevsky's oeuvre with its wide-ranging interests and active engagement with philosophical, religious, political, economic, and scientific discourses of his time represents a particularly important case for the study of cross-fertilization among disciplines. The primary goal of this volume is, therefore, to consider Dostoevsky's real or imagined dialogues with the aesthetic, philosophic, and scientific thoughts of his predecessors, contemporaries, and heirs. Such issues as the interaction between scientific and social discourses, the positivistic and idealist components of intellectual history and aesthetics, and philosophical and theological contexts of his oeuvre form the core of the intellectual framework of the volume.

Dostoevsky's "fantastic realism" or "realism in a higher sense" was deeply rooted, as this volume aspires to suggest, in the scientific and philosophical thought of his time. In his frequently cited letter to N. D. Fonvizina (1854), Dostoevsky announced, "I can tell you about myself that I am a child of this century."⁴ Many readers acknowledged Dostoevsky's enduring ability to be engaged with modernity, but what exactly did Dostoevsky mean when he referred to himself as "a child of his century"? The way he grappled with the most pressing challenges presented by the science, philosophy, religion, and aesthetics of his time tells us a great deal about his sense of modernity. Referring to doubt as the prevailing attitude toward religion ("a child of doubt and disbelief"), Dostoevsky reveals that his religious hesitance may have been

4 PSS, 28(1):176.

formed under the impact of the ascending power of scientific discourses. Dostoevsky's doubt, however, extended both to the power of science and to the validity of religion.

Although Dostoevsky, in his later years, in particular, consistently rebelled against the exaggerated trust in the efficacy of the natural sciences' methods as applied to all areas of knowledge, he nevertheless took the challenge of science seriously. Moreover, some of his contemporaries even observed Dostoevsky's almost "chemical" method of characterization. Commenting on *The Double*, V. N. Maikov emphasizes Dostoevsky's "scientific" approach to his character's mental state and compares it to "an inquisitive person penetrating the chemical composition of matter": "What could be more positivistic, so it seems, than a chemical view of reality? And yet, the picture of the world illuminated by this view always appears to us as if bathed in some kind mystical light."⁵ Indeed, the science of the period had acquired a heretofore unknown prestige. Richard G. Olson, among others, scrutinized this phenomenon, observing in his *Science and Scientism in Nineteenth-Century Europe* that "social theorists and those literary and artistic figures who molded the larger public culture continued through the nineteenth century to borrow heavily from development in the natural sciences in formulating their understanding of humans and their societies."⁶ Exploring the issue from the Russian perspective, Diane Denning Thompson commented that "scientific ideas and methods spread into areas of thought where they had hitherto been absent: into biblical scholarship, history, philosophy and social and political theory."⁷ As a "child of his century," Dostoevsky himself was to a certain degree a man of science. Let's not forget that Dostoevsky's father was a doctor, and Dostoevsky himself was an engineer by education, facts that are frequently glossed over. He received a good scientific education, including a solid grounding in mathematics and geometry. It is not a coincidence that his rebellion against knowledge offered by science frequently takes the form of a mathematical rebellion. But Dostoevsky's *Underground Man* hardly makes his notorious attack on "twice two is four" out of ignorance or

5 V. N. Maikov, "Nechto o russkoi literature v 1846-om godu," in *Literaturnaia kritika: Stat'i, retsenzii* (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1985), 182.

6 Richard G. Olson, *Science and Scientism in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 2.

7 Dianne Denning Thompson, "Dostoevsky and Science," in *The Cambridge Companion to Dostoevskii*, ed. W. J. Leatherbarrow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 192.

stubborn irrationalism.⁸ Without trying to dismiss all scientific knowledge, Dostoevsky vehemently argues against *simplifications* (one of his favorite terms), suggesting that a particular brand of science cannot and should not usurp absolute and complete dominance over other fields of intellectual exploration. Dostoevsky had a particular distaste for axioms of all sorts, be they mathematical or ethical ones. In this respect he took a stance very different from that of his famous older French contemporary, Victor Hugo, a writer whom he otherwise greatly admired. Deploying the notion of “twice two is four” not to subvert rationalism but, on the contrary, to mock people’s predilection for rewriting simple equations and questioning the axioms of Euclid’s geometry, Hugo asserted that the notions of good and evil are also “axioms” of sorts. In *Napoléon le Petit* (1852) he writes,

Here are some axioms of which you have probably an idea. Two and two make four. Between two given points the straight line is the shortest. The part is less than the whole. Now, get seven million five hundred thousand votes to declare that two and two make five, that the straight line is the longest road, that the whole is less than its part; get it declared by eight millions, by ten millions, by a hundred millions of votes, you will not have advanced a step . . . There are axioms in probity, in honesty, in justice, as there are axioms in geometry; and the truth of morality are no more at the mercy of a vote than are the truths of algebra.⁹

Dostoevsky would disagree. For him, the truths of morality are not at the mercy of a vote, but they are not axioms either. Hugo’s sense of moral certainty might appear a bit strange in a Romantic, but Hugo was also an heir to the venerable rationalist tradition; he clearly owed his certainties to the moral authority of science and logic, articulated with unprecedented boldness by one of his

8 PSS, 5:119. “Twice two makes four seems to me simply a piece of insolence. Twice two makes four is a pert coxcomb who stands with arms akimbo barring your path and spitting. I admit that twice two makes four is an excellent thing, but if we are to give everything its due, twice two makes five is sometimes a very charming thing too” (ibid.). Dostoevsky, for sure, wasn’t the first, nor was he the last, to play with the idea of “two times two may be five.” The notion that two and two could somehow become five was already mentioned by George Gordon, Lord Byron, who states in his 1813 letter to his fiancée, Annabella Milbanke: “I know that two and two make four—and should be glad to prove it too if I could—though I must say if by any sort of process I could convert 2 & 2 into *five* it would give me much greater pleasure.” Lord Byron, *Selected Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 340. Undoubtedly, this Romantic concept appealed to Dostoevsky.

9 Victor Hugo, *Napoleon the Little* (London: Vizetelli and Company, 1852), 185.

countrymen, Pierre-Simon Laplace, who in the preface to his 1814 “Philosophical Essay on Probabilities” penned this vivid, and supposedly the first, articulation of scientific determinism:

We may regard the present state of the universe as the effect of its past and the cause of its future. An intellect which at a certain moment would know all forces that set nature in motion, and all positions of all items of which nature is composed, if this intellect were also vast enough to submit these data to analysis, it would embrace in a single formula the movements of the greatest bodies of the universe and those of the tiniest atom; for such an intellect nothing would be uncertain and the future just like the past would be present before its eyes.¹⁰

Dostoevsky, however, didn’t share this confidence in scientific, mathematical, and moral axioms and their explanatory power. In part, his suspicion of “axioms” may have been nourished by his exposure to Russia’s scientific climate of the time. We recall that the Underground Man’s rebellion against “twice two is four” goes hand in hand with his rebellion against Euclidian geometry.¹¹ His protest, however, is not against arithmetic per se. Rather, he suggests that self-evident ideas, such as two plus two equals four, comforting as they are, may, in fact, have no reality outside the mind. Dostoevsky’s interest in non-Euclidean geometry highlights the fact that he must have been well aware that some Euclidean proofs might very well be—in the words of Russian mathematician and geometer Nikolai Lobachevsky—“merely explanations and were not mathematical proofs in the true sense.”¹² Lobachevsky produced geometry that he called “imaginary,” and this concept might have been more congenial to Dostoevsky’s notion of “realism in a higher sense” than its Euclidean counterpart. Curiously, the connection between a scientific outlook and a corresponding type of realism would be later elucidated by Albert Einstein, who drew on the non-Euclidean geometry and its further development in the theory of complex numbers, the theory of vectors, and the theory of relativity. In his “Remarks on

10 Pierre-Simon Laplace, *A Philosophical Essay on Probabilities* (New York: Dover, 1951), 4.

11 For Dostoevsky’s interest in non-Euclidean geometry, see Dianne Denning Thompson, “Dostoevsky and Science,” 205–7. See also “Dostoyevsky & Science: The Brothers Karamazov,” *Cambridge Forecast Group Blog*, November 3, 2007, <https://cambridgeforecast.wordpress.com/2007/11/03/dostoyevsky-science-the-brothers-karamazov/>.

