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## FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY VS KARL MARX: PERSONAL FREEDOM IN EXISTENTIAL AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS

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*The paper explores the perspectives of Fyodor Dostoevsky and Karl Marx regarding human freedom, highlighting their relevance amidst the contradictory landscape of social development in late capitalism. It is well-established that Dostoevsky's 'orthodox' socialist stance resonated with Marx's critique of bourgeois society, focusing on themes of materialism, the dominance of wealth, and alienation. Both thinkers grappled with the concept of human freedom, recognizing it as an intrinsic characteristic and essential aspect of humanity. While they shared similar views on existential and social dimensions of freedom, they diverged in their conceptual approaches to achieving it. The study aims to demonstrate, through a comparative analysis of Dostoevsky's and Marx's perspectives, that despite differences in their understanding of freedom and its attainment, their positions can be seen as complementary. Dostoevsky advocated for inner spiritual improvement, while Marx prioritized external structural change. Research indicates that these perspectives can mutually reinforce each other. The authors assert and support the thesis that according to Dostoevsky, achieving spiritual freedom is feasible through labour activity, a concept akin to Marx's notion of praxis.*

**Keywords:** human, alienation, moral compass, faith, capitalism, socialism

### 1. Introduction

Dostoevsky and Marx were contemporaries, practically the same age, and their influence extended beyond their lifetimes. They significantly shaped the spiritual and intellectual landscape of their era and laid the foundations for ongoing discussions about human nature, interpersonal relationships, and society.

There is a tradition in Russian religious philosophy (Nikolai Berdyaev, Vasily Rozanov, Sergei Bulgakov, and Dmitry Merezhkovsky) to consider Marx and Dostoevsky as radical antipodes. Dostoevsky denounced socialism as he saw the anti-Christ principle in its revolutionary and atheistic character. However, contemporary researchers are less categorical and emphasize inflection points in the ideological heritage of Dostoevsky and Marx. From our perspective, despite differences in their views stemming from the



individual characteristics of the thinkers' personalities and their unique personal contexts, the shared socio-cultural and historical context shaped their attention and interest in similar issues.

We observe commonalities in the rejection of social injustice, the condemnation of the oppressive influence of money and capital, and criticism of capitalism, which fosters an internal division within individuals and leads to the loss of true self among the working class (Lesevitsky, 2015; Vladiv-Glover, 2018). Additionally, there is a shared influence of Christian moral principles (Scanlan, 2002; An, 2017; Morillas, 2018a; Frank, 1939), as well as a quest to understand the essence of humanity and its inherent characteristics (Gritsenko, 2013; Kondrashov, 2020). Moreover, both Dostoevsky and Marx explored socialism as a societal framework grounded in solidarity and brotherhood. Another argument in favour of comparing the views of Dostoevsky and Marx can be the thought of Oittinen that "Russia has become, as it were, a touchstone for much of what Marx declared and proved; <...> he was open to the analysis of new problems related to the development of capitalism outside the main sphere of its influence in Western Europe and North America" (Oittinen, 2019). At the same time, Dostoevsky, according to Nikolsky, "Undoubtedly, he was acutely aware that... he provides an insight into the nature of the Russian people, markedly distinct from that of individuals from other cultures, including, most notably, Europeans whom he criticized. Within this context, the author perceived the potential for a divine destiny for Russians to "make their mark on the world," guiding humanity away from the morass of falsehoods, materialism, and consumerism associated with liberalism, an ideology increasingly captivating Europe and upon which America seeks to build itself" (Nikolsky, 2021, pp. 51–52).

Finally, it should be recognized that not only "in the artistic world of Dostoevsky, the starting point with which the solution of all problems is optimally connected, the peak from which the light falls on everything else...is personal freedom," (Chervinskiene, 1980, p. 68) but also in the universe of Marx's views "the free flourishing of individuals is the whole aim of his politics. <> This, one might claim, is Marx's morality from start to finish" (Eagleton, 2018, pp. 86–87).

The authors of the article emphasize the shared belief of both thinkers in the necessity of freedom for humanity, considering it as an inherent characteristic and essence of being human, as well as exploring the means to attain it. While Dostoevsky, with a sceptical view towards social changes driven by scientific and technological advancements, focused on the enhancement of the inner spiritual realm, Marx associated the attainment of freedom and the development of moral values with external factors such as changes in social structures and relations. Without initially situating the perspectives of these thinkers within a specific ideological framework, we aim to uncover the conceptual foundations behind both their unity and divergence. This approach enables us to illustrate that despite their differing views on human nature and the methods to achieve freedom, their approaches towards identity formation are mutually complementary.



