

HEARTS AND MINDS: THE CONFESSIONS OF ROUSSEAU, RASKOLNIKOV, AND THE UNDERGROUND MAN

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Apparent antagonists, assumed to be ideological opposites, Rousseau and Dostoevsky actually share profoundly similar moral outlooks.¹ Each attempts to demonstrate the inadequacy of the rationalism, individualism, scientism and optimism characteristic of the Enlightenment. Their writings marked by an underlying pessimism, both authors argue that human beings are born to suffer; each sees history as essentially tragic. In the case of Dostoevsky, this tragic quality is mitigated by Christian transcendence. For both, the rejection of certain varieties of rationalism is paralleled by an emphasis on faith and on the value of religious belief, though Dostoevsky's mystic Christianity is very different from the civil religion of Rousseau. Both portray moral goodness as tied to the heart, feelings and true conscience. Each warns that reason twisted by pride may distort moral judgment, yet neither rejects rationality proper. While Dostoevsky depicts characters like Raskolnikov, Stavrogin and the Grand Inquisitor to show reason without faith as an extreme evil, he values reason for its role in developing consciousness. And Rousseau allows that the

MARY L. BELLHOUSE

rare true sage may be lacking in faith and feeling and yet serve others as a valuable moral guide.

The Underground Man, Raskolnikov and Rousseau must bare their souls in order to overcome the dangers of pride and shame; all three strive for "transparency" and seek acceptance.² Transparency brings each closer to others; it diminishes feelings of isolation and separation — feelings which, engendered by pride, tend to encourage immoral behavior. While both Rousseau and Dostoevsky suggest that vulnerability to feelings of shame may be rooted in poverty and exacerbated by an urban life, the solution implied by each is not so much economic change as escape from *amour-propre*, vanity, and the sway of opinion. The solution, as Raskolnikov illustrates, begins at least with confession, sincerity and love.

According to Rousseau and Dostoevsky, because reason is subject to distortion by pride and vanity and because most human beings act on the basis of the passions, the good community must also be based on feeling, not rational truth alone. At the same time, the two authors caution that pity is inadequate to form the community's affective ties since, as both observe, pity may be either too weak or based on an unrecognized egotism, an assertion of superiority that reduces its object. Thus, Rousseau and Dostoevsky each hold that pity is no substitute for duty, justice and adherence to law.

The emphasis placed by Rousseau and Dostoevsky on feeling, love and confession carries political implications as each author calls for an integration of self, an integration achieved by Rousseau's citizen and, in the end, by Raskolnikov. In Dostoevsky's political vision of Russia as the Christian nation and in Rousseau's *Social Contract*, what is crucial are the ties of feeling uniting the people. In each case, one finds a community whose members feel a part of the whole and stand willing to sacrifice self-interest for the needs of others. Such a people are not strangers, detached and cloaked by calculations of self-interest, but, instead, are loving and open in their feelings. Thus, Rousseau and Dostoevsky decry the egoistic individualism they see to be dominant in Western European culture; the alternative they both espouse is greater moral and psychological equality among human beings and, in its political dimensions, a community of brotherhood.

With an eye toward deepening understanding of the counter-Enlightenment and dispelling the notion that Rousseau and Dostoevsky are ideological opposites, the "complex but authentic link" which connects their ideas will be explored in this essay. Three particular moral issues of fundamental importance to both thinkers are considered: the role of conscience, pity and reason in moral choice; the purpose of confession; and love as a means of moral regeneration.

DECONSTRUCTING ROUSSEAU

I

Moral Freedom and the Role of Conscience, Pity, and Reason

Rousseau, like Dostoevsky, is no Grand Inquisitor. Philosophically, both writers grant the highest value to moral and spiritual freedom, judging it far more precious than, for example, material prosperity.³ They each accord freedom primary value while recognizing its tragic quality: freedom, including what Rousseau calls "perfectibility," does not necessarily lead to virtue; rather its likely result is moral corruption.⁴ As the Underground Man insists, humans may exercise their free will stupidly, irrationally, illogically, and self-destructively.⁵ Still, as Rousseau states, "To give up freedom is to give up one's human quality: to remove freedom from one's will is to remove all morality from one's actions."⁶

In analyzing the factors involved in making moral choices, Rousseau and Dostoevsky both pay great attention to conscience, pity, and reason. Rousseau contends that humans are characterized by two fundamental, pre-rational traits: *amour de soi* and *pitié*, which, combined, render humans unwilling to harm each other in the state of nature. According to the *Second Discourse*:

pity is a natural sentiment which, moderating in each individual the activity of love of oneself, contributes to the mutual preservation of the entire species. It carries us without reflection to the aid of those whom we see suffer; in the state of nature, it takes the place of laws, morals, and virtue, with the advantage that no one is tempted to disobey its gentle voice.⁷

All the social virtues — generosity, clemency, humanity, benevolence, friendship — are said to flow from pity.

