

ANALYZING HUMAN EXISTENCE THROUGH FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY'S LITERARY CONTRIBUTIONS

*ANÁLISE DA EXISTÊNCIA HUMANA ATRAVÉS DAS CONTRIBUIÇÕES
LITERÁRIAS DE FYODOR DOSTOÉVSKY*

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines the existentialist perspectives within the works of Fyodor Dostoevsky, a pivotal 19th-century Russian literary and philosophical figure. Dostoevsky is celebrated for introducing existential themes to Russian literature, with his narratives deeply rooted in the human condition. His key works, such as "Notes from Underground," "Crime and Punishment," "The Idiot," and "The Brothers Karamazov," delve into the human psyche challenged by the societal norms of 19th-century Russia. This paper seeks to dissect Dostoevsky's nuanced examination of self-discovery, the pursuit of genuine existence, ongoing inner turmoil, solitude as a means to spiritual liberation, and the significant role of religious belief in shaping human experience. Through an analytical lens, this research scrutinizes the existential quandaries faced by Dostoevsky's characters, positing that his literary and philosophical contributions not only shed light on human complexity but also serve as an enduring meditation on the nature of existence.

KEYWORDS: existentialism, Fyodor Dostoevsky, human condition, Russian literature, spiritual freedom.

RESUMO:

Este estudo examina as perspectivas existencialistas nas obras de Fyodor Dostoiévski, uma importante figura literária e filosófica russa do século XIX. Dostoiévski é celebrado por introduzir temas existenciais na literatura russa, com suas narrativas profundamente enraizadas na condição humana. Suas principais

obras, como “Notas do Subterrâneo”, “Crime e Castigo”, “O Idiota” e “Os Irmãos Karamazov”, investigam a psique humana desafiada pelas normas sociais da Rússia do século XIX. Este artigo procura dissecar o exame matizado de Dostoiévski sobre a autodescoberta, a busca pela existência genuína, a turbulência interior contínua, a solidão como meio de libertação espiritual e o papel significativo da crença religiosa na formação da experiência humana. Através de uma lente analítica, esta investigação examina os dilemas existenciais enfrentados pelas personagens de Dostoiévski, postulando que as suas contribuições literárias e filosóficas não só lançam luz sobre a complexidade humana, mas também servem como uma meditação duradoura sobre a natureza da existência.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: existencialismo, Fiódor Dostoiévski, condição humana, literatura russa, liberdade espiritual.

Introduction

The 19th century in Russia was a crucible of social upheaval and ideological transformation, a period marked by the intense struggle of its people against the oppressive autocratic regime (LADOUCEUR, 2018). This tumultuous era, characterized by significant movements towards freedom and democracy, was further exacerbated by acute societal tensions and unresolved conflicts (GIUGANOP, 1995, p.82). The serfdom reform of this time, ostensibly a step towards emancipation and human development, in reality, perpetuated autocratic impositions under the guise of progress, resulting in a society fraught with disparities between the serf and peasant classes against the feudal lords, and the impoverished working masses against the burgeoning bourgeoisie. These societal rifts, coupled with the stifling constraints imposed by the ruling class, catalyzed a profound sense of dissatisfaction and contemplation among the Russian intelligentsia, who found themselves in a perpetual quest for ideological direction and liberation.

Amidst this backdrop of societal discontent and moral crisis, Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881) emerged as a literary colossus, whose works reflect a deep engagement with the existential quandaries and the ethical dilemmas of his time (AHO, 2023, BYKOVA, 2022, FRANK, 2010, MCCONNELL, 2002, MORSON, 2023). Dostoevsky's narratives, deeply imbued with existential themes, offer a window into the souls of men under siege by the moral and societal constructs of 19th-century Russia (BERDYAEV, 2015, p.191). His seminal works - “Notes from Underground,” “Crime and Punishment,” “The Idiot,” and “The Brothers Karamazov” - are not mere literary explorations but profound philosophical inquiries into the nature of freedom, morality, and the essence of human existence. Through their characters, Dostoevsky delves into the complexities of the human psyche, navigating the

intricacies of self-awareness, the relentless pursuit of authenticity, and the existential dread that accompanies the human condition.

