

***The Brothers Karamazov in the Prism of Hesychast Anthropology***<sup>1</sup>

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Surely, everything that can be written on *The Brothers Karamazov* has already been written long ago. The last novel of Dostoevsky was scrutinized in all aspects and from all points of view. Today, it would be very naïve, beginning to think or speak about it, to hope to say a “new word” or discover things unnoticed by and unknown to anybody. But nevertheless everywhere in the world this novel is studied and discussed again and again, and we all are here also to discuss it. There is no contradiction in this situation, however. We know that people will always turn to *The Karamazovs* and similar cultural phenomena, but not so much for making great new discoveries about them, as for getting their help in discovering and understanding themselves. Such is the role or even, may be, the definition of truly *classical* phenomena: they are those landmarks or constellations in the world of culture, which any time, and the man of this time must use to determine their own location in this world, and achieve their self-determination, in which they form up their own selves. An immanent part of the constitution of cultural identity of each époque as well as personal identity of the man of this époque is their own reception of classical phenomena.

Thus any time and any cultural community address classical phenomena in their own way. They put their own questions to these phenomena, the questions that are most essential for themselves, for their self-determination. Choosing my subject, I would like to choose it among these essential questions, and so I ask: *What is important in “The Karamazovs” for our time, for the present-day people?* What are vital problems, the solution of which they look for by all means, including reading and re-reading of this novel? Present-day situation, both Russian and global, social and cultural, tells us that the focus of these problems is now more and more concentrated in what is happening to human person: in anthropology. Cardinal changes are taking place here, which diverge sharply with old classical anthropology. Man shows strong will and irresistible drive to extreme experience of all kinds, including dangerous, asocial, transgressive ones, he is performing radical experiments on himself, and projects are vividly discussed, which plan to do away with Man as such, transforming him into a completely different being, a Post-human. In such situation anthropological reflexion is activated most intensely. Strenuous search for new anthropology is going on, and hence it is *anthropology of “The Karamazovs”* that comes to the foreground in the relation of modernity to Dostoevsky’s main novel. In no way was it always like this. Russian Silver Age, plunging into Dostoevsky deeply and enthusiastically, looked in his works for metaphysics and theology, for prophecies, social and religious projects. Now such interest belongs to the past. Man of nowadays, who finds out with anxiety that his own personality is changing in a way uncontrollable by and unintelligible to him, is interested, in the first place, in Man’s image or anthropological model embodied in the novel.

But how should one extract out of the novel its anthropological model? Such methodological problems were not put by Silver Age; they simply did not exist for Berdyaev,

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<sup>1</sup> The Talk at the conference “Art, Creativity and Spirituality in Dostoevsky’s *Brothers Karamazov*”. (College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA; April 10-12, 2008).

who announced from the start that Dostoevsky's novels are "anthropological treatises" and gave them corresponding reading. However, when he was writing this, in 1918, the Russian formalism was already emerging, and its adepts were surely convinced that reading a novel as a "treatise" is sheer philological ignorance. The attitude of exclusive concentration on phenomena of esthetic form, writing, reading, etc. passed through many stages, reaching its culmination in postmodernism. Today it is exhausted at last; but by now everybody learned firmly that the way to any conclusions on any text should go through the analysis of the writing and poetics of this text. In particular, we cannot draw any conclusions about personages of *The Karamazovs* and their anthropological meaning by means of the naïve reading that tries to attack directly the contents of the text. It is necessary to turn to its poetics and see the principles of its writing, in order to determine, basing on them, adequate rules of its reading.

This way to anthropology through the prism of poetics turns out to be not so difficult, however, if we accept basic postulates of this poetics as reconstructed by Bakhtin. Today these postulates became almost classical, and, being, in general, not an adept of Bakhtin's theories, I see no reasons to reject them. The main and visible distinction of the discourse of Dostoevsky's novels (and, may be, especially of *The Brothers Karamazov*) is entirely personalized nature of this discourse. It is made up of many sub-discourses, each of which is the voice of a definite person, definite human consciousness. In the cosmos of the novel there holds the identity:

*Personage (person) = consciousness = voice = personal discourse,*

and all this cosmos consists of such personal discourses, which are its only and universal building elements. Each personal voice-discourse develops, "sings its part" freely and autonomously of all the others, although not in isolation from them, but interacting and communicating with them. Thus the world of the novel has the nature and structure, corresponding to the famous Bakhtin concept of "polyphony", or many-voiced dialogue of free and equal persons-voices. Being perfectly adequate to Dostoevsky's novels, it is, of course, not adequate to any arbitrary taken novel or work of fiction, where many other kinds and models of discourse are used. In our case, however, the polyphonic model is quite useful, since it gives simple answer to our methodological problem.

Esthetical cosmos of *The Karamazovs*, the poetics of the novel are personalized, built out of personal elements; but *eo ipso* they are anthropologized, anthropological. The universal building-block of the system of poetics, "voice-person-consciousness" is also an anthropological element, it represents a definite human person (though the way of representation is questionable, and not free of weak points). Due to this, we can reconstruct anthropology of the novel, turning to the set of such elements and treating each of them as an anthropological specimen, a *sui generis* personal or individual anthropology. Describing these specimens one-by-one, we can gradually re-compose, restore all the anthropocosmos of the novel, and then try to find or formulate some anthropological model, fitting it.

Thus we outlined a certain way to reconstruct anthropology of *The Karamazovs*, conceiving it as a sum or ensemble of "individual anthropologies", corresponding to voices-persons of the world of the novel. Next, we make an important observation: the novel itself gives us a guiding thread for the work of reconstructing and interpreting its anthropology. It is directly evident that there is an instance in the world of the novel, which is endowed with special authority and special ethical and axiological prerogatives. It enters the novel already in its introductory exposition, and its special status becomes clear immediately. This exposition is entitled "The Story of a Certain Little Family", and its chapters are devoted, in consecutive order, to Karamazov the father and his three sons; but after these chapters, provided with corresponding "familial" titles, there follows unexpectedly one more chapter, "The Elders". It tells about a monastery nearby the city of Karamazovs and highly revered ascetics, the Elders, who practiced there their monastic labors, and "to see and listen to whom the pilgrims thronged

in their multitudes... from all across the land” (14,26; 41)<sup>2</sup>. But why are “The Elders” included into “The Story of a Certain Little Family”, a special part of the book, in which voices-persons still do not enter, and only the Story-Teller depicts a starting panorama, giving also the moral estimation to it (he does it through all the novel)? As the Story-Teller stresses, the Elders possess higher spiritual and moral authority (delegated to them by God, of course); and hence their presence *inside* “The Story of a Certain Little Family” shows clearly that there is an instance of spiritual and moral judgment included into this history, and this instance is embodied in the Elders. It is worth noting that the location of this instance corresponds exactly to the Bakhtinian concept of outsideness (*vnenakhodimost'*): the monastery and the Elders are outside the city, but not far from it, at the distance of direct communication and influence. This is how the novel starts, and then its composition demonstrates once more the special role of the Elders: the Book VI, “The Russian Monk”, which finishes the first half of the novel, is devoted to them entirely. This key book, taking the very center of the novel<sup>3</sup>, is almost entirely withdrawn from the novel action and given to ascetical texts, the life and homilies of the Elder Zosima. This compositional device establishes the status of the Elders as the status of higher spiritual, valuative and moral authority sufficiently clearly and firmly. But, in addition, the novel confirms and supports this status repeatedly by usual verbal means too.

In a quite straightforward way the novel describes, what is the Elderhood and what is the root of the special status of Elders. The Elders endowed with the gift of seeing into the inner reality of everybody who came to them, are wise and experienced representatives of the Orthodox ascetic tradition, *hesychasm*. In Dostoevsky's time this tradition was flourishing in Russia (although its Greek name was practically not used then), and the Russian Elderhood, which meant that well-versed and usually old hesychast monks served as spiritual counselors and teachers to countless simple laymen and laywomen, was a new and quite recent phenomenon. In the folk consciousness and religiosity, free of Western influence, there was always the firm belief that it is hesychast monasticism, dedicated entirely to a special spiritual art of ascending to God, that represents the very core of Orthodox spirituality and keeps the true faith. Such attitude to hesychast tradition is a general feature of Orthodox religiosity and hence this tradition enjoys higher spiritual and moral authority in all the world of the Eastern-Christian civilization. Dostoevsky shared this attitude. In the beginning of the work on *The Brothers Karamazovs*, in July 1878, he made a pilgrimage to Optina Pustyn', the main center of Russian hesychasm, together with Vladimir Soloviev, and had two personal meetings with the Elder Amvrosy. “A visit to the Optina had long been a dream of Fyodor Mikhailovich's”, – wrote A.G.Dostoevskaya in her memoirs.

However, it is another side of the hesychast tradition that is important for us now. This tradition is a community, united on the basis of a certain practice: starting from the 4<sup>th</sup> c. and up to now, the tradition is occupied exclusively with creating and then keeping and reproducing identically the hesychast practice or the spiritual art of “Noetic Practice” (*Praxis noera*, in Greek), a holistic practice of man's complete self-transformation, in which an adept of the practice, advancing step-by-step, ascends to *theosis*, the union with God in His energies. For reaching its goal, this anthropological practice should have precise plan and method, which means that it should be based on reliable anthropological knowledge. Because of holistic character of the practice, the knowledge needed should embrace all the levels of human organization, thus forming up at least the main body of a certain full-dimensional (though not philosophical) anthropology. What is more, since the goal of the practice, *theosis*, represents the “surpassing of the natural” (a formula used by Orthodox ascetics), i.e. actual transcensus of

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<sup>2</sup> I quote *The Brothers Karamazov* in the English translation by David McDuff (Penguin Classics, 2003). The bracketed figures give the location of the quotation first in the original (in the Complete Works edition, the first figure being the volume and the second the page number), and then in the translation.

<sup>3</sup> This book has the key place not only in compositional, but also ideological structure of the novel: sending “The Russian Monk” to the editors, Dostoevsky wrote: “I consider this Book VI as the culminating point of the novel” (the letter to N.A.Lyubimov, Aug. 7<sup>th</sup> 1879).

human being, this anthropology should in some part go out the usual anthropological discourse restricted to empiric man, in order to become *meta*-anthropology. Thus we see that hesychast tradition must have its own anthropology, which includes elements of meta-anthropology. But there was actually no need to deduce this, because the existence of hesychast anthropology is today a well-known and undisputed fact, and this anthropology is studied actively.

Coming back to Dostoevsky, we draw from this fact our next conclusion or better, working hypothesis. As we have seen, hesychast tradition has a special place and status in the world of *The Karamazovs*; spiritual and ethical positions of the novel are hesychast-influenced and hesychast-oriented. Isn't it natural to suggest that anthropology of the novel is also hesychast-oriented, has some connection with and dependence upon hesychast anthropology? Among other readings, and not excluding them, the anthropology of *The Brothers Karamazov* must admit hesychast reading. This is the idea of my talk, and now I am going to substantiate it. First of all, I must give a brief information on hesychast anthropology.

### **Hesychast anthropology, in brief**

Drawing upon my reconstruction of hesychast anthropology in the book *To the phenomenology of asceticism* (Moscow, 1998, in Russian), I resume basic elements of this anthropology, needed for the hesychast reading of the novel.

