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The Escape of Chekhov's Characters through Religion

Abstract: In a study that involves the interpretation of such complex characters as those in the sphere of Russian writing, I inevitably reached issues like faith, soul, religion, suffering and aspirations. Considering that mysticism underlies the Russian soul, I tried to understand the human dimension of the characters from Chekhov's plays, *Three sisters*, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Cherry Orchard* and *The Seagull*. Thus, I analysed the abyssal Slavic soul through the ideas of Russian mystical school and its representatives, Paul Evdokimov and Nikolai Berdiaev, starting from the image of Christ in Russian thinking. "The soul of the Russian man is directed to the Kingdom of God, but yields easily to temptations, imitations, and illusions, and easily falls into the power of the kingdom of darkness." For Chekhov, one must be faithful or go in search of faith, otherwise his life will be deserted. This study is intended for those interested in russian dramatic characters and their search for faith.

Keywords: Chekhov, Christ, philosophy, religion, love, sacrifice.

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Evadarea personajelor lui Cehov prin religie

Abstract: Într-un studiu care implică interpretarea unor personaje atât de complexe precum cele din sfera dramaturgiei ruse, am ajuns inevitabil la probleme precum credinţa, sufletul, religia, suferinţa şi aspiraţiile. Având în vedere că misticismul stă la baza sufletului rusesc, am încercat să înţeleg dimensiunea umană a personajelor din piesele lui Cehov, *Trei surori*, *Unchiul Vania*, *Livada de vişini* şi *Pescăruşul*. Astfel, am analizat abisurile sufletului slav prin ideile şcolii mistice ruseşti şi reprezentanţii acesteia, Paul Evdokimov şi Nikolai Berdiaev, plecând de la imaginea lui Hristos în gândirea rusă. „Sufletul omului rus este îndreptat către Împărăţia lui Dumnezeu, dar cedează cu uşurinţă ispitelor, imitaţiilor şi iluziilor şi cade uşor în puterea împărăţiei întunericului". Pentru Cehov, omul trebuie să fie credincios sau să fie în căutarea credinţei, altfel viaţa lui va fi stearpă. Acest studiu este adresat celor interesaţi de personajele dramatice în căutarea credinţei din literatura rusă.

Keywords: Cehov, Hristos, filosofie, religie, iubire, sacrificiu.

Introduction

"Coming out of the waters of baptism, the Russian people defined themselves and gave their name to the country not of beautiful Russia, not of Great Russia, but that of Holy Russia."

(*Evdokimov, 2001, p. 51*). This Holy Russia was apparently forgotten with the revolution of 1917, when "[…] the devil of this age spoke Russian. What was triggered in the history of the world […] was, for hundreds of millions of people, a descent into hell, a barely reversible experience of disfigurement," according to Romanian philosopher Andrei Pleşu (*Berdiaev, 1992, p. 5*).

Despite these political circumstances, this Holy Russia, "the other Russia," as Andrei Pleşu calls it, has never ceased to exist, even if sometimes outside its endless borders. Through the writings of several great philosophers, religious, theologians, such as Paul Evdokimov, Nikolai Berdiaev, Vladimir Losski, or Lev Shestov, mystical Russia continued to breathe, and then to be reborn and restore to the world the deep religious depths and passions that exist in the depths of the Slavic soul.

Man, no matter how wild and lonely, would lead his life, without any urge coming from outside his existence, from a certain feeling: "looks up at the sky, falls to his knees with a sigh that he doesn't even understand, but he immediately feels something special, something that pulls him to the top, something that leads him to an unknown world. All religions are built on this foundation." (*The Russian pilgrim…, 2002, p. 202*)

Man, theologian or not, carries with him the religious spirit of his people, of his national Church. This national specificity can put its stamp on the way it is found in works, the spiritual heritage. Between peoples, nations, there are considerable differences, differences that can be noticed even on a spiritual level. Thus, we can talk about the specificity of each people. Unlike other peoples, the specificity of the Russian people is that of a strong feeling at the mystical encounter with God, as Paul Evdokimov argues.

The need for God of the Slavic soul and Russian characters can be found not only in Checkov's plays, but also in the works of the great mystics of Russian literature: Dostoievsky, Tolstoy and Gogol, and some might say that we exaggerate if we say that Chekhov's work, because Russian culture takes its juice from a certain place of the spirituality of the Russian soul.

