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## Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky's *Super-Human*

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### Abstract

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In the present article will be highlighted the fact that there is both a common ground which Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche stepped on, as well as a major bifurcation of this ground, with these two great visionaries being separated from a conceptual point of view and taking different contemplative paths. We will emphasize that, while Nietzsche assumes the role of a full supporter of the earthly values, of the immanent dimension, while denying the possibility of the transcendence and trying to identify the absolute only in the image of the Super-human, who is a witness of the absurd return of the same entity, Dostoyevsky goes beyond the proclamation of the empire of Man-God, since he projects his contemplative thinking towards the future of the latter, the sole authority that can give the extent of the value and positivity of such a hypostasis

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## 1 Introduction

*The nihilism*, as an ontic attitude, is one of the paradigms frequently encountered in the evolutionary course of the human being. The man has often assumed the totality of a radical rejection that frequently identifies with the furious gesture of rebellion and rejection of traditional social norms, as well as of moral imperatives conferred by revelations or priestly postulations. However, nihilism began to be conceptualized and monitored at the level of philosophical abstractions, along with the issuing in 1862, in the field of Russian literature, of the novel written by Turgevev, "Fathers and Sons". Resuming this term and going more thoroughly into it, F.M. Dostoyevsky will open the field of a broad debate on what essentially addresses the fatal slips of the acceptance of an absolute freedom for the human destiny. If, through the radical act imposed by the nihilist approaches, the tradition may be rejected and at least put between brackets, as deemed later on by phenomenology, which presented its own reductive method, then, the religion as well, along with its whole axiomatic, may be suspended in the sense of an affective and mental non-implication in its values. Therefore, the fact of rejecting *the revelation*, as a decisive element for the dynamics of religion, means the idea of faith in God is refused. Therefore, the man can walk, liberated from the terrible burden of the supposition of divine existence, towards his own future, a plan in which he could achieve the perfection of his own structures, becoming, for himself, the only god. The cancellation of all traditional values and the rising of a single triumphant axiom, which postulates that *everything is permitted* in the name of human evolution towards the state of the *Super-human*, generates, for Dostoyevsky, a number of dramatic problems that can reveal terrific risks incurred by such an ontological, gnoseologic and ethical option.

## 2 Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky's Super-Human

Assuming this sentence of relaunching the man towards a self surpassing, through the rejection of traditional European values, especially Christian ones, as the primary theme of his philosophical discourse, Friedrich Nietzsche will insist on the need for cancelling the past full of Judeo-Christian imperatives and on the reformulation of the conceptual step towards future, on the bases of an ecstatic postulation of the *Super-human* as the only virtual presence towards which man should strive. Such a resurrectionary jump can be taken on after the announcement of *God's death*, with the discovery of the *will of power*, as a factor that prevails in relation to the love for the fellow human, and after revealing the sole explanatory principle of the world, the eternal circularity of the world, which Nietzsche calls metaphorically *the eternal return of the same*. Therefore, it was necessary, within the framework of such a radical approach, to make a total criticism of the Judeo-Christian spiritual heritage, as well as the postulation of a new hierarchy of values, in the middle of which the image of the Super-human haloed by the energies generated by the cancellation of *the feeling of compassion* should prevail in favour of the exuberance of unleashed pride and force. There is, therefore, a common path on which Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche walked, but also a major bifurcation where this path branches, the two great visionaries being separated from a conceptual point of view, since they headed for different contemplative directions.

To Nietzsche, the Christian religion, along with the Buddhist one, represent one of the most profound nihilistic steps ever taken in human history. Practically, Nietzsche believes that the Christian worldview rejects the primordial elements of life and essential realities that define its dynamics. These factors, whose crucial importance is denied by the religious and mystical scenario of Christianity, can be summed up by the concept of *will of power*. Such a concept, once postulated as a capital component of a correct view on life and human destiny, generates other satellite-concepts such as the degree of power, hierarchy of power, the great disparities between the strong and the weak. From Nietzsche's viewpoint, the tradition of European spirituality was centred on assuming these Judeo-Christian values, which are spaced substantially by the merciless truth of life, that reduces the human evolution to an evolutionary and selective process, in which the vigorous ones must despise and neglect the inferior ones. Of course, the acceptance of such a perspective can only exclude the possibility of the Christian revelation and transcendent reality, the Christian divine nature, manifested through epiphanies and miracle, with these ones being catalogued by Nietzsche as metaphysical lies and simple fables added by early Christians to authentic historical facts. *The instinctual reality* of life must be contrasted here with any timeless and supra-spatial hierarchies, all that matters being the triumph of man in time and space, his victory over his own limitations and the obsessive leap towards the final stage of his progress, the paradigm of the *Super-human*. Nietzsche tells us that this is not a supposition or a fascinating proposal, but, instead, it constitutes the ultimate and undeniable reality of life. This authentic mundane hierarchy must be accepted and assumed by the new man, liberated from the Christian superstition and rooted in another conceptual ground different from that of the Judeo-Christian disparities, but also platonic ones, between good and bad, moral and amoral. Nietzsche, 1999, p. 43) Nietzsche wants to place the human consciousness *beyond good and bad*, in a framework of relentless action that despises and rejects the love for the fellow human, considering the feeling of compassion as the most decadent vice of mankind. The theory of the reward or of the divine damnation, the idea that there is a post-temporal Heaven or Hell represent visions which are incompatible with the teaching on the Super-human, teaching brought by Prophet Zarathustra. According to Nietzsche, such visions are not other than the fruit of the resentment of the weak ones, represented by the early Christians, compared with the strong ones, symbolized by the Romanian aristocracy. The return to the hardness of life and to the attitude of the old Romans is compulsory, according to Nietzsche, since it is an absolute imperative to be fulfilled along with the renunciation to Christianity and to the faith in the Christian God, renunciation which is evoked under the ecstatic assumption *God is dead!*