Rousseau takes conscience to be the first derivative of love of oneself (*amour de soi*) and pity. In the *Profession of Faith* — Rousseau's most thorough discussion of conscience — the Savoyard Vicar explains that conscience is a natural feeling, "a simple gift of nature" that precedes all acquired ideas. Conscience, "an innate principle of justice and virtue," inspires human beings with love of the good and hatred of evil. The Vicar stresses that conscience, said to be found "in the depths of souls," issues *feelings*, not judgments.⁸

In analyzing the development of human reason and its effects, Rousseau is led to consider the question of "hearts and minds": what is the relation of moral feeling — pity and the decrees of conscience — to reason? Rousseau approaches this relationship variously and offers a complex perspective on it. The Savoyard Vicar highlights the possibility of conflict between reason and

MARY L. BELLHOUSE

conscience and suggests that, as a guide to right and wrong, conscience is more reliable:

Too often reason deceives us. We have acquired only too much right to challenge it. But conscience never deceives; it is man's true guide. It is to the soul what instinct is to the body; he who follows conscience obeys nature and does not fear being led astray.⁹

Rousseau claims in his autobiographies that his own conscience and pity have *not* been destroyed or silenced and that he is still able to rely on conscience for moral guidance. He asserts that his heart generally has sway over his reason. While admitting that he has sometimes been wrong in his outward behavior, he insists that, due to the goodness of his intentions, his heart has remained pure and his conscience free.¹⁰ Rousseau's criticism of the vain rationalizing of sophistic philosophers, his praise of simple folk still guided by conscience, and his self-portraits all seem to support the popular view of him as an apostle of *sentiment* and enemy of reason.¹¹

But, despite its lively history, such an interpretation remains inadequate. It fails to recognize that Rousseau condemns not reason as such, but reason misled by vanity. Characterizing modern society as morally corrupt, Rousseau avers that this corruption is rooted in the workings of pride or vanity (*amour-propre*). Pride not only weakens the voice of conscience, it tends to distort or pervert the functioning of reason. Reason is vulnerable in this respect: it is likely to become subjugated to vanity.

At the same time, Rousseau teaches that reason may play an extremely valuable moral role so long as it is not a tool of pride. He asserts that conscience requires reason for its completion. The two faculties, at best, ought to function in harmony: conscience will prompt human beings to *love* what is right, while reason will allow them to *perceive* what is right.¹²

While conscience is always correct, reason perverted by vanity may *imitate* conscience. In such a case, uncorrupted reason may be able to distinguish true conscience from false or imitated conscience. Thus, Rousseau speaks of the "true philosopher" as one whose reason resists the pressures of vanity. Such a sage might be lacking in feeling — his conscience might even be silent — but he would be able to distinguish right from wrong and, as a result, might serve others as a valuable moral guide. Emile's tutor, the Lawgiver of the *Social Contract*, and Wolmar of *Julie, or the New Heloise* approximate this type.

Rousseau portrays himself in his autobiographies as, for the most part, a kind of 'natural man,' *not* as a model of moral or civic virtue. Thus, for example, he explains in the sixth Walk of the *Rêveries* that he is generous only when acting freely, not when driven by a sense of duty or bound by feelings of

DECONSTRUCTING ROUSSEAU

constraint. Virtue, which Rousseau distinguishes from natural goodness, is founded on duty and requires constraint. According to the *Social Contract*, the citizen's virtue is guided by his or her own reason, the rational direction of the Lawgiver, and morally salutary national feeling, including a civil religion.

Rousseau, then, is not an anti-rationalist; rather, he holds that reason may play a major role in the attainment of moral and civil freedom, keeping conscience from going astray.

While *sentiment* often overwhelms Jean-Jacques, the Underground Man finds himself enervated in a state of detached analytic reflection, unable to sustain deep feelings of compassion for others. The Underground Man has freedom and individuality, two primary values for Dostoevsky, but he suffers in his consciousness from the great modern disease of isolation. He is not sure of what is in his head or his heart, and his inner turmoil produces a marked ambivalence in his behavior. As he regards himself, he fluctuates between exaggerated feelings of esteem and degradation. This "characterless creature" is struck by the uselessness of consciousness of virtue and, ironically, in remarking that he would probably never have been able to do anything with his magnanimity, he echoes Rousseau.¹³ Like Rousseau, the Underground Man claims his wrongdoing originates in his mind, not his heart. When the Underground Man admits to deliberate cruelty, he adds: "it was not an impulse from the heart, but came from my evil brain. This cruelty was so affected, so purposely made up, so completely a product of the brain, of books."¹⁴ But the text also indicates that the Underground Man's heart is "corrupted by depravity" and that he "cannot have a full, genuine consciousness without a pure heart."¹⁵

The Underground Man, paralyzed by the inertia resulting from hyperconsciousness, searches for a base, a "primary reason" for action; he seems to think too much and cannot act out what is in his heart. Despite his discomfort with this stance, the Underground Man insists that any intelligent man is reduced to inaction, that only fools can act. He looks down on the "men of action" as only exterior, lacking in freedom, self-awareness and development. While the "men of action" mouth the latest rationalist theories, the Underground Man claims to recognize the moral implications of scientific determinism and the significance of will and desire.

Both Jean-Jacques and the Underground Man eschew the idea of life lived by reason alone. For Rousseau's life to have meaning, he needs love and the freedom to follow his passions. For the Underground Man, the truth is that there is no meaning, and hyperconsciousness does not allow him to delude himself with man-made meanings. In his view, even the rationalist acts out of impulse — hate, spite, anger, pride — without realizing it and every act of reason is an act of the will. Still, *he* is the great rationalizer, using his reason to protect himself from his failure of will. The Underground Man wants to

MARY L. BELLHOUSE

believe in morality, in virtue, in love, in his own character, but he lacks faith and is incapable of transforming himself.