12 Quoted in Jason Socrates Bardi, *The Fifth Postulate: How Unraveling a Two-Thousand-Year-Old Mystery Unraveled the Universe* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2009), 142.

Bertrand Russell's Theory of Knowledge," Einstein makes a distinction between an "aristocratic illusion" concerning the power of pure thought to gain the knowledge about the "objective world" and the "plebeian illusion of naïve realism," based solely on sense perception:

During philosophy's childhood it was rather generally believed that it is possible to find everything which can be known by means of mere reflection. It was an illusion which anyone can easily understand if, for a moment, he dismisses what he has learned from later philosophy and from natural science; he will not be surprised to find that Plato ascribed a higher reality to "ideas" than to empirically experienceable things. Even in Spinoza and as late as in Hegel this prejudice was the vitalizing force which seems still to have played a major role.

The more aristocratic illusion concerning the unlimited penetrative power of thought has as its counterpart the more plebeian illusion of naïve realism, according to which things "are" as they are perceived by us through our senses. This illusion dominates the daily life of men and of animals; it is also the point of departure in all of the sciences, especially of the natural sciences.¹³

Dostoevsky's realism definitely was not an example of what Einstein viewed as "plebeian illusion of naïve realism," nor was it a purely "aristocratic" one. Dostoevsky defended his "higher realism" specifically against naïve realism, stressing the fundamental need to go beyond empirical comprehension into the realm of spiritual apprehension as the only way of grasping the very essence of reality: "I have my own view of reality (in art), and what most people regard as fantastic and exceptional is sometimes for me the very essence of reality. Everyday trivialities and conventional view of them, in my opinion, not only fall short of realism but are even contrary to it."¹⁴

Dostoevsky proposes here his version of "imaginary realism," or realism that reaches beyond the surface rather than blindly embracing *a priori* concepts, sensory experiences, and conventional views. Without denying the importance of sensory experiences and "real facts," Dostoevsky suggests a more integrative approach, including both observation of empirically

13 Albert Einstein, "Remarks on Bertrand Russell's Theory of Knowledge," in *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell*, ed. P. A. Schlipp (New York: Tudor, 1944), 281.

14 Dostoevsky, Letter to N. N. Strakhov, February 26, 1869, PSS, 29(1):19.

experienced things and penetration into the realm of “ideas.”¹⁵ In his letter to A. N. Maikov (December 11, 1868), he writes, “I have entirely different notions of reality and realism from those of our realists and critics . . . With their kind of realism you cannot explain so much as a hundredth part of the real facts which have actually occurred. But with our idealism we have even prophesied facts.”¹⁶ Dostoevsky, therefore, links realism to epistemology. His realism, rooted as it was in both sensory experiences and Platonic idealism, was shaped, at least in part, under the impact of new trends in science. Dostoevsky focused on the epistemological doubts (it is in this sense also, that he viewed himself as “a child of doubt and disbelief”), on skepticism connected with the empirical sciences’ ability to capture the dynamic nature of reality, on science’s dependence on ever-changing scientific paradigms, each overturning the “absolute foundations” of the previous one. As he puts it in his Notebooks for *A Raw Youth*:

Facts. They pass before us. No one notices them . . . I cannot tear myself away, and all the cries of the critics to the effects that I do not depict real life have not disenchanted me. There are no bases to our society . . . One colossal quake and the whole lot will come to an end, collapse and be negated as though it had never existed. And this is not just outwardly true, as in the West, but inwardly, morally so. Our talented writers, people like Tolstoy and Goncharov, who with great artistry depict life in upper-middle-class circles, think that they are depicting the life of the majority. In my view they have depicted only the life of the exceptions, but the life which I portray is the life that is the general rule. Future generations, more objective in their view, will see that this is so. The truth is on my side, I am convinced of that.¹⁷

What Dostoevsky suggests here is that conventional realist writers, such as Tolstoy and Goncharov, while trying to depict reality, have barely touched on the real itself, having not being fully aware that our inquiries into the nature of reality result in dynamic and perpetual state of flux. His “imaginary realism”

15 Malcolm Jones provides an important insight in Dostoevsky’s integrative approach to realism by ascertaining that his fantastic realism “is about the intersubjective experience of reality and the elusiveness of a much sought-after, universal Truth.” Jones, *Dostoevsky after Bakhtin: Readings in Dostoevsky’s Fantastic Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 30.

16 PSS, 28(2):329.

17 PSS, 16:329.

stubbornly juxtaposes the “reality” of empirical facts to the “reality” of “essences.” In *Diary of a Writer*, he presents his philosophical view of realism in clear opposition to the prevailing literary one: “One must depict reality as it is,’ they say, whereas such reality does not exist and has never even existed on earth, because the essence of things is inaccessible to man who perceives nature as it is reflected in his ideas, after passing through his senses; therefore one has to give more room to the idea and not to be afraid of the ideal.”¹⁸ We see how in Dostoevsky a “pure thought” claims its epistemological validity “independently of sense perception.” Here Dostoevsky seems to be closer to Einstein’s awareness of the “gulf” that logically separates the concrete world of material objects, on the one hand, from the abstract world of ideas, on the other.¹⁹

Along with some other “realist” Russian writers, who inherited the Romantic ethos of the “age of wonder,” such as Tolstoy, for example, Dostoevsky exhibits profound suspicion of science as absolute truth and therefore engages in creating alternative narrative structures, highlighting the limits of deterministic, logical, predictable, that is, “scientific” unfolding of both a

18 PSS, 21:75. Curiously, in Dostoevsky’s thought, the personal truth of an individual consciousness is often presented in its juxtaposition to empirical facts, whether this personal truth takes the form of acceptance of a higher ideal of Christ or of earthly axioms of Euclid’s geometry. Although Ivan Karamazov draws on the authority of geometry, his ideas and conclusions belong to the domain of “personal truth”: “Even if parallel lines do meet and I see it myself, I shall see it and say that they’ve met, but I still won’t accept it” (PSS, 14:214). In an almost complete reversal of this argument, Dostoevsky insists in his aforementioned letter to Fonvizina that “if someone proved to me that Christ is outside the truth, and that in reality the truth were outside Christ, then I should prefer to remain with Christ rather than with the truth” (PSS, 28[1]:176). What is remarkable about these quotations is that while the speakers’ visions of truth are radically different (belief in Euclid’s “earthly” truth versus belief in Christ), the structure of the argument remains the same. The acceptance of God and acceptance of Euclid’s geometry become ultimately a matter of faith, of personal preference, and commitment. What Dostoevsky suggests here is that he prefers to accept Christ as something that goes beyond and transcends empirical reality and established scientific facts. By the same token, Ivan Karamazov refuses to accept the “truth” of non-Euclidean geometry (which postulates that the parallel lines might meet) even if it is proven to him empirically, preferring to stick to his belief in Euclidean geometry. In other words, in both cases the argument is made in favor of a personal conviction, based on some deep-seated intuition or insight, against the “reality” or “truth” proven through traditional scientific methods or arguments.

19 Einstein writes, “We have the habit of combining certain concepts and conceptual relations (propositions) so definitely with certain sense experiences that we do not become conscious of the gulf—logically unbridgeable—which separates the world of sensory experiences from the world of concepts and propositions” (Einstein, “Remarks,” 287).

character and a plot (similar to Tolstoy's attempt to delineate the limits of historiography). Dostoevsky's concept of the individual was formed in clear opposition to both the philosophy of the Enlightenment, with its belief in progress and cumulative organic growth, and to nineteenth-century realism and naturalism, preoccupied with the effects of heredity and environment upon the individual, presenting an individual character as the sum of causal and deterministic unfolding of his traits. Dostoevsky's characters, by contrast, affirm their radical freedom by evolving through sudden leaps and turns that defy the predictability of behavior. To some extent, this fascination with the eccentric can also be attributed to the Romantic ferment of science that swept across Europe at the end of eighteenth century but reached Russia somewhat later. Discussing a sudden series of breakthroughs in the fields of astronomy and chemistry that may have influenced the Romantic age and the Romantic taste for poetic inspiration coupled with "intense, even reckless, personal commitment to discovery," Richard Holmes writes,

Romantic science would seek to identify such moments of singular, almost mystical vision in its own history. One of its first and most influential examples was to become the story of the solitary brooding Newton in his orchard, seeing an apple fall and "suddenly" having his vision of universal gravity. This story was never told by Newton at the time, but only began to emerge in the mid-18th century, in a series of memoirs and reminiscences.²⁰

Much has been made of Dostoevsky's particular taste for "sudden" changes taking place in his novels, including mystical illuminations, personal epiphanies, and transformation, and for the overall prominence of such concept as "suddenly" in his poetics. It might be fruitful to link those elements of his poetics to the Romantic "ethos" of "sudden" discovery and to the very scientific climate that have shaped this ethos.²¹ While Dostoevsky, similar to his famous

20 Richard Holmes, *The Age of Wonder: How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science* (New York: Pantheon, 2008), xvii.

