

Tandem of Sociologist and Writer in Search of Social Harmony (On the Example of Sociologism of F.M. Dostoevsky's Novel "Idiot")

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ABSTRACT

The literary method in sociology is an understudied topic. Sociologism as a method of an objective, purely scientific approach to social phenomena does not contradict the literary approach of analyzing the actions of individuals, which is characteristic of works of art. When analyzing a certain social phenomenon, a sociologist, along with documentary facts, can also use the literary method. According to researchers, writers act as a kind of "sociologists with a brush in their hands", i.e. as a sort of social artist. In this regard, arming the sociologist with the methods of artistic analysis gives him additional opportunities in revealing large-scale social phenomena.

In this article, the authors trace the points of contact in the depiction of the life of society and identify similar methods for analyzing social types and society on the example of analyzing the actions of the characters in F. Dostoevsky's novel The Idiot. According to the authors, the literary method could become a new approach in the field of analysis of many acute social problems of society. In this sense, the sociologist may have additional opportunities to reveal the mechanisms of social processes, armed with methods of artistic analysis.

MAIN PART

The sociology of literature has not yet acquired the features of a systematic discipline. It is sometimes interpreted as a subsection of the sociology of culture, and on the other hand, as a related area of sociology and literary studies. One way or another, an important milestone in the development of the sociology of literature is the work of Lukács "The Theory of the Novel", published in 1916 [2].

In Western sociology, under the influence of Lukács' work The Theory of the Novel, the theme of the literary method was developed in the work of representatives of the Frankfurt School (mainly Adorno). In the 1950s and 1960s, attempts were made to study literature using specific sociological methods, but the predominance of empiricism in such studies did not lead to the creation of theoretical systems. In the works of Soviet researchers (Plotnikov, Gudkov, Dubin, Davydov, Kantorovich, etc.) there was also no consistency, moreover, they were dominated by the influence of the Marxist approach to the analysis of literature as a whole.

Based on the realities of the 21st century, the well-known Polish sociologist P. Sztompka was one of the first to draw attention to the role of realistic prose as an important resource in a comprehensive analysis of society [10; 13]. This approach, in our opinion, is included in the

general mainstream of his methodology for analyzing modern society. The literary method is also being actively developed by some modern Russian sociologists, primarily Ivanov V.N., when he singles out the social realism of artistic prose and poetry as an effective method [5; 7, 9].

So-called sociological realism is known in sociological science, i.e. sociology. This methodological principle was developed by E. Durkheim as an alternative to psychologism. Sociologism proceeded from the ideas of an objective, purely scientific approach to social phenomena, requiring an explanation of the “social social”, excluding all other factors, such as psychological factors, considering them contrary to scientific character [10; 244-245]. Durkheim's main idea was that society exists as a kind of integral system, irreducible to a simple sum of individuals. Excessive adherence to this concept in the interpretation of society sometimes led to one-sidedness, even to vulgar sociologism, which was sharply opposed by another well-known sociologist, Max Weber. He rightly believed that any social phenomenon should be considered as a system of specific actions of individuals [10; 52-54].

It's no secret that outstanding works of fiction can be an important resource in the study of society. At one time, Karl Marx noted that in the study of the history of Western society in the 19th century, the novels of Honore de Balzac provide more material than the works of any significant historian or social scientist. It is the writers who act as a kind of "sociologists with a brush in their hands", i.e. like a kind of social artist. A similar opinion can be said about the novels of the great Russian writer F.M. Dostoevsky in relation to the Russian society of the same social time.

First of all, Dostoevsky was highly skilled at creating images of a broad social plane, representing various strata of society - a nobleman (Prince Myshkin), an aristocrat (Lizaveta Petrovna), a general (Ivolgin), a merchant (Rogozhin), a poor man (Ippolit), etc. In literature, this can be called simply an image, and in sociology there is the concept of “social types”. In our opinion, it is in this perspective that sociology and fiction enter into a close dialogue.