## 2. The writer Dostoevsky and the economist Marx: the general subject of criticism and the posing of the freedom problem

Whether the thinkers were familiar with each other's ideas remains controversial. We know that Dostoevsky has many statements criticizing socialist theories, including Marx's "scientific socialism" (An, 2017, p. 98). The writer had the opportunity to meet various concepts of socialism in the Petersburg circle of Petrashevsky and by reading works of French writers (primarily Georges Sand), reflecting the ideas of "utopian socialism" of Saint-Simon, Fourier ("Fourierism"), Leroux, and others (Scanlan, 2002). Oittinen claims that Marx did not read or comment on Dostoevsky (Oittinen, 2019, p. 14). However, it is worth noting Dostoevsky's indirect polemic with Marx during the 1872 trial of the anarchist revolutionary Sergei Nechaev. Both Marx and Engels followed and commented on the trial, and Dostoevsky was also among those who closely observed it. The novel *Demons* (1872) is based on the events included in the case materials, and the writer's acquaintance with the Revolutionary Catechism is reflected in the plot-thematic composition of the novel (Tihomirov, 2019). Lesevickij suggests that Dostoevsky was acquainted with some of the works of the German philosopher, in particular, with the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 (Lesevickij, 2015).

Dostoevsky's creative genius brought him fame as a writer of existential problems: the inner world of the human soul, moral choice, the relationship between the general and the individual, etc. "In journalism and novels, every hero is a bearer of an existential idea" (Nikolsky, 2023a, p. 77)<sup>1</sup>. One of the key issues that preoccupied Dostoevsky throughout his life was human freedom. However, alongside these 'eternal themes', socio-economic and political concerns also loomed large in his works. Terms such as *pochvennik* (loyalist to the nation), *conservatism*, *traditionalist*, *guardian*, *Orthodox*, and *monarchist* reflect his political stance, as "all of Dostoevsky's works, in one way or another, were anti-capitalist" (Katasonov, 2020). The political dimension of Dostoevsky's works is underscored by the Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno, who observed that Bolshevism, as a new religion, has two prophets: Karl Marx and Dostoevsky (Morillas, 2018b, p. 154).

Marx's conceptualization of existential issues such as human freedom, essential characteristics, and the ratio of the individual and the social sphere was grounded in materialism, notably through the concept of the generic essence of a human (*Gattungswesen des Menschen*).

Both thinkers grounded their exploration of human freedom on similar premises: the unveiling of the alienating influence of bourgeois society and the affirmation of freedom as an inherent characteristic of humanity. Marx's vision of the "Kingdom of Freedom" and Dostoevsky's concept of the "Kingdom of God" were both seen as liberation from the tyranny of material possessions, the fetishization of money (as noted by Marx), and the idolization

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<sup>1</sup> About the existential meanings of F.M. Dostoevsky works, see in: (Nikolsky, 2021; 2023b).

of material wealth. Dostoevsky, on the other hand, emphasized freedom from materialistic desires, bourgeois tendencies, and the insatiable pursuit of personal material gain.

In his works, Dostoevsky portrayed the main features of capitalism emerging in Russia and perceived them as catastrophic. "Demonic obsession", the pursuit of profit, the flourishing of usury, stock market speculation, and the social polarization of society became the highest goal. The veneration and power of money take on an artistic-figurative form, identified with the name of Rothschild. Dostoevsky mentioned him in *The Idiot* and *A Raw Youth* as a mythological and symbolic figure. Rothschild replaced in the mass consciousness the notions of power and glory associated with the name of Napoleon. Rothschild became the new ruler of society, the "Napoleon of finance", the Antichrist, "a symbol of a huge financial fortune with the resulting power over the world" (Podosokorskij, 2020, p. 38).

However, the fundamental differences of thinkers in these issues relate to the understanding of alienation (its tools) and the understanding of the essence of human freedom and, respectively, the ways to achieve it.

