

## Loose and Baggy Spirits: Reading Dostoevskii and Mendeleev

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For Dostoevsky, the watcher and spy upon the occult depths of our souls, needs no daylight. On purpose he veils his poetic creations in half-darkness; so that, like the ancient Furies, he may steal by night upon the culprit . . .

—Vyacheslav Ivanov

Fedor Mikhailovich Dostoevskii was much more than a novelist on the St. Petersburg cultural scene. Crafting complicated rhetorical solutions to some of the most gripping debates of his day, Dostoevskii and his ideas interacted with a plethora of other prominent actors in the imperial capital in an effort to promulgate a vision of the state of Russian culture in the age of the Great Reforms. In this paper, I explore Dostoevskii's reactions to spiritualism in Russia and, by contrasting his views with those of another opponent of spiritualism, chemist Dmitrii Ivanovich Mendeleev (1834–1907), propose a contextual reading of both the author and one of his most intriguing literary creations. In particular, I shall focus on three sections of his voluminous *Dnevnik pisatel'ia* (Writer's diary), a text written and published from 1873 to 1881. In length alone, the *Diary* competes with *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* (Crime and punishment) and *Brat'ia Karamazovy* (The brothers Karamazov) combined, and it was created over a longer period of time than any of his other works. Yet, while it encapsulates so much of Dostoevskii's time and thought, it has often been overlooked. Some of this neglect can be ascribed to its unusual publication history. The idea for the *Diary* was to publish a monthly periodical that included fiction, journalism, autobiography, literary criticism, political commentary, and philosophy, with both author and contemporary readers uncertain about which topics might be discussed in the future, producing interesting problems of genre.<sup>1</sup> Although Dostoevskii conceived of the idea for his

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1. Genre is an important category in studies of the *Diary*, best analyzed by Gary Saul Morson. See *The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer and the Traditions of Literary Utopia* (Evanston, 1981); "Reading Between the Genres: Dostoevsky's *Diary of a Writer* as Metafiction," *Yale Review* 68 (1978): 224–34; and "Dostoevskij's *Writer's Diary* as Literature of Process," *Russian Literature* 4–1 (1976): 1–14. Less successful have been the attempts to see the *Diary* as belonging to Dostoevskii's idiosyncratic *Zapiski* genre or reading the *Diary* as a combination of eighteenth-century epistolary journals and the nineteenth-century confessional novel. For the first see Yuri Kudryavtsev, "Dostoevsky and His 'Diary of a Writer,'" *Melbourne Slavic Studies* 8 (1973): 58–63, and for the second L. S. Dmitrieva, "O zhanrovom svoeobrazii 'Dnevnika Pisatel'ia' F. M. Dostoevskogo (K probleme tipologii zhurnalnogo)," *Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta*, ser. 11, no. 6 (1969): 25–35.

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*Diary* while hiding from Russian creditors in Dresden in the late 1860s, he was only able to realize the financially and artistically risky project in 1873, when it appeared as an erratic column in the newspaper *Grazhdanin*, which Dostoevskii edited.<sup>2</sup> Dostoevskii remained at *Grazhdanin* for only a year, resigning on 20 April 1874 to work on his fourth major novel, *Podrostok* (A raw youth). In 1875, Dostoevskii revived the original idea for publishing a self-sufficient monthly *Diary*, in which he would retain complete control as sole publisher, editor, and author. As a former political prisoner, he was hindered by the tentacles of the tsarist censorship network in the waning hours of 1875 (and eventually extricated by an appropriate testimonial by his friend, orientalist V. V. Grigor'ev), yet the first issue of the *Diary* proper did come out in January 1876—to a rather cool initial critical reception. It continued every month (with doubled issues in the summer months), becoming the most popular broadsheet in Russia, until December 1877, when Dostoevskii suspended publication to compose *The Brothers Karamazov*. He published one issue in 1880 (the August issue), recapitulating and commenting on his famous Pushkin Centennial speech in Moscow. In 1881 the *Diary* resumed full production, but Dostoevskii only survived a few weeks, leaving a posthumous January issue.<sup>3</sup>

The three *Diary* articles I examine here concern the growth of modern spiritualism in Russia. I will explore them in tandem with the anti-spiritualist writings of Mendeleev, one of their targets. Mendeleev is best known as the formulator of the periodic system of chemical elements, but he was also the motivating force behind a scientific commission established in 1875 to investigate spiritualism in St. Petersburg.<sup>4</sup> From close readings of the texts, I then distill an interpretation of the rhetorical strategies of each author and suggest how these differing rhetorics stemmed from the authors' conflicting interpretations of the urgency of combating spiritualism in Russia. Spiritualism (*spiritizm*) was an extremely popular movement in nineteenth-century Europe, generating thousands of "spirit circles," all conducting séances with mediums to exhibit the various

2. There were good financial reasons for initiating it in this format. As Dostoevskii's wife recalled, he obtained a steady salary from *Grazhdanin* as its editor and was paid in addition for any entries of the *Diary* that he published, thus turning the *Diary* into a money-making venture while drumming up interest for its realization as a self-standing monthly. S. S. Koteliansky, ed. and trans., *Dostoevsky Portrayed by His Wife: The Diary and Reminiscences of Mme. Dostoevsky* (New York, 1926), 141–42.