The character Raskolnikov offers an even more fascinating example of reason in conflict with feeling. A striking feature of *Crime and Punishment* is that Raskolnikov is repeatedly moved to great feelings of pity and generosity. Despite his destitution, he leaves money for the pathetic Marfa and her starving children; he aids the drunken girl, apparently already raped and now pursued again; he brings the injured clerk Marmeladov home to die and pays for his funeral.¹⁶ Yet, typically, Raskolnikov is quick to regret his generosity. His immediate feelings of compassion soon pass and are replaced by an abstract rationalism, which leaves him scornful of his attempts to help.¹⁷ His friend Razumihin perceives this see-saw dynamic in Raskolnikov's character:

he is morose, gloomy, proud and haughty, and of late — perhaps for a long time before — he has been suspicious and fanciful. He has a noble nature and a kind heart. He does not like showing his feelings and would rather do a cruel thing than open his heart freely. Sometimes, though, he is not at all morbid, but simply cold and inhumanly callous; it's as though he were alternating between two characters.¹⁸

This change from pity to detachment is addressed by Rousseau in his distinction between the nature of simple souls and that of "hyper-rational" philosophers. Rousseau argues that the development of reason tends to diminish the workings of pity:

Reason engenders vanity and reflection fortifies it; reason turns man back upon himself, it separates him from all that bothers and afflicts him. Philosophy isolates him; because of it he says in secret, at the sight of a suffering man: Perish if you will, I am safe. No longer can anything except dangers to the entire society trouble the tranquil sleep of the philosopher and tear him from his bed. His fellow-man can be murdered with impunity right under his window; he has only to put his hands over his ears and argue with himself a bit to prevent nature, which revolts within him, from identifying him with the man who is being assassinated. Savage man does not have this admirable talent, and for want of wisdom and reason he is always seen heedlessly yielding to the first sentiment of humanity. In riots or street fights the populace assembles, the prudent man moves away; it is the rabble, the market-women, who separate the combatants and prevent honest people from murdering each other.¹⁹

DECONSTRUCTING ROUSSEAU

Raskolnikov has within himself both great reasoning ability and powerful feelings of pity. The conflict between the two is emphasized even by the character's name: the Russian word *raskol* means schism. Hyperconscious like the Underground Man, Raskolnikov is also hyper-rational; he uses reason to justify his decision to rob and kill the old pawnbroker. Dostoevsky writes, "it would seem, as regards the moral question, that his analysis was complete; his casuistry had become keen as a razor, and he could not find rational objections in himself."²⁰ Early on, Raskolnikov suggests that he commits the crime partly in order to aid the poor (is the irony of murder in the name of compassion lost on him?). Later he reveals that he killed because he "wanted to become a Napoleon." He deems the murder an "experiment" designed to demonstrate his theory that great men have the right to transgress moral boundaries, and that he is such a man.²¹

Explaining his theory, Raskolnikov haltingly discloses that

an extraordinary man has the right ... that is not an official right, but an inner right to decide in his own conscience to overstep ... certain obstacles, and only in case it is essential for the practical fulfilment of his idea (sometimes, perhaps, of benefit to the whole of humanity).²²

The good Razumihin is shocked by Raskolnikov's position on conscience, seeing it as the most disconcerting aspect of his friend's theory:

what is really *original* in all this, and is exclusively your own, to my horror, is that you sanction bloodshed *in the name of conscience*, and, excuse my saying so, with such fanaticism... That, I take it, is the point of your article. But that sanction of bloodshed *by conscience* is, to my mind ... more terrible than the official, legal sanction of bloodshed...²³

By implying that the murder of the pawnbroker was sanctioned by his conscience Raskolnikov seems to directly contradict Rousseau's view on this sentiment.

But Raskolnikov later learns that his "conscience" is a false one. His act of murder was not based on true conscience, but on reason *perverted by vanity and pride*. Soon after his crime, Raskolnikov feels "horror and loathing of what he had done."²⁴ His reason and conscience conflict, tearing him apart. His failure as a "superman" occurs within himself: he cannot sustain his efforts to use reason to fend off his feelings of guilt and torment. When his rationalizing ceases and he begins to *feel*, he is horrified. Then he is engulfed by a "dull, unreasoning terror."²⁵ Several times, losing control over his reasoning, he is overcome by a desire to confess.

MARY L. BELLHOUSE

The impulse (to confess) was so strong that he got up from his seat to carry it out. 'Hadn't I better think a minute?' flashed through his mind. 'No, better cast off the burden without thinking.'²⁶

After the murder, he is bitter at the realization that it was a vain experiment, not a stepping stone to some great, noble end. It is a blow to his ego that he cannot control his conscience with the logic of his theory. He insults himself for not being extraordinary, but does not abandon his theory,²⁷ which remains a rationalization for an impulse to kill, an impulse stemming from *wounded pride*. After the crime, his pride, still dominant, denies him total remorse.

Even after a year of imprisonment in Siberia, Raskolnikov remains unrepentant, claiming his "conscience is at rest."²⁸ Yet the novel, taken as a whole and particularly its ending, indicates that Raskolnikov has been out of touch with his true conscience and has mistaken the casuistry of his reason for conscience's voice. When Rousseau's Savoyard Vicar explains that fanaticism may counterfeit the voice of conscience, his observation accurately portrays Raskolnikov:

If it (conscience) speaks to all hearts, then why are there so few of them who hear it? Well, this is because it speaks to us in nature's language, which everything has made us forget. Conscience is timid; it likes refuge and peace. The world and noise scare it; the prejudices from which they claim it is born are its cruellest enemies. It flees or keeps quiet before them. Their noisy voices stifle its voice and prevent it from making itself heard. *Fanaticism dares to counterfeit it and to dictate crime in its name*. It finally gives up as a result of being dismissed. It no longer speaks to us. It no longer responds to us. And after such long contempt for it, to recall it costs as much as banishing it did.²⁹

In a sense, Raskolnikov's true conscience turns out to be Sonia, who eventually leads him to the path of moral regeneration. The ending of *Crime and Punishment* suggests that Raskolnikov eventually discovers what Rousseau understands, that abstract reason twisted by pride should not overrule conscience. What seems to be a perversion of Rousseau's views on conscience, then, ends up an extraordinary example in support of this aspect of the Genevan's teachings.

