

Dostoevsky's Brothers Karamazov. Art, Creativity, and Spirituality.
Edited by Predrag Cicovacki and Maria Granik. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter 2010 (= Beiträge zur Slavischen Philologie, Band 16). 232 pp.

The publication of this very attractively bound book by the well-known Publishing House Universitätsverlag Winter in Heidelberg was sponsored by the American Museum of Russian Icons in Clinton, MA (USA). An icon of the Mother of God aptly adorns its front cover. The twelve essays include papers of a Conference dedicated to Dostoevsky's last novel, which was organized in 2008 at the College of the Holy Cross by P. Cicovacki. The book includes an index. The editors have also appended 11 pages of an interview with Joseph Frank.

Three excellent essays should be singled out as deserving special praise. This is Jacques Catteau's study of the Grand Inquisitor "From the Great Sinner to the Grand Inquisitor" which continues his earlier study in the well-known miscellany *Dostoevsky. New Perspectives* (ed. R. L. Jackson, 1984, 243-254). In his essay at Holy Cross Catteau establishes a link between Ivan's powerful accusations addressed to God – culminating in the suffering of innocent children – and the concluding pages of the novel referring to Alyosha and the group of boys. I quote from the last page of Catteau's essay: "Ivan and the Grand Inquisitor's mad and deadly dream of bringing men down to the level of a colony of child-slaves is followed by Alyosha's thrilling hope of hoisting the children up to the status of free men, reinvested with their freedom, along with its responsibilities, which was first given to them by Christ." Equally impressive is Horst-Jürgen Gerigk's essay "Dialogue and Pseudo-Dialogue" in which he applies his insights presented at the Budapest Symposium of the International Dostoevsky Society (2007) to an analysis of the dialogues in Dostoevsky's last novel. Gerigk outlines the concept of pseudo-dialogues, going back to Hans-Georg Gadamer, briefly examines Dostoevsky's earlier novels and then applies the two forms of dialogue to various dialogues in the *Brothers Karamazov*, concentrating on Book V which includes Ivan's rebellion against God and his Legend (or Poem) of the Grand Inquisitor. His conclusion is that genuine dialogue has its centre in the personality of Zosima, pseudo-dialogue mainly in the prosecutor. The true message of Ivan's poem according to Gerigk is that the "State" (pseudo-dialogue) has to become "Church" (genuine dialogue). Julian W. Connolly's essay "Confession in *The Brothers Karamazov*" provides readers with a useful survey of the multitude of confessional dialogues which can be found in the novel, something

unsuspected by the average reader, ranging from miniature confessions by minor characters to the well-known confessions of the Karamazov brothers. As Connolly rightly observes, “This is a rich topic that will merit further investigation.” Dostoevsky scholars, no doubt, will be grateful to the author for having broken new ground demanding further detailed investigations. These necessarily brief characterizations of the three essays need to be supplemented by the readers who will find in these essays many more facets deepening our understanding of Dostoevsky’s art, insights that may, indeed, stimulate further research.

Apart from these papers I should like to mention three more essays which should attract special attention by the readers of this volume. Robin Feuer Miller’s essay bears the enigmatic title “Divine Conversations”. As the author points out, she uses the word “God” frequently, – “some sixty five times”, i. e. about four times on every page. However, this should not turn away prospective readers. Feuer Miller analyzes “conversations in which one partner of the dialogue is God himself, as in “Mary’s conversations with God” (= “The Wanderings of Our Lady through Hell”). Her essay is thought-provoking and well researched. Her conclusion is: “God... appears or wishes to appear malleable, persuadable, changeable.... [God] is occasionally somewhat less attractive, seeming mercurial and occasionally seeming to act according to whim.” Feuer Miller ends her essay with a pointed question: “How then do we reconcile the theological, philosophical, intimate, personal and loving God of this novel... with his appearances to us as a character, in the inserted narratives of Ivan, Zosima, and Grushenka?” Predrag Cicovacki’s essay “Dostoevsky’s Uncommon Worldview: An Alternative Ethics, or an Alternative to Ethics?” remains at a certain, one might say philosophical, distance to the text of the novel, discussing primarily the “Lebensphilosophie”, i. e. the power of “vitality” and love of “life” that the author perceives in Dostoevsky’s worldview which he relates to Dostoevsky’s spirituality. The German term is used by Evgeniia Cherkasova in her essay “Poetics of Life Affirmation” (p.175), which precedes Cicovacki’s essay, pointing the way, as it were, to Cicovacki’s more philosophically oriented reflections. Two minor matters in Cicovacki’s essay: It is not clear why he inserts a quotation from E. Thurneysen’s booklet *Dostojewski* (originally a lecture before students), in a weak English translation of 1964 (Thurneysen’s “Zauber” ought to be translated with “enchantment” rather than “magic”, etc.), that transports the readers who know the German author back to the panegyric worship enjoyed by Dostoevsky in Germany in 1921, the date of publication of the original German text. Another point: Cicovacki claims that “he [= Ivan] cannot

love.” This is not really confirmed by the novel. To the contrary, Ivan’s rebellion is obviously motivated by love (Ivan: “I dearly love little children.”)! Last, but not least, Deborah Martinsen’s essay “The Devil Incarnate” is a very well researched study of Dostoevsky’s, or more appropriately, Ivan’s Devil, his role in the novel and the psychology behind it. Martinson has collected an impressive amount of background material from secondary sources, well organized and presented.

