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Dostoevsky: an author for all time

Reflections on humanism from the novel *The Idiot*

Thinking, selecting and talking about the mythical absolute book is a complex task. No good reader can say precisely what work should be the one that could be taken to a deserted island or with which he would like to stay if he had to get rid of his entire library.

Readers change, grow or decrease, worry about issues that previously were not contemplated or are no longer the ones they used to be. Therefore, each book would have to be valued in the precise reading act. Even, no reading will be equal to the other, even if it is the same person, even if it is the same title.

Of course, some books are well worth enlisting and that guide us to identify them within our existential plane. Already Italo Calvino in his masterful “Why to read the classics?” pointed out all these causal and good relations with the texts that will never die.

There are times when books become a precious commodity (both for economic value and for the complex moral dilemmas that we seek to solve), so we would have to appeal with a greater impetus to the classics, to the texts in which the tradition has been unwrapped best way. A classic is not synonymous with obsolescence. On the contrary, it transcends time because it speaks of the depth of the human spirit.

The authors of the classical books are unique beings, which, among the thousands or dozens of pages that they give us, they rediscover us as human beings and allow us to look at the other. For pointing to one of the most outstanding and noteworthy cases we can refer to the great Fyodor Dostoevsky.

Muscovite by birth, Dostoevsky has been consolidated in the imaginary of readers and non-readers as a mandatory reference, as a cornerstone of universal thought. And it's not an exaggeration. We find Quotes laudatory to Dostoevsky in voices as dissimilar as Frederic Nietzsche or Pope Francis. Both referring to the way

Dostoevsky makes us comprehend the fragile interiority of the human being.

It is difficult to know how many pages have been written, how many university courses, and how many philosophical debates have taken place about his work; because, in addition to the depth of his texts, Dostoevsky was an author of extensive works throughout his long career.

Man of contrasts and sufferings, Dostoevsky found in his life an unbeatable source of inspiration. Condemned to death, acquitted at the edge of the wall, a prisoner in Siberia, manipulated by his first wife, a traveler in Europe, gambler with the brink of bankruptcy, father with a dead son, national glory, epileptic, the dynamics of his biography would prevent to summarize it in a few lines.

Although he did not die in opulence, his work received the best compliments of his contemporaries and his successors, as the also master Tolstoy. Its monumental titles, *Crime and Punishment*, and *The Karamazov Brothers* have become, since its inception, on the grounds of thousands of commentaries.

Therefore, to resume a work almost forgotten in the dostoevskian Parnassus as it is *The Idiot* is an act of continuous surprise. This magnificent novel intends to make a synthesis of two fundamental figures in the spiritual history of mankind. The task of Dostoevsky is carried out with unprecedented precision, and more because what he sought was to bring together narratively Jesus and Don Quixote and make their steps in the convulsed nineteenth century, so similar to our times, the option for free social transformation.

Of course, it is not a fiction of impossible character. It is a realist work that, from a character, manages to discover the sense shared by Jesus of Nazareth and the knight fruit of Miguel de Cervantes. Among the pages of the book, we find an extraordinary man, victim of prejudice and his kindness, who is marginalized by a society wrapped in vanity, nihilism, opulence, frivolity and other own details of the thoughtless actions of any ordinary person.

With the madness of Don Quixote, Prince Mishkin defends his ideals with the ability to give to others, essential in Christianity; it is capable of unexplained renunciations by making the tragedy the step before any redemption. Therefore, he is judged as an idiot, as a man who is unable to reach the great spheres of what we now know as a success. Because it is that society, empty and corrupt, that sees in the good people idiots, crazy and failures.

Without wanting to enter into further details of the book, not to ruin the surprise to the reader, we could underline that in "*The idiot*" Dostoevsky offers us some of his genii, so widely proven in each of its pages. A genius that gives way to the psychological and realistic novel rarely surpassed. Each page envelops in a fast-paced style, each action of the characters reflects a little of our being and our need to decide for the good, even though the society is the opposite.

Dostoevsky is an author who is on the cusp of universal authors. They are the names of a luminous universe that could well bring together names such as those of the authors of the bible, the Asian sacred literatures, Homer, Sophocles, Seneca, Virgil, Dante, Rabalais, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Quevedo, Sor Juana, Milton, Goethe, Poe, Tolstoy and more recently Kafka, Joyce, Saint-Exupéry, Tolkien, Borges, Paz and a background etcetera. And this is just appealing to a sort of expanded Western canon.

Also, Dostoevsky dares to recognize the voice of the outcast, the excluded, and the helpless. It is not only the voice consecrated by the aristocracy or the remedy to consolidate the good to say of the bourgeoisie. His work belongs to everyone because it is the human soul that inhabits him, regardless of his affiliation with curricular programs.

Dostoevsky's work is necessary to configure our daily existence, to understand the pain in this world, to understand the search for God and to understand the human fragility we share and which deserves attention in favor of unity.

If a book is a friend to trust, the work of the classics is to paraphrase Harold Bloom, the temple, the house, where wisdom is located. In a time where answers are sought, Dostoevsky would have more to say to us than any cybernetic searcher, than any psychotropic substance or any author of the little mount and much sale.