Results

The Slavic Soul in Search of Faith

The Slavic soul seeks the limits of the liturgical experience, the Russian people never being satisfied with half measures when they live the emotion and the feeling of God's presence. "Russian maximalism", as Evdokimov called it, reveals exactly this irresistible need to push the boundaries through an obvious thirst for the absolute. "In Russian, the root of the soul, as in Plato, is suspended indefinitely." (*Evdokimov, 2001, p. 50*)

"Russian maximalism" can be transposed into the endless expanses of the Russian steppes. The boundless Russian steppes are projected into the boundless Slavic soul, and the word that most eloquently expresses this space is the word "proctor." The short story *The Bishop* of Chekhov best illustrates this "prostor", the bishop's deliverance, through death, from all that burdened him: "again young and cheerful, the bishop crosses the green fields and breathes deeply, with joy, the endless, unlimited field." (*Evdokimov, 2001, p. 50*) This maximalism can also be applied to those who are trying to confront God. The Russian man never looks for the middle way, or everything. or nothing, we can say. "The Russian man is with God or against God, but never without God." (*Evdokimov, 2001, p. 50*) According to Evdokimov, atheism and nihilism

can be made absolutely divine. The absolute need, specific to the Slavic soul, actually belongs to each person, it is essential where he is going, what he is aiming for, and the real path is the great encounter with God and His knowledge.

According to the specificity of each people, we can speak of a Russian Christ as we can speak of a Greek Christ or a Spanish Christ, ecc. The iconographic image agrees with the vision of each people on its Christ. The Russian Christ has the image of a healer, of one who does not seek to judge but above all to heal the wounds of the soul. He is the merciful, constantly surrounded by the poor and crippled, by the less fortunate of this world as he is, in fact, depicted in the work of the painter Nesterov, entitled *Christ and Holy Russia.* In accordance with these attributes of the Russian Christ goes the Russian literature, which has in the central plan mainly those who suffer. When the human being seems to be unable to find his way, to find salvation, and to wander aimlessly in a hopeless maze, then a glimmer of light can be seen, expressed through faith, love of God, and salvation, these being the sure ones, which can bring saving peace. Faith in the goodness and saving power of God are essential features of the Russian people and the Slavic soul. Going in the direction of pan-Slavism, Satov claims that "the only <God-bearing> people is the Russian people" and that "the second coming of Christ will take place in Russia." (*Dostoievski, 1981, p. 356*)

"The Russian people are headed for the Kingdom of God, which explains not only their virtues but also many of their vices. The soul of the Russian man is directed to the Kingdom of God, but yields easily to temptations, imitations, and illusions, and easily falls into the power of the kingdom of darkness." (*Berdiaev, 1995, p. 103*) The name of Holy Russia does not implicitly imply a sinless Russian people. The Russians are perhaps the most sinful sinners on earth, Evdokimov believes, but the ideal of the absolute, the aspiration for the holy, places them in the heavenly level.

There have been countless comments and opinions on religious issues in Chekhov's work. These controversies are based on the author's personal choice about faith. We know that Chekhov was a practicing Orthodox Christian, spending much time in monasteries, having friends, priests, and a thorough knowledge of liturgical worship. It is also known that orthodoxy and spirituality were lived by him authentically, often arguing as a true theologian. We could say about Chekhov that he did not hide his faith, even more than that, he expressed it in his work, right from the moment he wrote and published *Orthodox Stories*.

About Chekhov we cannot speak of a moment of conversion as in Gogol or Dostoievsky. Chekhov seems to have simply been faithful. Chekhov loves the Church; he writes like a son of the Church. However, you will not find in him the slightest attempt at idealization. His characters may be drunken, uneducated, filthy priests, priests who have stopped their sins. Thus, in the mentality of the Orthodox intellectual, to the two Russian writers who have probed the spiritual depths of man, Dostoievsky and Gogol, is added Chekhov.

For Chekhov, man must be faithful or go in search of faith, otherwise his life will be deserted. We can see this conviction through Masha from *The Three Sisters:* "It seems to me that everyone must have a faith, or at least seek it. Otherwise, his existence is empty… To live and not know why roosters fly? Why are children born? Why are the stars in the sky? …Either you know why you live, or everything in the world is trifles… nothing." (*Cehov, 1960, p. 314*)

Despite the author's biography, humbly inclined to faith, there were still voices that fought against the author's faith in terms of the characters he gave life to, because in Chekhov you always see a failure, a helplessness, that no otherworldly hope he does not come to sweeten it, being one of the most pessimistic writers. Chekhov creates a universe in which there is no room for the "Good News," for the "Resurrection of Christ," or for the redemption of sinful people. How can God exist when He is not seen in Chekhov's work? These were the strongest arguments put forward by those who vehemently doubted Chekhov's faith and the expression of faith in his plays.