Secondly, Dostoevsky has an enormous talent for finding social types. Such characters of the novel as Burdovsky, Ippolit Terentyev, Keller and others can be characterized as a social type of "materialist, atheist and nihilist". Speaking about the creation of social types by writers, Dostoevsky himself writes: “Writers in their novels and short stories for the most part try to take the types of society and represent them figuratively and artistically, types that are extremely rare in reality in their entirety and which, nevertheless, are almost more real than reality itself” [3; 477].

Thirdly, Dostoevsky's social universalism is manifested in the fact that through the actions of generalizing images, the reader is offered socially significant, dialectically opposite and mutually combating themes, such as humility (Myshkin) and beauty (Nastasya Filippovna) as opposed to evil (Rogozhin), disgust and nihilism (Ippolit). At the same time, the author himself was able to show the depravity and inhumanity of social rebellion and the overthrow of everything, both in an individual and in a social form. It is not for nothing that both negative heroes of this plan end their lives tragically: Rogozhin, as the killer of a woman (“individual evil”), is sentenced by the court to hard labor for a period of 15 years, and Ippolit, who calls for all-out nihilism and radicalism, ends his life as a terminally ill person. The writer himself, in his essence, deeply hates social evil, oppression and humiliation, when these social vices in their phantasmagoric interweaving are like that “dark force that takes the form of a tarantula” [3; 427].

Fourthly, Dostoevsky's positivist approach to wide layers of social relations is manifested in his ability to find shades of important social ideas in the vast interweaving of events. The writer finds features of humanism even in the general context of the actions of negative characters. So, Ippolit, being ill with consumption and knowing that he had little time left to live, decides to help a poor doctor who happened to meet him in a cardinal way, finishes off a job for him and thereby

saves the doctor and his family from an obvious tragedy. The writer defines such an act as a "single good" necessary for human coexistence, because "it is a need of a person, a living need for the direct influence of one person on another" [3; 419]. Thus, philanthropy becomes a "living need" in the system of social relations.

Fifthly, the sociologism of the novel *The Idiot* also manifested itself in the fact that the author expands artistic analysis with elements of art and social sciences. Dostoevsky himself compares the life of a person and his possible options with a chess game, in the sense that even the best chess player can only calculate a few moves ahead. It is the same with the moves of the human in life with its many variations. From here, the writer deduces the mechanism of social action, assuming the relationship of people in countless ramifications hidden from us: another; you mutually join one another; a little more attention, and you are already rewarded with knowledge, the most unexpected discoveries. You will certainly begin to look at your business as a science at last..." [3; 420].

Sixthly, Dostoevsky divides the artistic characters he created further into "atoms", based on what features are characteristic of their carriers and gives them three-dimensional characteristics: Prince Myshkin is an idealist, General Ivolgin is a liar, Ippolit is a nihilist, Belokonskaya is a "terrible despot" etc. It turns out that "there is nothing more annoying than to be, for example, rich, decent family, decent appearance, not badly educated, not stupid, even kind, and at the same time not to have any talent, no special features, not even eccentricity, not a single one of your own . own idea, to be resolutely "like everyone else" [3; 479]. The thing is that you have to put human qualities in their place, otherwise you get a mess when the social type "has no face": "There is wealth, but not Rothschild's; ... the appearance is decent, but very little expressive; a decent education, but you don't know what to use it for; I have a mind, but without my own ideas, I have a heart, but without generosity..." [3; 479]. It is the full value of a person in all respects that constitutes the essence of the social type. In this, in our opinion, the writer is similar to a sociologist in compiling a "matrix" of a social type.

Seventh, based on the versatility of the individual's action, Dostoevsky determines the general dynamics of social action as a whole. In this plan, the actions of the main characters in the novel are brought to their logical end, and the rest of the images revolve around these main images according to the scheme: "the main character - images - characters - social types - society". It should be noted that this interpretation of events and processes corresponds to the basic canons of the theory of social action. The writer himself evaluates this approach as a "picture of relations".

