V

CONCLUSION

The literary response of Dostoevskij to Schiller is marked by three major phases: fervent admiration, parody and satire, and creative assimilation. The admiration is evident from Dostoevskij's letters to his brother Mixail as also from some of his early stories, where Schillerian situations appear in a fairly pure form. What became an object of mockery later on, in *The Insulted and the Injured*, is in the 1840's treated in full seriousness. One situation runs through several stories: a triangle of one woman and two men, one of whom sacrifices himself for the love of the other. In *White Nights* the narrator, who loves Nasten'ka, offers to mediate between her and her dilatory lover; after the lover has turned up, she still believes it possible to maintain the same relationship with the narrator. In *A Weak Heart* there is the theme of friendship versus love, with alternating expressions of the reconcilability of these feelings, and the reverse. At one time, Vasja thinks that when he marries his friend's beloved, their friendship will be intensified (I, 534); at another, he feels that he has betrayed the friendship (I, 545). The girl, being the most simple-hearted of the three, even conceives of the possibility that the three of them could live together in a kind of friendship-love relationship. " 'We three shall live like one!' she cried with extremely naive enthusiasm" (I, 534). In this work appears also the idea of the universal embrace; all enemies would be reconciled "so that they might all embrace one another in the middle of the street for joy . . ." (I, 546).

The emotions of love and friendship, interpreted in a romantic-mystical spirit, are in these stories embodied in characters who dream about a perfect state.[1] Their mentality is that of Don Carlos, Marquis Posa, and Mortimer, three ideal characters referred to enthusiastically by Dostoevskij in a much-quoted letter to his brother. More specifically,

[1] For the genealogy and importance of the "dreamer" in Dostoevskij's work, see V. Komarovič, "Junost' Dostoevskogo," *Byloe* 23 (1924), 3-43.

one may mention the theme of love and friendship in *Don Carlos* and *Maria Stuart*. Marquis Posa, like so many of Dostoevskij's narrators, decides to further his friend's passion and becomes an intermediary between Don Carlos and the Queen. And an intermediary he remains, even after the Queen has touched his own heart.[2] Mortimer, the impetuous young noble in *Maria Stuart*, serves in the same capacity between Maria and Leicester, despite being passionately in love with Maria himself. These Schillerian situations, and the emotions surrounding them, are fairly exact counterparts to those just mentioned from Dostoevskij's early work. Whatever modifications appear, largely because of the absence of Schiller's high tragic themes, have turned Schiller's romantic idealism into sheer sentimentalism.

Thus, despite the fact that Dostoevskij's consciousness of his literary vocation came to him by way of an experience in which the lofty figures of Marquis Posa and Don Carlos were replaced by ordinary men of real life,[3] the spirit behind the superseded Romantic characters of Schiller remained strong in Dostoevskij's work. In the second stage of his literary relationship with Schiller, as I have shown in the first chapter, the attitude is ambivalent. The story of *The Insulted and the Injured* in its main features follows Schiller's bourgeois tragedy *Cabal and Love*,[4] and the young "quadrangle" of lovers and friends embody in their conduct Dostoevskij's early concept of Schillerism. At the same time, Prince Valkovskij strips the veils of illusion away from Schillerian idealism and finds baseness at its source. The hampering effects of Dostoevskij's Schillerism become manifest in this novel through the uncreative use of Schiller's play, demonstrated, perhaps, most clearly in his failure to make the meeting of the two women rivals integral to his plot design. In *Cabal and Love* this is a striking scene, beginning with the asserted superiority of Lady Milford and ending with her complete humiliation through Luise, the musician's daughter (Act IV, sc. 7). Dostoevskij stages the meeting, but it serves no purpose whatsoever (III, 321-325). And one suspects that it was precisely because of his "Schillerism," centered in ready-made feelings of self-sacrifice and universal love, that he was unable to make effective

[2] Martin Malia has stressed the curious participation of Marquis Posa in his friend's passion for the Queen, who represents an ideal beyond attainment (*op. cit.*, 193).

[3] Dostoevskij, "Peterburgskie snovidenija . . .," *Polnoe sobranie xudožestvennyx proizvedenij* XIII, 158.

[4] Meier-Graefe has, somewhat mockingly, indicated the close similarities in

use of it.[5] It is not surprising that he should use Prince Valkovskij to vent his pent-up frustration, especially since this frustration must, to a great extent, have been literary.