In support of the idea of religiosity in Chekhov's plays, Nina Zarecinaia stands up, with that much interpreted monologue from the end of *The Seagull*, before her final departure and the suicide of Kostea Treplev. Although thoughts seem to be uttered with the despair of one who has nothing to lose, Nina nevertheless expresses the great mystery of the defeat of death by removing the fear of death. Chekhov tried to express his faith in the most delicate way, without using emphasis.

The departure of Nina at the end of the play really means the salvation of her, but also of the man who, abandoned, commits the great sin because of this. The woman, however, takes with her, on the ascent of Golgotha, also her soul. The boyfriend of his youth, who gave up and could not make it to the end, is thus saved. The end, then, is no longer without redemption, but on the contrary, it is a beginning of life that defeats death. The *Seagull* is the best example of his writing strategy, to envelop and reveal the spiritual meanings. The miracle of the Chekhov's *Seagull*, without being shown to us, is like a more convincing promise than any firm verdict.

"This is the reading I am now giving to the song. […] Chekhov was a Christian author and had an attachment to religious ideas above the appreciation shown for literature itself. After all, any author who takes his work seriously, sooner or later, goes beyond it. He looks at his toys in amazement and, even if he does not throw them away, he feels that he is living an incomparable happiness. It is his encounter with the inexpressible and, forgiven is the great statement, with God." (*Stanca, 2011*) Thus, there are arguments to argue that Chekhov is not only orthodox, but has all the hallmarks of a high, perhaps even holy, life.

Paul Evdokimov emphasizes, in his treatise *Christ in Russian Thinking*, that for the Russians all that is temporary and earthly proves to be irrelevant, for what matters is final and universal salvation. This characteristic is also found in the famous monologue of Nina from the *Seagull*: "Since I have been here, I have walked a lot and while I was walking, I thought and felt how, with each passing day, the powers of my soul increase. Now I know, I understand, Kostea, that in what we do, whether we play on stage or write, the main thing is not the glory, it is not the glamour, it is not what I dreamed of, but our power to endure. Know how to carry your cross and keep your faith. I believe and I suffer less…" (*Cehov, 1967, p. 229*)

Nina Zarecinaia's reply provoked many interpretations, but all agreed that it best reflected Chekhov's relationship with the great unknown. Nina's words carry, beyond apparent despair, the imprint of victory over death by banishing the fear of death. At the same time, they focus on the essence of A.P. Chekhov with the divine: delicate, discreet, like an underground current as perfectly perceptible as it is without ostentation. *The Seagull*, like the *Cherry Orchard*, in fact, is thus enveloped in a spiritual dimension.

This reconciliation with the idea of death, the elimination of fear and the fear of death appears as the basic feature of the new man. The old man must be destroyed to prepare for the birth of the "new man". Man must change, because man's life is suffering, it is fear, which makes him totally unhappy. "Man cares for life because he cares for suffering and fear" (*Dostoievski, 1981, p. 127*), therefore the old man, unhappy, must be destroyed in order to be born the new man who no longer wants suffering, who is no longer afraid of death, a new man who does not care whether he lives or not.

The apocalyptic dimension often appears in Chekhov's works. What is revealed to us in *Revelation after John*, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; because the first heaven and the first earth had perished and the sea was gone" (*The Bible or Holy Scripture, 1997*), is often expressed by Chekhov's characters. Trofimov, in the *Cherry Orchard*, expresses his painful feeling that the old world is sinking, but he dreams of another, another creation, which they will never see again: "Look, it's coming, it's getting closer, more and more, I hear his footsteps. And even if we don't see it, we don't know it, it doesn't matter ... Others will see it!" (*Cehov, 1960, p. 394*)

The apocalyptic image of destruction is vehemently expressed by Elena Andreevna, echoing Dr. Astrov's idea: "Just as Astrov said just now: you all destroy the forest without thinking, and soon there will be nothing left on earth. And without thinking, you destroy man, and soon, thanks to you, there will be no faith left on earth, no purity of soul, no power of sacrifice. […] in you lies the demon of destruction!" (*Cehov, 1960, p. 243*)

From this outburst of rage of the character come several essential ideas: on the one hand the eschatological dimension of the end times, on the other hand man, the destroyer of God's creation by its rapture, which categorically contains the involvement of the devil in the human soul, and not in lastly, the appearance of the ruthless primitive man.