### **3. Dostoevsky: alienation as an existential characteristic of humans and the problem of freedom**

To begin with, Dostoevsky did not give us an unambiguous answer to the questions: what is human freedom, and what is the existential threat of alienation. His ideas about the essence of freedom and the means of achieving it changed throughout his life. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the writer had his own method of exploring existential issues within a socio-cultural context. One of the cross-cutting issues of his work is the degrees of human freedom and how humans depend on circumstances. The writer describes how money becomes an object of worship in the world of emerging capitalism and market relations. A person possessing plenty of money gets new qualities, social characteristics, and status. A person dominated by money loses touch with himself and alienates his spiritual and human essence, which becomes evident in relation to others – in terms of economic rationality, the pursuit of profit, and the possession (or lack) of capital. Such is the alienating influence of money. According to Tihanov, "the alienation of man from man under capitalism is only a variety of a large-scale counter-suggestion, a manifestation of which... is in the introduction of more advanced money-based (i.e. increasingly indirect) relationships" (Tihanov, 2010, p. 331). Money gets mystical metaphysical power.

Any shallow-minded and primitive person, devoid of all talents and abilities, can outshine a genius, just having a million in a pocket. "What is a man without a million?", asks Dostoevsky. "The person without a million is not the one who does anything he wants to, but the one with whom they do anything they want" (Dostoevsky, 1988, p. 48). An individual devoid of personality, who has mastered the art of making money, is elevated above any genius or creator because impersonality possesses unlimited resources while Truth, Right, and Beauty – everything is devalued under the influence of capital.



The image of Ganya Ivolgin illustrates how the craving for money, taking possession of a person, pushes him to humiliation, meanness, and deception, deprives him of will and self-respect. Gavril Ardalionovitch Ivolgin is a person, according to Prince Myshkin, "the most ordinary", "not at all original", but weak in relations with others (relatives, Nastasya Filippovna, the prince). Ganya shows the dark sides of his greedy, impatient, envious, and immensely proud soul, the soul obsessed with the desire for wealth and self-affirmation. "When I have money, I shall become a highly original man. What's most low and hateful about money is that even talent can be bought with it, and will be, till the end of the world" (Dostoevsky, 1916, p. 123). At the same time, Dostoevsky repeatedly sends the message that life circumstances awaken baser feelings and mean desires in Ganya. "He looked with loathing and hatred on the downfall and poverty of his family. He treated even his mother haughtily and contemptuously, though he knew perfectly well that his mother's reputation and character were the pivot on which his future rested" (Ibid., pp. 464 – 465).

These ideas resonate with Marx's thesis that money represents the essence of human labour and existence, and this essence becomes estranged or alienated from the individual (Marx, 1955, p. 410). According to Tillich, Marx "gives a brilliant description of the money function as the main symbol of self-alienation in modern society" (Tillich, 1995, p. 311). With the emergence of such an alien mediator, "a person considers his own will, his activity, and his attitude to others as a force. And this force is independent of him and others. Thus, his slavery reaches its climax" (Marx, 1974, p. 18). Lesevitskij believes that Dostoevsky built part of his novel *A Raw Youth* on this idea. Moreover, the researcher claims that a passage from the novel paraphrases a fragment of Marx's text about the alienating power of money in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. Speech and overlapping semantics indicate that (Lesevickij, 2015).

Equally noteworthy is the author's focus on issues of social equity. According to certain researchers, he advocated for the creation of favourable social conditions to nurture the development of human personality. But the existing social institutions do not fulfill this mission (Merrifield, 1999). Dostoevsky saw socialism as structured upon "communal stereotypes", as described by Lesevickij, or alternatively, an Orthodox community characterized by mutual assistance, friendship, love, and brotherhood, as outlined by An (2017). It is not characteristic of existentialism, which "persistently emphasizes the individuality of being, giving it priority over collectivity" (Gritsenko, 2013, p. 87).

Being well aware of the imperfection of the social order, the writer does not consider its radical change as an option. He opposes social determinism, because "making man dependent on any error in the social organization, the environmental doctrine reduces man to absolute impersonality, to a total emancipation from all personal moral duty, from all independence; reduces him to a state of the most miserable slavery that can be conceived" (Dostoevsky, 1919, p. 13). As Lossky notes, Dostoevsky knows very well that "a person has a free and independent, meaningful self, regardless of the environment" and that, although "the struggle between good and evil in the

heart of man has been and will be in every social order". "Evil <...> cannot be eliminated by any changes in the social order", because it "is conditioned by the deepest properties of the human personality." "However, it does not mean", the philosopher emphasizes, "that one should not fight for social justice and should not eliminate those special types of evil that are rooted in a given social order" (Losskij, 1994, p. 358).