21 Dostoevsky scholarship has long paid attention to on overwhelming prominence of the words "sudden" and "suddenly" in Dostoevsky's poetics. Cf. V. N. Toporov, "O strukture romana Dostoevskogo v sviazi s arkhainymi skhemami mifologicheskogo myshleniia. (Prestupleniie i nakazanie), in *Structure of Texts and Semiotics of Culture*, ed. Jan van der Eng (The Hague: Mouton, 1973). Toporov observes that the word "suddenly" occurs 560 times in *Crime and Punishment* and concludes: "The maximum frequency in the use of this word

Russian and Western European contemporaries, such as George Eliot, was striving to create adequate forms of literary realism, their respective versions were shaped by the different ways each of them responded to scientific theories of their time. A “breeding ground” for Dostoevsky’s aesthetics and his religious and philosophical views included the thought and works of not only Darwin but also of Lobachevsky and such scientists as Mechnikov, Mendeleev, and Pavlov. Rather than merely modifying and reaffirming the claims of the historically received scientific discoveries, these scientists articulated a new paradigm and, therefore, attracted Dostoevsky’s scrutiny, even though he frequently disagreed with the specific conclusions or implications of their research. These nineteenth-century scientists generated “scientific revolutions,”²² to use Thomas S. Kuhn’s term, or, in Alain Badiou’s terms, created an “event,” that is, they discovered a rupture in the appearance of normality and opened a space to rethink reality. In this volume, two of those scientists, Darwin and Pavlov, receive particular attention.

Even though great examples of the two- or three-way exchange between science, literature, and then back to science can be found throughout this volume, the first part of this collection specifically addresses Dostoevsky’s engagement with the challenges posed by the works of Darwin, Pavlov, and other scientists whose biological discoveries paved the way toward the reconceptualization of social, cultural, political, artistic, and psychological categories. This process of reconceptualization provoked Dostoevsky to his own groundbreaking literary discoveries and reconceptualizations.

David Bethea and Victoria Thorstensson’s “Darwin, Dostoevsky, and Russia’s Radical Youth” gets the ball rolling in chapter 1 as they concentrate on the very lively polemics within Russian fiction and journalism on the issues of uses and abuses of Darwin’s theories. The chapter presents Darwin’s reception in the writings of Russian radical intellectuals, such as Nikolai Chernyshevsky, Dmitry Pisarev, and Varfolomei Zaitsev, their ambitious and frequently groundless claims about the promise of science, and their consequent dismissal

occurs at such narrative steps, which coincide with transitions or depiction of emotional changes. In Russian literature, there are no other examples (with the exception of other texts of Dostoevsky) that would even remotely come close to *Crime and Punishment* in terms of their saturation with this word” (“O strukture romana Dostoevskogo,” 234, 266–71).

22 Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

of idealism and metaphysics, resulting in the radical reinterpretation of basic categories of society, art, and religion. These young radicals' highly partisan reading of Darwin was bound to produce reaction both in the journalism of the period and in fictional writings, including the major texts of Dostoevsky. Bethea and Thorstensson suggest that Darwin is present in Dostoevsky's oeuvre in various mediated forms, as a person, as a scientist, but even more importantly as an exaggerated figure conjured up by the imagination of his Russian epigones and their ideological opponents, be it the journalists Nikolai Strakhov and Mikhail Katkov or conservative writers, such as Nikolai Leskov and Alexander Diakov. Bethea and Thorstensson's discussion of these authors provides a very concrete and helpful background to Dostoevsky's thinking on the subject of science and biology, in particular. The overextension of science's claims, carried out by Dostoevsky's radical contemporaries, and their embrace of the caricatured vision of Social Darwinism clearly took educated Russians by storm, leaving its mark on their perception of science and philosophy, materialism and religion. Such spectacular misreading could not but trouble Dostoevsky, who was ready to challenge their assumptions and conclusions, moving boldly to "anti-empiricist, anti-positivist, anti-'mechanico-chemical' thought." Dostoevsky's skepticism toward all worldly truths, which are separated from the dynamic and open-ended approach that he associated with Christ, had put him on alert when Darwin's insights were mechanically and slavishly applied to the study of human development.

Darwin's thought, however, influenced not only the natural and social sciences but also the development of literary narratives. As Gillian Beer argues in her study *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Darwinian ideas insinuated themselves into the very texture and structure of the nineteenth-century English novel so that Darwinian notions of time, inheritance, variation, and selection permeated its very structure. As Beer explains, such novels as *Middlemarch* deal explicitly with the "web of affinities" determining relations within a specific time and space: "The web exists not only as an interconnection in space but as succession in time. This was the aspect of the image emphasized by Darwin in his genealogical ordering."²³ Taking Beer's argument as a point of departure, Liza Knapp,

23 Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 157.

in chapter 2, “Darwin’s Plots, Malthus’s Mighty Feast, Lamennais’s Motherless Fledglings, and Dostoevsky’s Lost Sheep,” offers a compelling argument about how Dostoevsky’s response to Darwin penetrated deep into the aesthetic level of his works, pervading the very plots of Dostoevsky’s narratives. Yet Knapp demonstrates that, as opposed to his English counterparts who were also influenced by the Malthus-inspired social Darwinism, Dostoevsky, resistant as he was to Social Darwinism, processed Darwin’s plots differently from English novelists. Even in his early novels, such as *Netochka Nezvanova*, Dostoevsky counters Darwin’s plots of the survival of the fittest with his Christian plots, novelizing the struggle for Netochka, the poor and unfortunate one, to be given a place at nature’s “mighty feast.” Knapp also points to the example of *The Idiot*, which clearly reveals Dostoevsky’s subversion of Malthusian-Darwinian scenarios in his defiance of the “realistic” triumph of Malthusian “truths.” Although, as Knapp insightfully concludes, “the consumptive and the lost sheep perish and the epileptic ends as an idiot,” the novel as a whole “sustains its spirit of metaphysical rebellion.”

Moreover, one could add that in his search for “realism in a higher sense,” Dostoevsky strove to combine the plots based on the “low truths” of Darwinian struggle with cases and situations that seemed to defy probability (“fantastic and exceptional”), but which, nevertheless, convey “the very essence of reality.” In opposition to the English novel, which is grounded in causality and predictability, Dostoevsky developed a particular taste for narrative and ideological surpluses, for the overabundance of characters, situations, causes and ideas, for broken continuity, for eruptions, epiphanies and all kinds of sudden changes; these narrative strategies disrupt the predetermined, “evolutionary” plot structure and overburden it with excess and schematic violations. Dostoevsky seeks for alternatives on the level of plot, theme, and characterization, and he tends to create characters marked as “oddballs,” as eccentrics who are not immediately recognized as typical or average.²⁴ Such are his Alyosha

24 Dostoevsky was clearly sensitive to the statistical fashion of deterministic scientific studies. Cf. the discussion of the impact on his work of statistical studies by Adolphe Quetelet in Irina Paperno’s *Suicide as a Cultural Institution in Dostoevsky’s Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 19–45. Several studies in our volume discuss the role of oddballs in Dostoevsky’s poetics, be it Kalganov in *The Brothers Karamazov*, or Porfiry Petrovich, the highly eccentric detective in *Crime and Punishment*.

Karamazov, or Prince Myskhin from *The Idiot*, or the Ridiculous Man from “The Dream of a Ridiculous Man.”