The contribution of scholars like Joseph Frank, Daniel Rancour-Laferriere, James P. Scanlan, Linda Ivanits, and Marina F. Bykova, alongside the philosophical comparison between Dostoevsky and Kierkegaard by Petr Vaškovič, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding Dostoevsky's engagement with these themes. Joseph Frank's (FRANK, 2010) exhaustive biography "Dostoevsky: A Writer in His Time" meticulously situates Dostoevsky within the socio-political and cultural milieu of his era, highlighting how contemporary currents influenced his philosophical and literary thought. This biographical context is crucial for grasping the relationship between Dostoevsky's life experiences and his existential explorations.

Further, Daniel Rancour-Laferriere's (RANCOUR-LAFERRIERE, 1992), "Signs of the Flesh" explores Dostoevsky's nuanced portrayal of human sexuality, arguing its integral role in his characters' existential quests while James P. Scanlan's "Dostoevsky the Thinker" (SCANLAN, 2011) delves into Dostoevsky's philosophical contributions, particularly his engagement with free will, evil, and redemption. Linda Ivanits' (IVANITS, 2009) "Dostoevsky and the Russian People" underscores Dostoevsky's connection with Russian Orthodox Christianity and the cultural and social fabric of his time, portraying him as a moral and spiritual guide. Marina F. Bykova's (BYKOVA, 2022) analysis and Vaškovič's (VAŠKOVIC, 2020) comparison with Kierkegaard further illuminate Dostoevsky's deep philosophical engagement and his exploration of authenticity and existential transformation.

This literature review synthesizes these scholarly works to argue that Dostoevsky's literature transcends its historical context, offering timeless insights into spiritual freedom, the quest for self-discovery, and the role of faith in human destiny. Dostoevsky's exploration of existential dilemmas through his characters underscores his significance not only as a literary figure but also as a profound philosophical thinker, whose insights into the human condition and the search for meaning continue to resonate. Through a detailed examination of Dostoevsky's engagement with existential themes, this paper aims to highlight the enduring relevance of his work in illuminating the complexities of human nature and the quest for authenticity in an uncertain world.

This paper aims to dissect Dostoevsky's intricate exploration of these themes, drawing attention to his profound understanding of the human spirit's resilience in the face of existential despair and societal oppression. Dostoevsky's characters, often depicted as existential subjects embroiled in turmoil, crisis, and deadlock, serve as embodiments of the author's philosophical rumination on the imperfections and incompleteness inherent in the human psyche (RANCOUR-LAFERRIERE, 1992). Dostoevsky

posits that these imperfections are not merely personal failings but reflections of the broader societal malaise and the existential vacuum that pervades the human experience.

Dostoevsky's philosophical outlook, deeply influenced by the socio-historical context of Russia during his time (FRANK, 2010), presents a critical analysis of the prevailing social order. He scrutinizes the moral bankruptcy of society, the erosion of spiritual values, and the existential crises that afflict individuals caught between the desire for moral integrity and the relentless pressures of societal conformity. Through his narrative, Dostoevsky challenges the reader to confront the harsh realities of existence, the dialectics of freedom and bondage, and the perennial quest for spiritual redemption.

Moreover, Dostoevsky's works transcend the immediate context of 19th-century Russia, offering timeless insights into the human condition. His exploration of themes such as spiritual freedom, the quest for self-discovery, and the significance of religious faith in shaping human destiny are as relevant today as they were in his time. By examining the existential dilemmas faced by his characters, this paper argues that Dostoevsky's literary and philosophical contributions serve as a beacon for those navigating the complexities of existence (BERDYAEV, 2017, p.59), seeking to understand the essence of being in a world fraught with moral ambiguity and existential uncertainty.

In essence, Dostoevsky's literary oeuvre is a profound meditation on human existence, a critical inquiry into the depths of the human soul, and a relentless quest for truth in an increasingly fragmented and disenchanted world. His philosophical musings, embedded within the fabric of his narratives, challenge us to reflect on the nature of freedom, the complexities of the human psyche, and the eternal struggle for meaning in the face of existential despair. Through a detailed examination of Dostoevsky's engagement with these existential themes, this paper endeavors to illuminate the enduring relevance of his work in shedding light on the intricacies of human nature and the perpetual quest for a genuine existence amidst the vicissitudes of life.

