

**Title:** The Hollow Icon: The Demonic in Dostoevsky  
**Author:** Mark Pettus, Princeton University

I will attempt to describe the demonic (and the nature of evil) in Dostoevsky's work by applying Kierkegaard's understanding of the movement of demonic despair as "inclosing reserve" (or, opacity) in response to the possibility of the eternal, as opposed to the openness to the world (transparency) and to the eternal that characterizes the good. This internal, spiritual category is the locus of the crucial qualitative distinction between a good and an evil which, externally and quantitatively speaking, are all but indistinguishable. Important aspects of this demonic movement include the inability to move, the inability to die, and an implosive self-assertion that, no longer sustained by eternal "fullness," collapses upon itself as upon a mathematical point, and falls into a kind of inverted or negated spectral existence. The demonic's parodic mirroring of existence (the negation of the good, the true, the beautiful as sustained by eternal fullness) allows the demonic to project an image of fullness (goodness, truth, beauty) that is in fact qualitatively its opposite; hence, the demonic mask in Dostoevsky as the hollowed "*lik*" of the icon.

My description of the demonic will rely heavily on space-driven metaphors and on movement within those spaces—not only the physical movement of flight from the eternal, from the world and from others, of "shutting oneself off," but also visual movement as a metaphor for free spiritual movement that has the potential to defy physical necessity, and is therefore closely associated with the movements of faith in Dostoevsky. Namely, I will characterize the demonic as one who refuses to see the world, particularly the transfigured creation presented by icons.