From the perspective of such a radical reversal and reconsideration of all the steps necessary for the assumption of the Western spiritual tradition, should be adopted the cult of *the will to power* as the sole guiding and relevant factor for the dynamics and fundamental structures of life. (Nietzsche, 1993, p. 5) Nothing that belongs to the terrestrial existence, the sole ontic dimension that can be invested with credibility, in Nietzsche's view, cannot be excluded from the processual character of the upward evolution of life, phenomenon that inevitably separates the factors which bear the will to power from the ones deprived of it. What remains undecided and presents the risks of a conceptual hazardous opening is the mere unclear and unilateral non-defining of this will to power. What is such a concept as

a last resort, and, especially, towards what consequences may lead its postulating as a unique guiding mark of life? What if behind such a triumphant proclamation, on behalf of which must be sacrificed the human soul's need to relate to transcendence, divinity and love, would be hiding a dangerous emptiness that only cultivates the selfish excesses of the self? The poetic-symbolic typology of Nietzsche's discourse, discourse often modulated in the shades of ancient biblical prophets and poets, is coming here just to help the enigma of the primordial and ultimate sense of the concept of will to power, but also of the proposal of the variant presenting the Super-human as a final milestone in the human evolution. (Papini, 1991, p. 4)

By rejecting the possibility of spiritual immortality and transcendent life, Nietzsche believes that the Christian scenario of the existence beyond death is the most nihilistic of all the world's religious proposals. To believe in a dimension infinitely superior to the terrestrial one and to move the centre of gravity of life *beyond* it, is tantamount, in Nietzsche's opinion, to placing the essence of life in nothingness. (Nietzsche, 1998, p. 63) In the view of the German thinker, the assumption, for nearly two millennia, of this explanatory version of the world and human destiny, determined the corruption and the syncope of human consciousness, with this one being seduced and narcotized by the idea of a better and more just world lying in an absolute plan. The end of this nihilistic situation can only occur by giving up the faith in the Judeo-Christian deity, by the final extinction of the Christian disease and by opening an era of sublime human strength and will, concentrated and symbolized by the iconic image of the Super-human. Thus, the man must fulfil himself under the ontic sign of here and now, since he is subject to the imperatives of durable acts committed by excluding the love for the fellow human and by cultivating the disdain for those considered weak and for self pride. The whole life is limited, therefore, to the absurd movement in circle, to *eternal returns of the same entity*, which fully justifies the sentence of living life to the fullest, without resentments or moral projections to a hierarchy of transcendent values. The only value is the one that imposes itself, which is dictated by the will of the powerful human who submits consciousnesses defined as poor, the ethics of compassion being here seen as a sign of decadence and spiritual disease. With the assumption of this existential and cultural attitude that only believes in the selective evolutionism, the Christian nihilism will be defeated and the dawn of the Super-human will triumph, as announced ecstatically by *the prophet of God's death*, namely Zarathustra. (Nietzsche, 1996, p. 364)

What can be seen beyond this triumphalist style of approach and exposure, is not a fully clear truth, a fundamental reality of life that has already been clarified and demonstrated in its absolute validity. On the contrary, if one has a closer look, it appears that behind the Nietzschean conceptual theory, there are simple utopian presuppositions intertwined with subjective perspectives related more to Nietzsche's personal experiences than to a central point argued through correspondence with the realities of human existence. In this context, *the evilness of Christianity* which the German thinker indicates, proves to be the only harmful product and action, cumulated, for centuries, by the fake Christianity, politically and socially engaged and totally distant from the original Christian vision. Also, the falsity of traditional values seems to be here an idea that exaggerates the conceptual and ideological deviations of a few lines of European culture, the main lines open by this one remaining valid, from the perspective of the evolution of human consciousness, for any period of time. But what