1. Self-Awareness in Dostoevsky's Narratives

Fyodor Dostoevsky's literary landscape is a vivid tapestry of characters, each embodying diverse social standings, ages, and philosophical outlooks. Through his adept portrayal, these characters not only reveal their psychological layers in the pursuit of identity but also navigate the intricate human condition. Dostoevsky's exploration delves deep into the essence of the individual and the collective human experience, unearthing the enigmatic depths within both his characters and himself (BYKOVA, 2022). At the heart of his narrative inquiry is the juxtaposition of spiritual freedom against the backdrop of oppression, injustice, and psychological confinement—a condition that stifles emotional expression and

erodes the quintessence of humanity (BERDYAEV, 2015). Such suppression is often rooted in societal norms, prejudices, and habits that inhibit creativity and diminish the human spirit (LADOUCEUR, 2018).

Dostoevsky champions the cause of liberation from these constraints through self-awareness, a recurring motif in his works. His characters are embroiled in internal conflict, exemplified in “Notes from Underground,” where the protagonist endures a life of spiritual bondage within the confines of a basement, symbolizing the oppressive monotony of existence (DOSTOEVSKY, 2020). This character’s struggle and yearning for freedom underscore a profound consciousness of their plight, albeit perceived as pathological by society. It is within this context that Dostoevsky’s figures embark on journeys of self-realization and declarations of freedom, resonating with the philosophical assertions on the nature of human freedom and self-awareness (AHO, 2023).

In “The Weak Heart,” Dostoevsky articulates a resignation to the human condition, suggesting that the inherent human desire to act autonomously, beyond the dictates of reason and self-interest, stems from a mundane yet profound longing (DOSTOEVSKY, 2019, p.146). This longing is a testament to the recognition that freedom, particularly spiritual freedom, remains the most invaluable and distinctly human of all pursuits (BERDYAEV, 2017). Even when physical freedom is curtailed, the spirit's liberty endures, challenging the constraints of “vibrant life” and the disillusionment with the tangible world (DOSTOEVSKY, 2019, p.23).

Within the metaphorical confines of the basement, Dostoevsky’s characters embody the human struggle against the drudgery of societal molds, always striving towards liberation. This pursuit of freedom enables a profound exploration of self, confronting the reality of their existence with raw admissions of their conditions and moral standings (DOSTOEVSKY, 2019). This process of self-confrontation and critique mirrors the existential crises and ideological turmoil faced by the Russian intelligentsia and, by extension, the broader societal quest for noble values amidst the constraints of outdated norms (FRANK, 2010, IVANITS, 2009).

The emotionally charged evolution of Dostoevsky’s characters not only represents personal existential dilemmas but also reflects the broader ideological and enlightenment struggles of the Russian intelligentsia and populace. Their aspirations for freedom and the rejuvenation of noble values amidst the stifling legacy of old societal norms highlight a collective yearning for human elevation and liberation (GIUGANOP, 1995). Through the lens of Dostoevsky’s rich narrative and philosophical discourse, the quest for self-awareness emerges as a critical pathway to understanding and transcending the limitations

imposed by society, illuminating the enduring human struggle for freedom and the realization of the self in the face of existential despair and societal constraints.

2. The Constant Desire to Be Oneself

Dostoevsky's literary works prominently feature the conflict between the individual and society, solitude versus the crowd, and freedom against morality. Individuals in these special contexts struggle to transcend pettiness, desire, and selfishness, even if it means embracing madness and recklessness. He stated that his desire for freedom, his willfulness, and his eccentric temperament, no matter how insane or wildly provocative, have been sidelined. These traits, he argued, do not fit into any category of utility in your classifications; they shatter every system, every theory into a thousand fragments (DOSTOEVSKY, 2019, p.146-147).

The aspiration to be oneself is evident when individuals seek values, they must first become self-aware and wish to be themselves to understand their uniqueness and identity. Faced with the adversities and injustices brought about by old societal morals, people feel deeply resentful towards the spiritual constraints and moral bindings that prevent them from living truthfully. In a society where freedom and clear consciousness are seen as abnormalities, the more aware and self-confronting individuals become, the more they recognize the indispensability of evil and ugliness in their spirit. Individuals are forced into malevolence, trampling, and deceit, only to feel ashamed and condemn themselves. He believed the essence lies in the infuriating realization that even at his angriest. He is embarrassed to discover that he is neither wicked nor prone to anger... and he merely delight in acting outlandishly, frightening children to comfort himself (DOSTOEVSKY, 2019, p.130).