3. The best secondary source on both the publication history and some of the poetics of the *Diary* remains the programmatic article by V. A. Tunimanov, "Publitsistika Dostoevskogo. 'Dnevnik Pisatel'ia,'" in *Dostoevskii—Khudozhnik i myslitel': Sbornik statei* (Moscow, 1972), 165–209. For Dostoevskii's tangles with the censors, see I. L. Volgin, "Dostoevskii i tsarskaia tsenzura (K istorii izdaniia 'Dnevnika Pisatel'ia')," *Russkaia literatura*, 1970, no. 4: 106–20; and on the hostile reception of the first issue by literary critics, see Volgin, *Dostoevskii—Zhurnalist: 'Dnevnik Pisatel'ia' i russkaia obshchestvennost'* (Moscow, 1982); and Volgin, "'Dnevnik Pisatel'ia': Tekst i kontekst," in G. M. Fridlender, ed., *Dostoevskii: Materialy i issledovaniia* (Leningrad, 1978), 3: 151–58. See also D. V. Grishin, *Dnevnik Pisatel'ia F. M. Dostoevskogo* (Melbourne, 1966); and the relevant chapters in Igor' Volgin, *Poslednii god Dostoevskogo: Istoricheskie zapiski* (Moscow, 1986).

4. There is still no complete biography of Mendeleev in any language. The best remains Nikolai A. Figurovskii, *Dmitrii Ivanovich Mendeleev, 1834–1907* (Moscow, 1961).

phenomena of table-turning, spirit-rapping, levitation, automatic writing, spirit materialization, and so on.<sup>5</sup> The Russian adaptation of western spiritualism drew much attention at the time, even earning note from so lofty a critic as Friedrich Engels, who cited Russian intellectuals' attempts to extirpate it as a healthy exemplar for English spiritualists.<sup>6</sup> As a way for Russians of all classes to deal with political, social, and economic dislocation after the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, spiritualism gained a substantial following in opposition to the established tradition of Russian Orthodoxy.<sup>7</sup> Dostoevskii's and Mendeleev's intertwining arguments against spiritualism and each other have (with one exception) received only superficial attention in the literature on Russian spiritualism.<sup>8</sup> It is important to stress that at no point did Dostoevskii and Mendeleev disagree about the status of spiritualist phenomena: both considered them to be fraudulent or hallucinations. Instead of concentrating on what happened in the séances, I emphasize both authors' attempts to *persuade* readers of their own interpretations of the events. My argument is that each carefully crafted a polemical rhetoric to persuade Russian readers to reject spiritualism, while feeling that the other's style would not only be ineffectual but would actually fan the flames.<sup>9</sup> Such a deep disagreement was a consequence of the *time scale* on which each one thought persuasion had to work. Urgency and a sense of immediate crisis (in Dostoevskii's case) had deep rhetorical consequences.

5. The Russian term for the movement, *spiritizm*, is perhaps more felicitously translated "spiritism," but I have opted throughout to translate it as "spiritualism." The Russian term comes from the French *spiritisme*, which primarily refers to the doctrines of the school of the French mystic Allan Kardec, who emphasized active spirit involvement in everyday life and reincarnation. The Russian movement, however, was much more heavily influenced by Anglo-American spiritualism, which emphasized psychic energy and physical effects and was more likely to entertain a scientific agnosticism.

6. Friedrich Engels, *Dialektik der Natur* (Berlin, 1952), 48–49.

7. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, "Political Implications of the Early Twentieth-Century Occult Revival," in Rosenthal, ed., *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture* (Ithaca, 1997), 379–418.

8. The exception is I. L. Volgin and V. L. Rabinovich, "Dostoevskii i Mendeleev: Antispiriticheski dialog," *Voprosy filosofii*, 1971, no. 11:103–15, translated as "Dostoevskii and Mendeleev: An Antispiritist Dialogue," *Soviet Studies in Philosophy*, 1972, no. 11:170–94. The remaining studies on this topic undercut Dostoevskii's role as an active polemicist: Thomas E. Berry, "Dostoevsky and Spiritualism," *Dostoevsky Studies* 2 (1981): 43–49; Maria Carlson, "Fashionable Occultism: Spiritualism, Theosophy, Freemasonry, and Hermeticism in Fin-de-Siècle Russia," in Rosenthal, ed., *Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, 137; Don C. Rawson, "Mendeleev and the Scientific Claims of Spiritualism," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 122 (1978): 1–8; and Richard E. Rice, "Mendeleev's Public Opposition to Spiritualism," *Ambix* 45 (1998): 85–95.

9. Throughout I use the word *rhetoric* to refer to the set of technical devices an author employs to generate a specific effect within the audience, as explicated by Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2d ed. (1961; reprint, Chicago, 1983); and Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago, 1974). Booth's emphasis on the moral pressure rhetoric can exert on an audience is especially important to my argument. There is a surprising paucity of analytical literature on the question of tone in literature, the central question of this essay. A fascinating approach to analyzing an author's "point of view" using the construction of a text is offered in Boris A. Uspenskii, *Poetika kompozitsii: Struktura khudozhestvennogo teksta i tipologiya kompozitsionnoi formy* (Moscow, 1970), esp. 16–17.

By explicating the rhetorical aspects of Dostoevskii's spiritualism articles, I hope to help repair an asymmetry generated by the systemic (but very understandable) bias in Dostoevskii scholarship toward analysis of the novels. Along with the bulk of the *Diary*, the work on spiritualism has been relegated to the category of Dostoevskii's "journalism," which is substantially less trodden by the heels of scholarship. In general, a tendency persists to view his novels as the expression of the "artful" and "true" writer, and the *Diary* as an expression of a knee-jerk reactionary, xenophobe, and anti-Semite.<sup>10</sup> I am not about to deny the offensiveness of many of the polemics in the *Diary*, but this attitude has obscured important elements of an affirmative worldview defended by Dostoevskii. An analysis of spiritualism and Dostoevskii will not only illuminate our view of him as a writer and journalist but will also develop him as a figure in the history of Russian science, where he has often been overlooked despite his frequently expressed views on the natural sciences and their impact on Russian culture.<sup>11</sup> This neglect is unfortunate, since previous studies that have considered Dostoevskii an active participant in local cultural debates have greatly enriched our understanding of both his fiction and Russian culture.<sup>12</sup> The more he is treated as a real historical figure in dialogue with real Russian intellectuals, I argue, the more we will in turn understand about his rhetorical strategies.