Dostoevsky is clearly denouncing Raskolnikov's pitiless side — the superman's "higher morality" is after all shown to be that of a callous murderer, who takes the life of not only the old usurers but also her gentle sister, Lizaveta.³⁰ Dostoevsky shares Rousseau's deep concern with the relationship

DECONSTRUCTING ROUSSEAU

among pity, conscience, reason and pride. His novels *echo* but do not simply repeat Rousseau. They appear as exaggerations — the portrayal of the extraordinarily divided Raskolnikov as a criminal, a murderer, is part of this exaggeration.

II

Purpose of Confession: From Shame to Sincerity

At the beginning of his *Confessions* Rousseau issues a remarkable challenge to the reader:

So let the numberless legion of my fellow men gather round me, and hear my confessions. Let them groan at my depravities, and blush for my misdeeds. But let each one of them reveal his heart at the foot of thy throne with equal sincerity and may any man who dares, say 'I was a better man than he.'³¹

To types like the Underground Man these remarks may seem simply boastful. Yet the implied demand for self-examination suggests that Rousseau's purpose in writing the *Confessions* is not merely exculpatory, nor only to gain self-knowledge; rather, he is also deeply concerned to bring about the moral improvement of his readers. To foster this improvement, Rousseau stresses sincerity and, in effect, argues for lower moral standards. It is this combination of lowering moral standards and the elevation of sincerity that leads Rousseau to unprecedented frankness in exposing his moral weaknesses.³² His revelations are essential if others are to examine their own character and conduct squarely.

Both Rousseau and Dostoevsky stress *shame* and vanity as major forces undermining moral goodness, destroying pure intentions and silencing conscience. Rousseau focuses on shame in his repeated discussions of a lie told in his youth blaming his theft of a ribbon on a poor servant girl. His heart was good, but he was overwhelmed by shame when accused of the theft, and, too proud to admit his crime, he wrongly blamed his friend. Rousseau implies that if one is driven to commit misdeeds, one ought to confess and seek understanding. The solution is found in openness, not secrecy and lying.

The Underground Man also lies out of shame. Like Rousseau in the ribbon incident,³³ the Underground Man continually alternates between feeling ashamed and hurt and making rude attempts to defend himself. All the Underground Man's relations — with his co-workers, with his former schoolmates, with Liza, with his servant — involve wild vacillation between feelings

MARY L. BELLHOUSE

of inferiority and superiority, between shame and pride. He wants to be accepted, yet he needs to sneer at others. Thus he is rude, petty and cruel and, at other times, grovels. He takes pride in his consciousness and in his unwillingness to compromise or to pretend, yet he is left with nothing to enjoy but his own suffering. He sneers at others for accepting delusions, but is left alone, trapped in his "hole."

Notes from Underground represents not parody of confession, but confession aborted.³⁴ After the Underground Man has sexual relations with Liza, he is ashamed because he, too, has defiled her, an innocent and simple creature. Struggling with his guilt, he uses false pretenses to win her respect: he plays the hero, preaching to her of "the holy mystery of love," borrowing the romantic rhetoric of other. Late, when Liza arrives at his squalid apartment and the real plight of his isolation and poverty are exposed, he stands before her in his filthy, tattered robe, "crushed, crest-fallen, revoltingly embarrassed."³⁵ Deeply ashamed of his indigency, he starts to cry and then, comforted by her sympathy, to confess to her. But his tears and confession only add to his shame and, stripped of his sense of superiority, his vanity destroys his compassion. Tormented by hurt pride, he ruthlessly insults her till she is forced to leave. However, even after Liza departs, he is ambivalent and, again in shame and despair, rushes after her to beg forgiveness. He fails to catch up with her and his confession remains aborted, basically because for him, "loving meant tyrannizing and showing... moral superiority."³⁶ He cannot accept her as an equal.

Not only his confession to Liza, but also his confession to the reader is incomplete. Like the former schoolmates, the servant, and Liza, the reader, too, witnesses his petty nastiness. He succeeds in revealing the "dark side" of his character, but he fails to open his heart consciously to the reader. Once again he is unable to relate to others as equals. He wants to be accepted by the reader but cannot admit so; instead, he again pretends indifference and attempts to ridicule the reader, too.

The Underground Man's confessions, both to Liza and to the reader, are failures in that he is not transformed by his revelations. His split personality and gloomy isolation are unchanged. Yet, like Rousseau, the Underground Man effectively calls readers to examine their own lives and begin their own confessions. In this way, despite his own failure to confess fully, and despite his resentment of his audience, the confessional narrator of *The Notes* may serve as a vehicle for moral guidance.³⁷

Like the Underground Man, Raskolnikov is tormented by shame and at the same time wants to prove his superiority. In contrast to the Underground Man, though, Raskolnikov is able to confess fully. He picks Sonia as his confessor, his choice settled after hearing her read the Lazarus story. He chooses a good-hearted, true believer as his confidante — a person, like Liza, whose

DECONSTRUCTING ROUSSEAU

goodness in no way depends on wisdom. Sonia's lack of deep metaphysical thought doesn't matter to Raskolnikov; he is attracted to her purity. Raskolnikov's confession to Sonia begins his moral regeneration. The ending of the novel suggests that her acceptance of his crime leads to love and a life no longer in conflict with feeling. With Sonia he will eventually humble himself and "settle" for love: as he gives up his drive for superiority, his conscience is revitalized. At the same time, he is not motivated — primarily at least — by repentance. For both Rousseau and Dostoevsky, the emphasis in portraying confession is not on repentance, but on overcoming isolation and insincerity.