As individuals become more aware of the good, the beautiful, and the noble, they also sink deeper into desires, necessitating adaptation and coexistence with this mire. Thus, upon self-confrontation, individuals simultaneously desire and fear freedom. Dostoevsky speculated that if someone were to offer us more freedom, loosen the reins further, expand our sphere of activity, and slacken the constraints, he was sure we would immediately ask to be led by the hand once again (DOSTOEVSKY, 2019, p.225). This forms a vicious cycle that individuals cannot escape.

In Dostoevsky's contemporary Russian society, to achieve true freedom, individuals had only two choices: (1) separate themselves from the collective, face themselves along with their flaws, emphasizing the need for self-awareness. (2) Pursue desires, value material gains, and accept living selfishly and deceitfully. This choice, according to Dostoevsky, was common in his society and inherently contradictory and reluctant. He argued that humans, distinct from animals in their consciousness, become

more miserable, mad, and powerless the more they try to “distort” themselves to fit societal morals. Torn in decision-making, individuals can neither become wicked nor anything at all. Unable to be malicious or kind, neither villainous nor virtuous, not a hero nor a bug. Dostoevsky resigned to live out his days in this hole, deluding himself with the cruel and futile consolation that an intelligent person never becomes anything, and only a fool ever becomes something (DOSTOEVSKY, 2019, p.130-131). He demonstrated that it is the complexity of the spirit that forms human character. His characters are always in turmoil, hesitating as they search for their self-identity and true life for the Russian people at that time (PHAM, 2001).

Dostoevsky pointed out that escaping one pain leads to another, prosecuting oneself, driving out one's demons to win back freedom (DOSTOEVSKY, 2011, p.228). Humans sometimes degrade themselves to animalistic instincts and desires, and at other times elevate themselves through social responsibilities. On one hand, they long for freedom and strive towards it, yet fear it due to the costs of freedom being loneliness, suffering, and torment. Dostoevsky passionately called for individuals to be themselves, to self-criticize, and to struggle with their conscience about their choices and their state of being. Therefore, he allowed his characters to always regret and wrestle with their conscience; to see themselves as wretched, petty, and despicable (DOSTOEVSKY, 2020). This confirms the nature of human introspection and the entire society in the process of choice; that humans are always in conflict with themselves, and society always embodies dualities: nobility – baseness, good - bad, benevolence – malevolence. It accurately reflects the law of motion and development as always embracing contradictions and viewing the struggle between opposing sides as the driving force of development.

3. The Perpetual Struggle with Internal Conflict

Internal conflict is characterized by a state of contemplation, torment, and incessant mental struggle. It is a psychological condition where individuals are torn between numerous desires that remain unfulfilled. This sense of inner turmoil is widespread, affecting anyone living within society. The impoverished are tormented as they grapple with life's hardships. Even the kindest individuals cannot escape the feeling of being tormented, as in those circumstances, chaos ultimately overwhelms all efforts to resist it, leading individuals to seek solace in the very chaos that increases daily, offering a bitter satisfaction and akin to hatred (DOSTOEVSKY, 2002, p.599).

Dostoevsky believed that achieving spiritual freedom requires a search for value, a search fraught with internal struggle. Individuals yearn to be themselves, embracing values such as love, faith, and social responsibility. However, they face spiritual crises, injustices, and societal constraints. Thus,

individuals endure internal torment and conflict. In theory, an individual's spirit should reflect and align with societal spirit to establish social norms. Yet, when conflicts between individual and societal spirits arise without resolution, it results in a suffocating and oppressive era. Self-criticism and the critique of current values are necessary for progress.