The climax of Dostoevskij's emancipation from Schillerism, though not from Schiller, comes with *Notes from Underground*, which can be considered the novelist's declaration of independence. Abstract humanism, brotherhood, and mutual sacrifice are now replaced by individual freedom and a sense of power; and instead of lofty idealism there is an acute consciousness of the moral complexity and ambiguity of human nature. Through showing detailed as well as general similarities between themes and motifs developed by the two authors, I have opened up the possibility that Dostoevskij was aided in his liberation from cliché Schillerism precisely by a deeper and a more imaginative assimilation of Schiller's own thought. For Schiller, after all, was himself no Schillerian!

It is not possible, of course, to fix the exact time at which Dostoevskij ceased to do battle with Schillerism. Suffice it to say that by the time he wrote *Crime and Punishment* (1865-1866) he had achieved complete mastery of his medium and had assimilated all literary influences. The magnificent result of this assimilation in the case of Schiller manifests itself in *The Brothers Karamazov*, where early Schillerism, religiously transformed, coexists with the themes and motifs developed partly by way of Schiller in the period of rejection. For Aleša's and Father Zosima's values are, at first glance, not so very different from those of the young Schillerians in *The Insulted and the Injured*; both sets of characters are idealists who have the highest concerns of mankind at heart. But the difference is crucial: the values of Aleša and

---

situation and character in the two works. After pointing out that the background of the action is intrigue, he goes on to say: "The Prince does what he can to come up to the President, Luise and Lady Milford have disguished themselves a bit, and the estate manager curses like the town musician. Only Aleksej in the age of Balzac does not dare risk the role of Ferdinand and must therefore content himself with his shadowy existence" (*op. cit.*, 127).

[5] Dostoevskij's dramatic use of the same scene in later novels, *The Idiot* (VI, 639-648) and *The Brothers Karamazov* (IX, 188-194), illustrates the tremendous progress he had made in the use and adaptation of literary materials. In both cases the intention of those who arrange the meeting is noble, but this noble, one might say Schilleresque, intention founders on a very human weakness, jealousy. Accordingly, in both scenes, the socially and morally superior of the rivals – Aglaja and Katerina Ivanovna, respectively – fall to the level of their inferior opponents, if not lower. I might mention that Schiller also uses the same scene effectively in *Maria Stuart*, where the attempt to reconcile Maria and Elizabeth fails because of aroused jealousies (Act III, sc. 4).

Father Zosima are based on religious faith, however aestheticized, and are founded in an unwavering moral consciousness. In this context of maturity and tested faith, the Schillerian dreams become acceptable. The second principal strain coming from Schiller is embodied mainly in Ivan Karamazov, in association with the broadly developed theme of theodicy. A third, and new strain, represented by Dmitrij Karamazov, Dostoevskij associates directly with Schiller, in particular with the ecstatic lyricism of *To Joy*.

In view of this complex use of Schillerian elements, it is virtually impossible to define the contribution of Schiller to *The Brothers Karamazov*. Carr's statement that Schiller is used to represent one side of the Russian temperament, the idealistic, is certainly an over-simplification.[6] Ernest Simmons made a truer assessment of this contribution. The characters of the novel, he writes, "are all deeply imbued with a Schiller-like moral consciousness. Indeed, the ecstasy of love in Schiller's *Hymn of Joy* is one of the basic elements of the whole ideological conception of the novel. . . ."[7] The centrality of the hymn and associated motifs is evident. Yet, the stance of denial taken by Ivan is also partly developed through Schillerian materials. Dostoevskij, whose thought, according to V. V. Zen'kovskij, ran in antinomies,[8] in this novel drew a great part of the substance for both poles of his thought from Schiller. All materials, needless to say, have been creatively transformed.

Perhaps the broadest perspective from which one could consider the Schillerian elements in *The Brothers Karamazov* is that of the East-West synthesis, which pervades Dostoevskij's thought. Komarovič, touching on this topic in connection with the use of *The Robbers*, suggests that Dostoevskij has employed the Western work invidiously rather than to intimate a synthesis. He put his own theme, the critic says, "into the borrowed model of a Western theme, only to proceed tearing the latter apart from within, changing its main lines and carrying out the resolution in a manner that was directly opposed to that indicated in the model."[9] On one level, this opposition is no doubt present; but it is not absolute. Indeed, looked at from a higher point of view, *The Brothers Karamazov* seems to embody to near perfection one of Dostoevskij's favorite ideas: namely, that Russian culture is

[6] Carr, *Dostoevsky*, 262.