III Love and Moral Regeneration

Although Rousseau asserts that primitive man's needs were limited to nourishment, repose, and sex, he allows that love is a true need of social man.³⁸ Significantly, Rousseau's last writing — the tenth Promenade of the *Rêveries* — is devoted to the subject of love. There he discusses love as a source of happiness, and presents an idealized version of his youthful liaison with Mme. de Warens. He stresses that this, his first love affair, occurred at a critical juncture in his life, shaping his soul and determining his fate. As Rousseau matured, his relationship with this woman changed from his acting as her student and child to being treated as an equal — a friend, and, finally, being accepted as her lover.³⁹ Rousseau writes that in their years as lovers, he could at last truly live and be himself "without admixture and without obstacle."⁴⁰ This love, he claims, helped him to gain self-knowledge. Without it, he was too pulled by the passions of others and dominated by necessity to know what was his own in his conduct. He found freedom, too, with this woman: "I could not bear subjection; I was perfectly free and better than free, for bound only by my affections, I did only what I wanted to do."⁴¹

It is not mere romantic sentimentality that leads Rousseau to conclude his last work with the subject of love. Rather, he wants to emphasize his view that love is the key if humans are to relate to each other on a basis other than *amour-propre* — a course that is imperative for happiness and virtue in a social context.

This is not to say that Rousseau views love as a panacea. In fact, he appears to rate the likelihood of successful, long-term love as small.⁴² On the surface, this is suggested by the fact that the two marriages portrayed by Rousseau end as failures (in the sequel to *Emile*, called *Les Solitaires*, and in the *Nouvelle Héloïse*). At the fundamental level there is the problem of the in-

MARY L. BELLHOUSE

stability of a relationship based on *amour de soi*.⁴³ Also, Rousseau discloses in the *Confessions* that his affair with Mme. de Warens ended unhappily when he was displaced by another lover. Yet, in deliberately depicting that love optimistically in his final account, Rousseau stresses that human beings need others. Even in his self-portrait as the *solitary*, he points to the value of love.

The parallel in Dostoevsky is important: in both *Notes from Underground* and *Crime and Punishment*, the Russian presents love as the key to spiritual regeneration. As the Underground Man recognizes, his one chance for "salvation" — for escape from the underground — is through loving Liza. Even after he begins to humiliate her, she opens her heart and arms to him:

Liza wounded and crushed by me, understood a great deal more than I imagined. She understood from all this what a woman understands first of all, if she feels genuine love, that is, that I was myself unhappy... Suddenly she leapt up from her chair with an irresistible impulse and held out her hands, yearning toward me, though still timid and not daring to stir.⁴⁴

Liza warmly embraces the Underground Man, but he finds that he is overcome by shame and seized by hatred of her. Although he did not even guess it till much later, she had come to love him, "because to a woman, true resurrection, true salvation from any sort of ruin, and true moral regeneration is contained in love and can only show itself in that form."⁴⁵

The Underground Man, immersed in spitefulness and bookish abstraction, is, as he admits, incapable of loving. In contrast to the happy memories of love recorded in the tenth Promenade, the Underground Man's love story is one of dismal failure. While Rousseau abandons himself to the desire to love, the Underground Man refuses to live by such feeling. He is emotionally stirred by Liza and by his outpourings to her, but he does not think this feeling is worth much: it is not a "primary cause" for action.

While the Underground Man looks down on the fools, the men of action, those who are pacified at the appearance of a "wall," he wants to believe in something, to form his character around it, and to find happiness in *love*. Still, his underground mentality tells him that all meaning is, in a way, a delusion, and he hates himself for aching for meaning. He envies Liza because she is capable of love. Full of disdain and spite, he persists in isolating himself in his underground world.

Raskolnikov, on the other hand, succeeds precisely where the Underground Man fails. Just as Raskolnikov is a spiritual heir to the Underground Man, so, too, the two prostitutes, Sonia and Liza, are related, and it is Sonia who saves Raskolnikov from his hyperrationalism. Forced by the corrupt

DECONSTRUCTING ROUSSEAU

society into prostitution, Sonia remains uncannily pure. A Magdalene figure, a self-sacrificer, she is spiritually untouched by sin. Something in her face, "a sort of *insatiable* compassion," draws Raskolnikov to her so completely that his perverted rational side is rendered impotent.⁴⁶ Through her, he is finally able to sustain true feeling and, unlike the Underground Man, to overcome his pride.⁴⁷

Raskolnikov's transformation occurs near the end of the epilogue:

She (Sonia) knew and had no doubt that he loved her beyond everything and that at last the moment had come.... They wanted to speak, but could not; tears stood in their eyes. They were both pale and thin; but those sick pale faces were bright with the dawn of a new future, of a full resurrection into a new life. *They were renewed by love: the heart of each held infinite sources of life for the heart of the other.*⁴⁸

Based on this love, Raskolnikov overcomes the inner division between sentiment and prideful rationality. Transformed, he gives up theorizing and, instead, is dominated by feeling:

He could not think for long together of anything that evening, and he could not have analysed anything consciously; he was simply feeling. Life had stepped into the place of theory and something quite different would work itself out in his mind.⁴⁹

In contrast to the Underground Man, Raskolnikov, then, is finally able to live life more fully.