Anna Berman’s “‘Viper will eat viper’: Dostoevsky, Darwin, and the Possibility of Brotherhood” (chapter 3) foregrounds this complexity and ambiguity in Dostoevsky’s approach to Darwin. Grappling with the subject of Darwin, Berman takes as a point of departure Daniel Todes’s pioneering work on Darwin’s reception in Russia. In his study, Todes explores and articulates the dominant line of thinking of both Russian scientists and philosophers, who were vehement on the subject of keeping Malthus and Darwin apart. Consequently, many Russians proved to be extremely hesitant, if not resistant, toward applying some radical ramification of Darwinian thought to the domain of social relationships. At the same time in Europe, such applications fell on rather fertile grounds, to the great dismay of such diverse Russian thinkers as Ilya Mechnikov, Peter Kropotkin, Andrei Beketov, Nikolai Danilevsky, and, of course, Dostoevsky. It is clear that the idea of cooperation as the powerful force within the unfolding biological drama was very dear to Russian thinkers. Dostoevsky mocked the facile reading of Darwin through his scathing portrayal of Andrei Semyonovich Lebezyatnikov, a character in *Crime and Punishment* who exemplified these “new ideas”: “In England compassion is forbidden, giving way to political economy.”²⁵ However, as Berman shows, Dostoevsky, true to his character, loved to play devil’s advocate. When Beketov finds faults with Darwin’s theory on the basis of his inability to imagine violent and bloody struggle between father and son over the last sip of water, Dostoevsky, in his last novel, demonstrates precisely the opposite. For Berman, Dostoevsky’s view of the family hardly remains static, unfolding from seeing family as a tightly knit knot of mutual commitments in *Crime and Punishment* to the family of *The Brothers Karamazov*, where the Karamazovs are based on accidental and random relationships, and therefore exposed to the pitfalls of Darwinian struggle. In her meticulous and creative reading of Darwin’s impact on Dostoevsky’s last novel, Berman views Ivan’s psyche as split between the two opposite stances concerning the familial relationships: love and sacrifice versus Darwinian struggle and competition to the bitter end.

25 PSS, 6:14.

Berman's insight into the complexity of the very issue of brotherhood takes us to the heart of Dostoevsky's view of man and reality: while it is easy to imagine that strangers are governed by the Malthusian relationship based on the "dog-eat-dog" principle, it is much more difficult to do so in the case of the sibling relationships. Yet, the presence of family hardly guarantees suprahuman love, devotion, and sacrifice. Dostoevsky appears to be very consistent here with his integrative approach, exploring the minute details of actions dictated by necessity and science, but at the same time introducing actions that stress mysterious, unexplainable, and illogical causality, much more akin to spiritual impact. Despite all of the Karamazov brothers' proclamations to the opposite, none of them seem to accept the brotherhood of Smerdyakov. The tension between easily proclaimed principles of abstract religious love and the concrete reality of loving one's unattractive neighbor, or brother, are foregrounded and problematized. It is clear that we are dealing here with an issue that is more serious than biological brotherhood or fatherhood. One's interpretation of the novel clearly depends on how one views the family and the mutual responsibilities of its members. Do the religious and moral teachings on such responsibilities enter into the conflict with those dictated by Darwin and biological science? Berman's reading of the text highlights the fact that the two approaches and outlooks should not be viewed as engaged in all-out conflict, but rather in a dynamic, unpredictable, yet mutually informed interaction.

Dostoevsky's grappling with the scientific thought of his time becomes further illuminated in Daniel Todes's chapter 4, in which he explores the interaction between Dostoevsky and two of his younger readers and admirers, the illustrious physiologist Ivan Pavlov and his committed Christian Orthodox wife, Serafima Karchevskaya. Todes's careful and attentive reading of the epistolary exchange between these three participants provides a fascinating example of how complex and dynamic one's views on science and religion can be. Despite his explicit embrace of atheism, Pavlov consistently stressed the dialectics of necessity and freedom, highlighting the complex manifestation of freedom within the laws of nature, while trying to avoid the simplification of pseudoscientific determinism at all costs. On a personal level, one can't help but admire Pavlov's acumen, his tolerance, and his open-mindedness; being an atheist himself, he welcomed his religious wife and equally religious Dostoevsky and wondered "how science might reconcile the seemingly

contradictory truths that humans were subject to the determinism of natural law but remained responsible for their actions and to some extent, free.” Later in life, he expressed his strong opposition to the Soviet attempts to suppress religion. Serafima’s letters and descriptions provide curious anecdotes that reveal that Dostoevsky could not always raise himself above essentialism, above ethnic determinism, and the debilitating rationality of his own prejudices. Yet it also becomes obvious that in his communications with Pavlov and his wife, Dostoevsky found great support for his views of science as a field that is unpredictable and dynamic, whose trajectory involves sudden jumps and curves, rather than deterministic linearity. Todes’s creative portrait of these three remarkable individuals, and of the environment in which they functioned, is illuminating, vivid, and gripping in its contradictions. The new and original material that Todes brings into the scholarly discourse on Dostoevsky confirms that science—be it in the form of biology, physiology, and psychology—while firmly grounded in empirical reality, frequently thrives through nonlinear, and therefore seemingly unscientific moments of shift, expansion, and indeterminacy.

Dostoevsky’s skepticism toward positivist science combined with his profound interest in scientific discoveries of his time informed both his aesthetic sensibility and his moral philosophy. Even though Dostoevsky’s contributions to the development of Russian religious thought and Western philosophy, and also to psychology and psychoanalysis, are frequently acknowledged, they are rarely analyzed in detail. Several authors, including Steven Cassedy, David Cunningham, Charles Larmore, and Sergei Kibalnik in Part II, discuss Dostoevsky’s philosophical outlook and his implicit or explicit dialogue with various philosophical schools and traditions, bringing Dostoevsky’s sophisticated dialectical thought to the surface.

In his provocative chapter 5, “Dostoevsky and the Meaning of ‘the Meaning of Life,’” Cassedy revisits the question of “meaning” by outlining the history of the concept and considering the historical and intellectual circumstances that led to its emergence. While tracing its origins back to German Romantic philosophy and all the way forward to the existentialism of Camus, Cassedy suggests that the “word ‘meaning’ surfaces, when conventional forms of belief are under assault and European intellectuals are fishing around for a vocabulary that they can press into service in order to characterize from

outside religion what's happening inside religion." In other words, the meaning of life (rendered by several Russian terms, such as *smysl*, *tsel'*, *znachenie*) tends to be connected with religious questions, or, to be more precise, with situations "when conventional faith is under challenge." Indeed, the believers among Dostoevsky's characters seem to have an understanding of the meaning of life, even though they rarely articulate it, as opposed to those who, having lost their faith and what Dostoevsky calls "higher meaning," embark on the road of despair and even suicide. Cassedy suggests that the "meaning" clearly depends on the position of the observer, whether he is a believer or not, highlighting the irony of the situation, in which "meaning of life lacks meaning" and the very quest for meaning signifies the loss of faith and, consequently, of meaning. Cassedy brings Dostoevsky's shifting, evolving, and circuitous thought to the foreground. Paradoxically, for Dostoevsky to find the meaning of life, one has to lose it.

It may also be useful to recall Dostoevsky's particular fascination with the book of Job and the Jobean quest for meaning. The question of "meaning" dissolves only when one is ready to accept its limitations, trust the meaningless, and embrace faith, which for Dostoevsky involves, first and foremost, the work of active love directed toward others. Consequently, the process of meaning-discovery consists in giving up on one's search and acquiring the position from which one no longer interrogates the meaning of life, but embarks on life through faith and active love.²⁶ We may recall Zosima's advice to "a lady of little faith": "Strive to love your neighbor actively and incessantly. And when you are able to utterly forget yourself in your love . . . you'll believe without doubts . . . active love involves work, commitment, and for some—it is a complete science."²⁷

26 Cf. St. Augustine's position that clearly foreshadows Dostoevsky's thought: "Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore, seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand" (*Tractates on the Gospel of John*, tractate 29).