The picture of relations according to Dostoevsky appears in two stages: a) in the sphere of feelings; b) in the sphere of consciousness. We can assume that the writer in this way also produces a final analysis of the actions of his protagonist. Indeed, in the novel, Dostoevsky does not give a generalized description of his main character in any episode. The character of the protagonist is revealed in the course of the entire plot of the novel through the opinions of other characters expressed regarding Prince Myshkin in various forms - replicas, dialogues, opinions, etc. For example, Radomsky, in a conversation with Prince Myshkin, expresses his attitude to the fact that the latter is called "Idiot" : "... you are too smart for such a name; but you are so strange as not to be like all people" [3; 599].

Speaking about the mechanisms of action of the protagonist of the novel, first of all, it is necessary to pay attention to the structure of the character's action through *feelings*, relating mainly to the interpersonal relations of the respective characters (Aglaya - Myshkin - Nastasya Filippovna). At the same time, the main points of characterizing the actions of Prince Myshkin through feelings are: a) the loss of a sense of truth leads to a lie: "what started with a lie, then should have ended with a lie" [3; 599]. It was the simplicity and lack of a sense of proportion that led the prince to an inadequate assessment of the "women's issue" and his mistakes; b) the

innate inexperience and thirst for activity of the young man who returned to his homeland and the feeling of love led him to love two different women “with two different loves” because of chivalrous feelings [3; 600-603].

Now let us dwell on the actions of Prince Myshkin on the basis of *consciousness*. In this aspect, the concept of truth comes to the fore. According to Keller, the prince thinks more nobly than others, because he “needs not brilliance, not wealth, and not even honor, but only truth” [3; 606]. Hippolyte also characterizes the main character traits of the prince, especially his mind. Speaking about the fact that the prince is no longer surprised by anything, he notes that this character trait “is a sign of a great mind ...” [3; 577].

In general, Dostoevsky follows the theory of social action in almost all of his multifaceted works, which is vividly confirmed in this novel. He himself correctly notes the fact that “the causes of human actions are usually innumerable more complex and diverse than we always explain them later, and are rarely definitely outlined” [3; 500].

It should be especially noted that Dostoevsky was one of the founders of that spiritual movement that was the result of the classical philosophy of the 19th century and the beginning of the existential philosophy of the 20th century. Dostoevsky, like no one else, was able to determine the tragedies of an entire society through a personal “boundary situation”. The life and death of an individual are intertwined with the universal scale of social collapse. The writer often with the brush of a “social artist” skillfully depicts the actions of his characters in “boundary situations”, when they remain between love and betrayal, good and evil, sometimes between death and life.

The writer himself, once sentenced to death and miraculously escaped this fate, pursued the theme of death through all his work. The theme of death is tragically felt in all his works, especially in the novel *The Idiot*. The actions of the novel are set by this topic, when Prince Myshkin, traveling by train on his way to St. Petersburg after living abroad, tells his companions about the practice of the death penalty existing there. Thus, the author himself sets an existential theme, in which, through the sensations of the proximity of death, the very existence of a person is sharply comprehended. Both the protagonist of the novel, who suffered from a serious illness, and some other heroes of the novel, in certain aspects of life, acutely feel the inevitability of death, realizing the tragedy of human existence in extreme conditions.

It should be noted that any nihilism is alien to the author's interpretation of the theme of death. Dostoevsky's rejection of nihilism as a harbinger of social evil passes through his existentialism to humanism. In the novel, such phenomena that destroy the very fabric of social relations as indifference, apathy, malevolence, malice and indignation are fundamentally denied by his philanthropy.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Outstanding prose writers are the great social artists. After all, a novelist, unlike a sociologist, will be able to draw subtle strokes to portraits of social types. This is confirmed by the words of Dostoevsky that “the typicality of faces is, as it were, diluted with water” [3; 478]. In this regard, the sociologist needs to “arm himself” with the methods of the writer, i.e. adopt elements of artistic analysis. This is not about replacing the methods of the writer and the sociologist, but about enriching the arsenal of the sociologist. After all, a sociologist needs not only scientifically verified methods of sociological realism, but also the mastery of imagery and the richness of imagination, so characteristic of the great writers of the past and present, who, no worse than scientists, were able and are able to “draw” social portraits of their contemporary societies.

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