Love, for both Rousseau and Dostoevsky, is especially precious to the extent that it can overcome or subdue pride and shame. Perhaps Rousseau's attitude toward the morally regenerative effect of love is more pessimistic than Dostoevsky's, but this is less certain in light of the mature statement of *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879-1880) where the treatment of love is still central but more problematic. Katerina and Grushenka are more complex and in some ways more negative characters than Liza and Sonia. The "active love" of Zossima and Alyosha takes on a greater purity and importance than romantic love. Moreover, the *brotherhood* espoused by Dostoevsky in that final work bears a significant resemblance to the patriotic love which unites the citizens of Rousseau's *Social Contract*.⁵⁰

IV
Conclusion

In conclusion, I cite a passage from Dostoevsky's *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* (1983) and invite the reader to consider it in light of Rousseau's social political theory, particularly as formulated in the *Social Contract*. Dostoevsky contrasts the nature of the Russian and the Western European and analyzes what he takes to be the lack of fraternity in the West:

In French nature, and in Occidental nature in general, it (fraternity) is not present; you find there instead a principle of individualism, a principle of isolation, of intense self-preservation, of personal gain, of self-determination of the *I*, of opposing this *I* to all nature and the rest of mankind as an independent, autonomous principle entirely equal and equivalent to all that exists outside itself. Well, fraternity could scarcely arise from such an attitude. Why? Because in fraternity, in true brotherhood, it is not the separate personality, not the *I*, which should be concerned with its right to equality and equilibrium with everything else ... This demanding, rebellious individual ought first of all to offer the *I*, to offer himself entirely to society, not only without demanding any rights but, on the contrary, offering these up unconditionally to society. But the Western personality is not accustomed to acting in this manner; it fights for what it wants; it demands its rights; it desires to separate — well, fraternity will not flourish in such an atmosphere.... What, you will say to me, must one be without personality in order to be happy? Does salvation lie in impersonality? To the contrary, I say: a person must not only not lose his personality, but must actually attain a much greater degree of individuality than now exists in the West. Understand me: voluntary, fully conscious self-sacrifice utterly free of outside constraint, sacrifice of one's entire self for the benefit of all, is in my opinion a sign of the supreme development of individuality, of its supreme power, absolute self-mastery and freedom of will... A highly developed individuality, completely convinced of its right to individuality, no longer fearing for itself, can do nothing else by virtue of its individuality, i.e., can serve no other purpose through it than to give itself entirely to others in order that others too may be equally autonomous and happy.⁵¹

Ironically, as Dostoevsky knew Rousseau's writings in only a partial, limited way, he remained unaware of the extent to which his moral outlook sympathetically recalls the Genevan's.

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DECONSTRUCTING ROUSSEAU

1. Dostoevsky, in explicitly referring to Rousseau's *Confessions* in both *notes from Underground* (1864) and *Crime and Punishment* (1866), invites a comparison. As does the first announced title for *Notes from Underground* — *A Confession*. The *Notes*, particularly its opening passages, seems a curious parody of Rousseau's last work, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground and The Grand Inquisitor*, trans. Ralph E. Matlaw (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1960), p. 35, p. xvi; *Crime and Punishment*, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Bantam Books, 1958), p. 100. The brief explicit reference to *The Confessions* centers on the notion that "Rousseau was a kind of Radischev." On the influence of Rousseau on this Russian writer see Allen McConnell, "Rousseau and Radischev," in *The Slavic and East European Journal*, VIII, 3 (Fall, 1964), pp. 253-272. According to McConnell, the main influence of Rousseau on Radischev lies in Radischev's appeals to the heart and conscience. Scholars have seldom paired the two authors except to offer a cursory antithesis. See, for example, Peter Axthelm, *The Modern Confessional Novel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 8. George Steiner mentions in passing the idea of "a complex but authentic link" between Rousseau and Dostoevsky in *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), p. 228, and Ernest J. Simmons asserts briefly that Rousseau had a profound influence on Dostoevsky in *Dostoevski: The Making of a Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 312-313. Despite the *Notes'* attack on Chernyshevsky's amalgam of Hegelian and Rousseauian ideas and despite Raskolnikov's apparent mockery of the Genevan's principles, the two Dostoevsky novels tend to affirm a number of Rousseau's teachings. See Matlaw, Introduction to *Notes from Underground*, p. xiii. For a lengthier discussion of how the Underground Man parodies Chernyshevsky as well as the poet Nkrasov, see Irina Kirk, *Dostoevsky and Camus: The Themes of Conscience, Isolation, Freedom and Love* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1974), pp. 13-31. Recognition of the important affinities is not to deny the tensions that separate Rousseau and Dostoevsky — the gulf of a century, the gap between what Strauss called the second and third waves of modernity. Leo Strauss, "The Three Waves of Modernity," in *Political Philosophy: Six Essays by Leo Strauss*, ed. by Hilail Gildin (Indianapolis: Pegasus, Bobbs-Merrill, 1975), pp. 81-98. Dostoevsky's radicalization of certain eighteenth-century moral problems signals the ebbing of the second or Rousseauian wave of modernity and its replacement by the Nietzschean phase. Dostoevsky may be taken as a transitional figure in this regard: his novels are filled with nihilistic terror and anguish, yet his moral perspective is vehemently anti-nihilist.
2. Rousseau writes in his *Confessions*, "I should like in some way to make my soul transparent to the reader's eye," (p. 169). The demand for acceptance is perhaps clearest in the case of Raskolnikov in his relationship with Sonia. Raskolnikov, in this respect, is like Marmeladov who, too, cries out for acceptance. Marmeladov not only asks forgiveness from his wife, his statement to Raskolnikov near the start of the novel seems to echo and parody the opening of Rousseau's *Confessions*: "Behold the man! Excuse me, young man, can you. . . . No, to put it more strongly and more distinctly; not can you but dare you, looking upon me, assert that I am a pig?" *Crime and Punishment*, pp. 161, 12.
3. Rousseau, too, would criticize the lure of the crystal palace. In a related way, both Rousseau and Dostoevsky are deeply critical of modern science. Marmeladov tells Raskolnikov that he's heard from a man "who keeps up with modern ideas" that "compassion is forbidden nowadays by science itself, and that that's what is done now in England, where there is political economy." (*Crime and Punishment*, p. 12). When Raskolnikov reflects on his sister Dounia's motivation for becoming engaged to Luzhin, he realizes that "she would not barter her moral freedom for comfort" but, "for her brother, for her mother, she will sell herself! She will sell everything! In such cases, 'we overcome our moral feeling if necessary,' freedom, peace, conscience even, all, all are brought into the market." (p. 39).
4. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses*, ed. Roger D. Masters, trans. Roger D. and Judith R. Masters (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), pp. 114-115.
5. Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*, p. 23.
6. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book I, Chapter 4.
7. Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses*, pp. 132-133.
8. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), pp. 289-291. Rousseau stresses the importance of the *Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar in the Rêveries*. See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres Complètes*, eds. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959-) I, 1018, where Rousseau says that the *Profession of Faith* "peut faire un jour révolution parmi les hommes si jamais il y renaît du bon sens et de la bonne foi." This edition hereafter cited as O.C.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 286-287. It is conscience, not reason, that the Vicar fully praises: "Conscience, conscience! Divine instinct, immortal and celestial voice, certain guide of a being that is ignorant and limited but intelligent and free; infallible judge of good and bad which makes man like unto God; it is you who make the excellence of his nature and the morality of his actions. Without you I sense nothing in me that raises me