Another consideration is the inherent contradiction within individuals, such as the conflict between good and evil, beauty and ugliness, nobility and baseness. Dostoevsky noted the terrifying internal contradictions within himself, always teeming within. He acknowledged these contradictions would persist throughout his life, demanding escape but deliberately confined. They tortured him to the point of insanity, leading him to exclaim in exhaustion and disgust (DOSTOEVSKY, 2019, p.130). In the battle of internal conflict, rationality is needed to achieve spiritual freedom. Humans are complex beings with numerous desires, including sensual ones that are essentially instinctual. Negative desires and instincts can reduce humans to bestial behavior, as seen in acts like patricide and prostitution in "The Brothers Karamazov" (DOSTOEVSKY, 2007). Hence, rationality is required to curb one's baser instincts. On the other hand, noble desires like altruism, helping others, and self-awareness necessitate the presence of rationality.

With rationality, individuals have the capacity to evaluate and judge their actions. Thus, humans constantly navigate between sensual desires and faith. Dostoevsky regarded clear rationality as a malady because the more individuals contemplate, the more they realize their pettiness, selfishness, and depravity (DOSTOEVSKY, 2019, p.129-130). Rationality is always present in human internal struggles. Dostoevsky delved into the deep inner world of individuals. His characters are portrayed from various perspectives. In "Notes from Underground," we see how desire leads individuals to lose themselves, becoming inhumane, irresponsible, immoral, and cowardly. They become slaves to themselves. Raskolnikov in "Crime and Punishment" is torn between morality and conscience (DOSTOEVSKY, 2023), committing murder but essentially killing and eradicating old moralities and societal orders. Morality represents the chains binding the spirit of the ruling class (i.e., the Russian nobility), while the conscience of the Russian intelligentsia seeks to abolish those morals, even at the cost of committing crimes to break free from those chains and shackles. Or in "The Idiot," Myshkin, though saintly, becomes simple-minded due to epilepsy (a flawed, imperfect human) in a mad world. Under the dominion of the Russian nobility, individuals must accept enslavement to alleviate pain, meaning they must renounce freedom. However, individuals choose to endure pain for freedom, lamenting, "Lately, I have been terribly uncomfortable having to measure all my actions and thoughts by any moral standard. Something else guides me" (DOSTOEVSKY, 2002, p.35). Throughout Dostoevsky's works, a deep humanistic

philosophy emerges. He criticized the use of violence to suppress the spirit. Humans are distorted by contemporary societal morals, meaning evil exists within individuals. To eradicate evil, it must be eliminated from within; individuals must be strong to overcome temptations, a responsibility towards society.

Dostoevsky's sharp pen shares the human struggle amidst myriad complexities, offering a respite before the onslaught of pain (if the pain bursts upon waking). Suddenly, amidst gloom, in the depths of a soul tormented by a crushing sensation, there are moments when our minds seem to burn, and in an extraordinary surge, all our vitality is utilized to its fullest. The consciousness of life, of oneself, greatly intensifies in those moments, fleeting like a flash (DOSTOEVSKY, 2002, p.339-340). Thus, the desire for spiritual freedom is strong yet stifled, powerless over the physical, acting human. On one hand, the existing human (physical, acting) must follow societal norms; on the other hand, the spiritual human transcends all those confinements and restrictions of reality. Within individuals, rationality conflicts with faith, causing a spiritual crisis that torments and tears at them. Further elaborating, Dostoevsky asserted that while claiming human freedom, God continually increases it, compounding their spiritual world with torments over freedom (DOSTOEVSKY, 2007, p.393).

The internal turmoil within individuals is inevitable as they long for a peaceful, virtuous life in a society experiencing a crisis of faith, causing them to be shaken, losing all that is spiritual and sacred. Individuals desire freedom but face numerous temptations, inevitably succumbing to evil and enduring perpetual suffering (DOSTOEVSKY, 2002, p.35). This represents a society where individuals easily fall into error, leading to torment in repentance and remorse.