The first point is already clear to us: hesychast anthropology conceives Man not as some constant and static nature, but as a being, which changes itself and its nature radically, striving to the union with Christ, the Divine being. Thus it corresponds to the process paradigm: it describes the self-realization of (Hesychast) Man as a process of his successive self-transformation. This transformation involves not the essence of Man (hesychasm does not use this concept at all), but his energies. Man is treated here as an energetic formation, an ensemble of energies of all kinds, somatic, psychic and intellectual, and hesychast practice is the process of a special guided transformation of this ensemble, directed, as said above, to the union of the latter with Divine energy. The main tool for this transformation is the art of "Noetic Practice", the core of which is the unceasing making of the Jesus prayer. All the spiritual-anthropological process has a specific energetic and personal character, due to which it is profoundly different from physical processes. It develops similarly to processes of personal communication and its course is always open to the possibility of breakdown, stopping, falling back to preceding stages, etc.

As for the structure of the process, its principal feature is the stepwise character, the division into well-defined steps. Since it is at the same time the ascent to *theosis*, these two features taken together bring immediately to one's mind the image or metaphor of ladder. This metaphor was applied to hesychast practice since the early stages of its historical formation, and the first text, describing systematically all the steps of the practice had the title "The Ladder of Paradise" (7<sup>th</sup> c.). Each step of the hesychast Ladder corresponds to a certain type of man's energetic configuration, and an ascetic in the course of the practice must: achieve a configuration needed – secure its maintenance – carry out its transformation into the next, higher configuration. The initial step of the Ladder, the start of the way of the practice, is characterized in its essence as the "change of mind" (*metanoia*, in Greek), the change in question being the most radical, implying the rejection of all worldly values in favor of the striving to God. It includes spiritual acts or events of *conversion* and *repentance*, and is also called *Spiritual Gate*. As for the final step, the *theosis*, it is already of meta-anthropological nature.

The stepwise structure of the practice implies that hesychast anthropology must have such structure as well. Obviously, it should be constructed as the successive description of all the steps of the Ladder, from conversion to *theosis*. It should display the dynamics of the process, anthropological (and, possibly, meta-anthropological as well) mechanisms, which produce the generation of each step, its maintenance and the ascent up the Ladder. Doing this, it will unavoidably discover, and will have to describe such aspects of the process, in virtue of which the process cannot be purely individual and includes trans-individual, intersubjective

dimensions. In hesychasm (as well as any spiritual practice) such dimensions are of critical importance. Although all its essence and goal is the self-transformation performed by an ascetic, who concentrates completely on his own inner reality, this individual transformation cannot be achieved in isolation, exclusively by means of an isolated individual consciousness. The goal can only be achieved, if the practice follows certain strict and intricate rules, a rigorous method (in Byzantium one of the names for the hesychast practice was exactly the “Method”). And such elements of the practice as the creation of the method, instruction in it and checking-up the ascetic experience with its help cannot be carried out individually, they can only be produced by the community of all those who cultivate this practice. Such a community, which elaborates the hesychast method, preserves and translates it identically from generation to generation, checks up the true nature of any experience obtained in the course of the practice, is exactly the *hesychast tradition*. Thus the hesychast practice (as well as spiritual practice as such) can live and be carried out only in the bosom of ascetic community, spiritual tradition; and hence its experience is not just individual, but also “communal”, “conciliatory” (*soborny*, in Russian). These conciliatory aspects of hesychasm are important for Dostoevsky, as we shall see.

“The Ladder of Paradise” by St. John of the Ladder divides the Hesychast Way into 30 steps, but there are other variants of the division as well, since the borders between the steps are not too distinct sometimes. But through all the long history of hesychast tradition, there was always the perfect consensus of hesychast teachers, concerning principal properties of the Ladder and its big parts or blocks. Now it is sufficient for us to describe these big blocks, of which the spiritual-anthropological process consists.

— *Spiritual Gate* (*metanoia*, conversion and repentance). Entering the ascetic way is a unique spiritual-anthropological act, the “change of mind”, changing sharply all inner reality of a person and the orientation of its strivings, from the “world” to God. This act initiates spiritual ascent, and that’s why Orthodoxy (contrary to Catholicism) attaches to this act profound ontological meaning and states necessary participation of Divine grace in it. On the same grounds, hesychasm develops vast economy of repentance, including unusual and powerful, extreme practices, such as compunction (*penthos*, an abiding sorrow for sins), weeping, etc. Developing a permanent repenting attitude and giving a specific and intense repenting note to consciousness, repentance penetrates and colors all the Orthodox spirituality, being one of its most characteristic features. In Dostoevsky’s world its role is very big too. Here there is one of principal points of hesychast influence in his work and his anthropology.

— *Unseen warfare* (struggle with passions). From the anthropological viewpoint, passions are such configurations of human energies, which attract and draw in the person. They follow cyclic patterns, reproducing themselves, and serve as traps for man, making him incapable to change himself and ascend the Ladder. Thus the very first tasks of the ascetic practice include the removing and uprooting of these phenomena. At first, the hesychast makes the work of driving out the passions, which, as he knows, are already nested in him; then he proceeds to creating the ability of “preventive reaction”, i.e. the suppression of any starting passion still at its birth; and all these works should lead him to *dispassion*: freedom of passions, complete inadmission of them into ascetic’s inner reality. But hesychast dispassion, in contrast to the same concept in stoics, does not mean the suppression and extinguishing of the world of human emotions. On the contrary, as Maximus the Confessor was teaching, energies of passions should be “converted from evil to good”, transformed into energies of love.

Variety of human passions is boundless, and hence the ascetic teaching on passions is vast and ramified. However, in arts passions always took even more place. Being the most expressive, most striking and violent of all human manifestations, they were always the main material of art, its daily bread, and, owing to this, we can hardly expect to find in art the ascetic attitude to passions. But this attitude was also adopted by Christian morals as such, and hence we find here one of the main points of tension and conflict between Christianity and art. The famous *Night-Thoughts* by Edward Young were asking: *Are passions, then, the pagans of the soul? Reason alone baptized?* and the equally famous Kierkegaard’s treatise *Either / Or* takes this line

as the epigraph to its First Part, presenting views of the “estheticist”, or esthetical consciousness. This is the proper context for the discussion of the problem, how the traditional artistic attitude to passions, i.e. their apology and esthetization, coexists in Dostoevsky with hesychast influence. However, this problem is not for my talk. Representation of human passions in *Karamazovs* and its relation to ascetic teaching on passions is a big theme, which needs a different format. But still, discussing the character of Mitya, we’ll do some observations on this theme.

— When passions are defeated, the hesychast reaches *hesychia*: the state, which gave its name to all the tradition and practice, one of “sacred silence”, tranquility, quiet concentration and integration. Now the vector of the hesychast’s principal attention changes its direction: main efforts can now be devoted not to struggling worldly forces, but acquisition of Divine grace and union with Christ in Saint Spirit. Concentrating on this, the hesychast is now able to attain the hesychast *unceasing prayer*; and the unceasing praying accumulates bigger and bigger spiritual energies in man, which makes it possible further ascent up the Ladder. Hesychast anthropology states firmly that man’s union with God is holistic, approached by man as a whole, and hence to achieve it, man should collect all his energies together and organize them into a coherent energetic structure. The formation of the core of this structure is a key stage of the process, a special sophisticated transformation of consciousness, which is called “bringing the mind in the heart” and makes intellectual energies bound inseparably with psychic, emotional ones. When such specific structure is built up and oriented to God in prayer, the hesychast becomes “transparent for grace”, by an ascetic formula. This is the key point of the Hesychast Way, which opens the approaches to the meta-anthropological summit of the practice, the *theosis*. This point is *synergia*: not yet the full and perfect union of human and Divine energies, but already their meeting, mutual accord and harmony, their coherent action.

— Approaching the final goal, meta-anthropological *telos* of hesychast practice brings forth first elements of actual changes of fundamental attributes and predicates of man’s mode of being. The vast set of experiential data shows that the changes starting at higher stages of the practice involve, first of all, man’s perceptive modalities. In this phenomenon called the “opening of feelings” in hesychasm, radically different feeling organs begin to be formed up, which are called “noetic feelings” (*noera aisthesis*, in Greek) and are capable to perceive our meeting with Divine being. “Noetic sight” makes it possible the contemplation of Taboric Light, the experience identical to that of the apostles in the event of Christ’s Transfiguration on Mount Tabor. But even this experience of the higher stages of the ascesis is only the approach to *theosis*, the fullness of which is only made accessible for men in eschatological horizon.

In the “opening of feelings” there begins the actualization of the meta-anthropological plan of the practice, in which it represents a real “surpassing of the natural”. Being a contact of energies of the two different modes of being, synergy is, obviously, an ontological event, and its ontological contents can be seen as *ontological unlocking of anthropological reality* or else the unlocking of man in being: since man in synergy succeeds to transform all his energies in such a way that they become capable to the contact with ontologically different energies – and this means that in synergy man becomes open or “unlocked” with respect to a different mode of being (Divine being). In Western philosophy the paradigm of man’s ontological unlocking was promoted by Kierkegaard, who stated that the destination and duty of each man is to make himself open for the meeting with God (he did not know that this paradigm was known in Byzantium for a long time as a paradigm of synergy). Kierkegaard noticed and stressed the most important property of anthropological unlocking, its *constitutive character*. He stated that making himself open is the only way for man “to become his true self”, acquire his selfhood, or, in other terms, to constitute himself, form up his personality and identity. In hesychast anthropology anthropological unlocking has exactly the same meaning, and here synergy represents also the paradigm of human constitution, the constitution of personality and identity. Indeed, Orthodox theology adheres to the theocentric conception of personality as the Divine Hypostasis, and this conception implies that empiric man or “created personality” does not represent genuine personality, but can only acquire his personality by entering, in his energies,

into communion with Divine Person, the Hypostasis of Christ. And it is in synergy that such communion is actualized.

If hesychast anthropology accepts synergy, one of the higher steps of hesychast practice, as the paradigm of human constitution, then the question arises about the limits of this anthropology, the sphere of its validity. At first sight, describing human being in reference to the steps of the practice, connecting even the human constitution with this practice, hesychast anthropology is restricted exclusively to the small community of adepts, cultivating this practice; which implies that it is an especially narrow, specialized anthropological conception of no value for general anthropology. However, it turns out to be of much wider spreading and much greater importance. As said above, hesychast tradition plays a special part in the life of the Orthodoxy, representing an instance of higher spiritual and moral authority. It has to be added now that its special part includes also what could be called the *function of anthropological model and reference point; anthropological school*, if you wish. Its spiritual and moral authority produces anthropological implications. In any Orthodox society emerges always some circle of people, for whom the integral way of life created by the tradition (*bios hesychastos*, the “hesychast life”) becomes the model and reference point for their lives. They do not become “full-time adepts” of hesychasm and members of hesychast tradition, but nevertheless they adhere to the “hesychast life” in various degrees and forms: they adopt its attitudes and values, learn some elements of its school of prayer, assimilate some of its behavioral patterns, etc. etc. In short, they conform to the tradition and are orientated towards it in their way of life, both inner and outer. Thus one can say that they *realize anthropological strategies, adhering to hesychast anthropology*, and all their circle forms up a community or stratum, adhering to the hesychast tradition.