### Spiritualism and Dostoevskii's *Diary*

Spiritualism in Russia, as was the case with spiritualism in many other European nations, descended directly from a local American movement of the 1840s, which then spread to England, and finally to the rest of Europe. The history of the American and English spiritualist communities has

10. For one example, see Marina Kostalevsky, *Dostoevsky and Soloviev: The Art of Integral Vision* (New Haven, 1997), 137.

11. The few studies of this topic remain only preliminary and focus generally on the medical and life sciences. See James L. Rice, *Dostoevsky and the Healing Art: An Essay in Literary and Medical History* (Ann Arbor, 1985); B. E. Lewis, "Darwin and Dostoevsky," *Melbourne Slavic Studies* 11 (1976): 23–32; Michael R. Katz, "Dostoevsky and Natural Science," *Dostoevsky Studies* 9 (1989): 63–76; and M. G. Iaroshkevskii, "Dostoevskii i ideino-filosofskie iskaniiia russkikh estestvoispytatelei," *Voprosy filosofii*, 1982, no. 2:103–13. Liza Knapp has proposed the intriguing but not entirely convincing thesis that Dostoevskii sought in his novels to provide an alternative metaphysics to the Newtonian worldview by engaging with scientific doctrines. Knapp, *The Annihilation of Inertia: Dostoevsky and Metaphysics* (Evanston, 1996). There has also been some debate concerning whether Dostoevskii actually engaged in non-Euclidean geometry in *Brothers Karamazov*. See Liza Knapp, "The Fourth Dimension of the Non-Euclidean Mind: Time in *Brothers Karamazov* or Why Ivan Karamazov's Devil Does Not Carry a Watch," *Dostoevsky Studies* 8 (1987): 105–20; and Diane E. Oenning Thompson, "Poetic Transformations of Scientific Facts in *Brat'ja Karamazovy*," *Dostoevsky Studies* 8 (1987): 73–91, esp. the appendix, "Note on Non-Euclidean Geometry."

12. The now-standard five-volume biography of Dostoevskii by Joseph Frank is the most sustained work in this direction. Regrettably, the volume that would cover Dostoevskii's encounter with Mendeleev has not yet appeared: *Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1821–1849* (Princeton, 1976); *Dostoevsky: The Years of Ordeal, 1850–1859* (Princeton, 1983); *Dostoevsky: The Stir of Liberation, 1860–1865* (Princeton, 1986); and *Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years, 1865–1871* (Princeton, 1995).

been chronicled elsewhere.<sup>13</sup> Less widely discussed has been the emergence of spiritualism within the cultural circles of St. Petersburg society.<sup>14</sup> Although many Russians had encountered spiritualism in trips abroad, the startling ascendancy of spiritualism took place under the guidance of Aleksandr N. Aksakov (1832–1903), cousin to the leading Slavophile thinkers. Aksakov first became interested in spiritualism by reading the works of Emanuel Swedenborg and Andrew Jackson Davis, whom he translated into Russian (although he was denied permission to publish in the case of the latter). Having become interested in psychical phenomena, he enrolled as a free student in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Moscow in 1855 and studied physiology, physics, chemistry, and anatomy, eventually publishing a translation into Russian of Count Szapary's work on magnetism and medicine.<sup>15</sup> In 1874 he published the first issue of a Leipzig journal, *Psychische Studien*, which he edited for many years, and he also composed a magnum opus for spiritualists, *Animismus und Spiritismus*.<sup>16</sup>

Dostoevskii's encounter with spiritualism was overdetermined. As a self-aware Petersburger who socialized with the local elite and read the daily periodicals, he was inundated with casual and not-so-casual endorsements and criticisms of séances and the latest British medium. His library contained a variety of domestic and foreign works on spiritualism, including a few by Aksakov.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, his close associate, former fel-

13. Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850–1914* (Cambridge, Eng., 1985); Bret E. Carroll, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America* (Bloomington, 1997); Logie Barrow, *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and English Plebeians, 1850–1910* (London, 1986); and Alan Gauld, *The Founders of Psychical Research* (London, 1968).

14. Given that the bulk of Russian spiritualists were located in Petersburg and that both Dostoevskii and Mendeleev lived there as well, I will speak of "Russian" spiritualism only in terms of its cultural location in that city. The recent collection edited by Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, has done much to articulate the diversity in occult movements during this period. On the publications of the spiritualists and other occult movements in this period, see the bibliographic essays by Edward Kasinec and Robert H. Davis, Jr., "Russian Occult Journalism of the Early Twentieth Century and Emigration," 419–23; and Maria Carlson and Robert H. Davis, Jr., "Russian Occult Journals and Newspapers," 423–49, both in Rosenthal, *Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*.

15. Emma Hardinge Britten, *Nineteenth Century Miracles; or, Spirits and Their Work in Every Country of the Earth* (New York, 1884), 353.

16. Alexander Nikolajewitsch Aksakow, *Animismus und Spiritismus: Versuch einer kritischen Prüfung der mediumistischen Phänomene mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Hypothesen der Halluzination und des Unbewussten*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1919).