27 PSS, 14:52–54. Dostoevsky suggests that the abstract search for meaning, the search that is based not on the living experience of faith and love, is bound to result in futile intellectual wonderings, similar to the Underground Man's vicious circle of reasoning. The dangers of this type of circuitous reasoning were mocked already by Milton in his comments on the philosophically minded devils, trapped in their search for meaning:

Others . . . reason'd high
Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will and Fate,
Fixt Fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
And found no end, in wandering mazes lost.
(*Paradise Lost*, 2.558–61)

As has been observed by readers, Dostoevsky's work abounds in intellectual paradoxes. It is to the paradox of a Christian who constructs the strongest possible case for atheism, as well as the paradox of an atheist who cannot take God off his mind, that David Cunningham devotes his chapter 6, "Dostoevsky and Nietzsche: The Hazards of Writing Oneself into (or out of) Belief." Drawing on René Girard's observation that Dostoevsky was writing "ahead of his faith," Cunningham offers a useful dichotomy of "writing ahead of one's faith" and "writing behind one's faith." In the latter type of writing, the author expresses his religious position, which is already set, acting more or less like a social scientist articulating the latest findings of his field. In the former, the process of writing constitutes an open-ended search, an inner quest, the dialectics of pro and contra. As Cunningham argues, in contrast with Nietzsche's writing *behind* his faith or rather "behind his *unfaith*," Dostoevsky writes *ahead* of his faith in a sense that he writes without knowing in advance where the story will end and explores the questions as broadly as possible without trying to resolve the mysteries of the universe, man, and religion. Cunningham discusses the issue using the opposition between *Historie* and *Geschichte* ("the things that happened" versus "the story of the things that happened"). The latter refers to the stories that the Church told about Jesus, while the former relates to what actually occurred in his life. The method of writing "behind one's faith" was associated with new "scientific" trends in historiography (Cunningham links this trend to the emerging Life-of-Jesus researchers intent to produce "serious scholarship about faith"), which aspired to determine and describe only irrefutable facts. Dostoevsky clearly finds himself in the opposite camp from this approach, openly favoring *Geschichte*. "That is, in fact, what the Gospels are; and, in a very different sense, it is also what Dostoevsky's novels are," concludes Cunningham. This fruitful opposition points toward the very core of Dostoevsky's creative process, in which nothing is set in stone, the world keeps unfolding and remains open-ended. Cunningham appropriately quotes René Girard, who observed that "for Dostoevsky, writing is a means of knowing, an instrument of exploration; it is thus beyond the author himself, ahead of his intelligence and faith."

In chapter 7, "Dostoevsky as Moral Philosopher," Charles Larmore links the question of Dostoevsky's skeptical attitude toward the exclusive authority of empirical evidence to his moral philosophy. Revisiting the well-trodden

territory of Dostoevsky's view of theodicy and the tensions between Ivan's and the Grand Inquisitor's "showing by argument" versus Christ's and Alyosha's "showing by deed," Larmore suggests that the confrontation between the Grand Inquisitor and Christ implies the two opposing ideas of human freedom.²⁸ These two notions of freedom involve the "radical freedom" to rise above our own sphere of concerns (or the *freedom of conscience*) and the *instrumental freedom* of being able to get what one wants. The latter kind of freedom fits in with our experience of how the world works, whereas the former is based on something that goes beyond such evidence. The best proof of radical freedom is our capacity to exercise it ourselves. Christ's and Alyosha's "showing by deed" demonstrates the limitations of any view of mankind's possibilities constructed on the evidence of what human beings usually think or do. Furthermore, Larmore offers an insightful interpretation of Dostoevsky's contribution to moral philosophy by identifying inner contradictions and inconsistencies within Ivan's arguments, that is, his "devotion to justice and his determination to stick to evidence." Ivan's very assumption that there is no God because the world is filled with the unjust and unjustifiable suffering of innocent children presupposes a sense of justice and a moral view that Ivan is trying to deny. In other words, Ivan relies on moral principles as he tries to explain his lack of faith in God and, therefore, in morality. Exposing the contradictions within Ivan's "two principal commitments," Larmore concludes that "his zeal for justice *shows by what it is* the error in his other, that is, in his determination to base his view of humanity on the way the world generally goes." The crucial moral truth, as Dostoevsky views it, is that "in our concern for the good of others we demonstrate the freedom we have to transcend what the evidence would otherwise prove to be the character of human motivation."

While Larmore discerns the inner logical contradictions in Ivan's conclusion that if there is no God, then "everything is permitted," Sergei Kibalnik, in

28 Dostoevsky's privileging the "showing by deed" over "showing by argument" is indeed a feature ubiquitous in his oeuvre. Many complex philosophical discussions find their resolution in Dostoevsky through nonverbal acts of human kindness. Consider, for example, *The Brothers Karamazov's* parable of an onion, which focuses on the series of acts of giving and sharing; and the memorable story of a pound of nuts presented to Dmitry when he was a child, a story that merges in his mind with philosophical and theological issues of the Trinity. Consider also the significance of a pillow put under Dmitry's head by an unknown benefactor and its role in Dmitry's spiritual transformation.

chapter 8, “‘If there’s no immortality of the soul . . . everything is lawful’: On the Philosophical Basis of Ivan Karamazov’s Idea,” focuses on the famous sentence’s sources and philosophical contexts. Kibalnik places Dostoevsky’s and his characters’ musings on atheism and morality in the context of European philosophical thought, Ludwig Feuerbach’s and Max Stirner’s in particular. For Dostoevsky, as Kibalnik sees it, “the complicated dialectics of faith and morality, disbelief and Man-godhood, love for a neighbor and love for mankind in *Brothers Karamazov* cannot be understood without taking into account their interdependence with contemporary philosophical discourses.” The philosophical basis of Ivan’s reasoning might be, in part, based on the popularization of Max Stirner’s ideas of “ego” and “self-enjoyment,” which refuses to recognize any limits. Stirner’s declaration of individualism and immoralism, in turn, stems directly from Feuerbach’s concept of religion as an “objectification” of human consciousness. As Kibalnik reminds us, Nikolai Speshnev, a member of the Petrashevsky circle, was one of the early champions of these ideas (Speshnev became later a prototype for the character of Stavrogin in Dostoevsky’s *The Devils*) and insisted that Feuerbach’s anthropotheism was the first step for “science” to secure “complete and unconditional denial of religion.” It is important to recognize Dostoevsky’s polemic with contemporary philosophical discourses (which are instrumental in understanding Ivan’s metaphysical rebellion) and his insistence on the interdependence between morality and the belief in the immortality of soul. Relying on Robert Louis Jackson’s reading of Ivan’s predicament, Kibalnik maintains that Dostoevsky’s solution to the philosophical impasse of Ivan was the conviction that “acts of love produce faith.” Both Jackson and Kibalnik emphasize that Dostoevsky believed that the scandalous and seemingly convincing logic of “if there is no God, everything is allowed” could be transcended only through concrete actions, through active love. Thus, despite differences in perspectives, Jackson, Kibalnik, and Larmore seem to agree that “showing by deed,” and therefore changing the terms of the polemics, appears to be Dostoevsky’s main strategy in challenging contemporary philosophical, theological, and scientific discourses. Undoubtedly, this is the strategy that Dostoevsky deploys consistently in his fiction, a point argued by other contributors to this volume, including Gary Saul Morson, Carol Apollonio, Deborah Martinsen, and Olga Meerson.

The questions of “showing by deed” and “showing by arguments” inevitably lead us to the problem of representation and, therefore, aesthetics. The three chapters in Part III in this volume address Dostoevsky’s aesthetic concerns. Dostoevsky’s religious and philosophical views, tensions between atheism and faith are reflected in what Robert Louis Jackson calls Dostoevsky’s “quest for form,” that is, his aesthetics.²⁹ How does one negotiate between the so-called natural truth and artistic truth, between empirical data and intellectual or spiritual categories, between *Historie* and *Geschichte*, to use David Cunningham’s application of hermeneutic categories to Dostoevsky’s thought? Jackson’s, Susanne Fusso’s and Svetlana Evdokimova’s essays deal with various aspects of Dostoevsky’s aesthetics and his polemic with his contemporaries on the subjects of his art and his understanding of realism.