It means that, because of the “adhering stratum”, the sphere of hesychast anthropology, social and cultural validity and influence of hesychast tradition expand. But how big is this stratum? Its scale depends on a multitude of factors, religious and historical, cultural and social, and in different periods, in different domains of Orthodox civilization it changed in the extreme. For us it is important to note that there were such exceptional situations, when the “adhering stratum” grew up so much that it included a considerable part of the society, with contribution of all social layers. In these situations the tradition experiences vigorous development, accumulates powerful creative energy and acquires wide and strong influence in the society, “goes out into the world”. Such special periods are called “hesychast renaissances”. The most important of them were two, in Byzantium in the 14<sup>th</sup> c. and in Russia in 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c.

Thus the time of Dostoevsky as well as the time of his main novel is the period of Hesychast renaissance in Russia. The “hesychast life” was then an important spiritual and cultural factor in the life of Russian society, and *The Brothers Karamazov* provide one of principal cultural facts, which prove this. As we shall see, nearly all the anthropocosmos of the novel belongs to the adhering stratum of hesychast tradition.

### **Anthropocosmos of the novel in an inventory**

The world of Dostoevsky’s novels is the world of the humans, *anthropocosmos*. It begins with the humans and is exhausted by them, discourses of nature, of author’s meditations and like, usual in the genre of novel, are all virtually absent, and all the artistic space is monopolized by voices-persons, leading endless and “unfinalizable” dialogue. All these voices-persons are significant for us, since our plan to reconstruct anthropology of the novel in hesychast perspective demands to compare each of these “anthropological units” to hesychast model of man. Before proceeding to this comparison, we have to survey all the anthropocosmos of the novel in order to see its general composition and structure. The order of the survey is determined by the novel itself: it is natural for it to follow the order of the appearance of the voices-persons on the scene, in the ....., as the initial exposition of the novel is called by the first of the voices,

— *The Story-Teller*. Leading the author's discourse, he does not represent nevertheless (as Bakhtin stresses justly<sup>4</sup>) the voice of incontestable truth and all-embracing knowledge, but is just one of voices. Dostoevsky somewhat accentuates his ordinary status, lowering his figure a bit: he is very trustworthy, he often gives his own moral estimates to heroes and events, but at the same time he is slightly awkward and simple-minded; having his own ideas on everything what he tells, he dares to voice them very really.

— "*The Family*", the protagonists of the novel: *Father, Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov*, 55 years old, twice married and twice widowed, having one son from the first marriage and two from the second one, wallowed in vice, drinking and <muck?> filthy tricks and called a buffoon by everybody, from himself to Bakhtin (cf.: "The character of Fyodor Pavlovich as a character of buffoon"). *The Elder son, Dmitry, Mitya*, 28 years old, retired captain. *The middle son, Ivan*, 23 years old, beginner literary man. *The youngest son, Alyosha*, 20 years old, novice in the monastery, attached to the Elder Zosima. In his position, he serves as the common link between "the family" and the next, higher domain of the anthropocosmos.

— "*The Elders*", representatives of hesychast tradition, the instance of spiritual authority and ethical judgment. Of them, in the list of principal voices-persons there is only *the Elder Zosima*, 65 years old, living in a separate skete and the most famous of all monks in the monastery, attracting more than all of them "the pilgrims from all across the land". But there are also other voices of ascetic fathers: *Paissy*, the "learned hieromonach", the closest disciple of Zosima and his spiritual father (i.e. confessing priest); *Ferapont*, "the great faster and observer of the vow for silence", but at the same time, "an adversary of Father Zosima, and principally – of the Elderhood". The world of the tradition in the novel is not homogeneous and harmonious.

— "*The Righteous*", very characteristic figures for Russian literature and Dostoevsky, in particular. In *The Karamazovs* they are represented by two personages from the life of the Elder Zosima: *Markel*, his Elder brother, and *The Mysterious Visitor*, and also by the boy *Ilyusha Snegirev*, who, like Alyosha, provides a common link between The Righteous and the following domain of the anthropocosmos.

— "*The Boys*", a special community with its own important destination in the novel. The center of the community and his principal voice is again *Ilyushechka*, but *Kolya Krasotkin*, who is dreaming "to sacrifice himself for the truth", represents also quite independent, important and very expressive character. These protagonists are complemented by other children's voices: *Smurov, Kartashov*...

— "*The Women*". In Dostoevsky's anthropocosmos feminine voices-consciousnesses are profoundly different from masculine ones. They have their own constitution, which unites them all, peasant women and ladies, over all distinctions. The main contribution of feminine voices to the dialogue of *Karamazovs* belongs to *Grushenka* and *Katerina Ivanovna*, two classical specimen of "Dostoevsky's women". These protagonist voices are supported by those of *Khokhlakov ladies, mother and daughter, Liza the little demon*. The other feminine presence is rather insignificant and voiceless: *Snegirev ladies, Marfa Ignatievna*, whose patronymic the author himself was forgetting and confusing... *The Brothers Karamazov* is not feminine, but very masculine novel, in which the woman is mainly exploited as a part of masculine consciousness, and the passion to her as a spring of men's acts.

— "*The Insulted and the Injured*", an unavoidable community in Dostoevsky's anthropocosmos. In his last novel this community was, however, reduced to *second-grade captain Snegirev* with his family.

The ensemble of full-dimensional voices-persons, meeting the Bakhtinian condition of full autonomy, is here finished, perhaps. The remaining voices are all, in one way or another, in one respect or another, denied the fullness of their autonomy.

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<sup>4</sup> Cf.: "The author is just one of participants of the dialogue (essentially, on equal rights with heroes)". M.M.Bakhtin. 1961 god. Zametki // Id. Coll.Works, v.5. Moscow, 1997, p.357.



— “*Not our folk*”<sup>5</sup>, *Rakitin*, “a seminarian-careerist”, *Miusov*, “a ‘forties-and-‘fifties liberal, a free-thinker and an atheist”. Their voices are clearly polemical constructions, in which the anthropocosmos of the novel shows itself as a *party cosmos*; the voices of westerners sound here in the way, in which their slavophile opponents would like them to sound. Manifestations of ideological coloring (and sometimes distortion) of artistic reality are also traditional in Dostoevsky.

— *Phantom voices, Ivan’s temptations: Smerdyakov, The Devil*. I put Smerdyakov’s voice in this category, because this voice, like that of the Devil, is only one of products or projections of Ivan’s voice. Without the connection with Ivan, Smerdyakov would be voiceless; his crime, which gives him the dialogical position, the voice, enjoying full rights, he commits from Ivan’s voice (testifying himself that otherwise he wouldn’t commit it), and as soon as he saw that he had misheard, and Ivan’s voice was not the sanction to crime (or was too timid and hesitant sanction), his voice immediately disappears, annihilates itself. In the final of Ivan, both Smerdyakov and the Devil figure both quite identically, in the same real or phantom way. And as an empiric personality, the footman of Fyodor Pavlovich, 24 years old, Smerdyakov belongs to the other, already the last domain of the anthropocosmos:

— *Object personages*, in Bakhtin’s sense: those, “who are factually taken out of the limits of the dialogue, as walkers-on, not having their own word, which could enrich the dialogue and change its sense”<sup>6</sup>. There is plenty of such personages, because *The Brothers Karamazov* is a big novel with the rich texture of reality, and some of its “object figures” even say lots of words (like the public prosecutor and the lawyer). Besides the court figures, the community of the object personages includes Polish *panowie*, Trifon the tavern owner, the parasite Maksimov; but also the devoted visitors of the Elder, folk at the marketplace and others, not because of any deficiency, but only because of purely episodic role.

### **Anthropocosmos of the novel in the hesychast perspective**

According to the hesychast vision of man, each of the persons-voices is constituted, actualizing its relation to God in synergy, ontological unlocking of itself. To the unlocking there leads the Ladder, spiritual-anthropological process. Thus, in order to interpret the anthropocosmos of *The Karamazovs* in the light of hesychast anthropology, we should consider each of its voices “against the back-cloth of the Ladder”, i.e. in its relation to the stages of spiritual (and holistic) self-transformation. But in the hesychast perspective the structure of the anthropocosmos as a whole is also seen in its own way. The view in this perspective, contrary to the view of the Story-Teller, structures the anthropocosmos by not the narrative (syntagmatic), but semantic (paradigmatic) principle, which implies that its description should start from not the plot center, “the family”, but the meaning center, “the Elders”. However, the hesychast view, like any other, should not ignore the nature of the discourse, in virtue of which all the anthropocosmos is presented to any view, hesychast or not, by the voice of the Story-Teller, whose mediation can in no way be avoided.

It is clear now, how we should proceed in solving our anthropological problem. We should display the constitution, in the hesychast synergy-related sense, of all voices-persons in the world of the novel. The first of them is the “admitting instance”, *Story-Teller*, then in the hesychast perspective there comes the “instance of the comprehension and judgment”, the *Elders*, and only after them the protagonists, the *Family*. Of course, the full reconstruction of all constitutions is a task impossible for this talk, and so they will be presented just in a brief outline.

***The Story-Teller***. This voice cannot have a constitution, in our sense: the Story-Teller is not acting, he does not implement any anthropological strategies or practices; in other words, he does not have any anthropology. But he can and does have his own position and views, so that

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<sup>5</sup> I took the name for this category of personages from the ideological polemics of the forties: “To not our folk” is the title of a rude anti-Westerner pamphlet verse by Nikolai Yazykov.

<sup>6</sup> M.M.Bakhtin. Loc.cit., p. 355.

our problem is not withdrawn, but only somewhat reduced: we have to describe the relation to the hesychast world not of his full-dimensional personality, but only of his views.

His connection with this world is seen already in the composition of his narration: after all, it is to him that the above-mentioned compositional device belongs, the device, which affords the hesychast tradition the status of spiritual and moral authority. Then he presents concise and quite competent exposition of the phenomenon of the Elderhood, both in its history and spiritual essence (although he has at first announced modestly: “upon this road I do not feel myself to be sufficiently competent or assured”). Undoubtedly, he is not just an expert on the Elderhood, he believes firmly in its spiritual truth and force: “the Elderhood is... tried and tested, thousand-year-old implement for the moral regeneration of mankind from slavery into freedom” (14,27; 43). His unshakable devotion to the Elderhood and its values is very clearly witnessed by the manner, in which he tells the episode about “a putrid smell” from the body of deceased Zosima: all his account (14,295-305; 423-437) is dotted with emotional expressions of the indignation and disgust to the address of the monks, who started to abuse and calumniate the deceased Elder. This devotion is in no way blind and unreasoned. In connection with the same episode, he shows spiritual maturity and discernment in his attitude to hesychasm: unhesitatingly, he calls a “fanatic”<sup>7</sup> zealous ascetic Ferapont, the opponent of Zosima, representing the typical figure of a monk cursing furiously all worldly life. The scrupulous attention paid by him to this “seductive” episode proves that he sees the Elderhood and hesychasm in their real character, being far from idealizing them uncritically. After this episode the narrative comes back to Alyosha, and a special digression gives a penetrating analysis of his state of mind and the crisis in his consciousness, displaying shrewdly the role of the expectation of the miracle in this crisis (14,305-307; 438-440). Here the spiritual portrait of the Story-Teller becomes still more well-defined. He possesses the knowledge and understanding of human soul and personality<sup>8</sup>, the laws of spiritual life are open to him, and these qualities make him close to hesychasts, who develop, due to the Spiritual Art, the keen vision of inner reality.

All this said, we have the sufficient grounds for the conclusion: positions of the Story-Teller, his views and assessments, his spiritual world are oriented to hesychasm. In our terms, we surely can place him in the “adhering stratum” of hesychast tradition.