Through this cutting of the forests, which brings enormous suffering to Dr. Astrov, through the destruction of God's creation, man has no place to take refuge, through destruction he cannot even take refuge in God's creation. Dostoievsky, in *Crime and Punishment*, through Marmeladov's voice, says that the poor man has no place to flee, all living things find their place in God's creation, as the *Gospel* tells us, birds have nests, foxes have burrows, only the son of man he has nowhere to put his tired head. Man, as Astrov says, is destructive, not creative; he fiercely destroys what he has received from God. The man, through this destruction, sold his soul to the devil: "Russia's forests are cracking under the ax. […] Man is endowed with intelligence and creative power to increase all that is given to him by God, but so far, he has not created, but destroyed. The forests are getting smaller and smaller […] and with each passing day the land is getting poorer and uglier." (*Cehov, 1960, p. 243*)

The issue of "new heaven, new earth, the first world has passed, another heaven, another earth" also appears in *Three Sisters*, most often in the conception of the character Vershinin, who goes on seeking immortality. The failure of the characters is "here and now," in the concrete dimension, but he is comforted by the idea that the world will be recreated from the ground up: "life will stifle you, but you will not all disappear. Your rooting will last! […] In two or three hundred years, life on this earth will be incredibly beautiful, amazing. Man needs such a life and even if he has not yet arrived there, he must present it, wait for it, dream it, prepare for it!" (*Cehov, 1960, p. 298*)

Immortality, perpetuation over the centuries, is a problem that has constantly crushed Chekhov, which is also evident in the problems of his characters. Astrov wants a projection in that other new world: "Astrov: […] will those of us who live a hundred, two hundred years after us and to whom we are making our way today remember us with a kind word? Marina: People don't! But God will remember." (*Cehov, 1960, p. 364*)

Revelation involves coming out of time; there is no more time, the beginning and the end are diluted, they disappear. The time in Chekhov is related to the apocalypse, the "*utopos*," the good place that cannot be. The characters have time, but their time is apparent, it is a time that works to the detriment of their becoming, it is a time that grinds them that leads them to failure, to final failure, to failure and so time in Chekhov is apocalyptic and utopian.

These ideas can also be found in Sonia's monologue, from the end of the play *Uncle Vanya*: "[…] and when our time will come, we will die humbly, and in the world beyond we will confess that we have been tormented, that we have wept, that our soul is bitter, and that God will have mercy on us. […] We will hear the angels, we will see the whole sky with diamonds, we will see how all the evil on earth, all our troubles will melt into the goodness that will fill the whole world, and our life will become peaceful, tender, sweet as a comfort. I believe, I believe…" (*Cehov, 1960, p. 427*) It refers to the Russian Christ, who is never a judge, but one who comforts, pities, and heals the wounds of the soul. Life must be understood by the "thirst" for eternity under the apocalyptic dimension. The Russian people could not accept the idea of an abstract God, common to all peoples. Evdokimov points out that the Russian God has something evangelical essential.

From this monologue also emerges another important issue, the idea of faith and advancing towards the absolute, towards the "end of times," as well as the idea of escaping into another dimension, resumed in *Three Sisters* – the cosmic escape, illustrated in Olga's monologue: "Peace and Happiness they will descend to the earth, and we today will be remembered with gratitude and blessed […] A little more and maybe we will know what we live for, what we suffer for!" (*Cehov, 1960, p. 356*).

Chekhov's female characters encompass distinct, extreme human universes, which abound in unrest and suffering, in new beginnings and giving up, in dissatisfaction and failure, the latter being one of the main characteristics of Chekhov's characters. This mediocrity of some characters is in opposition to the concept of infinity of the inner geography of the Russian.

We can observe, in the Chekhov plays, the existence of another "character," which exists and influences the other characters, a "character" that has the same path, that of laziness, fatigue, stillness, non-becoming: the atmosphere. "Chekhov's plays give the stage a hidden vibration, hard to perceive, with a dramatic, slower rhythm, the stage space being filled with a dense, oppressive, suffocating atmosphere, and in this atmosphere the gestures become slow and hesitant, the words are heavy and diffuse, as if impossible to say." (*Cehov, 1967, VI*) We can speak of the atmosphere as a character because it transmits, like the characters, emotion, despair, decay, return, resignation, expresses all the paroxysmal states of the Chekhov characters. The Chekhovian atmosphere is the very projection of the characters' souls: a seemingly apocalyptic atmosphere, in the biblical sense, an atmosphere that will stop at the end of time and be reborn, a new atmosphere in a new world.