The solution offered by Dostoevsky is self-improvement, the work on the spiritual perfection, liberation "from oneself, from one's base nature" (Rozanov, 1996, p. 85). It's essential to recognise that spiritual enhancement and the strengthening of one's moral core are integral in combating the imperfections of the external world, resisting the "vile structure of the environment", and ultimately moving towards a more equitable social order. The foundation of inner transformation, and consequently the journey towards freedom, lies in faith in God, love, and compassion for one's neighbour. Faith not only gives strength to choose between good and evil and to accept the inevitability of suffering, but it also allows satisfying 'metaphysical hunger' and overcoming the existential fear of loneliness. Among the heroes of Dostoevsky, there are many who, due to disbelief or weakness of faith, pride or excessive rationalism, try to free themselves from metaphysics, live "on their abilities" (or with their passions), and will inevitably face failure/punishment (Ivan Karamazov, Nastasya Filippovna, Raskolnikov, and Kirillov). Conversely, those feeling their weakness, seeking support in faith, trust in God will be rewarded. In this regard, it is appropriate to compare the images of two women who, despite the difference in social status, personify the harmful influence of the environment and broken life. These women are Nastasya Filippovna and Sonya Marmeladova.

Nastasya Filippovna is a "victim of circumstances – the victim of a wicked libertine", she "has suffered too much already in the consciousness of her own undeserved shame", as "she will believe nothing but that she is a guilty creature". She suffers deeply and sincerely and "in the perpetual admission of guilt she probably finds some dreadful unnatural satisfaction – as though she were revenging herself upon someone". According to Prince Myshkin, she "didn't want condescending sympathy or help from anyone" (Dostoevsky, 1916, p. 436). She seems to be challenging everyone involved in her fate and punishes them for this involvement. Dostoevsky lets us know that selfishness and "demonic pride" are the reasons behind such behaviour. Suffering herself, she makes others suffer, feeling her guilt and her fall even more strongly. Nastasya Filippovna falls into a vicious circle of self-destruction, and only her death can break it.

Nastasya Filippovna is a character who lacks an inner core, faith, that is important for Dostoevsky. For the first time in her life, she believed in the prince, as in "a truly good man." Due to her character and life circumstances, Nastasya Filippovna is not capable of metaphysics either rationally or emotionally. Therefore, she sticks with a weak person unable 'to raise' her, despite his kindness and compassion.

Sonya Marmeladova is a kind of antipode to Nastasya Filippovna. Living in complete poverty and despair, in the mud, which, according to Raskolnikov, she hates, Sonya, nevertheless, does not want to hurt anybody.



She humbly endures all the suffering and forces herself to go on living, despite all the horror around her. This fragile little woman has a force more powerful than external circumstances. It is her faith. Faith is her gift from above. "What should I be without God?" she says to Raskolnikov, who does not understand how she can be in the right mind for such a long time and keep "the purity of her spirit" (Dostoevsky, 1917, p. 329). It is noteworthy that Raskolnikov believes that Sonya, having ruined herself, "got over", and therefore, she is worthy of freedom and power (*ibid.*, pp. 335–336).

Raskolnikov's bewildered speeches suggest a yearning for liberation from circumstances, social constraints, and imposed norms. This notion of freedom is negative in nature, rooted in self-will. Its pursuit typically results in either collapse, leading to both spiritual and physical demise, or occasionally, a form of 'rebirth'. As Berdyaev wrote, "The one who, in his willfulness, does not know the boundaries of his freedom or loses it, that person becomes obsessed with an 'idea' that enslaves him". Raskolnikov is such a person. He does not at all make an impression of a free man. He is a maniac having a false idea. He has no moral autonomy, as "self-purification and self-liberation make it" (Berdyaev, 2016, p. 388).

Although the desire for freedom, including the negative, is inherent in the very nature of man, the freedom of choice is always individual. Dostoevsky shows in *Demons* where the thirst for unlimited freedom (unrestrained willfulness) can lead a person. This novel is frequently described as politicized, as the author, drawing inspiration from the Nechaev case, attempted "to depict the manifold and heterogeneous motives which may prompt even the purest of heart and the naive people to take part in the perpetration of so monstrous a villainy" (Dostoevsky, 1919, p. 149).<sup>2</sup>

In the context of our research, we can examine the socio-political ramifications of individual freedom, understood as self-will, when devoid of moral norms and boundaries. Dostoevsky illustrates these consequences through the words of Peter Verhovensky: "All are slaves and equal in their slavery" (Dostoevsky, 1920, p. 391).