**The Elder Zosima.** The position of Zosima with respect to hesychast tradition, the question, whether he is really representative for the Russian hesychasm were actively discussed in the literature on Dostoevsky. The discussion was started still during writer’s life by the critics of Konstantin Leontiev in *Varshavskii Dnevnik* (which was continued by him in the correspondence with Rozanov and became widely known). Unfortunately, in the last decades, when our knowledge and understanding of hesychasm reached a new and much more solid level, this theme was practically not addressed. Of course, here I shall not be able to elucidate this old problem fully, and only present the main points.

The service of Russian Elder combines two sides and two works, inner and outer. To him the inner world of his fellow-beings is open and, due to this gift, he is a far-sighted counselor and spiritual teacher for every man, coming to him, and he carries this mission tirelessly for hosts of people of all states and strata. But this outer service is based on a definite inner fundament or source, which is the firm standing of the Elder in the hesychast tradition. The Elder is an experienced hesychast, who reached the higher steps of the spiritual Ladder and never ceases the Noetic Practice. This paradoxical union of the two services or works, each of which is immeasurably difficult and all-absorbing, is a special charisma of an Elder and the key to the phenomenon of Elderhood.

As for the Elder Zosima, his voice has not a small place in the dialogue of the novel and reveals himself amply enough. What matters, he reveals himself not only in his mission of an

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<sup>7</sup> The word “zealot” in the translation does not render adequately strong negative overtones of Dostoevsky’s word “izuver”.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. in the Commentary to the novel in the Complete Works edition: “The Story-Teller in *The Brothers Karamazov* is an explorer of human soul” (15,479).

Elder, in counseling and teaching communion with his visitors, but also in the communion with the closest, inner circle of his fellow-monks, in his parting conversations with them. And the first thing that this vast discourse of Zosima tells us is the following: in all this discourse, including the part, addressed to monks, there is no visible trace of the fact that the Elder is a practicing hesychast, cultivating *Praxis Noera*. His homilies say nothing about hesychast Method, the steps of the Ladder, etc.; the only paragraph on prayer (14,288-289; 412) is not connected at all with the hesychast school of prayer. The style of these homilies is very unlike that of ascetic texts; in particular, the homilies do not care to show the roots of their message in the ascetic tradition, they almost do not include quotations and references to teachers and classics of hesychasm. However, in the ascetic discourse, the quotations and references are in no way a void formality, they represent one of the main ways to ascertain the genuine character of the experience told. In all the Zosima book, “The Russian Monk”, commentators have unearthed only two connotations to the corpus of hesychast literature, both to Isaac the Syrian and both of not a specifically hesychast character. As is well-known, all the main affinities for the Zosima discourse in spiritual literature are provided by works of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk (1724-1783) and materials from his life<sup>9</sup>. But all this is rather “not far from” and partly “in tune with” hesychasm than belongs directly and unambiguously to the hesychast tradition. – Obvious hesychast “non-canoncity” of Zosima has immediately been noticed by Leontiev – and this was the birth of the “Zosima problem”: *Can one say that Zosima represents truly and fully the hesychast asceticism? As if in confirmation of the thesis that Dostoevsky’s text is essentially an “unfinalizable” dispute, this problem is not solved and closed up to nowadays. It is quite natural to resume its principal arguments in the style of the novel itself, as just another “pro and contra”.*

*Contra.* The principal doubts with regard to Zosima’s hesychasm I described above. As for the above-mentioned Leontiev’s criticism, it comes to two or three short passages in his works, which are easily quotable:

1) “In *The Brothers Karamazov* monks say... completely not the same things that are said in reality by *very good monks* both in Russia and in the Athos Mountain... here one speaks very little about Divine Office, monastic duties; not a single church service, no public prayers at all... *Not in such way*... one had to write about all this... It would be much better to combine *stronger mystical feeling with more faithful real depicting*”<sup>10</sup>;

2) “The teaching of Zosima is erroneous, and all the style of his conversations is false”; “In *Optina The Brothers Karamazov* are not accepted as a “correct Orthodox book” and the Elder Zosima is not resembling Father Amvrosy at all, either in his teaching or in his character. Dostoevsky has described only his appearance, but made him *speak* absolutely *not what* he speaks, and not *in the style*, in which Amvrosy expresses himself. In Fr Amvrosy the rigorous *ecclesiastic mysticism is in the first place*, and only after this the applied moral goes. In Fr Zosima... moral, “love”, etc. is in the first place, while mystics is *very feeble*”<sup>11</sup>.

*Pro.* Objections to the second, more concrete passage of Leontiev’s criticism have been presented immediately, they were joined to the publication of Leontiev’s letter by its addressee V.V.Rozanov,. Rozanov has rejected the criticism resolutely, bringing forward two counterarguments. The first of them is decisive for the destiny of the novel: Rozanov points out that “*All Russia read... The Brothers Karamazov and believed the representation of the Elder Zosima*”<sup>12</sup>, and due to this, the character of Zosima started to exercise real influence on Russian society in its attitude to monasticism, and also on the monastic community, in which a “new school of monasticism, a new type of it” started to emerge: the type inspired by the character and

<sup>9</sup> The connection of “some homilies of Tikhon of Zadonsk” with the “Life” of Zosima was pointed out by Dostoevsky himself in the letter to Lyubimov quoted above. K.Mochulsky found quite a number of other correlations with St. Tikhon (see K.Mochulsky. Dostoevskii. Paris, 1980, p.520-523).

<sup>10</sup> K.N.Leontiev. *Nashi novye khristiane*. F.M.Dostoevskii i gr. Lev Tolstoy // Id. Coll.works. Vol.8. Moscow, 1912, p.198 (author’s italics).

<sup>11</sup> Id. Letters to Vassily Rozanov of April 13<sup>th</sup> and May 8<sup>th</sup> 1891 // Id. *Pis’ma k Vasiliyu Rozanovu*. London, 1981, p.46 (author’s italics).

<sup>12</sup> V.V.Rozanov. The note 11 to the letter of K.N.Leontiev of May 8<sup>th</sup> 1891. Loc. Cit., p.51 (author’s italics).

preaching of Zosima. But for our subject the second Rozanov's argument is more important, since it treats directly the relation of Zosima's type to hesychasm: "If it didn't correspond to the type of the Russian monasticism of the 18-19<sup>th</sup> cc. (Leontiev's words), then, possibly and even surely, it did correspond to the type of the monasticism of the 4-9<sup>th</sup> cc."<sup>13</sup> Rozanov was not an expert in the history of monasticism, but his opinion has been confirmed and approved by such an authority in the subject as Fr George Florovsky. In his *The Ways of Russian Theology* he called this opinion "quite right", adding that "Dostoevsky guessed and recognized... a seraphic stream in the Russian piety, and prophetically continued the outlined trend"<sup>14</sup>.

There are also some other points that should be added to this "apology of Zosima". To start with, in his scantiness of words on the hesychast Method and all concrete matters of hesychast practice, Zosima is not alone, such scantiness being a well-known trait of Russian hesychasm as such. Giving a general characteristic to the latter, I wrote: "In Russian hesychasm... only small attention was paid to hesychasm as a Method, as a rigorous and integral spiritual discipline... the discourse of the higher spiritual states is poorly represented here... as well as the subject of contemplations of the Uncreated Light"<sup>15</sup>. Of course, this general rule has some very important exceptions, like the works by St. Nilus of Sora and St. Theophan the Recluse, but in Dostoevsky's time they were known only in very narrow strata. We must take into account, however, that "small attention" to problems of the Method and discipline in the discourse of Russian hesychasm does not prove yet that these problems were neglected by ascetics. The reason might well lie in the fact that the moulding and polishing of the Method were essentially completed in the Byzantine period, and for Russian hesychasm these tasks were not in the foreground already in the period of the Muscovite Russia. The Method could be followed as something what goes without saying and needs no discussion, and history of hesychasm tells us that such attitude to it was typical indeed.

Next, it is necessary to note that the discourse of Zosima displays one of the main traits, which create a bond between the world of hesychasm and all the world of Dostoevsky: the pivotal role of repentance. As said above, the world of hesychast ascesis is penetrated and colored by the atmosphere of repentance, which represents not only the beginning, gate of spiritual ascent, but also the permanent attitude of the Orthodox consciousness. This atmosphere of repentance can be felt in Zosima's ministry. Speaking to one of the "Women of faith", Zosima tells her as if a miniature sermon on repentance and love (14,48; 72-73), which contains just a few sentences, but presents a quintessence of all the Orthodox and hesychast culture of repentance, including the precept of unceasing repentance. But the most intimate connection with the element of repentance has the discourse of Mitya, and describing it, we shall come back to repentance.

Some obvious things have to be reminded as well. Evidently and deliberately, the novel makes Elder Zosima and his monastery look like Elder Amvrosy and Optina Hermitage. As traced down, e.g., by Mochulski, the view of the monastery and its surroundings, the topography of the monastery, the view of the cell of the Elder and its interior, all this almost literally corresponds to Optina Hermitage and the cell of Amvrosy. In the same way, the appearance of Zosima and scenes of his communion with the people remind the appearance of Amvrosy and scenes of his ministry almost to the extent of being copied from life. For sure, all these details are not purely external, they clearly claim the direct orientation of all the world of "The Elders" in the novel to the Elderhood of Optina. As for the discourse of Zosima, it is not oriented to the spiritual type and style of Elder Amvrosy for two reasons, at least. First, at the time of Dostoevsky's visit to Optina and his work on *The Karamazovs* (1878-79), no letters of Amvrosy were published yet, and the sources available on him were hardly sufficient for full-bodied reproduction of his "type and style". Second, long before the acquaintance with Amvrosy and the

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<sup>13</sup> Ib.

<sup>14</sup> Prot. Georgii Florovskii. *Puti russkogo bogosloviya*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Paris, 1983, p. 302.

<sup>15</sup> S.S.Khoruzhii. *Russkii isihazm: cherty oblika i problemy izucheniya // Hesychasm. An annotated Bibliography*. Ed. by Sergey S.Horujy. Moscow, 2004, p.555.

phenomenon of the Elderhood, there was already an image in Dostoevsky's mind, which was for him an embodiment of the Russian sainthood; and this image was firmly connected with St. Tikhon of Zadonsk. Relating the conception of "The Life of a Great Sinner" (with which that of *The Brothers Karamazov* is successively connected), Dostoevsky wrote to Maikov on 25 March 1870: "... I want to present Tikhon of Zadonsk as the protagonist"; further on in the same letter he says that he does not want to "create" anything, but has the only goal, "to present real Tikhon, whom... I took into my heart with enthusiasm long ago" (29/1,118). Thus the main prototype of the voice-person, personifying the world of the Russian sainthood, was predetermined in advance. However, as we said above, St. Tikhon, not belonging to hesychast tradition *stricto sensu*, is close to it, and the discourse of Zosima, orientated to him<sup>16</sup>, is not so far from the discourse of Optina and Amvrosy, as Leontiev states. Contrary to Leontiev, Amvrosy's letters have usually no "rigorous mysticism" in the foreground. Being markedly different from Zosima's discourse in their tone and style (being more reserved, even dry, may be), they have nevertheless the same general character of spiritual and ethical counsel (i.e. "moral", in Leontiev's terms, although the proportion of "mysticism" is more significant in letters to monks). And, on the other side, Zosima's discourse, as any genuinely religious discourse, is not free of "mysticism" too: his homilies include "a Mystical Argument" on hell and the fire of hell, they tell about "a mysterious, sacred sense of our living connection with another world", and the Elder himself has, as the Story-Teller tells us, "acquired a perspicacity"<sup>17</sup>, the gift, connected directly with the sphere of mystical experience. – As a result, the discourse of Zosima can be considered, with the sufficient grounds, as a *sui generis* variation on the theme of the Optina Elderhood, which is in accordance with basic positions of the latter.