Only young people talk about a new life, says Shestov, inexperienced young people who still have the power to hope, to make future projects, who still have aspirations, although most of the time their aspirations do not take the form of victory. But about a new world, about a perfect future society, in which they will find themselves, also speak those who have gone through life experiences, such as Astrov, Vershinin or Olga, those who dream of remaining in the thoughts of new people being gratefully mentioned. If work has no purpose in itself if it does not bring spiritual satisfaction, or if it does not bear fruit in others, today's suffering can be transformed into joy, the joy of those who will live after them. This is the only way that the three sisters can accept the pains, failures and disappointments of the current life as it appears from Olga's final monologue: "Oh! Oh my God! Our sorority will be fulfilled and we will be gone forever. The world will forget us; he will forget our faces, our voices and all that they were! But our sufferings will turn into joy for those who will live after us. Peace and happiness will descend to earth, and we today will be remembered with gratitude and blessed! My dear sisters, our life is not over yet! So, let's live it! […] A little more and maybe we will know why we live, why we suffer! If we only knew! If only I knew!" (*Cehov, 1960, p. 356*) Although the dream of reaching Moscow again, this checkovian Edenic city, will never come true, the three sisters understand and accept that despite the disappointments and sufferings, the road of life has only one meaning: before, even if the price paid is huge: happiness, joy and current fulfillment. Perhaps when peace and happiness come down to earth, man will have faith, or at least seek it, as the youngest of sisters thinks it should happen, because to live without faith, without knowing what, it is an empty existence, without content.

"See, we, Russians, are able to reach the highest peaks of thought, but tell me… why do we let ourselves be enslaved by all the trifles of life? Why?" (*Cehov, 1960, p. 309*) Vershinin wonders, perhaps the most vehement and vocal preacher of a new world, whom he describes as incredibly beautiful and amazing. Through his projections into the future, through his philosophies about new people and new times, he tries to escape from a tense, ugly and petty present, sprinkled with obstacles and disappointments. In fact, the characters are strongly anchored in a past time that triggers painful memories and a wonderful future for others, but which still brings them peace of mind. The present, for the Chekhov heroes, does not exist, they are not able to connect in the present time, not being able to undertake concrete and immediate actions that will bring them spiritual satisfaction.

Chekhov builds a compensatory structure for his characters, so that he can understand and accept his suffering, giving his characters the opportunity to escape from the ugliness of today's life and to imagine a projection of their happiness over hundreds of years. We are therefore talking about a compensatory structure for all the current failures, failures and sufferings: "a happy life will begin, a new life will begin! We will not have it of course; but for her we live today, we toil and suffer. We do it… and that is the meaning of our existence and, we could even say, our happiness." (*Cehov, 1960, p. 313*) Here we find the idea of fulfilment, not by its immediate and personal realization, but by its fruiting in others, ideally supported by little Irina, eager to sacrifice for those who need it. "Happiness, they believe, is for distant descendants, not for them, and this gives them the strength to move forward, resigned, a resignation considered by some analysts more painful than death: as if the future could restore to them the lost paradise of

childhood lived or only longed for, or of resignation more dangerous than death, in a hypothetical Moscow or Paris." (*Bălănescu, 2009, p. 29*)

The theme of the new man, of a new world, is frequently present in Chekhov's plays, but it gains weight in the *Cherry Orchard* through the thoughts expressed by the student Trofimov. He expresses his beliefs in front of everyone, but especially in front of Ania, a good listener and a good student. And he, like Versinin, understands the unhappiness of the present time as a sacrifice for the happiness of others: "Here is happiness! Look, she's coming, she's getting closer and closer, and I hear her footsteps. And even if we don't see it, we won't know it, it doesn't matter… Others will see it!" (*Cehov, 1960, p. 395*) In *The History of Universal Theater*, Romanian author Ileana Berlogea attributes to Trofimov an essential attribute: inner youth, a state of mind that brings her effervescence and an intellectual curiosity to ask questions and find answers to essential problems. His answers are not distorted because they come from "the universe of a man who looks at the world with his eyes uncorrupted by the ugly possible, who listens to it with his soul without forbidding any of his questions, this type of universe shelters solutions for all, efficient solutions, full of substance." (*Berlogea et al., 1982, p. 244*) The student Trofimov not only raises an alarm regarding the deplorable state of man and implicitly of humanity, which deceives itself, full of pride, but even proposes solutions: "[…] man is ill-formed, and in the sea most of us are rude, unintelligent, and deeply unhappy! We must once again cease to delight in ourselves. We need to work hard" (*Cehov, 1960, p. 390*), not for them, but to extend a helping hand to those who seek the truth, he says.