17. A selection of the spiritualist books in Dostoevskii's personal library: R. Gera, *Experimental Researches on Spiritualism* (1862); William Crookes, *Spiritualism and Science: Experimental Researches on the Psychic Force* (1872); and A. N. Aksakov's Russian translations of Emanuel Swedenborg's *The Gospel according to Swedenborg: Five Chapters of the Gospel of John with an Exposition and Discussion of Their Spiritual Meaning according to the Teaching on Correspondences* (Leipzig, 1864), *On Heaven, the World of Spirits and on Hell, as They Were Seen and Heard by Swedenborg*, trans. from Latin (Leipzig, 1863), and *The Rationalism of Swedenborg: A Critical Analysis of His Teaching on the Holy Writ* (Leipzig, 1870). See Berry, "Dostoevsky and Spiritualism," 45; and Czesław Miłosz, "Dostoevsky and Swedenborg," *Slavic Review* 34, no. 2 (June 1975): 302–18. Although Dostoevskii clearly disagreed with Swedenborg on religious grounds, Miłosz and others have noted Swedenborgian resonances in some of his more nightmarish imagery: Donald Fanger, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism: A Study of*

low journalist, and sometime friend/enemy, Nikolai Strakhov, heavily attacked spiritualism.<sup>18</sup> Dostoevskii also conducted an extensive correspondence with spiritualist and St. Petersburg University zoologist Nikolai P. Vagner (1829–1907), who doubled as a writer of children's books under the name "Kitty Cat" (Kot Murlyka). Dostoevskii even ran into A. N. Aksakov while taking a cure at Ems. In a letter to his wife, he dubbed Aksakov "the nihilist" for his interest in spiritualism, which he saw as destructive of religion. Dostoevskii very much respected Ivan S. Aksakov, the noted Slavophile, but was disappointed by his cousin Aleksandr, dismissively commenting, "There are now lots of Aksakovs."<sup>19</sup> Dostoevskii quickly swallowed his original distaste, angling for an invitation to a séance at Aksakov's in a letter to Vagner: "What is happening at Aksakov's? Will there finally be séances? I'm ready to ask him myself (when everyone in my family is well, of course) whether he won't admit me to at least one séance of his." Although Dostoevskii clearly wanted to attend a séance, he was quite firm in stating that "I absolutely cannot, after all, feel indifferent about spiritualism."<sup>20</sup> After some more inquiries about the arrival of Madame Claire, a British medium destined for ignominy before Mendeleev's commission, Dostoevskii was finally invited to a séance on 13 February 1876.<sup>21</sup>

*Dostoevsky in Relation to Balzac, Dickens, and Gogol* (1965; reprint, Evanston, 1998), 225; and Robin Feuer Miller, "Dostoevsky's 'The Dream of a Ridiculous Man': Unsealing the Generic Envelope," in Elizabeth Cheresch Allen and Gary Saul Morson, eds., *Freedom and Responsibility in Russian Literature: Essays in Honor of Robert Louis Jackson* (Evanston, 1995), 90.

18. Strakhov also corresponded with Mendeleev and provided a link between Dostoevskii and the chemist during this period. See Linda Gerstein, *Nikolai Strakhov* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971).

19. Dostoevskii to Anna Dostoevskaia, letter 579, 29 May (10 June) 1875, Ems, F. M. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh* (Leningrad, 1972–1990; hereafter *PSS*), 29(ii):32; translation from Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Complete Letters*, Volume 4, 1872–1877, ed. and trans. David A. Lowe (Ann Arbor, 1991; hereafter *CLA*), 222. There is sporadic correspondence with Vagner from 4 December 1875 (letter 597) to 26 January 1877 (letter 666). As a sign of friendship, Dostoevskii announced *Svet*, a semi-spiritualist journal edited by Vagner, in his *Diary*; the announcement caused some bad press and is the topic of the last letter between the two.

20. Dostoevskii to Nikolai Vagner, 21 December 1875, Petersburg (letter 600), *PSS*, 29(ii):68; translation from *CLA*, 265. V. Pribytkova, the wife of the future editor of the Russian spiritualist journal *Rebus*, recalled that Dostoevskii had a "negative attitude" toward spiritualism, although "he criticized those people who simply mocked and laughed at spiritualism in public." V. P[r]ibytko]va, "Vospominaniia o Dostoevskom," *Rebus*, 1885, no. 25–26: 230–31, 240–41. Pribytkova saw Dostoevskii as an unconscious spiritualist, who did not want to admit the reality of the effects before him. A penetrating contemporary criticism of her account pointed out that even had Dostoevskii wanted to believe, his metaphysical objections would have prevented it. A. German, "Po povodu stat' i 'Vospominaniia o Dostoevskom,'" *Rebus*, 1885, no. 38: 343–45.

21. On Claire, see Dostoevskii to Vagner, 2 January 1876, Petersburg, (letter 602), *PSS*, 29(ii):70; *CLA*, 267. Also present at the séance was literary figure N. S. Leskov. His public report of the séance was quite positive, although he remarked on Dostoevskii's skepticism. N. Leskov, "Pis'mo v redaktsiiu: Mediumicheskii seans 13-go fevralia," *Grazhdanin*, 19 February 1876, no. 9: 254–56. Although Leskov claimed he was not a spiritualist, Aksakov had been in contact with him for some years on this topic, and Aksakov was impressed by much in Leskov's poetry that touched on "one of the basic dogmas of contemporary spiritualism!" Aksakov to Leskov, 12 June 1872, Pushkinskii dom, f. 612, d. 232, ll. 1–10b.