Finally, there is one more aspect in the subject "Zosima and hesychasm", pointed out by many authors: the character of this Elder is addressed to the future, and some important trends of spiritual development are anticipated in it<sup>18</sup>. Any appellation to the future is always to some extent ambiguous and ambivalent, and we shall still have to discuss Dostoevsky's prophecies; but in this case there is at least one moment of a genuine anticipation. The voice of Zosima and his spiritual style responded to trends of the development of Russian hesychasm, and even, perhaps, of all the Orthodox hesychasm of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. What is more, they not just responded to some trends, but were to some extent creating and forming them up: as Rozanov justly noted still at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> c., Elder Zosima, Alyosha and the novel as a whole became well-known in Russian monasticism and turned into real participants of its life, who affected the ways of its development. First and foremost, their influence stimulated the connection and rapprochement between the monastery and the world, on such principles, according to which the "monastery" should not stop or reduce its spiritual works, while the "world" was learning from the "monastery" and mastering, in the measure within its powers, the way of life directed to God. This is how Zosima presents this mission of the monastery: "the Russian monastery.. has from the time immemorial been with the people... Then cherish the people... In silence, educate them. This is your monkish task" (14,285; 407). What is even more important than this preaching, he inspires with these principles Alyosha, his beloved disciple, and sends him from the monastery to the world, to realize practically in his life the work of monastic and hesychast educating service to the world.

As it appeared gradually, the theme of the going-out of the ascetic tradition into the world and the Elderhood, seen as the creation of the "monastery in the world", – the theme, embodied in the dyad of Zosima and Alyosha, – became the strong connecting thread between *The Brothers Karamazov* and the destiny of hesychasm in the 20<sup>th</sup> c. Russian Hesychast Renaissance

<sup>16</sup> And even stylized on his works, most closely, on his "Spiritual Treasure, collected from the World" (1777-79). Cf. K.Mochulski. Loc.cit., pp.521-522.

<sup>17</sup> In fact, this translation is not fit: the Russian "prozorlivost'" (in the original), from "prozrevat'", means essentially the ability to see the invisible, like the future or thoughts in one's head, and is a spiritual gift.

<sup>18</sup> Cf., e.g.: "Zosima... is addressed to the future, as a proclaimer of new spiritual consciousness of the Russian people". K.Mochulski. Loc.cit., p.522-523.

developed in accordance with Dostoevsky: the next stage of the Russian Elderhood, connected with “Elder in the world” Father Alexiy Mechev, his son Father Sergiy Mechev, one of the New Martyrs, with catacomb communities of hesychast orientation in the period of Bolshevik persecutions, – relied strongly on the ideas of the “monastery in the world”, looked for and found new forms of their realization<sup>19</sup>. What is more, modern studies of hesychasm prove that the roots of these ideas were always present in the Orthodox asceticism. As Metropolitan of Diokleia Kallistos (Ware) writes, already in the early Desert Fathers, starting with St. Anthony the Great himself, the way of the asceticism obeys the paradigm *Withdrawal in order to return*, meaning that the complete leaving of the world is then followed by the return to the world for spiritual ministry: “Such is the sequence that characterizes Anthony’s spiritual career: first silence, then speech; first withdrawal, then involvement; first solitude, then leadership. Exactly the same pattern, of a flight followed by a return, recurs again and again in later Christian monasticism... Equally it characterizes the hesychast movement”<sup>20</sup>. Dostoevsky surely did not know that it was St. Gregory of Sinai (1255-1346), one of the greatest hesychast teachers, who used to send his best disciples back into the world. Thus we must recognize the profundity of his spiritual intuition, and also recognize the genuine and undoubted affinity of Elder Zosima to hesychasm.

But still, like all the *Pro and contra* in Dostoevsky, the dispute on Zosima also cannot be closed. Notwithstanding all these arguments, voices of the opponents still have a good deal to say. Even if passing over in silence the subject of hesychast practice could conceal the perfect knowledge and zealous making of it in Russian ascetics, – in Zosima’s case the actual underestimation of this practice is much more probable. In his case we can rather suppose the real shortage of attention to what is most necessary to a hesychast: the permanent self-absorption into Noetic Practice, the minute and methodical work of the ascending self-transformation in unceasing prayer. Indeed, all Zosima’s discourse contains no slightest allusion to this work, but instead it contains calls to “ecstasy and frenzy”, states, which are extremely dangerous for an ascetic and very far removed from the key hesychast attitude of “sobriety” (*nepsis*, in Greek). A similar underestimation is noticeable in him with respect to the ascetic tradition, the community, which keeps and translates, through ages and lands, the undistorted experience of the ascent to *theosis*. It is only in the firm standing in this tradition and permanent communion with its teachers in their works that the hesychast experience is acquired; but in Zosima we see practically no traces of this communion. We noted this already, but now we have to add that the underestimation of the role of the ascetic community (constitutive for an ascetic) is connected in Zosima with the overestimation and utopian idealization of another community, the national one. Unfortunately, Dostoevsky made the Elder’s voice the spokesman of his own Slavophile utopia, which proclaimed that there lives the steadfast devotion to the Orthodox faith in the Russian people, and predicted the radiant Orthodox future to this people: “Russia is great in her humility... I clearly see our future: ...even the most depraved of our wealthy people will end by being ashamed of his wealth before the poor, and the poor man, seeing this humility, will understand and yield to him with joy... I have faith that it will take place and the appointed season is drawing nigh... The people believe in our way, and the unbelieving activist will achieve nothing among us here in Russia... The people will go to meet the atheist and will conquer him, and there will arise a united Orthodox Russia... this people is a Bearer of God” (14,285-287; 407-409). What can one say today to this clear vision of the Russian future? Only that Bakhtin committed also an utopian idealization, of the autonomy of voices-persons in Dostoevsky. Such enthusiastic false prophecies are not found in Russian hesychast Elders. Here the Elder’s voice is expropriated by a partisan of the Slavophile party. Un-Christian, and surely un-hesychast utopia of “the people, a Bearer of God” (*narod-bogonosets*) played and still

<sup>19</sup> See on this: S.S.Khoruzhii. Russkoe starchestvo v ego dukhovnykh i antropologicheskikh osnovaniyakh // Id. Opyty iz russkoi dukhovnoi traditsii. Moscow, 2005, pp.41-46.

<sup>20</sup> Kallistos Ware, Bp. Of Diokleia. “Act out of Stillness”: The Influence of Fourteenth-Century Hesychasm on Byzantine and Slav Civilization. The “Byzantine Heritage” Annual Lecture, May 28, 1995. Toronto, 1995, p.15-16.

continues to play a bad role in our history, stimulating enthusiastic, and sometimes aggressive and xenophobic religious dreaminess.

**Alyosha.** He is directly included into the hesychast world, taking part in a basic cell of this world, the dyad Elder – Disciple. Like in Zosima’s case, his voice provides no grounds to suppose that he is involved in the hesychast practice, but now it does not generate a problem: so far he is only a novice, and the fact that he is the *beloved* disciple of a *far-sighted* Elder removes all possible doubts; we are sure that he is integrated into the ascetic world in the full measure, corresponding to his age and status. What is more, in all the course of the novel Alyosha is demonstrating a rare wealth of spiritual gifts, including even some elements of spiritual vision akin to the far-sightedness of his Elder (when he announces to Ivan: *it was not you!* – speaking “as though he were beside himself, as though not of his own will, as though in obedience to some overpowering call” (15,40; 769). But his principal gift, on which all the other are based, is love. The very first sentences about him by the Story-Teller present him as “a lover of mankind”, whose soul was “straining unto the light of love”. A kind of a special atmosphere of love surrounds him and is radiated by him, and some personal overtones are easily guessed behind this atmosphere<sup>21</sup>. But all this does not contradict at all the Christian and hesychast hierarchy of values and gifts, and a special endowment with this gift is the distinction of the Elder charisma<sup>22</sup>. Based on this community in the gift of love, a *sui generis* similarity or parallel emerge between the role or mission of the youth Alyosha and the Elder ministry. On a different, local scale, but Alyosha’s counsel is also sought and even craved for by everybody, and his counsel and his judgment is trusted unconditionally<sup>23</sup>. It means that he is considered as a plenipotentiary of an instance of the higher spiritual and moral authority; and such instance is represented in the world of the novel by “the Elders”, the ascetic tradition.

As already said, Zosima and his beloved disciple embody and realize together one of the leading ideas of *The Brothers Karamazov*, the idea of the going-out of the “monastery” into the “world”, for the service to the world on the paths of love enlightened by ascetic experience. Zosima is the initiator of this spiritual movement, but Alyosha is not his tool: the Elder was able to see deeply in him that this is exactly the vocation of this youth, and the way of his building-up his true self. This seeing is an example of profound dialectics of the ascetic vision: Alyosha’s way leads into the world, exactly because in his nature he is a born monk, the monastic vows *temperance – chastity – obedience* are not a burden on him, and even more, they are completely natural to him. Thus, even being in the world, he cannot avoid to be *other to the world*<sup>24</sup>, and thus: “I think of you like this: you will go out beyond these walls, but in the world you will abide as a monk” (14,259; 370). Ministry of the monk-in-the-world had to be represented in the next, unwritten novel. However, how it happens in the epilogue of a classic novel, the final of *The Karamazovs* opens the future a little, showing to us a prototype or, if you wish, rehearsal of this ministry. Alyosha represents here an instructor, a spiritual guide, so to speak, a mini-Elder for a circle of boys on the verge of childhood and adolescence.

**The Boys.** In the panorama of ideas of the novel, the community of boys plays not boyish at all, but quite essential and, in a way, even decisive role. It is not ascetic, but again utopian vision that manifests itself in this role. Inherent in Dostoevsky’s vision there is a peculiar and arbitrary logics of *limitless universalization of the good*, which concludes quickly from one nice example noticed somewhere to the global triumph of the Good, the picture of the world, not “lying in evil” anymore, but full of love. Again unfortunately, the author makes Zosima to demonstrate the purest example of such utopian logics. After telling about his meeting, when he

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<sup>21</sup> Alyosha is given the name of the baby-son of Dostoevsky, who died from epilepsy in May 1878 (like Shakespeare gave to Hamlet the name of his deceased son).

<sup>22</sup> See on this: S.S.Khoruzhii. *Russkoe starchestvo*... Loc. cit., pp.59-60.

<sup>23</sup> Of great many examples, this is Mitya’s attitude: “What could I possibly decide without you? ... Only your decision will decide... this is a matter of conscience, a matter of the loftiest conscience... I myself am unable to cope with it and have postponed it all for you” (15,34; 761).

<sup>24</sup> The original Russian word for “monk”, *inok*, derives etymologically from *inoi*, “the other” (to all the worldly).

was already a monk, with his former batman, and describing, how the former lord and servant “exchanged kisses lovingly and in spiritual tenderness”, and between them “a great act of human unity had taken place”, the Elder (but is it him really?) concludes: “The way I see it now is like this: is it really so beyond the mind that this great and simple-hearted act of unity may... everywhere take place among our Russian people? I have faith that it will take place and the appointed season is drawing nigh” (14,287; 410). With “The Boys” somewhat similar situation takes place.

