

Sin and Redemption--On the Theme of the Brothers Karamazov

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ABSTRACT. *Redemption is the eternal theme of Dostoevsky's works. The Brothers Karamazov, the last work of Dostoevsky, revolves around the experiences of Fedor Karamazov and his sons, showing a complex tragic theme of society, family, morality and humanity in Russia and exploring the existence of God, reason, goodness and evil. Dostoevsky rejects any rationalized moral, historical or political salvation plans, and insists on choosing good and love as a cure for humanity and for saving the sufferings of the Russian nation.*

KEYWORDS: *The Brothers Karamazov; God; freedom; love*

With the rest of his life, Dostoevsky gave us such a deep exploration of human nature, a thorough insight into the Russian national character. He used a long scroll, full of contradictions, doubts, the interweaving of good and evil, the conflicts between suffering and happiness, reason and belief, through the polyphonic self-report, honestly expressed his confusion to God, reason and freedom. The thoughts, characters and destinies of the Karamazov families are the portrayal of the Russian people in the period of dramatic social change. Through writing this direct contact with human moral issues, humanity's "father's case", by placing the characters in a marginal situation to highlight the psychological contradictions, conflicts and suffering of the characters, Dostoevsky concluded the ultimate redemption is to believe in God. Through the mouth of Alyosha, he revealed the principle of "love life". The author recognizes the value of good and the value of faith in the deep understanding of human evil.

1. The Way of Redemption of the Russians-Regaining the Faith of God/Goodness

Dostoevsky said that in the book of writing, what has been around him is the question of God. In fact, the entire Russian nation, whether atheists, socialists or nihilists, is seeking the truth of God. This confusion about God is a reflection of the deep suffering reality of the Russian people. If the people live and work in peace and contentment, based on human inertia, why would they change the habit of praying, preaching, and praying? Faber, Dmitry, Ivan, and Smergakov' distrust of God have their own roots of sorrowful "conditions". Old Faber, the lonely landlord, used to

play the role of a clown in front of everyone, in order to retaliate against people and society. Dmitri was resold from a variety of people from childhood, without formal and complete education, served in the military, and thus became more temperamental. Ivan, knowledgeable, knows a lot of shocking stories from various tabloids, and with his thoughtful and intelligent personality, his faith collapsed very early. The main reason why he could not reconcile with God was about the sufferings of the children. The illegitimate child, Smergakov, was accused of “breaking his mother's womb” from an early age and was malicious to society and the crowd. Alyosha, accepting the faith of God from an early age, coupled with the influence of Elder Zosima, so his evil was completely suppressed by goodness. Faith or non-belief have their own social roots.

God is the embodiment of reason and is “an image or substitute for absolute goodness.” As the only common belief of human beings with different ideas and cultures, God can gather scattered religious people and cultivate the people through The Original Sin. The rational, restrained, and collectivist spirit represented by God is the foundation of social stability. Dostoevsky felt that the decay and disorder of the Russian society was due to the loss of the people's belief in God, and the way out for the Russians is to regain faith in God.

Dostoevsky also believes that human nature is evil, that all people have evil impulses, and that God's absolute goodness must be used to curb human evil nature. This is why “even if there is no God, it must be made.” In addition, the certainty of the meaning that God itself brings to people is also the reason people believe in God.

The Russians are all God's devotees. “It is impossible for people to overcome God. It is impossible to overcome the religious consciousness that has been deeply immersed in the flesh. To remove it, we must first get rid of our own lives.” This is the conclusion of Dostoevsky on the issue of the Russian people's beliefs. Ivan's cynicism and skepticism eventually led to his insanity and death.

Dostoevsky's view of the existence of God has its own personal and epochal limitations. Although he is a master of existentialism, he cannot be called a true philosopher. Because philosophy does not believe anything except truth. Does the acquisition of truth have to go through God? Not necessarily. Faith, as a kind of thing that does not need proof, its root is basically nothing. It's the creation of human imagination, believe or not depends on the individuals. How does it become the truth? People are imaginative. In real life, perfection does not exist, so people create a representative of perfection - God as the object of people's faith. God's existence can be seen as a reference to evil, to supervise the human soul.” Human belief in religion seems to be a worship of ‘God’, but in essence reflects our desire for ‘goodness.’” People use the materialized “goodness” of “God” to spur themselves, but this “good” image is not good itself after all, the image is solidified and static, and the human consciousness is free. The concept of “goodness” is broad and transcends the limitations of individuals and times. If you are obsessed with imagery, you may be stagnant or even embarrassed. Moreover, the “authority” of religion can hinder the realization of people's sense of freedom. For example, “confession” will only condone people to continue to commit crimes. To achieve

true freedom, one must believe in “goodness” itself. People can not believe in God, but they can't believe in good. Even if God is dead, good is alive.