Unlimited freedom can be characterized by the words of Father Tikhon which he said to Stavrogin: "A great idle force is being spent deliberately on abomination" (Dostoevsky, 1974, p. 25). It destroys everything, destroys both the person who imagines himself to be free and the world order. "We are going to make such an upheaval that everything will be uprooted from its foundation", repeats Verkovenksy (Dostoevsky, 1920, p. 390). Dostoevsky, led by example, knew how infectious revolutionary nihilism is: "All these convictions about the immorality of the very foundations (Christian) of modern society, the immorality of religion, family, right of property; all these ideas about the elimination of nationalities in the name of universal brotherhood of men, about the contempt for one's native country, as an obstacle to universal progress..." (Dostoevsky, 1919, pp. 148–149). This is what Dostoevsky criticizes in his "anti-nihilistic and anti-revolutionary" novel (Pushchaev, 2022).

<sup>2</sup> On the attitude towards the figure of Nechaev by Dostoevsky, the founders of Marxism and the ideologists of the revolutionary struggle, see in: (Kibalnik, 2020; Pushchaev, 2021; 2023).



In socio-political terms, the alternative to nihilism is 'Pochvennichestvo' (a movement similar to Slavophilism in that it rejected Europe's culture and contemporary philosophical movements). As Oittinen notes, "Dostoevsky assumed that the political solution to the problem of nihilism would be 'Pochvennichestvo' <...>. 'Pochvennichestvo' as a project responds to social contradictions with a proposal to return to the 'nation', to the simple and unspoiled way of peasant life, little affected by the processes of modernization" (Oittinen, 2019, p. 18). On the one hand, the idea of "returning to the nation" is consistent with the idea that "that the Russian people are truly a believing bearer of <..> truth" (Stepun, 1962, p. 41), without which freedom is impossible. On the other hand, it expresses the essence of 'Russian socialism' as "universal, nationwide, brotherly fellowship in the name of Christ" (Dostoevsky, 1919, p. 1029).

**The consonance of socialism with Christianity was of fundamental importance for Dostoevsky<sup>3</sup>.** As a Christian, he could not help but "sympathize with all measures promoting social justice," while understanding that "spiritual needs... cannot be satisfied by any "social reforms"" (Frank, 2001, p. 279). That is why he opposes Russian Orthodox socialism to political socialism, in which he sees "the final result of the Roman idea adopted by Catholicism" (Morillas, 2018a, p. 93), representing a person as an atheistic, purely rational, and pragmatic being. In Western man, according to Dostoevsky, "there is no basis for brotherhood", but on the contrary, "an individualist, isolationist foundation that continually gives itself a bad name and demands its rights with a sword in its hand? Seeing that there is no brotherhood, the socialist begins to urge brotherhood. In the absence of brotherhood, he wants to create, to shape brotherhood" (Dostoevsky, 1988, p. 50). Dostoevsky does not deny Reason. However, as his works show, he carries out a philosophical criticism of the limits and boundaries of certain rationality, based on the Western-type of ethics of selfish individualism (Roberts, 2012, p. 205). The writer does not agree with socialism, which is built on rationalization in isolation from the moral and spiritual development of members of society, on the transformation of economic and other material aspects of life, but does not change the moral nature of man (Tulchinskiy, 2021, p. 66). As an alternative, Dostoevsky offers his 'project' for the reorganization of earthly life on church principles (Kharkhordin, 1997, pp. 46–47).

The fact that Western individualism, rationalism, pragmatism lead to "an escape from freedom" is shown by Dostoevsky in *The Grand Inquisitor*. As Tulchinskiy notes, "The argumentation of *The Grand Inquisitor* is the anthropology of power as deliverance from freedom and responsibility, based on the promise of prosperity and happiness" (Tulchinskiy, 2021, p. 66). At the same time, the writer shows that "the transition from a true Christian mindset to the ethical and political position of "Christian socialism" <...>

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<sup>3</sup> We deliberately do not discuss the evolution of Dostoevsky's understanding of socialism and attitude towards it. See about this in: (Kibalnik, 2017; Puschaev, 2022). It is important for us to emphasize the consonance of the idea of a fair social order based on human brotherhood with the moral ideal of Dostoevsky.



turns out to be a departure from the true path — a delusion that essentially coincides with the temptation of Dostoevsky's *Grand Inquisitor*" (Frank, 2001, p. 284).