In themselves, the voices of the boys – Ilyusha, Kolya Krasotkin – are quite pure and fully autonomous, there is no distorting deformation in them, be it utopian or other. The community of the boys is a flexible and plastic anthropocosmos, not yet fallen into inertness and enjoying, by the old idea of the childhood, innocent, “paradisiacal” attitude to the world; and under a kind a sympathetic guidance, it is able to become a kind and harmonious community. This is exactly what happens to it in the epilogue of the novel: due to the influence of Alyosha and “the speech by the stone”, Ilyushechka’s death turns into a genuine catharsis for each of the boys and all their little world. However, in the discourse of the novel, this artistic reality is loaded with ideological and partly even symbolic functions. By the utopian logics, the pure and harmonious (for how long?) anthropocosmos of “the boys” is not just what it is, but moreover, “a little children’s Church” (Bakhtin’s expression), a prototype of the future perfect all-human or all-Russian, at least, community and, undoubtedly, also its faithful pledge. With meaning, the novel mentions that “in all there were about twelve of them” (15.189; 975).

As for the prism of hesychast anthropology, the laconic statement is sufficient: the community of “the boys” can certainly be attributed to the “adhering stratum” of the ascetic tradition. Detailed collation with the Ladder of spiritual ascent is not yet possible for children’s voices.

As well as “the boys”, the “adhering stratum” surely includes another community in the world of the novel.

***The Righteous.*** Now we could be already ascertained that the Orthodox ascetic tradition is indeed a dominating spiritual factor in the anthropocosmos of *The Karamazovs*. But there were always other phenomena in the world of Christianity, which had spiritual influence on Dostoevsky and have noticeably been reflected in his works. The list of such phenomena is not small. It is headed by Christ Himself and his Word, the Gospel; then there follow lives of saints, read much by the writer, apocrypha, phenomena of folk religiosity, and so on, including Christian socialism. Lives of saints present the rich repertory of images and models of holy and righteous life, patterns of situations, of spiritual and moral conflicts and ordeals. Thus they were always among feeding sources of Dostoevsky’s creative imagination, and their influence is present in his last novel as well, although hesychasm and the Elderhood became the dominating spiritual factor in it. The influence of hagiographic material may well turn literary imagination to such manifestations of sanctity and righteousness, which are in no way connected with the ascetic tradition. – Such are the threads leading to “the righteous” in Dostoevsky’s works. Obviously, their voices may well be quite dissimilar with each other and as diverse, as the world of the Orthodox sainthood is diverse. But they all have one main thing in common, they all are, in virtue of their spiritual gift, bearers of God’s truth in the world, and so they are close to God. They all – Markel, The Mysterious Visitor, Ilyusha Snegirev – reach this closeness to God by different ways, and each of them has his own unique experience of the life in God.

As for the relation of “The Righteous” to hesychasm, and the type of sanctity connected with the ascetic tradition, this relation can be elucidated by means of an ancient hesychast image or metaphor, the “circle of Abba Dorotheus”: if God is the center of the circle, which embraces all the life paths of all men, then one can see directly that all those who become close to God, become at the same time close to each other.

***Mitya.*** This is the richest character! Mitya’s voice possesses fully all the dimensions of the world of personality, and no talk can be sufficient to display all his artistic richness and variety of his meanings. However, not all these dimensions are touched upon by our theme, but only



those, which take part in the "hesychast constitution" of this voice; our task is to clarify, to which extent strings and structures of Mitya's personality can be seen and understood in the prism of hesychast anthropology. Such task turns out to be not too difficult, since profound hesychast connections in Mitya's constitution come out immediately.

Mitya's voice-consciousness enters the polyphony of the novel in the Book 3, "Voluptuaries". Characterized in advance as "an ardent heart" by the Story-Teller, he enters at once with his confession, as the voice enthusiastically excited, but becoming quickly perturbed, anxious, frantic... Why is he like this? This is because from his first appearance on the scene (at the Elder's, not long before the "confession") and until the final leaving the scene, after the verdict, Mitya is ceaselessly torn apart and tormented by passions. Throughout all the novel he is not just in captivity of passions, but always at their peak, and always it is not one passion, but many conflicting ones: the new great passion to Grushenka, the old one, not the love passion anymore, but still causing "crack-ups", to Katerina Ivanovna, the hate to the father, evil, mean "Karamazovian" tricks, flaring-up from time to time ("my heart had been bitten by a centipede, by the evil insect" (14,105; 152))... Always and entirely, he is at the height, in a daze, in the intoxication of passions, he is in their orgy, slough, maelstrom...- all these cliché suit Mitya, because he is the *Hero of Passion*. Mitya's world is the world of human passions, in all its variations and bends, nooks and blind alleys: "I went to give her a whipping and stayed. The tempest raged, the pestilence struck, I succumbed to the taint" (14,109; 159). "A monster of cruelty... Even though he's been engaged to be married... has been unable to contain his debauchery" (14,108; 156). "If I throw myself into the abyss I do it straight, head first and heels last" (14,99; 143).

And nevertheless the world of passions is not all Mitya's world, but only one half of it. One half exactly. When Mitya makes his appearance, there is an incense-bag on his neck (though we do not know about it), and it stays on his neck all the first part of the action, till the "delirium" in Mokroye. The incense-bag contained fifteen hundred rubles, exactly one half of appropriated Katya's money. Out of three thousand appropriated, one half is thrown into the maelstrom of passion, but the other one is sewn up in the incense-bag and hanged on his neck, it is with him, right on his neck, permanently, and it does not let him forget about the committed sin of vile action. Thus the incense bag is the repentance of the sinner, the material sign and pledge of his repentance. Having sewn the money in it and putting it on his neck, the sinner makes the act of repentance, and as far as the incense-bag is with him, so is his repentance, he lives with it, in its presence. But even when the incense-bag is torn-off and emptied, this presence does not end up, in fact, it only intensifies, as the novel tells us: in Mokroye, in all the hours given to the passion, "only one fixed and burning emotion affected him every moment, 'like a burning coal in my soul', as he remembered it later" (14.396; 565). Burning emotion came in place of the incense-bag, and it reminded him and did not let him forget about the same thing. Hence *the repentance is the second inalienable half of Mitya's world*, the ceaseless and relentless inner tune of his existence. The element of repentance is organic to him and accompanies him just as much as the element of passion. In the beginning of the novel, his confession to Alyosha is not simply the narration about his passions, it is penetrated all through by merciless moral self-condemnation, so that it is a confession not only in the literary, but also in the spiritual sense, as the declaration of the repentance (of course, only to some extent, since Mitya is only able to repent "in Bakhtin's vein", leaving the inner process open and fundamentally unfinalizable, even if he makes some "definitive" vows and promises). In the final, preparing to go to penal servitude, he is more than ever in the element of repentance, he considers his future work in the mines as "a tragic hymn to God" sung "out of the bowels of the earth by the subterranean folks"; and after the verdict Alyosha tells him: "You wanted to regenerate another man within yourself by means of suffering" (15,185; 969), thus expressing Mitya's emotions by one of classical formulas of Christian repentance. Thus all the discourse of Mitya, all the novel through, has the double structure: it is a combination, parallel presence and parallel development of the discourse of passion and discourse of repentance.

Clearly, both of these components of the constitution of Mitya, his voice and discourse, are from hesychast anthropology: two big initial blocks of the hesychast Ladder are Repentance and Struggle with passions. Mitya dwells exactly in these two domains of spiritual life, which hesychasm scrutinizes most steadily; and hence he is, in general, a “hesychast personality”, he goes easily into the perspective of hesychast anthropology. But he is also a Dostoevskian personality! It is exactly on his example that we see clearly that Dostoevsky has his own vision of man, his original anthropology. It is based on anthropological paradigms discovered by the writer himself; and as a result, the “Dostoevskian personality” turns out to be a very specific version of the “hesychast personality”.

The most important of these paradigms, which gives the key to the constitution of both Mitya and Ivan (as we shall see below), stands out clearly from our description of the double world of Mitya’s self-consciousness. As hesychasm says, the world of repentance and the world of passions stand in opposition to each other, and a man must build a path through them, rejecting one of them and moving further and higher with the help of the other. Mitya does not argue at all with it, on the contrary, he accentuates the polarity of the two worlds still more, contrasting them to each other as the “ideal of the Madonna” and the “ideal of Sodom”. Yes, he does not argue... and he does not leave either of them, keeping the blood relationship with both poles through all the 12 books of the novel. *It is exactly the specific structure of consciousness of the “Dostoevskian personality”: dragged-on, suspended stay in two mutually excluding poles of a certain fundamental alternative.* Man is conscious that he is in the situation of vitally decisive choice between the totally incompatible opposing poles, but the moment of the choice, as if in a slow-motion shot, is dragged on for all the time of artistic action. This situation is paradigmatic for Dostoevsky’s world. Permanent stay “at the threshold of the decisive choice” between two worlds in one’s consciousness appears as a specific mode of human existence, an anthropological paradigm. This paradigm is connected directly with the Bakhtinian concept of the threshold, which, according to Bakhtin, represents one of the main principles of Dostoevsky’s poetics. Its central meaning is spatial (the “threshold” is a type of the chronotope, which corresponds to the action of the crisis character and is opposite to closed “interior”), but the concept is generalized in many ways, being applied also to the action itself (“threshold dialogue”) as well as the inner world, the structure of consciousness (cf.: “Man’s insides, his inner depths serve as the border, threshold... the point of the contact of consciousnesses (and the split in one’s own consciousness)”<sup>25</sup>). The last case fits our context, and so we can call our paradigm “the existence (or consciousness) on the threshold” and consider it as just another application of Bakhtin’s concept. However, it must be clearly distinguished from other applications and meanings of this concept, since the semantics of the “threshold” in Bakhtin is too vast and vague. Following Bakhtin, we could call the “consciousness on the threshold” also the type of consciousness, which achieves its unlocking toward God or other consciousness, while for us the unlocking and the existence-on-the-threshold are two basically different anthropological (and, possibly, meta-anthropological) paradigms. Taking Bakhtin’s concept, we attach to it just one well-defined meaning, the “threshold of the choice between two worlds in the same consciousness”, shifting, at the same time, its semantic center from poetics to anthropology.

Thus Mitya’s voice-consciousness, corresponding *grosso modo* to the hesychast discourse of Repentance and Unseen Warfare, realizes, at the same time, the specific Dostoevskian paradigm of the existence-on-the-threshold. The threshold, according to Bakhtin, is always connected with the crisis, and hence we can add that Mitya’s constitution and mode of existence are of the crisis nature.

