

Title: Helpless Love in the Context of Revaluation of Values: Dostoevsky's Frustrated Dreamers
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Abstract:

In *The Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche describes a peculiar psychological strategy of resentment revenge: powerless to counter external oppression in any other way, the Nietzschean slave proclaims his subservient status to be his choice, thus “finalizing” his painfully inadequate self-image from within in an effort to escape an even more reifying definition from without. Here the “affirmed” lower value (that of powerlessness and lack of freedom) is deliberately elevated in place of the higher one (that of freedom and independence). Similar negative self-consummation, which consists in constructing a deliberately exhaustive self-image in order to discourage any definition from without, is often practiced by Dostoevskian characters, tragic heroes and buffoons alike. A special case of resentment in Dostoevsky is frustrated love, conditioned by the impossibility of helping the beloved. If I assume a priori that the beloved cannot be helped, the actively oriented surplus of my love immediately falls away. The logic of either-or mentality then dictates a resentment solution: I will embrace the existing status quo, finalizing the hopeless image of my suffering beloved and even exacerbating her pain in a desperate effort to take an active stance in relation to the suffering other.

With the aid of Scheler's and Nietzsche's theories of value, this paper will reflect on the phenomenon of emotional impotence in the face another's inevitable death, depicted in the notebooks for *The Idiot* and *The Adolescent*, and Ivan's (perceived) helplessness to change the plight of the suffering humanity. My analysis will demonstrate that in a solipsistic, non-communal universe Ivan has constructed for himself his only possible reaction to another's suffering could be a passive contemplation of her pain, a response that evokes L. Shestov's definition of pity as simply “an admission that one can no longer be helped by other means.” Revealing important continuities in Ivan's argument in “Rebellion” and in “The Grand Inquisitor,” I will demonstrate that the character's repeated decisions to withhold empathy and love are efforts to preserve human suffering as incriminating evidence in his long dossier against a cruel and absurd God. As such, these acts are all part of a consistent passive-aggressive life strategy rooted in resentment and intended to further compromise the existent world order.