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Dostoevsky on AI (probably)

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> "Denatured alcohol, as one of the strongest and most unpalatable drinks, is perceived as one of the most 'true/authentic' ones. — V. V. Erofeev's poem "Moscow to Petushki" "Hail to the True, intense vampires." — Darkthrone's "Transilvanian Hunger" The way Trü[1] Literature is timeless and timely at the same time is often being interpreted from a utilitarian angle in which timelessness equals to big brain philosophy and timeliness equals to journalism; both are, of

> course, wrong. I hate definitions tho, and I‘ve been rather reluctant to study more of them, the terms, the names, all that—they are annoying, not just any words, only ones that supposedly mean more than they do, deceiving ones, that everyone keeps misunderstanding. When semantics and taxonomics come at my door, I usually say I’m not 25 yet, they believe me and leave. This is how it happens, factually:

—Are there any adults at home?—they ask.

—No.

—Are you sure there’s no one we could talk to?

—About what?

—About our Taxonomic Overlord.

—Ladies and gentlemen, visitors,—I say to them from beyond the threshold where I remain unreachable.—I’m a baby who reads no books and knows no words, I don’t know what it is A and what is B, so please take your boxes and labels and go to my neighbours, they are completely deranged and don’t clean they garden from the dog shit of those two diabolically loud yet angelically cute labradors.

—But wait…

But I don’t wait. My door closes (I do it), the visitors vanish.

Timeliness and timelessness are never about categories, don't aim to generalise or convey some universal Trüth but achieve the resonance both in their time and after their time through a proxy[2]—they hit on something profound that isn't concerned with zeitgeist and only use it as "a setting", a sandbox, an environment that makes it possible to study a recurring idea through its single manifestation, thus studying the manifestation, rather than idea, because the idea itself often remains elusive and inaccessible directly. This is what makes literature way better at accessing that universal Trüth than other media—it allows readers to glimpse it through specific instantiations rather than abstract declarations like this passage.

The history may rhyme or repeat or echo or recur in other ways (like helically), sometimes with absürd[3] precision, sometimes with great irony, sometimes only as an apparition, but in all of those cases we encounter not a specific event that reemerges but a manifestation of something greater that event. In objective oriented programming, if I recall correctly, we'd call it "class inheritance". Like a child who inherits traits from their parents but expresses them in her own unique way, historical events or literary works similarly "inherit" patterns from broader universal themes while manifesting them through specific, unique details of their own time and place. Time and place and action in that case are irrelevant, the underlying current of what's going on with a human is what matters. That is, so to say, the only reason we still understand Ancient Greek drama like this:

> NICIAS: Well, then! Say "Let-us-bolt," like this, in one breath. DEMOSTHENES: I follow you-'Let-us-bolt." NICIAS: Now after "Let-us-bolt" say "at-top-speed DEMOSTHENES: "At-top-speed! NICIAS: Splendid! just as if you were masturbating; first slowly, "Let-us-bolt"; then quick and firmly, "at-top-speed!" DEMOSTHENES: Let-us-bolt, let-us-bolt-at-top-speed! NICIAS: Hah! does that not please you? DEMOSTHENES: Yes, indeed, yet I fear your omen bodes no good to my hide. NICIAS: How so? DEMOSTHENES: Because masturbation chafes the skin. The fragment above, that is from Aristophanes's "The Knights", demonstrates that despite being separated from us by thousands of years, the humour remains immediately comprehensible because it taps into fundamental human experiences that transcend time and cultural context. The whole play, by the way, does so, not just this little scene. The simple rule is: if you draw a surface by looking at the surface, you'd draw the surface, but if you draw it by looking "beyond" the surface, you'd inevitable draw something else, something that is "beyond" the surface.

That is why, again, we can still find that "something" in the epoch-old stories, we can still "assume" what a great writer or thinker of the past would've said about our present problems or "apply" the ancient formulas to reach that understanding ourselves from our vantage[4] point. With AI, of course, you can directly imitate such a scenario, e.g.

what would Dostoevsky say about AI itself? The thing about him (Fyodor Mikhailovich) in particular is that he loved writing rants, dialogues that go on and on for dozens of pages arguing about an idea simultaneously in a very abstract and a very human way, so to say both timely for him and timeless for us. In that sense, he, like many others, said many things about many things without really saying anything about them things—through a proxy! Of course, Dostoevsky didn't say anything about AI but he did say rather a lot about progress, technology, or utopia-building that we now can apply to accelerationism, transhumanism, artificial intelligence, etm.