This 'story within a story' presents two types of morality and the associated *two types of freedom and ways to reach it*. The first, personified by the Grand Inquisitor, is purely rationalistic and paternalistic; it proceeds from the weakness and sinfulness of human nature, and excludes freedom for man and society. "Freedom and earthly bread in plenty for everyone together are inconceivable," and people "can never be free, because they are weak, vicious, insignificant and rebellious," says the Grand Inquisitor. Between "earthly bread" (happiness) and "bread of Heaven" (freedom), humans will choose the first, "for nothing has ever been more insupportable for a man and a human society than freedom" (Dostoevsky, 1950, p. 299). "Thou wouldst have accomplished all that man seeks on earth", says the Grand Inquisitor "that is, someone to worship, someone to keep his conscience, and some means of uniting all in one unanimous and harmonious ant-heap, for the craving for universal unity is the third and last anguish of men" (ibid., pp. 305–306). It is a "universal happiness of man".

Researchers note the "high rhetorical skill" and "subtle dialectics" of the Inquisitor (Giuliani, 2019, p. 113; Rozanov, 1996, p. 96). His plan "Oh, we shall persuade them that they will only become free when they renounce their freedom to us and submit to us" (Dostoevsky, 1950, p. 306) seems not only justified but almost the only possible in the conditions he described. Escape from freedom in exchange for "life as a child's game" is the way of "the ethics of selfish individualism."

As Rozanov notes, the "tempting and powerful dialectics" of the Inquisitor begins with slandering man and human nature. His goal is "to arrange the fate of humanity on earth, taking advantage of human weaknesses" (Rozanov, 1996, p. 103). Only faith and "obedience to the truth" will help a person overcome his weaknesses and resist temptation since freedom is "inseparable from truth" (Stepun, 1962, p. 28).

It is an alternative path personified in Ivan's poem by the Prisoner. It is not articulated in words but rather expressed through actions such as humility and love. However, to embrace this path, one must undergo moral rebirth and make an existential choice.

#### **4. Marx: alienation as a social phenomenon and the problem of human freedom**

Marx did not use the term *capitalism*. He uses the concepts of "capital", "capitalist mode of production", "bourgeois mode of production", "bourgeois society", etc. Exploring "bourgeois society", Marx pointed, first of all, to the mode of production and political power (Fedotova et al., 2011) and the personal and material dependence associated with them. In addition, Marx's criticism of bourgeois society was of a scientific and theoretical nature, as an



analysis of socio-economic production systems. The theory of commodity production, labour, value, dialectics of productive forces, and production relations, provisions formulated the mechanisms of alienation. Alienation economic justification was also given.

Marx characterizes the category of “alienation” as the labour activity of an employee exploited by capital. Analyzing labour, he shows that the worker sells labour power in exchange for wages. In this case, labour becomes an external process that does not belong to its essence, in which the worker denies himself rather than affirms (Marx, 1977, p. 71). “Capital obtains this surplus-labour without an equivalent, and in essence it always remains forced labour – no matter how much it may seem to result from free contractual agreement” (Marx, 2010, p. 806). Marx emphasizes that alienation is twofold. First, the product of labour, alienated from its producer, begins to dominate a person, which leads to a person's attitude towards the world as alien and hostile. Secondly, the work itself is perceived as “self-sacrifice and self-torture” (Marx, 1977, p. 71). As a result, the work divorces from its human reality, from all its qualitative variables (Foucauld, 2010, p. 280). “The relation of labour to the act of production within the labour process. This relation is the relation of the worker to his own activity as an alien activity not belonging to him; it is activity as suffering, strength as weakness, begetting as emasculating, the worker's own physical and mental energy, his personal life – for what is life but activity? – as an activity which is turned against him, independent of him and not belonging to him. Here we have self-estrangement, as previously we had the estrangement of the thing” (Marx, 1977, p. 72). Thus, Marx reveals man as a suffering being in his analysis of the phenomenon of capitalist alienation.

But the concept of alienation gets a deeper social and anthropological meaning in the context of Marx's ideas about the generic essence of man (*Gattungswesen des Menschen*). Thus, Kondrashev (2020), Buzgalin and Kolganov (2015), and An (2017) note that contrary to traditional opinion, in the Marxist theory, the generic essence of a person is not exhausted by “the totality of social relations”. Moreover, the understanding of man as an active, socially creative subject is the genetically starting point of the Marxism social philosophy. On this aspect of Marxist theory, the activity approach and the understanding of man as a living creator of history become fundamentally important in the context of freedom understanding. “Man is a species-being, not only because in practice and in theory he adopts the species (his own as well as those of other things) as his object, but – and this is only another way of expressing it – also because he treats himself as the actual, living species; because he treats himself as a universal and therefore a free being” (*ibid.*, p. 72).