In his nuanced reading of Dostoevsky’s complex, dynamic, and dialectical responses to Hans Holbein’s *Dead Body of Christ in the Tomb*, Jackson in chapter 9 takes us back to the fundamental issues of Dostoevsky’s thought and his views of the tasks of art to portray an image in something that has no image, to see beauty in ugliness. He further discusses Dostoevsky’s belief in art’s ability to convey not only natural or actual truth but also a higher, artistic truth. Jackson considers Dostoevsky’s aesthetics within the context of such diverse thinkers and artists as St. Augustine, John Keats, and Victor Hugo, all of whom express an aesthetic-spiritual outlook congenial to Dostoevsky and are concerned with the problem of beauty and ugliness in artistic representation. Jackson argues that Augustine’s notion of “formed formlessness” or “formless form” is particularly useful for the understanding of the concept of two kinds of beauty so central in Dostoevsky’s aesthetics. Holbein’s seemingly repulsive, albeit well-executed, depiction of Christ’s crucified body represents for Dostoevsky this tension between artistic and natural truth, between two kinds of beauty. Dostoevsky’s interpretation and understanding of Holbein’s painting foregrounds his own concepts of reality and realism as a triumph of artistic and spiritual truth over natural truth. The pro and contra of Holbein’s *Dead Christ* in Jackson’s interpretation of Dostoevsky’s response to it consists in the painter’s power to evoke contradictory reactions from the audience. The

29 See Robert Louis Jackson, *Dostoevsky’s Quest for Form: A Study of His Philosophy of Art* (Bloomington, IN: Phylssardt, 1978).

viewer's ability to see the form in something that is formless ultimately depends on the degree of his or her prior receptivity and inner preparation. One could either project onto the canvas one's own spiritual crisis, as does Ippolit Terentiev (a character in *The Idiot*, who a priori resists faith) or internally visualize one's ideal aesthetically and spiritually, as does Dostoevsky. "A sense of permanent unrest and unease, and endless imaging of, and striving for, the unattainable ideal—here is where Dostoevsky leaves us," concludes Jackson. Curiously then, Jackson's analysis of Dostoevsky's aesthetics reinforces Cunningham's insights about writing "ahead of one's faith" versus "behind one's faith." Holbein's painting emerges as a work of art executed "ahead" of Holbein's faith. It is for this reason that it evoked such a powerful and dialectical response from Dostoevsky, whose aesthetic sensibility and creative thinking seems to be always ahead of his faith.

Approaching the issue of aesthetics from a biographical and historic perspective, Fusso explores, in chapter 10, Dostoevsky's relationship with his rival publisher and fellow journalist, Mikhail Katkov. Fusso sees Dostoevsky and Katkov as two conservatives sharing many aesthetic positions and agreeing on fundamental issues but engaging nevertheless in a passionate polemic over Russian cultural and political roles, especially the legacy of Pushkin. These dialectics of differences and similarities clearly exaggerated their individual antipathies. As biting and personal as this polemic might have been, it ignited Dostoevsky to write some of his most important aesthetic "manifestoes," including his essay "Mr. –bov and the Problem of Art," in which he defined his concept of art as independent from both the "utilitarian" and "pure artistic" perspectives. Ultimately, the story of the sharp personal attacks and disagreements between these two men had a "happy ending," as Katkov, to Dostoevsky's surprise, agreed to publish what would become *Crime and Punishment*, the first of Dostoevsky's major novels. These aesthetic disputes, which were part of "the bare-knuckled nature of nineteenth-century Russian journalism," undoubtedly sharpened Dostoevsky's own polemical muse.

Fusso's discussion of Dostoevsky and Katkov's literary polemic highlights Dostoevsky's intense preoccupation with the issues of aesthetics. Romantic debates over the utility of art had acquired new poignancy in Dostoevsky's time, as various intellectual movements—scientism, pragmatism, materialism,

and nihilism—resumed their attempts to redefine art, provoking Dostoevsky toward new artistic discoveries and insights.

Dostoevsky's preoccupation with the questions of art and representation is considered by Evdokimova from the point of view of his concern with the crisis of Platonic aesthetics. In chapter 11, "Dostoevsky's Postmodernists and the Aesthetics of Incarnation," Evdokimova discusses Fyodor Karamazov as a performing artist who anticipates the anti-Platonic turn in modern philosophy described, among others, by Deleuze and Baudrillard, theoreticians investigating postmodern sensitivity. In contrast to Dostoevsky's religious aesthetics, based on the Platonic (and Neoplatonic) representation and captured in his notion of "realism in a higher sense," Fyodor Karamazov (along with Ivan Karamazov's devil and several other characters who represent modern aesthetic trends) emerges as a prophet of postmodernism, a representative of the poetics of phantasmatic simulacra, of the destabilization of meaning, and aleatory verbal defilement. Reading Fyodor's notorious blasphemy and buffoonery as the manifestation of his rejection of Platonic representation and the embrace of the aesthetic existence of simulacrum, Evdokimova argues that Fyodor's use of distorted quotations, his references to the nonexistent originals, his deconstruction of cultural intertext, and his hypertextuality link his performance-driven activity to postmodern aesthetics. Dostoevsky sensed the pending crisis in the aesthetic and religious consciousness of modernity, and he was therefore concerned, as Evdokimova argues, with the rupture between the modern aesthetic and its foundation in Platonic tradition. Trying to defend his "realism in a higher sense," Dostoevsky was critical of both the naturalistic understanding of realism, which, in his opinion, was limiting itself to exterior similarity and superficial depiction, and of the emerging aesthetic sensibility that separated the image from the proto-image. In response, Dostoevsky offered what Evdokimova calls the "aesthetics of incarnation," that is, aesthetics based on the assumption of continuity between the ideal form and the empirical world.

Being the "child of his century," Dostoevsky grappled not only with new aesthetic trends but also with the new trends in psychology. How do modern scientific and philosophical views refract themselves in the way we conceive of human personality, identity, selfhood, and consciousness? Dostoevsky's notion of "realism in a higher sense" is clearly tied to his concept of self and of consciousness: "They call me psychologist: that's wrong, I am only a realist in a higher sense, that

is, I depict all the depths of human soul.”³⁰ A cluster of authors address the issues of selfhood in Dostoevsky’s oeuvre in Part IV, exploring his fascination with peculiar kinds of literary characters, such as doubles, shadows, “angels,” men “without qualities,” catalysts, and other indeterminate and ambiguous personalities.

In chapter 12, “What Is It Like to Be Bats?,” Gary-Saul Morson draws a sharp line that separates Dostoevsky from writers who approach human consciousness from the perspective of scientific materialism. For Morson, the line that divides the two groups is connected with their respective views on the mystery of consciousness, the existence of which always presupposes a point of view. According to Morson, Dostoevsky was convinced that “a purely objective, point-of-view-less description of the world could never be complete. The materialists must be wrong precisely because for them that description is complete.” One of Dostoevsky’s strategies of challenging the Russian intelligentsia’s materialistic point of view on human consciousness shaped by the scientism’s rejection of its mystery was to populate the pages of his fiction with doubles, replicas, shadows, and other ambiguous and amorphous characters whose presence foregrounded the tensions between similarity, identity, and consciousness. How can a likeness end in identity if identity implies a point of view? Morson places the cultural anthropology of doubling characters within the debates on materialism, religion, and subjectivity by Dostoevsky, on the one hand, and by the radical Russian intelligentsia, on the other. He links the phenomenon of the simultaneous fear of doubles and entrapment in doubling to the crisis of personhood understood as consciousness. The only way out of this crisis, Morson emphasizes, is suggested by the moments of “genuine sympathy for others that allow one to escape the logic of doubling, of leaving one’s own shadow behind.”