Several of the remaining contributions approach the “theophanic” or faith-based reading, popular in the USA (cf. “Dostoevsky Studies”, v.13, 2009), adding a touch of fundamentalism to the book. It is in this context that an unusual terminology surfaces occasionally. An example is Contino’s essay “Incarnational Realism and the Case for Casuistry: Dmitry Karamazov’s Escape,” in which “beauty becomes salvific”, Christ’s suffering is “salvific”, and freedom is characterized by “unfinalizability” (pp.134-136). The author ends his essay by saying that he has been “blessed” that many of his students “have been transformed” by Dostoevsky’s ‘salvific image’ of Christ, as expressed also by the Icon of Christ Pantocrator, which Contino has appended to his text (see p.158), - perhaps hoping for more ‘transformations’ among his readers?

The “Introduction” by the two editors of the volume needs a commentary. They stress that their book is “the first collection that crosses the too often too rigid lines between philosophy and literature. ... there have been no collaborative attempts like this one by philosophers, theologians, and literary critics, to tackle the varying aspects of Dostoevsky’s fiction.” Obviously the two editors are unaware of the International Symposia of IDS (International Dostoevsky Society, founded 1971). Fourteen (!) Symposia have been held so far between 1971 and 2010. From the very beginning IDS, which by the way, is not mentioned in the volume reviewed here, has invited not only theologians and philosophers, but also specialists in the fields of medicine and law, who participated and contributed to a deeper understanding of Dostoevsky’s art and personality at the Symposia, often in a more exhaustive and penetrating manner than this is done in the collection under review. A brief look at the programs will show this clearly. The editors claim that their collection “articulates a new approach to Dostoevsky’s novel”, a claim that the reviewer considers to be a bit exaggerated. Nevertheless it should be emphasized that the volume contains many excellent papers, well worth reading. However, some minor points need to be clarified.

Diane Oenning Thompson’s essay on “Islamic Motifs”, which is mentioned by the editors in their “Introduction”, needs a commentary. Thompson discusses the “Turkish atrocities” in the Balkan wars

mentioned by Ivan Karamazov. However, nowhere in the novel does Dostoevsky/Ivan discuss Islam, one of the three great monotheistic religions. The accent in Ivan's rebellious speech clearly is not about Islamic religion. Ivan describes atrocities against children perpetrated by Turks as much as by Russians! Thompson seems to confuse two not necessarily connected terms! At least in the novel, Dostoevsky refrains from ascribing atrocities to Islam. We should beware of what might be interpreted as islamophobic!

Maria Granik, writing about "The Politics of Love", mentions Chekhov's story *The New Villa* which portrays, as she writes, "the very intense resistance people have to change." As an illustration, Granik quotes in a footnote a phrase by a "former member [?] of the Russian government": "We wanted the best, but it turned out as always." Why does she not name the politician? This was Viktor Chernomyrdin, Prime Minister under Yeltsin in the 1990's. Chernomyrdin, a close collaborator of Yeltsin, died in November 2010 at the age of 72. People associate him with the economic problems of his time. Finally, the reviewer is intrigued by Deborah Martinsen's footnote about the eminent Dostoevsky scholars Bakhtin and Jackson whom she calls "two of Dostoevsky's greatest readers". The reviewer is not sure who is a "great reader," - not to speak of the "greatest"? Martinsen presumably did not base her evaluation on the OECD's PISA criteria, but then on what else?

In summary, the book should stimulate further research of the topics discussed here. We know that "pros" and "contras" are usually indicative of an ongoing dialogue acting as a stimulus for further discussions and, in this case, proving that Dostoevsky's last novel is still offering many aspects to be further investigated. The reviewer wishes the collection many ('great'!) readers!

Rudolf Neuhäuser

Alpen-Adria Universität Klagenfurt

Rowan Williams: *Dostoevsky: Language, Faith, and Fiction*. Waco, Texas: Baylor UP 2008. 290 pp.

There has been a chorus of praise for the Archbishop of Canterbury's foray into Dostoevsky criticism. Roman Catholic and Jewish periodicals