**The Women.** The voices of Dostoevsky’s women in their spiritual structure are close both to each other and to Mitya’s voice. The element of their spiritual dwelling is also the world of passion and the world of repentance, and they are also never able to make the definitive choice

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<sup>25</sup> M.M.Bakhtin. K voprosam samosoznaniya i samootsenki // Id. Coll. Works. Vol.5, p.74.

between them, to part with either of them. However, the hypertrophied reflection of masculine voices-consciousnesses is usually not inherent in them, and so the relations of the two worlds in feminine consciousness are rarely brought to the threshold and crisis (crises caused by conflicts between different passions are here more typical). The similarity to Mitya's structures of consciousness is more characteristic of Grushenka; as for Katerina Ivanovna, her structures of consciousness have common traits also with those of Ivan, and this, first of all, in one important point, namely, the strong *pride*. As is well-known, ascetic anthropology attaches great significance to this point. The pride is the first and worst of all mortal sins, for a simple, but profound reason: it means that man is convinced that he is unconditionally valuable and sufficient in himself, and this conviction blocks for him his unlocking, transcending the bounds of his individuality and spiritual ascent, thus separating him from God. In the anthropocosmos of the novel, both the Story-Teller and Alyosha represent the hesychast view of man, and they both see pride as the dominating trait of Katerina Ivanovna<sup>26</sup>. As for Ivan, the motive of pride is associated with him too, but now it has different place and role. Those who speak confidently about Ivan's pride, are Smerdyakov, The Devil and also Miusov, and all these voices are cut off from the truth, although in different ways. The Story-Teller speaks about it without confidence, just as a suggestion: "he made not the slightest attempt to communicate with his father by letter – possibly out of pride" (14,15; 26; italics are mine); "young man... so proud and cautious *by his appearance*"(14,16; the italics are mine, and the translation as well, since Mr McDuff's translation loses necessary nuances). And finally, Zosima, presenting Ivan's "anatomy of consciousness" (for which the latter kisses his hand), does not mention pride at all (but stresses the despair instead!). All this discordance has the simple explanation: Ivan's consciousness, similarly to that of a proud man, cannot realize the unlocking, make itself open toward God; but only the Elder sees clearly that the root of this lockup of the consciousness in itself is not pride, but much more complicated things.

**Ivan.** As we have said already, the basic structure of Ivan's voice is again the paradigm of consciousness-on-th-threshold. This time, however, it is realized in a quite different way, in different plans of consciousness and reality. The main collision, main inner conflict in Ivan's world is determined by the Elder clearly in the very beginning of the novel, and his diagnosis corresponds directly to our paradigm:

- ...*That idea [the idea of immortality] has not yet been resolved within your heart and is tormenting it... This question has not been resolved within you, and therein lies your great unhappiness, for it insistently demands resolution...*
- *But can it be resolved in me? Resolved in a positive direction? – Ivan Fyodorovich continued to inquire, strangely...*
- *If it cannot be resolved in a positive direction, it will never be resolved in a negative one...(14,65; 95-96).*

This is a classical example of the "threshold dialogue". Here, in the beginning of the novel, the worlds, which the threshold separates, are not yet seen distinctly, but nearly all the Book 5, "Pro and contra" (the author called it the culmination book, like the Book 6 as well), is devoted to their exposition. Not long before, "over some cognac", Ivan declared plain and unequivocal atheism, to tease Alyosha. But now, inducing him to the utmost sincerity, to the "conversation of Russian boys", he takes special care to present Alyosha his threshold as accurately and fully as possible – and, in fact, he does present an original position, called by him the "return of the ticket". Of course, the two incompatible worlds in his consciousness are atheism and faith, because nothing else can be there in "Russian boys"; but they both are reflected upon and taken to heart deeply and in his own way. Atheism and faith (the state or feeling of faith) mean, in the first place, the absence or presence of the *fundamental relation*, that to the "highest and last value" (Bakhtin), to Other Being, and hence they relate to each other as ontological closedness

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<sup>26</sup> In the beginning of the novel, Alyosha is "struck by the imperiousness, the proud pertness, the self-assurance" (14,133; 193) of Katerina Ivanovna; in the final, the Story-Teller tells about her: "proud and chaste... only out of pride had she attached herself to him... out of stung pride" (15,121-122; 882).

vs. openness of the Self. Ivan's particular distinction is extremely profound and heightened experiencing of both positions.

The leaning to the first of them, the closedness, was rooted always in him, "he grew up a rather gloomy lad, closed off in himself" (14,15; 26; the closedness to one's fellow-beings and to God are correlative in Dostoevsky). Reflecting painstakingly upon this position, Ivan finds that "if there is no God, all things are lawful"(in this part, his way repeats Kirilov from *The Devils*, and their conclusions are perfectly equivalent to each other). But he surely does not choose the closedness, which was predicted by Zosima at once and in advance. He has also an active leaning to the openness, to life, "the sticky leaf-buds of spring", he is capable to love, he wants to find the way out to life – and by all this he makes a certain initial, starting motion of unlocking himself, or at least, "towards unlocking himself". However, reflecting painstakingly upon this second position, he finds it impossible for him to accept it too! There arises an ambivalent situation: "acceptance of God – unacceptance of the world", which is very aptly rendered by the formula "return of the ticket". This formula means, as we see it now, that Ivan stays exactly on the threshold: on the threshold of unlocking himself, on the threshold between the two *ontologically* (for the question is about God) different modes and strategies of human existence. Being suspended on the threshold, he looks again for the possibility of the decision in favor of the openness, and he expects that such possibility might come from Alyosha, through him ("I should, perhaps, like to be healed by you" (14,215; 309): here Ivan turns towards the "adhering stratum" of hesychast tradition). Alyosha advances an argument, decisive for Christian consciousness, *argumentum ad Christo*, – but it turns out that there is a counterargument in Ivan's possession prepared long ago: *The Grand Inquisitor*. In the logics of the dispute of the "Russian boys", the sense of the famous "legend" is simple to the extreme: yes, if only this world were Christ's world, there would be no need to return the ticket! but there is no place for Christ in this world... – And so Ivan stays on the threshold. The crises, which the *ontological* threshold implies, are much more dangerous than all the crises of Mitya's passions. Ivan's being-on-the-threshold becomes the fatal temptation for Smerdyakov, entails the murder of his father, sentence for Mitya and final insanity of Ivan himself, sinking into which, he pronounces in the court session one more formula of the threshold state, as apt as the "return of the ticket": *If I want, I'll jump, if I don't, I won't*.

Thus the constitution of Ivan is the constitution of being-on-the-threshold, and, as distinct from the anthropological threshold, determining Mitya's constitution, it is the meta-anthropological and ontological threshold. The two worlds of Mitya's consciousness are within the area of the hesychast Ladder, but those of Ivan's consciousness are without this area, they precede its start, the Spiritual Gate. Hence the repentance is inaccessible to Ivan. The inner motion, which would turn into the repentance in the unlocking consciousness, cannot find vent in him, thus producing breakdown, collapse of his consciousness. The collisions of Ivan's voice-consciousness are close not so much to ascetic anthropology, as to European philosophy, which in the New Times was thoroughly analyzing and protractedly making choice between the standings of the religious and secularized consciousness. All thinkers, in whom the reflection of this choice was complemented with existential and emotional modalities (such as Pascal, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche), turn out to be close relatives of Ivan, whose philosophical discourse is immensely rich. But problems of this relationship do not belong to anthropology, and we avoid them, making just one remark. The modality of living experience, which corresponds to the ontological threshold, is the despair, and in the theme of despair Ivan meets Kierkegaard. The theme is opened in a promising way: in the beginning of the novel, the Elder associates firmly the despair with Ivan, presenting its laconic, but refined analytics: "A martyr sometimes likes to keep himself amused with his despair, out of sheer despair, as it were. For the moment that is what you are doing: amusing yourself with your despair" (14,65; 95). The theme is not given explicit development, however. Although in the final parts of the novel Ivan is, in fact, in permanent despair, there is no explicit discourse of despair here.

**Smerdyakov** is, if you wish, also one of the fruits of Ivan's "games of the despair", together with his journal articles mentioned by Zosima. Being struck by one of the ideas, with which Ivan was "amusing" himself, the idea-slogan "if there is no God, all things are lawful", the voiceless lackey finds his voice-consciousness-person: he starts to reflect on his own on the idea, applies it to himself, plans carefully the crime and commits it. His voice is formed up as a projection of one of the themes of Ivan's voice, a lowering, distorting and profaning projection. The secondary, derived, and thus phantom, in this sense, status of this voice is revealed distinctly in the culmination moments of his existence, which are the moments of the murder and suicide. He can only commit the murder with Ivan's sanction, and so his main care in the preparation of the crime is getting this sanction. And he commits the suicide as soon as it became clear beyond doubts that the voice, which inspired him to his crime and thus constituted him as a personality (even though a criminal one), was not, after all, the sanction to the crime and had not the constitutive power and force. As soon as this constitutive voice exposed itself as something imagined and non-existing, Smerdyakov's voice, who was constituted by it, ceases immediately to exist. He even returns the money, stolen in the murder, into the origin of this murder, to Ivan, and, as a result, he cancels himself entirely, liquidates himself and is dissolved in Nothing, as it is proper to phantom figures. A characteristic detail serves here as a thread to ascetic demonology: before annihilating himself, Smerdyakov reads or, at least, has on his table, the book by Isaac the Syrian, the teacher of strictest asceticism and struggle with the devils: a very probable implicit reference to the New Testament saying, popular in old Russia, "the devils also believe and tremble" (Jas 2,19).

**The Devil.** His phantom status does not need a proof. Evidently, his voice is completely in the orbit of hesychast anthropology, which was always dealing with appearances of demons or devils. According to Bakhtin, The Devil as well as Smerdyakov is the voice of Ivan's double, parodying him. These two qualifications provided by ascetics and poetics do not contradict each other, since a demon, by the type of his discourse, can perfectly be considered as the "parodying double".

**Fyodor Pavlovich.** Of all the full-dimensional voices-persons of the novel, Karamazov the father represents the most far-distant point with respect to the hesychast world and its anthropology. With all the members of the "little family", in the beginning of the novel he obtains the "spiritual diagnosis" from the Elder, and, according to this diagnosis, he is "the one who lies to himself". It is the worst of all possible diagnoses: as the Elder explains, "the one who lies to himself and listens to his own lies comes to the point where he can distinguish no truth either within himself or around him" (14.41; 63). In other words, Karamazov-father lost the access to reality so that all his actions, strategies, relationships are developing in unreality, in deceiving void and nothingness. It is exactly this mode of existence that is expressed by the title of the "buffoon", accompanying him permanently, and in Mitya, whose consciousness is of high honesty, this mode raises the justified question: *Why is a man like that alive?* The flight from the opening and unlocking himself approaches here complete isolation. The "buffoon" himself tries to make this isolation really complete, and we could think that he succeeded in this, if only it would not been known for sure that the possibility of repentance is inalienable of man. And, moreover, the "buffoon" is not fully devoid of love; this subject liked one to discuss in the Silver Age, and Lev Karsavin devoted to it the bright essay "Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov as an ideologue of love". Thus, instead of a verdict, we come to just another *Pro and contra*...

Surely, in this brief survey we exhausted in no way the anthropocosmos of *The Brothers Karamazov* and did not elucidate all its connections with the world of hesychasm and Elderhood. But, entering Dostoevsky's world, it would be very silly and inappropriate to plan to "exhaust" any of its essential sides.

**P.S. An epileptic coefficient?**

Not claiming to exhaust all the hesychast correlations in anthropology of the novel, we find it useful instead to discuss briefly in conclusion a quite different aspect of this anthropology. It is one of those aspects, on which one was telling so much ignorant and absurd things in former times that in our times they started to be considered as banal and kind of indecent for discussion. We mean the so called “psychopathologies” in Dostoevsky’s world: the impregnation of his artistic reality, its characters and events, all the texture of its discourse, with variegated manifestations of psychic anomalies, and, in the first place, epilepsy, from which he suffered himself. This old theme is vast and ramified, and its thorough discussion needs going into biographical circumstances, and writer’s personal world, besides worlds of his heroes. Now I do not plan at all to follow this risky route. I want to make only a few short remarks, drawing attention to rather interesting correlations of poetics, psychopathology and hesychasm.