Thus, Dostoevsky's characters suffer endlessly, tormented by an unending spiritual pain. They experience constant struggle between reason and sensuality, between sensuality and faith. In contrast, Hamlet is mainly haunted by questions of life and death, as well as integrity and loyalty (DO, 2023). Dostoevsky highlighted the spiritual crisis unbearable for humans, leading to madness and loss of reason. In "The Brothers Karamazov," through the Karamazov family relationships, Dostoevsky reenacted the chaotic state of contemporary Russian society and the ultimate suffering of the Russian people at that time. Ivan Karamazov epitomizes these sufferings. A highly rational Ivan, who prides himself and considers his reasoning flawless. Unfortunately, it is reason that blinds him, leading to arrogance and ultimately becoming a victim of those truths. His intention to kill his father to satisfy his rage brought Ivan Karamazov pain, regret, torment, and madness. Dostoevsky's character agonizes over the contradictions and absurdities within himself. Ultimately, he mocks himself and those who think they understand everything, in reality, mocking the notion of outward freedom. Through the fates of his

characters, Dostoevsky affirmed that freedom is the true aspiration of individuals, and they are always conscious of the meaning of freedom. However, the path to freedom is incredibly difficult, causing the inner world of individuals to be tormented between self and the crowd, the collective. These are the pains of the era that individuals must have the strength and inner force to overcome base desires, greed, and selfishness to aspire to goodness. This becomes a common measure of value for all Russians, for Russia at that time. Spiritual freedom for Russians, for each individual or the nation as a whole, cannot be imposed by the old order but must be based on the establishment of new value standards.

4. Embracing Solitude for Spiritual Freedom

In Dostoevsky's philosophical discourse, the attainment of spiritual freedom is intricately linked with the embrace of solitude and the endurance of crisis. He posits that the quest for freedom demands an authentic engagement with one's own being, necessitating a profound comprehension of one's identity, existential purpose, and life obligations. Dostoevsky champions solitude as the supreme, most dignified condition for self-discovery, arguing it is the solitary state that allows for introspection, self-reassessment, and the unravelling of one's essence amidst prevailing value systems (BERDYAEV, 2015, BYKOVA, 2022). He underscores the necessity of solitude for exercising the fundamental human rights to conscience and expression, suggesting that solitude fosters the strength and tranquility essential for confronting and transcending various forms of human degradation (DOSTOEVSKY, 1974, p.118).

The journey through solitude towards freedom is not devoid of challenges; it is a path laden with temptations and conflicts that test the individual's resolve to remain true to oneself. This path reflects Dostoevsky's confrontational literary ethos, indicative of his readiness to dispute established norms and advocate for the dynamic evolution of beauty beyond conventional constraints (FRANK, 2010). The complex interplay within the human psyche mirrors developmental laws, where the search for new values and the redefinition of beauty necessitate engaging in struggles against and beyond the existing social fabric.

Dostoevsky's exploration of humanity eradicates traditional perceptions, portraying humans as beings of profound existential depth endowed with a rich, humanistic essence (IVANITS, 2009). His narrative transcends a personal odyssey, embodying a radical transformative process that interrogates and disrupts societal values and norms. The emphasis on solitude as a conduit to freedom necessitates a critical reassessment of individualism, positing that genuine comprehension and emancipation emerge from rigorous self-examination and an openness to grappling with the complexities of one's inner realm (AHO, 2023).

Thus, Dostoevsky's oeuvre invites a scrutinizing lens on the societal edifices that confine individuals, championing a vision of existence that is both liberated and acutely conscious. This vision advocates transcending traditional boundaries to embrace the inherent contradictions and challenges of the human experience (LADOUCEUR, 2018, MCCONNELL, 2002). Through his philosophical and literary journey, Dostoevsky not only underscores the significance of solitude in achieving spiritual freedom but also illuminates the transformative potential of confronting and embracing the multifaceted struggles inherent in the quest for a more liberated and self-aware existence.

5. Faith in God as a Pillar of Existence

Dostoevsky, through his existential lens, posits faith as the cornerstone of human existence, proposing that the essence of freedom is inextricably linked with faith. In his view, faith transcends mere belief to become a force that enables individuals to surmount their limitations, thus fostering a transformative process towards enlightenment and the transcendence of sin (BERDYAEV, 2017; BYKOVA, 2022). Characters such as Alyosha, who embody Christ-like virtues, exemplify this principle by radiating a beauty and nobility that epitomize Dostoevsky's vision of divine freedom as a catalyst for human redemption and the overcoming of base instincts.

Dostoevsky's narrative suggests that faith serves not only as a bulwark against societal decay but also as a potent antidote to the intrinsic evils that plague humanity. These evils, manifested as selfish desires, deceitful affections, and hubristic arrogance, are depicted in works like "Notes from Underground," "The Idiot," and "Crime and Punishment". Through their existential struggles, Dostoevsky's characters engage in a profound internal conflict, striving to purge their sins and embrace a higher moral standing, often at great personal cost.