MARY L. BELLHOUSE

- above the beasts, other than the sad privilege of leading myself astray from error to error with the aid of an understanding without rule and reason without principle." (p. 290).
10. See, e.g., Rousseau, *The Confessions*, trans. J.M. Cohen (Baltimore: Penguin, 1954), pp. 333-335. Rousseau's analysis of Mme. de Warens is similar, pp. 190-192. See also Rousseau, *Rêveries*, pp. 14, 47-48, 89, *passim*.
 11. See, e.g., Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, trans. Charles E. Butterworth (New York: New York University Press, 1979), pp. 32-33.
 12. *Emile*, pp. 67, 290-291. See also Robert Derathé, *Le Rationalisme de Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948), Chapter 3, esp. pp. 110-112, and François Bouchardy. "Une définition de la Conscience par J.-J. Rousseau," *Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, XXXII (1950-52), 167-75. Bouchardy comments, "En refusant de voir en la conscience un jugement, il se peut que Jean-Jacques manifeste plus précisément son intention de se séparer des juriconsultes du Droit National, des philosophes de l'Encyclopédie dont l'article sur la conscience — s'inspirant de Barbeyrac — la définit très traditionnellement comme un acte de l'entendement" (p. 170).
 13. Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*, pp. 8-9.
 14. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
 15. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
 16. Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, pp. 23, 41-45, 154-163. Raskolnikov's deep compassion is also revealed in his remarkable dream about the beating of a horse (pp. 48-53). Further, we learn in the Epilogue of earlier acts of generosity performed by Raskolnikov, cited at his trial as mitigating factors in his defense: six months' support of a tubercular student, paying for the funeral of the student's father, and the rescue of two children from a fire (pp. 460-461).
 17. A similar mood change occurs when Raskolnikov strenuously objects to Dounia's plans to marry Pyotr Petrovitch and then suddenly says, "what am I making such a fuss for? ... Marry whom you like!" (*Ibid.*, p. 203).
 18. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
 19. Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 132. Rousseau also points out that even the most depraved are not wholly without pity and that it often leads them to anomalous acts of mercy (*Second Discourse*, p. 131; *Emile*, p. 287-288).
 20. Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 63.
 21. Cf. the following note by Nietzsche, written between November 1882 and February 1883, while he was preparing to write *Zarathustra I*: "You lovers of knowledge! What have you done up to now out of your love for knowledge? Have you stolen and murdered yet, so as to know how a thief and a murderer feels?" trans. by Richard Perkins from Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1967-). VII 1, 196 (5(1) number 47). An earlier variant appears in the same volume at 124(4(43)). For references in Nietzsche to crime and the criminal, see the following for a comprehensive overview: *Dawn* 50, 187, 202 and 366; *The Wanderer and His Shadow* 24, 28 and 186; *Zarathustra* "The Pale Criminal" and "The Shadow"; *Beyond Good and Evil* 109, 110 and 201; *On the Genealogy of Morals* II 10 and 14; *Twilight of the Idols* "The Problem of Socrates" 3 and "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man" 45; *The Will to Power* 42, 50, 116, 135, 233, 235, 292, 374, 736, 739, 740, 765, 788, 864, 928 and 951; *Die Unschuld des Werdens* (Innocence of Becoming: an editorial compilation of unpublished material Alfred Bäumler printed in *Kröners Taschenausgabe*, volumes 82 and 83/1915 as well as II 379, 423, 521, 525, 592, 593, 782, 1064 and 1105; the letter to Strindberg dated December 7, 1888, and letter to Jacob Burckhardt, January 6, 1889. Nietzsche knew nothing of Dostoevsky until February 1887. He read *Notes from Underground*, *The House of the Dead*, and *Insult and Injured*, and he was aware that the French were performing *Crime and Punishment* on the stage, but it is unclear whether he read that work or not. On Nietzsche's view of Dostoevsky, see esp., *Twilight of the Idols*, 45; *The Anti-Christ*, 31, 54; letter to Overbeck, February 23, 1887; letters to Gast, March 7, 1887, and October 4, 1888, letter to von Meysenbug, May 12, 1887; and letters to Brandes, October 20, 1888 and November 20, 1888. Even though, in any case, Nietzsche could not have read *Crime and Punishment* until four years after *Zarathustra I* was completed, the portrait of "The Pale Criminal" seems to represent what might have been his view of Raskolnikov's crime — indeed Thomas Mann, not realizing the large anachronism, thought *Zarathustra's* pale criminal was a deliberate copy of Raskolnikov. There is a preliminary sketch at KGW VIII 1, 191-192 (5(1) number 6), dating November 1882 to February 1883, that contains the psychological insight: "With our intentions, we rationalize our inexplicable drives: as, e.g., the murderer, who makes his true inclination, towards murder, acceptable to his reason by deciding to stage a robbery or to take revenge." (trans. Richard Perkins). While Nietzsche praises *Dostoevsky*, he denigrates Rousseau and rails against pity. On Nietzsche's view of Rousseau, see esp., *Human, All-Too-Human*, Part