Marx did not view human nature exclusively in a socio-economic manner. He was no less interested in the existential problems of man, and his inner spiritual life. It is proved by the consonance of Marx's ideas with the principles of Christianity, the role of which in the moral life of man and his improvement he highly appreciated (An, Morillas, Scanlan). However, Marx criticized the inability of Christianity to find an earthly, this-worldly way of



realizing its value orientations, and its impotence in achieving moral ideals. He was looking for a practical way to implement them and suggested it himself (An, 2017, p. 98).

Marx understood the generic essence of man (*Gattungswesen des Menschen*) as a practical conscious transformative activity, which in different contexts he calls labour (*Arbeit*), practice (*Praktik*), and praxis (*Praxis*). Activity (praxis) represents the way of human existence in the world as a generic being, including the ontological basis of social life (Kondrashov, 2020, p. 33), which is the basis of the true people community. It serves as a sort of analogue to the principles underlying Dostoevsky's "Earthly Brotherhood."

In this logic, the problem of the relationship between the social and the individual is solved as follows. The consistency of human existence, interactivity, a social connection between individuals is revealed in labour: in the dialectical unity of objectification of labour (implementation) and its de-objectification (use of results).

Some researchers believe that Marx, following "bourgeois principles," considers man as a "purely material being" determined by labour (Morillas, 2018a, p. 95). But the authors of the article adhere to a different point of view, emphasizing the philosophical and anthropological aspects of the Marxian concept of labour. A person reveals his subjectivity (*Subjektivität*) in practical, objective and activity relationships with the world (Kondrashov, 2020, p. 35). In conscious productive activity (praxis), a person realizes his essential forces, expresses himself, his creative intention, objectifying himself and humanizing the object, forming the world in his image. "This practical, lively and vital connection of man with the world reveals itself in the form of an indifferent attitude-to-the-world, emotional- existential capture of man by the world and the world by man" (*ibid.*, p. 39). Thus, social relations and the existential aspect reveal the generic essence of man in Marxism. This aspect is "existential non-indifference" expressed in suffering, in the ability to experience one's being-in-the-world, in a non-indifferent attitude to the world (*ibid.*, p. 42).

The inherent essence of a person as a conscious agent of action shapes the nature of freedom. According to Marxist logic, genuine freedom can only be attained when individuals exist as part of a collective entity, participating in the social construction of the objective world and in self-creation. True freedom is deemed unattainable within individual, autonomous existence, as well as in isolation itself.

But if the social (bourgeois) world is organized inhumanly, then a person's connection with the world and other people appears in an alienated form (for example, exchange and trade). In the case of alienated labour, a person turns his life activity and his generic essence "only into a means of maintaining his existence" (Marx). Labour, its means, results, subject, and social relations turn into a force opposing man and dominating him. Human qualities, values, and motives are subject to the power of money and things in the world of capital.

Marx considered this situation in the conditions of private property inevitable and emphasized the transitory nature of bourgeois society. So, he linked freedom with socio-political transformations aimed at changing the social system. Tillich, considering alienation and dehumanization Marx's most important topics, noted that "alienation is not an inevitable tragic necessity for him. It is a product of a very historical situation, and a person can overcome it" (Tillich, 1995, p. 311).

Here is the difference between Marx's and Dostoevsky's positions. According to Dostoevsky, freedom is an individual choice made through suffering, doubt, and disbelief. Therefore, no equitable world order can guarantee it. Marx, on the contrary, interprets freedom as a manifestation of the generic (i.e., social) essence of a person and sees its implementation in conscious creative activity based on private property abolition. He proposes to overcome the alienating character of "external" social relations by transforming social reality with the help of material forces. Thus, there is a strong emphasis on the significance of scientific reasoning and class struggle in advancing towards the realm of freedom. Action in the external world is considered crucial. The path to freedom entails transcending the capitalist mode of social reproduction, often described as the "realm of necessity," through the alteration of reality. This involves abolishing private property, fostering the development of productive forces based on science, technology, and production, engaging in class struggle, and ultimately, revolution. "In fact, the realm of freedom actually begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases; thus, in the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of actual material production" (Marx, 2010, p. 807). As Marx emphasizes, the development of human forces is a goal in itself, a true realm of freedom, which, however, can flourish only on this realm of necessity, as on its basis (*ibid.*).