In a small newspaper article by Vladimir Weidle the following observation is found: “very striking in Dostoevsky... is a strange unimpeded, free of hindrance character of action in his books. The laws of gravity are forgotten, everything became weightless: to make a step means to fly for a whole mile forward... a new lightness, the liberation from the matter unheard of... we fly, being beside ourselves...”<sup>27</sup>. The author himself draws from this subtle observation rather disputable conclusions about “pure spirituality” of Dostoevsky’s world; but for an anthropologically oriented view a different association arises here. Weidle’s description presents a splendid characteristic of a certain psychological phenomenon, connected both with Dostoevsky’s personality and work: the *world of the aura*, or a specific state of consciousness before an attack of epilepsy. Its most famous description belongs to Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot*. In the last moment before an attack, man is visited and overwhelmed by an extraordinary vision: he sees all the world in a state of the highest beauty and harmony, fullness of being, absolute peace and bliss, and he becomes one with this world of bliss, experiencing exactly those sensations, which Weidle describes. Traces, reflections, influences of this world-moment in Dostoevsky’s work are numerous and profound; one can find in this work a rich *discourse of the aura*.

First of all, the image of the perfect, paradisiacal being – the image, originating surely in the world of the aura, – became paradigmatic in Dostoevsky, appearing regularly in his text. Restricting to the last novel, let us remind that here the vision of the world in a paradisiacal state has the dying youth Markel, who transmits it to his younger brother; and this brother, becoming a spiritual teacher and Elder, in his turn, conveys in his homilies the essence of this vision. In *The Idiot*, where the vision of paradisiacal being is connected directly and unambiguously with epilepsy, the question arises naturally about its spiritual truth and value, and the Prince comes out with its whole-hearted apology: “Yes, it’s a sickness, but so what?!...”, etc. etc. In *The Brothers Karamazov* this vision is free of any explicit relation to epilepsy, so that there is no visible need in its defense or apology. However, it cannot lose its undoubted inner connection with epilepsy, its origin in the world of the aura and its epileptic nature: indisputably, it is *the same* vision as in *The Idiot*, and in all the discourse of the aura in Dostoevsky. And because of this, its estimation in hesychast perspective can in no way coincide with its unconditional adoption by Zosima. Spiritual tradition denies categorically that visions obtained in states of mental disorder are genuine appearances of Divine reality. The theme of false appearances of Christ, Mother of God, angels and saints or the world of Paradise, the theme of doubtful and dangerous nature of religious exaltation, “ecstasies” and “frenzies” of all kinds (which abound in Dostoevsky’s world) is one of time-honored themes of ascetical practice. This practice had always as one of its basic tasks the elaboration of criteria of the identification and means of the banishment of the phenomena of false religious experience, which are called here the “fascination” (*prelest*, in Russian; *planesis, plani*, in Greek). But the subject of necessary and rigorous checking of spiritual experience, extremely characteristic of hesychast spirituality, is simply not present in Zosima’s discourse. We can also remember here our remarks made above

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<sup>27</sup> V.V.Weidle. Chetvertoe izmerenie. Iz tetradi o Dostoevskom // Vozrozhdenie (Paris), 12.02.1931. Quoted by: Russkie emigranty o Dostoevskom. St.-Petersbutg, 1994, p.192.

about utopian elements in this discourse. In the ideological aspect, all the series of our remarks is connected with the motives, which are called often, after Leontiev, the “pink Christianity”. But our analysis proceeds in a different plane, thus discovering another aspect of the same motives: the elements, which come out as “pink” or utopian in the ideological aspect, turn out to belong to the discourse of the aura, in the anthropological aspect.

The properties noticed by Weidle characterize another kind of elements of the same discourse: the elements representing not some motive or image, but certain global qualities of Dostoevsky’s artistic reality, of his poetics. The common nature of these qualities originating in the world of the aura can be rendered by the collective term *hyper-harmony*. Unreal perfect harmony of the world of the aura manifests itself in a magic conformity and coherence, ideal mutual matching and coordination of all its things and events; it is these qualities that generate that miraculous lightness and unimpeded character of action. In the world of Dostoevsky’s novels, the texture of human existence includes lots of conflicts, sufferings, evils, but it does not include any gaps, holes, flaws, lacunas, unmatching pieces... – here all ends meet and all people still more so, they meet, and enter immediately into a conversation, a dialogue. The latter is especially important. If we agree with Bakhtin that Dostoevsky’s novel is a dialogical novel, anthropocosmos of voices-consciousnesses, then the main manifestation of the hyper-harmony of this anthropocosmos is its *hyper-dialogism*. The “unimpeded character” of action in this dialogical anthropocosmos means, first and foremost, the unimpeded character of dialogue, which does not know impossibility or failure. This property has a certain anthropological premise, so to say, *hyper-contactness* of Dostoevsky’s personages: at any moment, if it is needed for a dialogue, they notice each other and are oriented to each other. Thus the dialogue establishes itself over all barriers and turns eventually into the dialogue of everybody with everybody, the dialogue, which knows no measure, no limits, no restraint... A nice illustration of this hyper-dialogism is Kolya Krasotkin, wandering over the city and engaging endlessly into dialogues with anybody and everybody, without any other need, besides turning the world into the place of total dialogue, which is the end in itself. This hypertrophy of Dostoevskian dialogue has something in common with another trait of this dialogue, which originates if not in the world of aura directly, then, in any case, in the sphere of psychic anomalies, shifted or altered states of consciousness. This is over-excitation, feverishness of the dialogue and communication, their “overheating”, “anomalous temperature”. The Story-Teller saturated intensely all the text with evidences of this overheating: a completely unusual, striking proportion of the replies of heroes is introduced by verbs or other expressions of the sharp affect such as “howled” (*zavopil*, the most popular verb in the dialogue of the novel), “barked violently”, “snarled hollowly”, “shrieked”, “clamoured like a halfwit”, “exclaimed in a frenzy”, “exclaimed almost in a fever”, “exclaimed in terrible anguish”, “bursting in a fit of a complete hysteria”, “cried, emitting a sudden roar”, “said, panting”, “shrieking loudly, she began to sob”, etc. etc. (in the original all this is much more expressive). A similar feature, showing also the “temperature anomaly”, was pointed out by Brodsky: “In his [Dostoevsky’s] sentences you hear the feverish, hysterical rhythm”<sup>28</sup>. Statistical counting could probably produce even the quantitative estimates, to calculate the degree of the anomalous temperature of the discourse. This trait is most conspicuous, and, very likely, it was the first trait, which gave birth to the theme of psychopathologies in Dostoevsky’s artistic world.

At first this theme was considered as a certain shocking oddity for the discourse of *belles lettres*. One did not know, how to integrate it into either esthetic or philosophical analysis of Dostoevsky’s creative world, and so it remained an isolated feature, which could be regarded as either the first and most important or the last, inessential and accidental with respect to the set of all the other, “usual” features of an artistic work. The first option, playing up excessively the psychopathological element, was chosen mainly in the West. Such view of Dostoevsky’s work was almost dominant in the European reception of this work at the early stage, and it continued

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<sup>28</sup> I. Brodskii. O Dostoevskom // Russkie emigranty o Dostoevskom, p.375.

to take a very appreciable place in this reception for a long time<sup>29</sup>, in particular, in the psychoanalytical school of thought and existentialism. On the contrary, at home, soon after first reviews, in which the elements of the “psychiatric hysteria” (the expression of Victor Burenin) were rather strongly stressed, the criticism and studies of Dostoevsky started to choose steadily the second option, more often than not passing over all the “psychiatry and pathology” in silence. (There were, of course, some exceptions to this rule too, e.g. the valuable article “Psychology of characters in Dostoevsky” by S. Askoldov (1925)). This tradition was not broken by Bakhtin, in whose texts one hardly finds the sacramental word “epilepsy” at all<sup>30</sup>.

However, even from our small remarks one can see that the discourse of the aura as well as all the “discourse of psychopathologies” in *The Brothers of Karamazov* finds some reflections in poetics of the novel. One can guess also that it is these “epileptic” features of Dostoevsky’s poetics that are the source of that aversion to Dostoevsky, which is characteristic of a number of prosaists with an acute flair for poetics, like Joyce, Nabokov and others. For Joyce I can answer confidently. Joyce’s world and poetics are polar to the world of hyper-harmony, they represent, if you wish, the *world of hyper-disharmony*, total lack of conformity and coherence: its texture is formed entirely by unmatching and uncoordinated things and events, by gaps and holes, and, of course, by permanent hopelessness of communication and failure of the dialogue<sup>31</sup>.

Coming back now to our main subject, we can ascertain that anthropology of *The Brothers Karamazov*, like poetics (both dimensions of the artistic work being inseparable), does also include the “epileptic coefficient”. It means, of course, not the plain plot fact that “there are too many of the insane” in the great novel. All the considerations above were needed to us to make sure: it is the anthropocosmos of the novel, the polyphony of its voices that carry the epileptic coefficient and assume epileptic complexion. And this coefficient cannot avoid somewhat reducing and shifting the dominating orientation of the world of *The Karamazovs* to the hesychast world. This is the concluding *Contra* to our central thesis about the hesychast character of anthropology of the novel. But there is no doubt that a new *Pro* might follow it.

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<sup>29</sup> E.g., the German «History of Russian Literature” (1886) informed its readers that the late novels of Dostoevsky are “pure psychiatry and pathology”. Georg Brandes, one of the most influential names in the literary criticism of the époque, gave to the writer the title “genius-epileptic”, and Max Brod wrote to Kafka that “there are too many of the insane” in Dostoevsky. See: V.V.Dudkin, K.M.Azadovskii. Dostoevskii v Germanii // Lit. nasledstvo, vol. 86. Moscow, 1973.

<sup>30</sup> Scattered remarks by Bakhtin show that his position suggested the removal of all this circle of problems by means of its modulation to a different dimension. Such dimension could be provided, e.g., by the principle of carnival (cf.: “Scandals... “hysterics” and so on in Dostoevsky. Their source is carnival place”. M.M.Bakhtin. 1961 god. Zametki. P.339). In the other variant, more in tune with early Bakhtin, it is suggested apparently that one can interpret the “psychopathological discourse” as a certain form of a purifying self-exposing or self-ejection, close to some extent to the confession (cf.: “Scandals, hysterics and so on in Dostoevsky’s world. This is neither psychology nor psychopathology, for it deals here about the *person*, and not *material* (veshchnykh) layers of man, about free self-exposing, and not object analysis of materialized (oveshchestvlenno) man in his absence”. Ib. P.354. Author’s italics). The critical warning against attempts to see in poetics of Dostoevsky’s novels the “object analysis of materialized man” is justified and valuable, but still the problems in question were not actually modulated or converted by Bakhtin to any dimension, and both ways outlined by him vaguely are, to my mind, unsound.

<sup>31</sup> The comparison of the systems of poetics of Dostoevsky and Joyce is made in my book: S.S.Khoruzhii. *Uliss v russkom serkale*. Moscow, 1994 (Episode 16). The English translation of this episode: Joyce Studies Annual, 1998. See also my commentary to Joyce’s *Ulysses*, mainly to the episodes 16,17 (Dzh. Dzhois. *Uliss*. St.-Petersburg, 2004, p. 805-817).