2. Irresponsible Freedom Is No Different from Poison

What is freedom? First of all, freedom is an idea. As consciousness, it is nothingness. The emptiness of this foundation determines that people cannot be free and free. When people are bound, they are longing for freedom, and extreme freedom is over-correction of restraint. It is to put their will on top of others, not only to hinder the freedom of others, but ultimately to hinder their own freedom.

In the chapter of the “Religious Judge”, the judge expelled God who came to the world, because the order of the world has been established through the church, and God, as the true body of faith, does not need or can do anything, just like the judge said to God, “You have no right to add anything beyond what you had said before.” “No matter what you declare newly, it will inevitably violate the freedom of people's beliefs.” God is just a symbol of “goodness”, a static symbol, and people don't need him to be active. People are weak, lazy, being a free man is terrible for human beings, that means endless torture and heavy burden. “People are deeply concerned with finding an object to deliver to him the freedom that comes with his poor creature.” Ivan believes that it is the evil and weakness of human nature that people need to believe in God. People cannot be in a terrible freedom, because freedom means responsibility, and people are evasive of responsibility. Extreme freedom leads to extreme individualism. Ivan's idea of “Preserving oneself” is to separate the individual from the society and the times. In his eyes, there is only self, no social order, and no moral principles. “Since there is no such thing as good and evil, everything can be done.” It is this kind of person who can do what he wants to make Smergakov dare to kill his father. Ivan denies God and denies the existing social morality and social order. It seems to be meaningless to live for him. Therefore, he decided to die at the age of 30, and to eliminate this “meaningless” emptiness by destroying himself.

Even though life and the world are nothing but meaningless, survival itself is meaning. Everyone needs to live. Therefore, everyone's life is worthy of respect. If Ivan can understand this, he will not abandon others and himself.

In the eyes of Ivan, freedom is the freedom of reason and the freedom of thought. When the belief in freedom above the law of reason is abandoned, the world loses the most basic judgment scale and ultimate goal. People's utilitarian attempts and even evil desires may be plated with dazzling golden body of “truth” and “ideal” in the name of reason. Smergakov is a good proof. The result of rationality replacing God is that Ivan regards it as the purpose of existence itself and despise human order and law. Rethinking the existence of God does not mean that you can do whatever you want in the name of reason. Ivan seems to forget that reason is only a means, and happiness is the purpose. And what is rational? Rationality is precisely the understanding of the situation in which it is situated. It is precisely to clarify the vision and make a reasonable imagination, to transcend its own limitations, to

“remove self” and to make itself happy in the community. It is in the contrast between the world and others that the human being produces the so-called “self”. Without him, there is no self. Ivan’s excessive attention to the self will inevitably hinder his attention to society and others, and thus will not be able to obtain a clear “view” that will lead to proper choice.

Freedom and responsibility coexist. People's lives are chosen by themselves. If they choose, they will be responsible, not only responsible for themselves, but also responsible for others and society. Because people are people in society, any consciousness produced by people is a product of socialization, and the root of freedom is also society. Freedom is a kind of freedom in the “condition”, not “doing what you want to do”, but an effort to transcend self-limitation, constantly recognize the facts, approach the truth. The mortal is responsible for the choices made for his own consciousness. If everyone is not responsible, society will be confused.

Dostoevsky believes that people are responsible for all mankind and for the entire history. In the novel, it means that the four sons should make atonement for the father. This is the author's request for too few people responsible for his own time. As the author said, “The world has declared freedom, especially in recent times, but what do we see in their freedom: only slavery and suicide. Because the world says: ‘If you have a need, you should let it meet. Because you have the same rights as wealthy people. You don't have to be afraid to meet your needs, or even make your needs grow. This is the new creed of the world. This is what they think of freedom. But what are the consequences of this growing need for rights? The rich are isolated and committed to spiritual suicide, and the poor kill each other because of jealousy. Because they only give rights, but have not yet pointed out ways to meet their needs.”