According to Dostoevsky, true freedom is always "on the other side" of social reality and everyday life. Perhaps for this reason Lukacs called the world of Dostoevsky "...the chaos of ethical solipsism" (Lukacs, 1985, p. 70). Dostoevsky's conception of freedom exposes a disjunction between the outward, "objective and real" activities (to use Marx's terminology) of human existence and their inner world, often regarded as the "cradle" of freedom. An exception to this dichotomy can be found in the actions of Sonya Marmeladova in Siberia, particularly her aid to convicts. However, for Sonya, this freedom was prefigured by faith before its practical manifestation.

Dostoevsky relied on the spiritual development and moral improvement of a person. Marx viewed a person's moral and ethical qualities as a reflection of the social relations system. Therefore, he pinned his hopes on the formation of conditions that would ensure free, inalienable labour, which, in his opinion, was possible only in a communist society. Stepun revealed the essence of Marx's position and its difference from Dostoevsky's understanding of freedom in the following "He opposes freedom of a revolution beginning to freedom, as obedience to God's will" (Stepun, 1962, p. 28).



## 5. Conclusion

Both thinkers criticize the alienating nature of bourgeois society and turn to the problem of human freedom, defending its necessity as an attributive characteristic and essence of man. However, for Dostoevsky, human freedom is associated with activities in the spiritual sphere. Freedom for him is the result of existential choice. His theory of alienation, combining personal and social aspects, provided the choice of priorities (in favour of the spiritual or material) but did not provide the socio-economic system changes. The way to freedom goes through self-improvement, religious, spiritual, and moral education, the Orthodox community.

For Marx, freedom links with the external world, with the person's social and creative activity. A person finds his subjectivity during the work. True freedom goes through praxis. Praxis is a labour activity that has an inalienable character and is possible only in a communist society.

We already noted that there is an opinion that these positions are irreconcilable. But in the context of the author's model of multilevel identity (Budenkova, Savelieva, 2016, p. 43), we consider it legitimate to talk about the mutual complementarity of Dostoevsky and Marx's positions. Dostoevsky's ideas align with the significance of comprehending personal identity within the comprehensive structure of an individual's being, thereby facilitating the expansion and strengthening identity formation. Marx's concept allows us to comprehend the role of labour practices in social identity at different levels, from group to civil identity. His idea of personality existential component as the objectification of the employee's subjectivity in the product of labour makes it possible to theoretically substantiate and develop mechanisms for identity formation through labour activity. It is especially true in our time when popular ideas about an unstable, fluid, blurred identity seem to remove responsibility from the person for his identity formation and development. In this sense, the inner work of Dostoevsky and the social activity of Marx are equally necessary to maintain the integrity of human identity. This assumption undoubtedly requires further research.

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Ф. М. ДОСТОЕВСКИЙ VS К. МАРКС:  
СВОБОДА ЛИЧНОСТИ В ЭКЗИСТЕНЦИАЛЬНОМ  
И СОЦИАЛЬНОМ ИЗМЕРЕНИИ

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*Проанализированы взгляды Ф. М. Достоевского и К. Маркса на свободу человека. Актуальность исследования обусловлена противоречивостью общественного развития в условиях позднего капитализма. Известно, что в контексте критики буржуазного общества, власти денег, материальных приоритетов и отчуждения позиция «православного социализма» писателя перекликалась с устремлениями К. Маркса. Оба мыслителя ставят проблему свободы человека и отстаивают необходимость свободы как атрибутивной характеристики и сущности человека. Цель данного исследования – на основе сравнительного анализа взглядов Ф. М. Достоевского и К. Маркса показать, что, несмотря на концептуальные различия в понимании свободы и путей ее достижения, позиции мыслителей могут рассматриваться как дополняющие друг друга. Достоевский предлагает путь совершенствования внутреннего мира, Маркс выступает за изменение внешних обстоятельств. Авторы статьи выдвигают и аргументируют тезис о том, что достижение свободы по Достоевскому, то есть духовной свободы, возможно посредством трудовой деятельности, понимаемой марксистами как praxis.*

**Ключевые слова:** человек, отчуждение, нравственный идеал, вера, капитализм, социализм

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