

A Dostoevsky Conference in Barcelona, September 6-8, 2006

From September 6 to 8, 2006, the first Spanish conference dedicated to F. M. Dostoevsky took place in Barcelona under the title: «Philosophy and Religion in the Life and the Work of F. M. Dostoevsky». The event was organized by the Spanish Section of the International Dostoevsky Society (IDS), having been established at the XIIth International Symposium of the IDS in Geneva in 2004.

The aim of this conference was to gather all Spanish Dostoevsky scholars and to promote the knowledge of the Spanish Section of the IDS in Spain as well. While the conference was primarily aimed at Spanish scholars, it also attracted an international audience. In addition to Spain, several other countries were represented, including France, Belgium, Holland, Latvia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Russia, and Mexico. As a result, the conference was both interdisciplinary and international in scope.

The focus of the conference was on Religion and Philosophy in the work and life of F. M. Dostoevsky. Although at the beginning of the 20th Century Dostoevsky has been studied as a Philosopher, he is today mostly considered a narrative craftsman, who has produced «novels of ideas». Whilst it might be correct to say that Dostoevsky is not a Philosopher in the «European sense» of the term, he was nonetheless a man of deep insights who elaborated ideas and arguments of a highly philosophical character.

The fact that scholars from all over Europe and Russia participated in our conference shows that the interest in Dostoevsky's Religion (Christianity) and Philosophy has not vanished: Russian scholars have made valuable contributions to the understanding of the Orthodox *milieu* in the life and works of Dostoevsky, while European scholars have written insightful studies on the philosophical aspects of the author of *Crime and Punishment*.

Among the Spanish scholars who participated in the Conference in Barcelona special mention should be made of those from the University of Granada, which is currently the main centre of Slavonic studies in Spain. Thus, on Wednesday September 6, Professor José Antonio Hita, from the University of Granada, inaugurated the Conference with a paper on Dostoevsky and Sologub. He was followed by Natalia Arsentieva, a Russian scholar teaching in Granada, with a study of Dostoevsky's metaphysics. Subsequently, José Luis Flores, from Mexico, proposed his analysis of Dostoevsky's sense of the «millennium» from a metaphysical point of view. The paper of Benamí Barros, from Granada, was without doubt the most surprising for it focused on the transcendentalism of the kiss in the works of Dostoevsky. In the afternoon Konstantin Barsht spoke on *Poor Folk*, Luis Beltrán from Zaragoza offered a critical analysis of Bakhtin's interpretation of *The Idiot*, and Ludmila Elnitskaja from Moscow, and Natalia Zhivolupova from Nizhny Novgorod discussed the problem of conscience in *Notes from the Underground* and the Holy Body as corpse in *The Brothers Karamazov*, respectively.

On Thursday, the contributions had a more philosophical character. The day was opened by Leopoldo La Rubia from Granada, who analysed the «civil servant» in Gogol, Dostoevsky, and Kafka. He was followed by Milusa Bubenikova, regional coordinator of the IDS in the Czech Republic, who spoke about Russian philosophers in Prague, and then by Maria Cymborska-Leboda from Poland, who discussed a very difficult philosophical topic: Love-Dialogue-Responsibility from Dostoevsky to Lévinas. The next paper, which was read by Jordi Morillas, was by Isabel Martínez from Madrid, translator of Dostoevsky's works into Spanish. The paper was about the philosophical roots of Dostoevsky's thinking. Juan Ignacio Torres, from the University of Granada, explained how Dostoevsky was read by José Luis L. Aranguren, and Jacek Uglik, from Poland, offered his contribution on how the personality of Bakunin influenced Dostoevsky's novels, particularly *The Devils*. In the afternoon, Sergej Daugovich from Latvia spoke about «the mind of slug», and Sophie Ollivier, regional coordinator of the IDS in France, compared the theological and philosophical interpretations of the Book of Job by Dostoevsky, Kant, Kierkegaard, Jung, and Ricoeur. Lilianna Kiejzik from Poland exposed Sergej Bulgakov's interpretation of Dostoevsky. The section was closed by Tamara Djermanovich, a Serbian scholar, who spoke on religion in Dostoevsky.

The last day (Friday, September 8) of the conference was opened by Anastasia Gacheva, from Moscow, who presented a wide overview of the

philosophical and religious thought in the time of Dostoevsky, and by Elena Borodkina, from Latvia, who analysed the concepts of «fear» and «courage» in Dostoevsky, particularly in *Crime and Punishment*. Karen Stepanjan focused on *The Brothers Karamazov* offering a stimulating interpretation of the soil and religious faith in this last novel of Dostoevsky. Arkadij Neminuschij offered parallels between the doctrines of Starets Zosima and Pater Seraphicus, provoking an intense discussion of the theories here defended by our colleague from Daugvapils. Wil van den Bercken from Holland and Nel Grillaert from Belgium closed this theological part of the conference with papers on the Poem of the Grand Inquisitor and the symbolic value of the Russian Orthodoxy.

Later on, Ludmila Navtanovich, from Barcelona, spoke about the story *Crocodile* and Antonio Morillas, president of *AGON. Grupo de Estudios Filosóficos* from Barcelona, focused on the relation between Dostoevsky and Nietzsche and the influence of the first one on the author of *The Antichrist*. The last paper was read by Jordi Morillas on the philosophical background of Raskolnikov's article "On Crime" in *Crime and Punishment* with an outlook to Nietzsche.

All this was made possible only thanks to the support of the Oficina d'Estudis i Recursos Culturals and its President, Mr. Carles Prats, who offered their facilities at the Pati Manning. Furthermore, the association of the University of Barcelona *AGON. Grupo de Estudios Filosóficos* and its President, Mr. Antonio Morillas, helped very much to organize the Conference. Finally, we have to mention the help offered by the colleagues of the Slavonic Department of the University of Granada, with special thanks to Professor Dr. José Antonio Hita.

Jordi Morillas Regional Coordinator of the Spanish Section of the IDS