Dr. Astrov's mission in the world is evident from the beginning of *Uncle Vanya* play. Astrov is, on the one hand, the savior of the forests and, at the same time, the one called, for a decade, to the head of the sick to heal them, his work being thus for the benefit of others. That is probably why he is given the voice to express his views on the new world beyond the ages, like the other characters discussed earlier. The Romanian hystorian Ileana Berlogea considers Astrov a character to whom countless qualities have been attributed. Lucidity and responsibility and determination of the doctor are the qualities that determined him to become a man given, through his work, to others. Dr. Astrov considers and mentions countless times the decline of the present man, the destruction and progressive degeneration of forests, climate, society, humanity, existence in its complexity, of which only man is guilty. Then he expresses his belief that this way of life of the present time will be despised by the new man: so stupid - they will be able to find a way to be happy. "But we… You and I have only one hope left. The hope that, once and for all, when we rest in our coffins, we will dream… Maybe even beautiful dreams." (*Cehov, 1960, p. 267*)

Among Chekhov's protégés we also find Sonya, the teacher's daughter, a character endowed with immense kindness and availability. And she walks the path of her uncle Voinitsky, giving up all the joys of life, toiling for others. Sonya's monologue, at the end of the play, is perhaps the most beautiful and moving tribute, like a prayer, to the resigned "Chekhovian losers," reconciled with life: "We will live, Uncle Vanya. We will live a long, long series of endless evenings; we will patiently endure the trials that fate will send us; we will toil for others, even now in old age, without knowing rest, and when our hour comes, we will die submissive, and there, beyond the grave, we will say that we have suffered, that we have cried, that we have been bitter and God will have mercy on us both, and we, dear uncle, will see a bright, beautiful,

wonderful life! We will rejoice and watch our misfortunes from now on, smiling tenderly—and we will rest […] We will hear angels, we will see the sky sown with diamonds, we will see all the earthly evils, all our sufferings melted in sorrow which will embrace the whole world, and our lives will be peaceful, tender, and sweet as a caress. I believe, yes, I believe! […] You have not known any joy in life, but wait, Uncle Vanya, wait… We will rest! …" (*Cehov, 1960, pp. 283–284*). How many of us, Romanian author and director Bogdan Ulmu (*Ulmu, 1985*) rightly wondered, would have the strength to speak strong in the moments of balance, this superb psalm of the carrying of the cross?

Conclusion

The fact that Chekhov's dramaturgy is interpreted and reinterpreted shows the preoccupation of dramatic researchers for over a hundred years with the one who revolutionized the theater, without consciously realizing this fact. One can not overlook the religious education Checkov has had as a child. He, like his Russian fellow writers, Tolstoy, Dostoievsky, Turgheniev, had a relentless concern for the mistery of the faith. Much of the Russian drama is populated by "bright" Christians (like Mishkin, Sonia Marmeladova, Aleosha Karamazov), but also "dark" nihilists (like Arkadi Svidrigailov, Pavel Smerdeakov, Nikolai Stavroghin). To understand them, one must make a constant appeal to Orthodox Christian theology. Man is seen as a theological being who, although he contains the world in himself, does not aim at the world, but at God. Man was created as a free, conscious, and responsible being, so he is not entirely dependent on God, but can make his own way in life; he transcends the created order, endowed ontologically with the power to become holy. It is about freedom as an ontological attribute of man, about freedom from the complex mechanisms of the outside world that make up all the laws of nature. The characters ascend and descend the steps of suffering, but at their end the supreme happiness awaits him, and this is the light of God's love. Love and faith, the true paths of light, intertwine, leading to the salvation of man. This whole picture is based on evangelical precepts. The victory of good over evil is accomplished through love. Suffering has a purifying role, and man's redemption is accomplished by faith. As a person, man is free, and faith is always linked to freedom, the freedom to seek, to find. Checkov's characters are also in the seek of peace of mind, of faith, although they struggle with the past and the problems of the present, the future seems bright for them, at least as a hope, seeing the escape in religion, in God.

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