Long before that séance, however, Dostoevskii penned his first article on spiritualism in the debut issue of the self-standing *Writer's Diary*, published in January 1876.<sup>22</sup> In this piece, "Spiritualism. Something about Devils. The Extraordinary Cleverness of Devils, If Only These Are Devils," Dostoevskii engages with a "very amusing and, most important, fashionable topic," the rage of spiritualism.<sup>23</sup> With characteristic humor, he relates a story he heard about a man who sat in a chair while spirits hurled it about the room, "and this is in St. Petersburg, the capital!" Spirits haunting houses, Nikolai Gogol' writing from the netherworld, and mass enthusiasm seem to be interfering with people "working and meekly earning their ranks." Dostoevskii sets himself to resolve whether there really are any spirits or "devils." He is aware of the scholarly commission established in St. Petersburg to investigate spiritualism, but he feels that it will necessarily turn up no results, since "in order to investigate the question of whether these are devils at work at least one member of the committee must be able and have the opportunity to admit the existence of devils, even as a hypothesis. But it is hardly likely that even one member of the committee can be found who believes in devils. . . . And therefore on this question the committee is incompetent."<sup>24</sup>

Dostoevskii's subsequent attempt to admit their existence as a hypothesis is delightfully ironic and playful. First, he criticizes those who claimed that devils did not exist because such devils made grammatical mistakes when they talked to spiritualists (through automatic writing or table-rapping, presumably) and had not yet revealed one astonishing or miraculous fact. On the contrary, Dostoevskii argues that a demonstration by the devils of their cleverness would be stupid. Suppose they did invent something on the same order of importance as the telegraph and communicated it to the world. While at first they would achieve a wide following, eventually people would become bored with the devils as they integrated the miracle into their everyday lives. And once bored, there would be no way to win them back. So the *worst* thing the devils could do would be to show their powers. But if they were to make mistakes and plod along ungrammatically, the curious would be drawn to them while the rationalists would scoff and do nothing. And all this would establish the "fundamental principle of [the devils'] kingdom"—discord: "Now please observe how the devils introduce discord among us and, so to say, from the very first step began spiritualism with discord."<sup>25</sup> When scientists eventually mobilize against spiritualism, they will belittle the devils' idiocy and the idiocy of their followers, the latter of whom will retrench and thus foment true discord. Thus, if devils did exist, Dostoevskii surmises, they are performing their job admirably!

22. All quotations from the *Diary* are from the recent translation by Kenneth Lantz, modified occasionally for style in accordance with *PSS: Fyodor Dostoevsky, A Writer's Diary*, volume 1, 1873–1876, and volume 2, 1877–1881, trans. Kenneth Lantz (Evanston, 1994; hereafter Lantz edition).

23. *Ibid.*, 333; *PSS*, 22:32.

24. Lantz edition, 333–34; *PSS*, 22:32–33.

25. Lantz edition, 336–37; *PSS*, 22:34–35.

The essence of this argument is to show that Mendeleev's commission would fail to eradicate spiritualism. What is even more provocative, the devils implicitly *want* the commission to produce a null result, because that would enable them to spread even more discord. First, the commission's stance against spiritualism would generate fervent adherence to the tenets of the dogma out of pride. Second, the devils would then act to subvert the commission from within, *after* it had already spoken against their existence:

Now imagine if such a thing happened here. No sooner would the learned commission, its work finished and the wretched fraud exposed, turn its back than the devils would seize one of its most obdurate members—even, say, Mr. Mendeleev himself, who has exposed spiritualism in his public lectures—and catch him up at once in their nets, just as they caught Crookes and Olcott in their time. They would take him aside and lift him into the air for five minutes, materialize before him various dead people he had known, and do it all in such a manner that he could no longer have any doubts. And what would happen then, tell me? As a true scientist he would have to accept actual fact—he, who has been giving lectures! What a picture, what a shame, what an uproar, what shouts and cries of indignation!<sup>26</sup>

The commission would be discredited. So if devils did exist (which they do not), they would be acting like they do not (so they do). Dostoevskii repeatedly assures us that this is "only a joke" and that he has "most definitely been joking and having fun from the first word to the last"; but he does see a real quandary here:

If we regard spiritualism as something that bears within it some sort of new religion (and almost all, even the most sober-minded among the spiritualists, are inclined to share even a little of that view), then something of what I have said above might be taken seriously. And therefore, may God grant speedy success to the *free study* of the question from *both sides*. . . . But to shout at one another, to heap scorn on one another and ostracize one another for spiritualism, means, in my view, only to strengthen and disseminate the idea of spiritualism in its worst sense.<sup>27</sup>

The aspect of spiritualism that Dostoevskii finds most disturbing is its "mysticism," an accusation that has often been leveled at the author himself. Dostoevskii's understanding of the mystical, however, involves the belief in an *unmediated* religious communion with the divine; from the perspective of Dostoevskii's Orthodoxy, this form of religious belief wavers between the twin sins of idolatry (in this case, of the medium) and putting oneself in the place of Christ. This attack on mysticism forms the back-

26. Lantz edition, 338, *PSS*, 22:36. Henry S. Olcott was an American agriculturist who had publicly criticized spiritualism but later converted. Sir William Crookes is an even more renowned case. After investigating the mediumistic abilities of D. D. Home and other mediums, Crookes declared himself convinced of the spirit world, a startling admission from a celebrated chemist. See R. G. Medhurst, ed., *Crookes and the Spirit World: A Collection of Writings by or concerning the Work of Sir William Crookes, O.M., F.R.S., in the Field of Psychological Research* (New York, 1972).

27. Lantz edition, 338–39; *PSS*, 22:36–37, emphasis added.

drop of his objection to spiritualism, even as he moves on to a more direct focus on the commission.