[7] Ernest J. Simmons, *Dostoevski: The Making of a Novelist* (New York, 1940), 348.

[8] Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy* I, 417.

[9] Komarowitsch, ed., *Die Urgestalt der Brüder Karamasoff*, 166.

most purely Russian when it assimilates to itself the different national cultures of Europe. The novel is firmly rooted in the Western tradition, represented by Schiller and others, but at the same time it is wholly Russian. The aesthetic fact fits the political-cultural theory so neatly that one is almost tempted to believe that, in writing his novel, Dostoevskij deliberately set out to prove it.[10]

No one can fully explain the permanent attraction Schiller held for Dostoevskij—for the attraction was permanent; the rejection of "Schillerism" made no break in Dostoevskij's high regard for Schiller.[11] The tone of admiration persists up to the last year of his life, when, in the Puškin Speech, Schiller appears as a member of a triumvirate of literary greats: Shakespeare, Cervantes, Schiller. Apart from emotional involvement, one might mention what George Steiner calls the "rare . . . creative equilibrium between poetic and philosophical powers" in both writers.[12] More important, perhaps, is the similarity in the focus and the quality of their thought. Zen'kovskij suggests that Dostoevskij's paramount concern is the theme of man; the same is true for Schiller. Furthermore, their thought moves in antinomies; spanning the ex-

[10] Thomas Mann has suggested that Dostoevskij's idea of the universal mission of Russia in regard to the national cultures of Europe came to him from Schiller's fragmentary poem "German Greatness" [*Deutsche Grösse*], where the German poet ascribes to his own country the same role. The Puškin Speech, Mann says, attributes to "the Russian nationality the same destiny in quite similar, often identical words" (*Versuch über Schiller,* 71). Zen'kovskij notes that this idea was expressed by Dostoevskij as early as 1861, in the subscription blank for *Vremja* (*A History* . . . I, 414). The most extended later statements appear in *A Raw Youth* and the Puškin Speech. Čiževskij notes the possibility of a Hegelian ancestry, but admits that the idea was first introduced by the followers of Schelling. Lacking the competence to arbitrate between these possibilities, I shall content myself with giving a few statements from Schiller's notes to his poem: "He [the German] is destined for the highest [goal], to perfect universal humanity in himself and to unite in one wreath the most beautiful things that blossom in all nations –and just as he finds himself in the middle of Europe's nations, so is he the fruit [*Kern*] of humanity, the others are the blossom and the leaf. He is elected by the universal spirit . . . not to shine and play his role in the moment, but to win the great race [*Prozess*] of time. Every nation has its day in history; the day of the German, however, is the harvest of all time–" (III, 443).

[11] This is quite evident from a short notice in *Vremja* in 1861, the date of publication of *The Insulted and the Injured,* in response to a statement in the periodical *Vek* that "we do not place Schiller very high." Dostoevskij writes: "*We should particularly value Schiller,* not only because he was a great poet, but because he was our poet. The poetry of Schiller is more accessible to the heart than the poetry of Goethe and Byron, and this is its merit; because of this Russian literature owes much to Schiller" ("Nečto o Šillere," *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij,* ed. L. Grossman XXII [Petrograd, 1918], 238-239).

[12] George Steiner, *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky: An Essay in the Old Criticism* (New York, 1959), 228.

tremes of human nature, it explores its demonic as well as its angelic principle.[13] Because of this double vision, both compose tragedy. Yet, both attempt to transcend tragedy, through the idea of a man whose psychic forces are in perfect balance and who, therefore, has achieved inner harmony. Perhaps it was his awareness of such an endeavor in Schiller which made Goethe call him a " 'savior figure' in whom 'the Christ tendency was innate'."[14] Goethe's words could also be applied to Dostoevskij, whose best work is the expression of a passionate quest to reconcile East and West, body and spirit, and to make all men experience the truth of Father Zosima's words, "life is paradise."

[13] Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy* I, 418-419.
[14] Letter to Eckermann of 11 September 1829, as quoted by Wais, 490.