Other scholars also discuss Dostoevsky’s interest in doubles and the implication of this category for his concept of self. Yuri Corrigan, in chapter 13, “Interiority and Intersubjectivity in Dostoevsky: The Vasia Shumkov Paradigm,” focuses on Dostoevsky’s conception of personality, of solipsism, and of doubles as issues located at the cross-section of psychology, sociology, philosophy, and religion. Corrigan contrasts the neo-Romantic “expressivist” conception of a deep mysterious soul (drawing on Charles Taylor’s taxonomy) with the notion of self as located in the “intersubjective dialogical space”

30 PSS, 27:65.

(Bakhtinian paradigm). Exploring the tension between what he calls “indwelling” and relational models of selfhood in early Dostoevsky’s story, “A Weak Heart,” Corrigan identifies the complexity of Dostoevsky’s construction of self in the tension between interiority and intersubjectivity. He concludes that the self in Dostoevsky is thought of “on the one hand, as an *essence*, a bottomless depth, encompassing the entire universe, and on the other, as an *activity, event, or point of view* that constitutes itself outwardly through relationships.” In contrast to scholars who locate Dostoevsky’s concept of personality entirely in human relationships, Corrigan maintains that only the self that partakes of both domains has a chance of proper development; for “without the positioning of an essential interiority principle within the self, human beings will consume each other . . . thus the need of the reconstitution of the interior realm from its dispersal into adjacent convulsively embracing, selves.” This turn to some “essential interiority,” similar to Morson’s emphasis on uniqueness of subjectivity and “point-of-viewness,” suggests that despite their seemingly successful banishment by the positivism of science, the Romantic concepts of the soul and of the mysterious self managed to recover their place in Dostoevsky’s thought and art.

Focusing on one of Dostoevsky’s marginal characters, Kalganov, from *The Brothers Karamazov*, Michal Oklot, like Morson and Corrigan, returns to the question of subjectivity and the crisis of personhood in Dostoevsky in chapter 14, “Dostoevsky’s Angel—Still an Idiot, Still beyond the Story: The Case of Kalganov.” Oklot’s central metaphor, the angel, defines Dostoevsky’s concept of personality through its “latent openness,” or “the surplus negating a possibility of finding [its] own identity.” Drawing from theological and poetic writings, Oklot sees an angel as a liminal creature *par excellence* that “stands for everything that is different in us and, yet, is not different, at the same time,” since “to put it oxymoronicallly,” he writes, “its identity is in its impossibility.” In other words, the marginal-“angelic” characters are important figures for understanding Dostoevsky’s anthropology of no-identity, of which major concepts are incompleteness and surplus. For Oklot, angelic incompleteness exemplified by Dostoevsky’s marginal characters is related not so much to dialogic openness or the intersubjective aspect of selfhood (also questioned by Corrigan) as to its subjective and ontological dimension. In Dostoevsky’s anthropology, our implied incompleteness gives us ontological hope for immortality, for that which is not complete

cannot die, concludes Oklot, revoking Ernst Bloch's philosophy of hope. The "angelic" Kalganov, in Oklot's reading, is a figure of incompleteness and as such could point to spiritual resurrection, but, continues Oklot, this "kernel of existence" remains in Dostoevsky uncovered and unrealized.

Vladimir Golstein approaches the problem of the personality's latent openness in Dostoevsky through the prism of characters-catalysts who serve as facilitators in the process of recovering one's identity. In chapter 15, "The Detective as a Midwife: Porfiry Petrovich in *Crime and Punishment*," Golstein's exploration of Socratic subtext focuses on the complex and contradictory function of the novel's detective. Porfiry's role is different from a usual, fully emplotted fictional character—he is this "liminal creature," to use Oklot terminology, that serves as a dialogical catalyst for Raskolnikov's self, enabling it to unfold into its full identity by the end of the novel. Porfiry Petrovich is not merely a detective whom Raskolnikov tries to avoid or outsmart. Porfiry is a facilitator who strives to apprehend and help to bring forth Raskolnikov's conscience, his better self that needs time and effort to be delivered. Porfiry's role as a "midwife," is not dissimilar from that of a novelist as Dostoevsky envisioned it, namely, "under the conditions of total realism to find a human being within a human being."³¹ In other words, in their role as "midwives," Socrates, Porfiry, and ultimately Dostoevsky, fully grasp the thoughts, actions, and motives of their interlocutors, yet manage to go beyond the surface, uncover, and deliver that inner man, that core of goodness that is not immediately detected by experimental methods. They serve as catalysts, as spiritual midwives capable of detecting and encouraging the rebirth and the restoration of the fallen self.

Several scholars further discuss the relational nature of the self in Dostoevsky by focusing not on his strategy of deploying doubles or catalysts in his narratives, but on the predicament of isolation and alienation, a predicament that highlights the relationship of the self to others. As we acknowledge Dostoevsky's fascination with various kinds of disturbed personalities, be it those who experience the anxiety of doubling, or those who, similar to the underground man, are engrossed in the solipsism of their hyporationalizing selves, the question of "Why is the I the way it is?" becomes especially pertinent. It is this question that Carol Apollonio raises in chapter 16, "Metaphors for Solitary

31 PSS, 27:65.

Confinement in *Notes from Underground* and *Notes from the House of the Dead*.” Focusing on Dostoevsky’s use of the special metaphor of solitary confinement and on the immediate effects of imprisonment on Dostoevsky’s characters, Apollonio delves into Dostoevsky’s notion of selfhood by considering the impact of isolation on human consciousness. Citing examples from biologists who observed apes in solitary cages, from psychologists who analyzed the psychological development of orphans, and from modern sociologists who examined the effects of solitary confinement, Apollonio reveals that Dostoevsky’s insights into the detrimental results of isolation, which become a modern condition, are corroborated by the experiments conducted by modern social science and psychology. However, Dostoevsky’s conclusions in Apollonio’s thoughtful reading are paradoxical and contradictory: conditions of solitude might be salutary for an individual’s spiritual and moral development but “compulsory communal cohabitation” as experienced by Dostoevsky’s narrator Gorianchikov in his *Notes from the House of the Dead* could cause his greatest suffering. It is this “solitary confinement within a crowd,” that is, the predicament of an ego separated from the community and failing to resolve the dual challenge of freedom and solipsism that Dostoevsky investigates in his postimprisonment texts. Thus, Apollonio’s analysis of the paradox of solitary confinement within a crowd reinforces Corrigan’s assertion of the importance of balance between interiority and exteriority in Dostoevsky’s notion of self. Dostoevsky’s underground man, as Apollonio aptly observes, diagnoses himself as “a creature of acute self-consciousness, in other words, a product of modern secular science.” His solitude is a condition shared by all modern humanity. The way to overcome this painful isolation for the Underground Man is, once again, through drawing on the relational aspect of self—in his case the act of writing and addressing his text to the reader, or, as we could say, through entering the Bakhtinian interpersonal dialogical space.

Apollonio’s discussion of solitary confinement in relation to Dostoevsky’s concept of self dovetails with Deborah Martinsen’s chapter 17, “Moral Emotions in Dostoevsky’s ‘Dream of a Ridiculous Man,’” which focuses on the spiritual awakening of the story’s protagonist, caused by his need for “the other.” The question of self is connected here with an acute human need to break out of “this circle of self” by engaging with and responding to the needs of others. Utilizing the concept of moral emotions developed by modern psychology and

sociology (Gabriele Taylor, Jesse Prinz, J. David Velleman), Martinsen explores the moral development of the story's protagonist and highlights his need to transcend the limits of his isolated self. It is precisely the intricate and complex balance between the inevitability of human alienation and the never-ending striving to regain the lost human community and metaphysical unity that constitutes the trajectory of moral development in Martinsen's probing reading of Dostoevsky. Focusing on the emotional trajectory experienced by the protagonist of "The Dream of the Ridiculous Man," Martinsen explores the tensions and oscillations between the rational model of behavior based on the principles of the Enlightenment and the conversion-driven, unpredictable, mysterious ways of healing the divided self by connecting it with others, or, as Martinsen labels it, between the models of Voltaire's philosophical "Micromegas" and Dickens's *Christmas Carol*. Love and pity as "other-directed emotions," in contrast with shame, a "self-directed emotion," heal the Ridiculous Man's divided self and help him to overcome his metaphysical alienation. The Ridiculous Man's moral emotions repair the social bond and establish connection to all living things. In line with other contributors' observations that only genuine connection with others allows Dostoevsky's characters to escape the logic of doubling, of alienation, and of solipsism, Martinsen concludes that "for Dostoevsky, belief in something greater than self, something that links all living beings, is essential to morality."