The spiritual odyssey described by Dostoevsky is one marked by solitude, suffering, and the relentless pursuit of virtue through trials and tribulations. He articulates a belief that true liberation of the spirit can only be achieved through Christianity, which offers a path through the wilderness of loneliness and despair towards ultimate freedom (IVANITS, 2009). This process of spiritual awakening is predicated on experiences, foresights, and the trials that forge a resilient faith in Christ. Dostoevsky asserts that devoid of divine guidance, humanity is prone to fall prey to its baser instincts, suggesting that the Holy Spirit, as a manifestation of divine will, is the true source of freedom (LADOUCEUR, 2018).

In Dostoevsky's philosophy, the interplay between Truth, Goodness, and Beauty constitutes the divine-human nexus, with beauty hailed as the harbinger of salvation in a world estranged from moral and spiritual absolutes. This salvation, Dostoevsky contends, is unattainable through force but rather

through a spiritual revolution that can only be realized through the embodiment of Christ's teachings (BERDYAEV, 2015).

Moreover, Dostoevsky's works are imbued with the spirit of Russian Orthodoxy, emphasizing the existential quest for God and the immortal soul as quintessential to the Russian psyche (DOSTOEVSKY, 2007). This quest is not limited to an external deity but extends to the divine spark within each individual, presenting a framework for existential crises and the path to self-mastery through suffering and enlightenment (MORSON, 2023).

In essence, Dostoevsky elevates the discourse on humanity's orientation towards goodness, asserting that despite the legal and existential shackles that bound the Russian people of the 19th century, the inherent rights of conscience remain inviolable. It is through the awakening of this conscience, facilitated by faith and religion, that individuals can embark on the journey towards moral and spiritual enlightenment (AHO, 2023).

Dostoevsky's exploration of faith, therefore, is not merely a doctrinal adherence but a deep, existential engagement with the divine, offering a beacon for humanity's journey through the vicissitudes of life. His philosophical and literary oeuvre invites a critical examination of faith as an essential pillar of existence, guiding humanity towards a higher plane of moral and spiritual actualization.

Conclusion

Fyodor Dostoevsky's literary legacy offers a profound insight into the existential dynamics of human existence, presenting a rich tapestry of themes that resonate with the quest for authenticity, freedom, and spiritual enlightenment. Through his nuanced portrayal of characters and their intricate psychological landscapes, Dostoevsky navigates the complex interplay between individual consciousness and societal pressures, unveiling the existential dilemmas that define the human condition. His exploration of self-awareness, the relentless pursuit of self-identity, internal conflict, solitude, and faith underscores a deep philosophical inquiry into the essence of being and the inherent contradictions of human nature.

Dostoevsky's works transcend mere storytelling to engage with existential questions that remain as pertinent today as they were in 19th-century Russia. His characters embody the struggle for spiritual freedom amidst the confinements of societal norms and the internal battlegrounds of conscience and desire. By integrating existentialist themes with a deep Christian theological perspective, Dostoevsky presents a unique vision of human resilience and redemption through faith, suggesting that true freedom and moral integrity are attainable in the embrace of solitude and the divine.

This paper has argued that Dostoevsky's contribution to literature and existential philosophy provides a critical reflection on the complexities of human nature and the perpetual quest for meaning and authenticity. His insistence on the indispensability of faith as a foundation for overcoming existential despair and achieving spiritual freedom highlights the transformative power of religious belief in reconciling the individual with the eternal dilemmas of good and evil, freedom and bondage.

In conclusion, Dostoevsky's existential discourse encapsulates a profound understanding of the human psyche, offering timeless insights into the pursuit of freedom, the significance of self-awareness, and the redemptive potential of faith. His literary oeuvre not only enriches the landscape of Russian literature but also contributes significantly to the broader philosophical discourse on human existence, challenging readers to confront the depths of their own being and the existential realities of their lives. As we navigate the complexities of the modern world, Dostoevsky's existential themes continue to inspire a critical examination of our inner lives and the societal structures that shape our existence, urging a reevaluation of the values and beliefs that guide our quest for authenticity and spiritual fulfillment.

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