is really worrying in the utopian Nietzschean scenario is represented by the vehemence of denying the absolute value of *the love for the fellow humans*. The exclusion of the compassion and its replacement with the feeling of the strong one, who must arrogantly dominate and command, due to his task concerning his own destiny of *conqueror*, represents a sentence which was first taken up and then interpreted and applied radically, thus eventually contributing to incalculable historical tragedies. Also, the rejection of the Christian revelation, on the assumption that all the apostles participated in a universal plot, being guided by feelings of revenge on the aristocrats of that time and on the verticality of the Roman welfare, turns out to be another simple personal opinion that Nietzsche, by using stylistic figures where the logical argument was insufficient, is trying to certify as a historical truth. Of course, revolving around these theses, Nietzsche's thinking will develop its analyzes of the dimension of the emotional human experience, postulating some decisive components for the whole subsequent European cultural development, among which the importance of feelings in philosophy and the inauguration of the abysmal psychology or the criticism of theological doctrines and of the manipulator superstition belonging to the great doctrinal religious systems. But, for Nietzsche, just like for other thinkers who opened new spiritual horizons, the dangerous fascination of the rejection and of the replacement of Christian revelation with an ontic and axiological *utopian* scenario proved to be generating important misunderstandings and obscure interpretations.

At the core of the Nietzschean utopia, there is the concept of *Supra-human*. One of the few authors who pushed the analysis of this concept further than Nietzsche was Dostoyevsky. Coming from another tradition of thinking and addressing the issue of the utopia related to the inauguration of an absolute human empire, with no connection or direct reference to Nietzschean type scenarios, Dostoyevsky will exhibit the glorified image of the man who surpassed himself, by turning into a *Super-human* or into the *man-god*. The era of this man-god would be characterized by the full submission of nature, by the maximization of the exploration and use of its resources, so that all people can enjoy the status of an absolute civilization and technology. Nothing would be impregnable for this man-god and he would act without the false and manipulative idea of a reward beyond death and of an existence of the spirit after the occurrence of death. Since everything happens exclusively in the terrestrial space and time, the man-god should achieve perfection in history not beyond or above it. Thus, the sole axiologies and ethics would be those which revolve around the human glory that would no longer know the reporting to the divine instance and to a transcendent dimension. (Dostoevski, 1982, p. 445) The query that Dostoevsky introduces, at this level of description, is a question avoided by Nietzsche: how will the man-god evolve, what will he aspire to? The impossibility to stagnate to a certain stage is obvious in so far as the man-god and his empire are inserted into the spatial and temporal dimension. Everything that is situated in the dimension of time, therefore, turns into what the man-god's evolution might head for, what would he become? Dostoyevsky's reply is negative and dramatic. The man-god would be guided, by his own pride, towards self-annihilation. Only acting according to his self-will, disregarding any natural law in his leap towards an unleashed progress, he will go back, eventually, to his own fellow humans, and his arrogance will generate the final conflict. In light of the portrait of this finality, Dostoyevsky reveals the non-substantial idea of the man-god or Super-human. This idea turns out to be only the image of an entity that is applied over the human being or is proposed in parallel to it but does

not actively go from the active inner dimension of the human spirit, in order to raise it to perfection. By proposing such an entity as the absolute model for which the man must be overcome, Nietzsche proposes an entity which is foreign for the human being, a presence which constitutes a slippage and a *betrayal* in relation with the authentic ontic performance of the human being. (Berdiaev, 1994, p. 206)

### 3 Conclusions

If Nietzsche assumes the role of a full supporter of the earthly values, of the dimension of the immanence, vehemently denying the possibility of transcendence and trying to identify the absolute only in the image of the Super-human, witness of the absurd return of the same (Berdiaev, 1999, pp. 41-42), Dostoevsky does is not hindered by the naivety which characterizes the proclamation of the empire belonging to the man-god, but he projects his contemplative thought towards the future of the latter, the only one that can give the measure of the value and of the positivity of such a hypostasis. The pride and the non-transcendentalism of the man-god prove to be fatal, as they increase exponentially with the lapse of time. Thus, the end of the man-god, his eschatology gives the extent of the degree of inconsistency and harmfulness of his idea in relation to the entity proposed by the Christian view as the only component towards which man should aim, namely *the saint*. Unlike the man-god, the saint is not self-sufficient, on the contrary, he aspires to a decisively achieved co-affiliation to an ecstatic reintegration. This fusion, or more precisely, re-fusion should be carried out, as indicated by the early Christian mysticism, and also by the scholastic one, according to the absolute being of the Divinity. Here, only the return and the re-making of the divine (Eckhart, 2004, p. 260), can guarantee the salvation of the man from the sin, which is a capital deficiency that Nietzsche vehemently denied, considering it the most active bias, salvation without which the man's spiritual ascension is impossible. But in order to understand the dark harmfulness of the sin and in order to be able to assume it, as far more than a religious superstition, it is necessary to adhere to the faith that can lead towards the resurrectionary revelation and involvement in the tension of a *total love*. Nevertheless, looking towards the non-consolatory finality of life and towards its terrible tragedies and lacerations of the soul, that seem doomed, from the very beginning, to the earthly human adventure (Cioran, 1990, p. 33-35), we can ask ourselves, along with the profoundly nihilist thought belonging to Emil Cioran, who would have the strength to be loving, in the proper sense of the word, being willing to sacrifice their ontic destiny and identity in the name of the compassion that raises the human consciousness to the level of the con-substantiality with the Divine?

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