An important way to think about the way human beings connect to each other and, therefore, overcome the danger and pain of isolated consciousness is through education. If, as Bakhtin insists, personality in Dostoevsky is located entirely within human relationships, then considering education as a form of human relationship that may help to strengthen that sense of self through belonging to a wider cultural community acquires a particular significance. One could say that Dostoevsky's view of the nation as self is "relational," similar to his view of personhood. As seen from the opening quote to this Introduction, some of Dostoevsky's characters even conceive of God as the "synthetic personality of the whole people," that is, in terms of collective interpersonal relations. Dostoevsky's concept of nation becomes an extension of his concept of self if we consider his insistence that a nation (for him, Russia) acquires identity through responding to the other (to the world). For Dostoevsky, to become a true Russian is to become universal. Education then is an important way of

connectivity, a way of establishing a dialogical bond between an isolated self and the “interiority” of the nation and the world. Dostoevsky’s interest in pedagogical philosophies and the goals of education are, therefore, closely connected with his concept of self and of national identity. In chapter 18, on Dostoevsky’s messianic pedagogy, Inessa Medzhibovskaya explicates Dostoevsky’s thinking on education as an integral process that involves the interaction between an individual and a nation, and by extension between a nation and the world. Dostoevsky imagined true Russian education as the process of restoring “the brotherhood and integrity of the human being who is giving the education in the image of Christ.”³² The writer’s commitment to the ideology of the soil (*pochvennichestvo*) implies a project of combining Russian native spirituality with the achievements of European civilization. His educational project, however, becomes distinctly messianic in his emphasis on the uniquely Russian ability for synthesis and “translation.” As Medzhibovskaya aptly observes, “Dostoevsky’s constant recourse to Hegel’s principle of *Aufhebung* (“sublation”), or the dialectical lifting of contradictions (*sniatie protivorechii*) is remarkable in its intended messianic sense.” By exploring the roots of Dostoevsky’s messianic educational vision, from classical Greece to Enlightenment Germany, and tracing Dostoevsky’s theories through time (going not only back in time but also forward), Medzhibovskaya shows how some of his ideas result in positions that he himself might have found questionable. Placing Dostoevsky’s thinking on education in the context of such diverse twentieth-century authors as Durkheim, Lyotard, Foucault, and Deleuze, Medzhibovskaya points out that “Dostoevsky’s messianic pursuit of ‘All-Knowledge’ through constant re-authoring ‘with a difference’ of what is borrowed is misappropriated in the intellectual mainstream of the West. Deleuze and other Western postmodernists take Dostoevsky’s message as a warning against ‘overfull understanding,’ as means to protect one’s subjectivity from *knowing all* and *knowing like all*.”

The final three studies in the volume in Part V shed light on the relationship of the self to the other in Dostoevsky through the prism of intercultural connections. Donna Orwin, Olga Meerson, and Marina Kostalevsky examine Homeric, biblical, and Koranic motifs in Dostoevsky’s novels as a way to locate both the self and the nation in the intersubjective dialogical space and time.

32 PSS, 14:284.

Donna Orwin in her “Achilles in *Crime and Punishment*” focuses on Dostoevsky’s self-conscious engagement with the *Iliad*, but she addresses a set of issues that goes beyond literary subtext, as she explores Dostoevsky’s reading of the Greek poet, and Dostoevsky’s poetics in general. Taking its cue from Dostoevsky’s essay “Mr. –bov and the Question of Art,” Orwin delineates Dostoevsky’s dynamic and interactive view of art as something that captures and reflects the age while simultaneously giving it its shape. Dostoevsky, as Orwin points out, makes fun of the positivist writers’ rejection of the great classics of past civilizations as irrelevant in the present day and especially of their “application of materialist standards to determine its value.” Dostoevsky, by contrast, finds great affinities between Homeric times and those of the Great Reforms in Russia as the peak moments in the national lives of their respective people. Orwin’s discussion concentrates on comparing and contrasting Raskolnikov and Svidrigailov in terms of their associations with Achilles; she then utilizes the contrast to further elucidate Dostoevsky’s artistic strategies. Raskolnikov manages to transform his “classical Achilles rage” into an act fitting “a great-souled man” as he embarks on the path of Christian penance and humility. In contrast, Svidrigailov’s encounter with a fireman wearing an Achilles-like helmet provides only “a debased, ironic form” of strength associated with Homer’s hero. The most powerful symbols of the past—whether Greek, Old Testament, Ottoman, or Roman—are either invested with, or divested of, meaning, depending on the character’s (or writer’s) ability to see continuity and appreciate “the lessons of bygone eras.” By saturating his imagery with classical references, from Homer in particular, Dostoevsky reveals his view of art as an interactive process.

Olga Meerson, in chapter 20, on the symbolism of Isaac Binding in *Crime and Punishment*, merges her study well with Orwin’s discussion of Homer as she considers another important “symbol of the past”—the Old Testament. While acknowledging Dostoevsky’s uneasy attitude toward Jews and his alleged everyday anti-Semitism, Meerson focuses on Dostoevsky’s paradoxical identification with Judaism, seeing it as artistically productive and “morally and theologically significant.” Meerson provides a fresh reading of *Crime and Punishment*’s epilogue, where, as she suggests, Raskolnikov is compared to Isaac to be sacrificed by his father. Textual similarities between this scene in Genesis 22:1–13 and *Crime and Punishment*’s epilogue serve as a clue to Raskolnikov’s otherwise

inexplicable transformation. Dostoevsky's own experience of being condemned to death and having his sentence commuted, Meerson argues, had to put the binding of Isaac squarely into his subconsciousness, if not consciousness. By situating Raskolnikov in the position of Isaac, Dostoevsky foregrounds his repentance as an emotional experience rather than a rational argument or logical conclusion, for "no rational argument would liberate the character from his own prison of ideological labyrinths." This allusion emphasizes the experiential nature of Raskolnikov's repentance and establishes the analogy with the biblical experiences of repentance. "This analogy tells by showing, not by proving or arguing," concludes Meerson, reaffirming, therefore, Dostoevsky's preferred strategy of refuting rational arguments by the deeds of love (*Notes from the Underground*, *The Brothers Karamazov*), as was discussed in several other chapters of this volume. The intercultural and interreligious aspect of Dostoevsky's thought and his poetics is conveyed through his use of Old Testament allusions. Raskolnikov's need for exteriority is achieved through his "subjective and unconscious experience of the Aqedah" that "takes him outside this-worldly time and space."

Finally, considering Dostoevsky's concept of time not only in the context of Judeo-Christian tradition but also against the background of a Koranic vision of time, Marina Kostalevsky in chapter 21 identifies a particular form of time that mediates between the this-worldly and other-worldly notions of temporality, which she calls "epileptic time" in reference to the sense of time experienced in moments before an epileptic fit. This particular sense of time, made famous by the Prophet Muhammad, was also experienced both by Dostoevsky and by his character Prince Myshkin. As Kostalevsky demonstrates, Dostoevsky describes Prince Myshkin's epileptic fit with a Koranic reference to the Prophet's vision of paradise when the jug of water that he overturned continues spilling. Kostalevsky utilizes Dostoevsky's own image of the time of Muhammad to discuss issues pertinent to the novelistic genre itself—its form, shape, and structure, and its mysterious unfolding, which embraces both stasis, when nothing seems to change and everything returns to the previous, and simultaneous dynamism, when a great deal occurs during a moment of revelation. As Kostalevsky puts it, "physiological dysfunction becomes a literary form." Both Dostoevsky and his characters privilege these moments of revelation, of the time understood as *kairos*, those moments when they get a glimpse into a higher reality and knowledge about themselves and their fellow human

beings. We could say that in the moments of revelation, Dostoevsky's characters reach out beyond the confines of self, reach beyond surface reality in an epistemological impulse similar to their author's attempt to go beyond realism and beyond fiction.

In his *The Island of Knowledge*, a very popular book on the inherent mysteries of science, physicist Marcelo Gleiser underscores the tension between an "island of knowledge" and the ocean of the unknowable: "We strive toward knowledge, always more knowledge, but must understand that we are, and will remain, surrounded by mystery. . . . It is the flirting with this mystery, the urge to go beyond the boundaries of the known, that feeds our creative impulse, that makes us want to know more."³³ In this urge to go "beyond," science, philosophy, religion, and fiction meet. Dostoevsky, probably more than any other Russian writer, strove to go beyond all boundaries, all "mind-forged manacles," to use Blake's phrase, thus expanding the island of fiction.

33 Marcelo Gleiser, *The Island of Knowledge: The Limits of Science and the Search for Meaning* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), xiv.