In the March 1876 issue of his *Diary*, Dostoevskii writes "A Word or Two about the Report of the Scholarly Commission on Spiritualistic Phenomena," the briefest of his entries on spiritualism. While the January entry contained a paradoxical and humorous critique of *both* the spiritualists and the commission, this article provided a more reserved criticism of the commission alone. Dostoevskii commented on the commission's public "Report" of their findings that spiritualism was a fraud. Dostoevskii began the article by picking up a central *Diary* theme: "isolation" (*obosoblenie*), the atomization of Russian society partially represented by spiritualism.<sup>28</sup> Dostoevskii claimed that he had hoped the commission would dispel this "isolation" but was disappointed (he is being facetious here: he had earlier denied any possibility of the commission's success). Curiously, he framed his objections in literary, rather than religious or philosophical, terms: "The report fails in its exposition and in its form. The report is framed in such a manner that its opponents will undoubtedly seize upon its 'biased' (and so very unscientific) attitude to its subject, even though the commission may not have had any such bias to justify the charge. (There was a certain amount of bias, but we really can't avoid that.) But the text is poorly framed."<sup>29</sup> As an example, he points out that the commission condemned as "nonexistent" phenomena they admitted never witnessing, such as the materialization of spirits. The problem was that spiritualism is a "mystical notion," and when dealing with such matters "even strictly mathematical proofs carry no weight whatsoever," since "Faith and mathematical proof are two irreconcilable things. There's no stopping someone who makes up his mind to believe."<sup>30</sup> And, continuing in a very serious voice to condemn the "overly scornful and haughty tone of the report," he argues that a chance has been squandered to fight spiritualism effectively. What is interesting in this brief commentary is, first, its denial of the efficacy of mathematical proof to persuade, stated years earlier with such vigor in *Notes from Underground*,<sup>31</sup> but also how he moves from a criticism of spiritualism as a wide cultural phenomenon to a very

28. Lantz edition, 420; PSS, 22:99.

29. Lantz edition, 421; PSS, 22:100.

30. Lantz edition, 422; PSS, 22:100-101. Pribytkova recalls that, in her presence, Dostoevskii attacked spiritualism as "mysticism." Pribytkova, "Vospominaniia o Dostoevskom," 241. Volgin and Rabinovich misread Dostoevskii's opposition to spiritualism as an attempt to "rationalize" and "empiricize" the soul through mechanist psychology. Volgin and Rabinovich, "Dostoevskii i Mendeleev." This is explicitly *not* the position Dostoevskii defends in the text, where he rejects spiritualism as a *religion*, and on the grounds that mysticism is dangerous and unholy.

31. Dostoevskii's underground man comments: "But good God! what have the laws of nature and arithmetic to do with me, when for some reason I don't like those laws or twice two? Naturally I shan't break through the wall with my head, if I'm really not strong enough, but I won't be reconciled to it simply because it's a stone wall and I haven't enough strength to break it down." Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground*, trans. Jessie Coulson (London, 1972), 23. This theme is also explicit in Dostoevskii's *The Demons* and implicit in the other works of his mature period. Malcolm V. Jones, *Dostoyevsky: The Novel of Discord* (New York, 1976), 25; Knapp, *Annihilation of Inertia*, 116.

focused attack on the commission, an attack centered on issues of tone and literary form. It appears that the attacks on the spiritualists have faded in favor of attacks on the antispiritualists, but this would be a misreading. Rather, his attacks on the spiritualists have moved to a non-"mathematical" mode of persuasion.

Just as the March 1876 article had moved from January's evenhanded criticism of both sides to a focus on the commission, the April 1876 article, "Just a Bit More about Spiritualism," is even more narrowly directed at Mendeleev. Some intriguing parallels and antiparallels in the biographies of Dostoevskii and Mendeleev are relevant to a historical understanding of this dispute. Dostoevskii hailed from Moscow, and Mendeleev was born in Tobol'sk, Siberia; both interpreted their presence in Petersburg as representatives of "real" Russia in the westernized capital. Furthermore, both returned to Petersburg in the early 1860s after a long hiatus: Dostoevskii from penal servitude and internal exile in Siberia, and Mendeleev from several years of study in Heidelberg, Germany. Dostoevskii returned from the east, Mendeleev from the west, and the clash between the two was read by both in symbolic overtones that reflected the central tensions in the Russia of the Great Reforms.<sup>32</sup> The debate outlined here, then, was seen by both participants (and by their readers) as about more than raps on a table and the tone of a report: it was about the appropriate direction for Russia.

According to Dostoevskii, Mendeleev had provided a clear example of how *not* to conduct a battle against "isolation." Dostoevskii claims to have found the essence of spiritualism, and, even though he was counseled by an unnamed friend (Konstantin Pobedonostsev, Procurator of the Holy Synod) not to write it, he felt it was too important to leave to Mendeleev and his public lectures. It was not that Dostoevskii thought he could reason against spiritualism better than Mendeleev; quite the contrary:

Besides, I am convinced that no article of mine could work either to support or destroy spiritualism. Mr. Mendeleev, who is delivering his lecture in Solianoi Gorodok at the very moment that I am writing these lines, probably looks at the matter differently and is lecturing with the noble intent of "crushing spiritualism." It's always pleasant to listen to lectures with such admirable tendencies; yet I think that whoever *wants* to put his faith in spiritualism will not be stopped by lectures or even by entire commissions, while those who do not believe, at least if they truly *do not want* to believe, will not be swayed by anything. That was precisely the con-

32. Considering the circle of individuals that both knew fairly well (Aksakov, Strakhov, Vagner), it is surprising that there was so little personal contact between the two men. I have been unable to locate any correspondence between them in Mendeleev's personal archive at St. Petersburg University, although Dostoevskii did send a complimentary copy of a book to Mendeleev's sister, E. I. Kapustina, long before either man was interested in spiritualism. See the excerpt of Kapustina's 4 January 1862 letter to Dostoevskii in PSS, 30(ii):268. The only physical meeting I have found took place substantially after the jabs in the 1876 *Diary*. Supposedly, on the day of Dostoevskii's burial, Mendeleev lectured to his chemistry class for over an hour on the importance of Dostoevskii for Russian literature, although no transcript or notes remain from this event. R. B. Dobrotin and N. G. Karpilo, *Biblioteka D. I. Mendeleeva* (Leningrad, 1980), 149.