DECONSTRUCTING ROUSSEAU

- I, 463, Part II, 221; *Thoughts Out of Season*, 4: *Twilight of the Idols*, 6, 48; *The Will to Power*, 62, 94, 95, 98, 99, 100, 117, 120, 340, 382, 1017; and letter to Gast, November 24, 1887.
22. Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, P. 226.
 23. *Ibid.*, p. 229.
 24. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
 25. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
 26. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
 27. *Ibid.*, pp. 238-239.
 28. *Ibid.*, p. 467.
 29. Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 291 (italics added).
 30. In an early draft, Lizaveta is six months pregnant when killed, a circumstance further emphasizing Raskolnikov's murder of the innocent. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Notebooks for Crime and Punishment*, ed. and trans. Edward Wasiolek (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 165.
 31. Rousseau, *Confessions* p. 17.
 32. Leo Strauss, "On the Intention of Rousseau," in *Hobbes and Rousseau: A Collection of Critical Essays*, eds. Maurice Cranston and Richard S. Peters (Garden City: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1972), p. 289. For example, in the *Confessions* Rousseau admits his pleasure in being whipped, his sexual exhibitionism, his desertion of an epileptic friend during a seizure, and the surrender of each of his five children at birth to a foundling home. (*Confessions*, pp. 25-29; 90-91; 127-128; 332-334.) Rousseau's discussion of the ring of Gyges in the *Reveries*, and its contrast with Socrates' response to Glaucon's version in the *Republic*, illustrates how the Genevan seeks to alter moral standards and how, in doing so, he displays the moral pathos of his own life. In the sixth Promenade Rousseau says that he has often asked himself what he would do with the ring of Gyges, were he to possess it. His first impulses are praiseworthy. But Rousseau then admits that, despite reason, he would use the ring's powers to accomplish a blameworthy act — apparently some type of voyeurism. The general point Rousseau makes is to stress the weakness of humanity. He states, "He whose power puts him above man should be above the weaknesses of humanity; otherwise this excess of strength will only serve to place him, in effect, below others and below what he himself would have been if he had remained their equal." In the end, Rousseau decides that he would be better off to throw away the magic ring before it led him to do something foolish. (See O.C. I, 1058 and n. 3.) Rousseau's remarks about the ring of Gyges may be seen as an inversion of Raskolnikov's theory. Raskolnikov commits murder out of a desire to prove he is superior, while Rousseau rejects the superiority to be gained by possession of the ring precisely because it would lead him to immoral behavior. Rousseau and Dostoevsky each stress that the accomplishment or realization of superiority in one traditional sense, i.e., power over others, does not bring with it, automatically, moral acts or a morally-content consciousness.
 33. Rousseau remarks more generally in the ninth Promenade of the *Reveries*: "The same shame which held me back has often prevented me from doing good works which would have filled me with joy and from which I have abstained only in deploring my foolishness." *Reveries*, p. 134.
 34. René E. Fortin, "Responsive Form: Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* and the Confessional Tradition," *Essays in Literature*, VII, 2 (Fall, 1980), pp. 237-240.
 35. Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*, p. 104.
 36. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
 37. See Fortin, p. 243.
 38. *Second Discourse*, p. 116.
 39. Rousseau, *The Confessions*, Books Two-Six.
 40. Rousseau, O.C., I, 1099; *Reveries*, p. 141.
 41. *Ibid.* Consider, in contrast, the curious loss of freedom Raskolnikov feels once he decides to go through with the murder. Raskolnikov passes through the Haymarket and overhears Lizaveta say she will be out the next evening, leaving the pawnbroker alone. Upon learning this crucial news, Raskolnikov "felt suddenly in his whole being that he had no more freedom of thought, no will, and that everything was suddenly and irrevocably decided." Afterwards, this moment always seemed to him "the predestined turning-point of his fate." (*Crime and Punishment*, pp. 54-56).

MARY L. BELLHOUSE

42. Rousseau claims there is an essential difference between the sexes and he thinks that the possibility of love has been vastly diminished in modern society because of our failure to respect this difference (see *Emile*, Book Five).
43. Roger Masters argues that relations of friendship and love are particularly unstable because they are based on *amour de soi* which can readily degenerate into *amour-propre*. (This degeneration will occur if one comes to see the friend or loved one as happier than oneself, and is thereby led to envy him or her.) Masters argues that relations based on pity are more stable because they already involve the making of comparisons. His argument is intriguing, but his contention that relations of love do not involve making comparisons seems to be directly contradicted by Rousseau in the early part of Book Four of *Emile*. There Rousseau states that to love is to prefer, to be loved is to be preferred, and preference rests on comparison. Masters, *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 43-46; *Emile*, pp. 213-215.
44. Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*, p. 109.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
46. Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 276.
47. The benefits of Sonia's love are prefigured in the novel when Raskolnikov asks Sonia's sister Polenka, "And will you love me?" and he regains strength and the will to live from the little girl's affection (p. 165).
48. *Ibid.*, p. 471, italics added.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 472.
50. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 2 vols., trans. David Magarshack (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966), on "active love" and brotherhood see esp. Vol. I, pp. 61-64, 218, 354-381.
51. Feodor M. Dostoevsky, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, trans. Richard Lee Renfield (New York: Criterion Books, 1955), pp. 110-112.