Freedom is dialectical and moral. The freedom to isolate people and society is only a negative, inactionless freedom. This freedom is nothing but poison.

3. The Ultimate Salvation of Mankind - Love Is the Highest Harmony of Life

The protagonists in *The Brothers of Karamazov* have their own evils, some greed, indulgence, some temperament, some insidious and scheming, but their evil is not evil itself. Because the true evil is incomprehensible by reason and inhuman, Dostoevsky can portray the thoughts of these people, precisely because their evil is understandable and sympathetic. Just as the protagonist of *Sin and Punishment* kills the old woman who is a loan shark for a little profit, the author never thinks that the characters in his works are wicked. The reason why people do evil is largely due to human goodness. And realizing the evil itself is actually the beginning of goodness. The real wicked is not guilty. Man is a combination of angels and demons. The goodness of man is reflected in the process of pursuing good.

Fedor was moved by Alyosha's lack of accusation against him. When Elder Zosima pointed out that the root of his evil was only “self-deception,” he also shed tears. Is Dmitry’s thinking about those suffering people not good? Ivan, the disaster of the child is the reason why he refuses to accept God. If he is evil, there will be no

later suffering because of the spirit of “thinking to kill his father.” The temperament of Karamazov’s families is that they are all eager to live. Even Ivan, who wanted to end his life when he was 30, said that, “Is there a disappointment in the world that will overcome the madness of life in my heart, maybe it’s not decent. I am eager to... I am eager to live... Although it is against logic. Although I do not believe in the order of the universe, I cherish the spring sprouting young leaves with nourishment, and I cherish the blue sky.”

If God is gone, then you should let “good” replace “God”. Because good is the ultimate truth, mankind can never get it, and can only chase the radish hanging in front of it like a donkey. This uncertainty, unreachability of goodness is equal to or even beyond the power of God. The belief in “goodness” does not require rituals and the lord, all that need is the unrelenting pursuit of morality by every free man. Morality is not an absolute restriction on human beings. It should be something that teaches people to be in the crowd, in the truth of society and the times. The traditional morality is the crystallization of people's efforts to pursue for thousands of years. Even though it has a contractual nature, it is something closer to the truth than rationality. Just as Fei Xiaotong believes in “Local China”, the ritual system is a moral example of the local community and cannot be easily broken.

How can people get good? they must be filled with love. What is love? First and foremost, love is a path that transcends yourself and approaches others and society. Love is the highest harmony of life. Love is transcendence and sublimity, giving people a strong sense of existence and meaning of life. Life in love is a real life, showing vitality and eternal beauty. Love gives infinite depth to life. The words of Elder Zosima are profound. “Moderate love is an awesome force, stronger than everything else, and nothing can compare with it.” Alyosha used the spirit of Christian forgiveness and fraternity to save the lost world. Finally, he said to the “Twelve Disciples,” “to love life.” How can people not love their neighbors? Ivan is negative. He let himself be in the skepticism, and he does not know that love is the means to achieve the final harmony and happiness.

“A grain of wheat does not fall to the ground and it is still a grain of wheat. If it dies, it will produce many seeds. “The resurrection of man is the resurrection of love. Dostoevsky is optimistic. He always maintains a firm belief in the meaning of existence and love for life. People should love life itself more than love it’s meaning.

4. Conclusion

Through the encounter of the Karamazov family, *the Brothers Karamazov* explores the propositions of God, freedom, goodness and love, and reflects the secrets of Russian national character and human nature. Dostoevsky felt that the decay and disorder of the Russian society was due to the loss of the people's belief in God, and the Russian way out was to find a faith in God. However, faith is the creation of human imagination, different from truth, so mankind will always fall into the quagmire of doubt. Church and morality have bound people's freedom. Ivan tried to replace faith with reason and went to the path of self-destruction. Freedom is

dialectical, moral, and extreme freedom leads to extreme individualism. Finally, the author proposes to replace God with “good” and “love”. Good is the ultimate truth, and love is the highest harmony of life.

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