The curious text below is one of the aforementioned rants, a fragment from "Crime and Punishment", that again demonstrates that human problems and aspiration over centuries don't really change, only metamorphose:

> "Nothing at all is permitted!" Razumikhin interrupted heatedly. (Actually wait, worth mentioning that characters in Dostoevsky's stories often have somewhat meaningful names, either foreshadowingly or ironically so. "Razumikhin" is one of those, etymologically meaning something like "the one who apprehends | reasons | knows")
>
> "I'm not lying!... I'll show you their books: everything for them happens because 'environment is to blame', and nothing more! Their favourite phrase! From this it follows directly that if society were arranged properly, all crimes would instantly

vanish, as there would be nothing to protest against, and everyone would become righteous in a moment. Human nature is not taken into account, human nature is banished, human nature is not to be considered at all! According to them, humanity will not develop along a historical, living path to its conclusion and transform itself naturally into a proper society. No, quite the contrary! A social system, emerging from some mathematical mind, will immediately arrange all humanity and in an instant make it righteous and sinless, before any living process, without any historical or living path! That's precisely why they instinctively detest history: 'nothing but ugliness and foolishness in it' – and everything is explained solely by stupidity! That's why they so despise the living process of life: the living soul is not needed! The living soul demands life, the living soul won't obey mechanics, the living soul is suspicious, the living soul is retrograde! But here, even though it reeks slightly of death, it can be made of rubber – but at least it's not alive, at least it has no will, at least it's slavish, it won't rebel! And the result is that everything has been reduced merely to the laying of bricks and the arrangement of corridors and rooms in a phalanstery! The phalanstery is ready, but your human nature isn't yet prepared for the phalanstery; it craves life, it hasn't yet completed the vital process – it's too soon for the cemetery! With logic alone, one cannot leap over nature! Logic foresees three cases, but there are millions of them! To cut off the entire million and reduce everything to a single question of comfort!

> The easiest solution to the problem! Temptingly clear, and no need to think! Most importantly – no need to think! The entire mystery of life fits onto two printed pages!" Well, with this I bow away. I do, however, have one final random thought: when we say that if we, for example, show a 15th century peasant a Chinese drone performance or 19th century writer what a modern large language model can do, are we sure they won't understand it at all or even lose their minds? Would they, unabridged by the complexity that we've built around us, all the interconnected, interdependent, self-referential structures, taxonomic prisons and semantic whirlpools, "apprehend" it even better than ourselves who can only look at them from our "vantage point", quite high indeed? Maybe probably . . .

Notes

1. Russian spelling of English-borrowed "true" is "труъ". Although that last letter isn't necessary, the hard sign (ъ) in "труъ" is a distinctive feature of Russian internet slang where adding this letter gives borrowed words like "true" an exaggerated intensity and authenticity. Originating primarily in metal music subcultures, especially among black metal enthusiasts ("True Norwegian Black Metal"), the ъ-suffix evolved to signify something as absolutely authentic, canonical, or hardcore. Thus the word "труъ" aims to designate elitism and canonicity—not just precision of forms, but also... the authentic essence of any object, phenomenon or creative act. Though initially earnest in black metal circles where fans distinguished between "true" black metal and "posers," it has now spread throughout Russian internet culture, often used ironically to highlight excessive pretentiousness while simultaneously signifying something as intensely authentic or extreme. I suggest to spell English "true" and "truth" with an umlaut to achieve the same

effect.

2. Alternatively, through a network of proxies, multiple layers of them, to create higher anonymity for the Trüth and make it less reachable for a casual seeker.
3. The same principle as the first footnote. I proposed it before and described in my previous post (see the footnote 4).
4. This word itself possesses a delicious irony of not having "ad" at the beginning as if allowing us to ponder: is our position really that advantageous? Maybe probably, but what makes it so? How often do we ask ourselves that's the speed of the grass becoming duller day over day and when is it going to reach the absence of colour altogether? Something to think about . . .

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