viction I took away from the February séance at A. N. Aksakov's; it was, at least, my first strong impression then. Up to that time I had *simply* rejected spiritualism, i.e., in essence I was perturbed only by the mystical sense of its doctrine. (I was never able *completely* to reject spiritualistic phenomena, with which I had some acquaintance even before the séance with the medium, nor can I now—especially now—after having read the report of the Scholarly Commission on Spiritualism.) But after that remarkable séance I suddenly surmised—or rather, I suddenly discovered—not only that I do not believe in spiritualism, but that I haven't the least *wish* to believe in it, so that there is no evidence that will *ever* cause me to change my views.<sup>33</sup>

Mendelev had done nothing to address this fundamental desire, Dostoevskii claimed. Rather, he and his commission acted like private citizens, giggling and holding grudges, "but once they were organized into a commission, these scholars became public figures and not private individuals," and thus should not have been so cavalier in dismissing spiritualism. And what was their evidence? They had found that the three mediums examined by the commission had generated "spirit noises" with mechanical devices. But that would not convince the average Russian, since he knew that his own family gathered around the séance table was not trying to deceive him, and he would not accept one instance of fraud as proof that other spirit phenomena do not exist. In other words, Dostoevskii feared that the commission's very positivism could backfire.<sup>34</sup>

So if the *fact* of finding some fraud did not convince, appropriate presentation would. The commission failed here as well. Its attitude in telling the average Russian (Dostoevskii is paraphrasing *very* loosely here), "You are being deceived just as all the others are; everyone is being deceived, and you are all fools. So it must be; so speaks Science; we are Science," would generate no results, Dostoevskii claimed, "even in the event *that the commission was correct.*"<sup>35</sup> What was needed was "a different tone and technique" that would "give particular consideration to the mystical significance of spiritualism, which is the most harmful thing that can be." Dostoevskii felt the commission was guided more by the desire to impress European scientists than to produce the urgently necessary results. As a conclusion, Dostoevskii mocked Mendelev for believing, based on the January *Diary*, that Dostoevskii himself had been an adherent to spiritualism who had become convinced by the commission's report in March. This is clearly a gross misreading by Mendelev, but two can play at that game. "Mr. Mendelev must be an unusually kindly man," Dostoevskii declared. Mendelev praised the spiritualists at the end of his April public

33. Lantz edition, 458; PSS, 22:127, emphasis in the original. This argument against attempts to understand faith rationally has a long life among Dostoevskii's associates. Vladimir Solov'ev, Dostoevskii's friend and an influential religious philosopher, propounded similar arguments. Kostalevsky, *Dostoevsky and Soloviev*, 146. Nikolai Strakhov also wrote to Lev N. Tolstoi in December 1875 along similar lines: "I suppose that spiritualism is part of our desire for the irrational, but it seeks irrationalism in the wrong place." Quoted in Gerstein, *Nikolai Strakhov*, 163.

34. Lantz edition, 459–60; PSS, 22:128.

35. Lantz edition, 460–61; PSS, 22:129–30, emphasis in the original.

lecture for daring to question their faith and for being concerned with the nature of the soul, while at the same time berating them for misunderstanding the sciences. "The esteemed professor, it seems," Dostoevskii continued, "is a great one for a joke. But if he has said this out of naiveté, and not as a joke, then he must be quite the opposite: he must have no sense of humor at all."<sup>36</sup>

At this point, explicit *Diary* entries on spiritualism cease; Dostoevskii felt that he had made his negative case against the commission's strategy clearly. What he proceeded to do throughout the *Diary* was demonstrate how an alternative model of persuasion would work that would also convince Russians to reject spiritualism (although this of course was not the primary goal of this rich text). It is this alternative "framing," "technique," and "tone," that characterizes Dostoevskii's affirmative project against spiritualism.

### Dostoevskii's Rhetoric of Resonances

The key to unlocking Dostoevskii's positive efforts to discredit spiritualism is his decision to embed the three articles in the complicated text of the *Diary*, a text that has often eluded interpretation as a whole because of its wonderful artistry. The *Diary* contains, along with journalistic articles, a series of powerful fictional pieces that are some of Dostoevskii's most touching creations ("Bobok" [Bobok], "Krotkaia" [The meek one], "Mal'chik u Khrista na elke" [The boy at Christ's Christmas party], "Son smeshnogo cheloveka" [The dream of a ridiculous man], some of which we shall return to shortly). A common approach to the *Diary*, especially by those interested in Dostoevskii's fiction, has been to ignore the corpus and treat the stories individually, amputated from their immediate context.<sup>37</sup> The opposite extreme has been to hack out elements of Dostoevskii's life story or "clues" to novelistic interpretation from the semiautobiographical segments of the *Diary*, an approach that often obscures those texts' original function in the *Diary* as a whole.<sup>38</sup>

The *Diary* performs several interrelated artistic tasks and it coheres (albeit somewhat unstably) by tracing a set of themes through what would otherwise resemble a random collection of writings from all genres. These

36. Lantz edition, 462, 464; PSS, 22:130, 132. Some clerics endorsed spiritualism as a way to bring individuals back to the church. Dostoevskii disagreed vehemently: "I have been told, among other things, that some of our clergy have rejoiced in aspects of spiritism—it allegedly inspires faith, for the appearance of ghosts at least comprises a protest against the universal materialism. What reasoning! No, pure atheism would be better than spiritism!" Pushkinskii dom, f. 100, No. 29479, SSKhb.12, as quoted in Volgin and Rabinovich, "Dostoevsky and Mendelev," 189–90.

37. Examples of excellent analysis in this fashion are Robert Louis Jackson, *The Art of Dostoevsky: Deliriums and Nocturnes* (Princeton, 1981), chaps. 9–12; and Miller, "Dostoevsky's 'Dream of a Ridiculous Man.'"

38. For an attempt to use the *Diary* for biography, see Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt*, 70. Malcolm Jones has correctly noted the dangers of attempts to use the *Diary* to "unlock" the novels. See Jones, *Dostoevsky after Bakhtin: Readings in Dostoevsky's Fantastic Realism* (Cambridge, Eng., 1990), xvi.

"themes" are broad intellectual and emotional issues that provide a common substrate to the diverse manifest content of the various fictional works, articles, and essays in the *Diary*. This content is in turn broadly organized into several repeating subjects, which I shall refer to as "topics." A broad variety of these themes and topics link tangentially to spiritualism.<sup>39</sup> The first and most striking topic is the Eastern Question—the fate of Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman-controlled Balkans and the role of Russia as messianic protector—a question that Dostoevskii called in his correspondence "the struggle with the *whole idea* of the West, that is, with socialism."<sup>40</sup> The jingoistic and xenophobic (not to mention anti-Semitic) overtones of Dostoevskii's discussion of the Eastern Question are largely responsible for readers' neglect of the *Diary*. Dostoevskii links spiritualism, a movement that originated in the United States and came to Russia primarily from English sources, to both proletarian movements and western imports.<sup>41</sup> Spiritualism thus belongs to the Eastern Question, but it also links to the second major topic: false religions and conversions from Orthodoxy. The third major topic is the epidemic of recent suicides, which Dostoevskii also attributes to atheism and loss of faith. The final two topics, which do not relate to spiritualism, are the problems of the newly introduced (1864) legal system, including trial-by-jury and deceitful attorneys, and the plight of children.

The themes of the *Diary* are fewer and more internally connected. The dominant theme, although least relevant for Dostoevskii's argument against spiritualism, is Russia's connection to its people (*narod*), and how that bond justifies Russia's millenarian role as savior of both west and east. Most members of the Russian intelligentsia found this extreme view alienating, and it is the source, so David Goldstein persuasively argues, of Dostoevskii's attack on Judaism as a competing millenarian movement.<sup>42</sup> The second and third major themes (both interconnected with the first) are also mutually intertwined, resonate throughout the spiritualism articles, and link his antispiritualism/anti-Mendeleev position to the *Diary* as a whole. The second theme is that intellectuals tend to oversimplify the

39. Bracketing spiritualism, one can consider the *Diary* as a dialogue with the journalism, philosophy, and literature of Russian thinker Aleksandr Herzen, an important intellectual influence on Dostoevskii. Herzen's "novel" about the 1848 revolutions, *From the Other Shore*, formed a template for the structure of the *Diary*. See Nina Perlina, "Vozdeistvie gertsenskogo zhurnalizma na arkhitektoniku i polifonicheskoe stroenie *Dnevnikha pisatel'ia Dostoevskogo*," *Dostoevsky Studies* 5 (1989): 141–55; Aileen Kelly, "Irony and Utopia in Herzen and Dostoevsky: *From the Other Shore* and *Diary of a Writer*," *Russian Review* 50, no. 4 (October 1991): 397–416; and A. S. Dolinin, "Dostoevskii i Gertsen (K izucheniiu obshchestvenno-politicheskikh vozzrenii Dostoevskogo)," in Dolinin, *Dostoevskii i drugie: Stat'i i issledovaniia o russkoi klassicheskoi literature* (Leningrad, 1989), 101–62.

40. Dostoevskii to Mikhail Pogodin, 26 February 1873 (letter 471), *PSS* 29(i):263–64; translation from *CLA*, 63, emphasis in the original.

41. Dostoevskii's focus on the low-class aspects of spiritualism can be contrasted with Lev Tolstoi's approach in *Anna Karenina* and *Plody Prosveshcheniia* (The fruits of enlightenment), where spiritualism is seen as a disease of effete elites. I would like to thank William Todd for emphasizing this point.

42. David I. Goldstein, *Dostoevsky and the Jews* (Austin, 1981), 50.

"messy" complexity of modern life, channeling the world into simplistic and dangerous schemes (like socialism).<sup>43</sup> The commission and the spiritualists are both guilty of such oversimplification, the former by misunderstanding the motivations of the spiritualists, the latter by distorting true religion through mystical oversimplifications. The final major theme is that without a belief in the immortality of the soul, there is no guiding principle for civilization, morality, or life itself—the central idea behind *The Brothers Karamazov*, which draws so much from the *Diary*.<sup>44</sup> Science alone, without faith, Dostoevskii contended, could not solve Russia's urgent crisis.

Dostoevskii insisted that the *Diary* did have a defined form that performed an artistic function. As he remarked to his physician Stepan Ianovskii as he was about to suspend the *Diary* in late 1877: "The *Diary* acquired such a shape all by itself that it is impossible to alter its form even the least bit."<sup>45</sup> My understanding of this "form" is closely related to Robert Belknap's insightful reading of the Grand Inquisitor story from *Karamazov*. In this story, Jesus returns to Seville and converses with the Grand Inquisitor, who tells Jesus that his pure faith is no longer necessary, since the church rationally and paternalistically cares for the people, who would only be lost without miracles, bread, and complete bondage. Dostoevskii, and many of his readers since, considered the Inquisitor's argument a compelling and logical case against Christianity. As Belknap argues, following Dostoevskii, much of *Karamazov* is meant to serve as a "refutation" of the Grand Inquisitor's position, a refutation that many readers do not see. This is not accidental; Dostoevskii never intended to engage with the Inquisitor on *rational* grounds, since he considered the Inquisitor's view unassailable from that perspective, and attempts to refute it logically would only trap one in the discourse of rationality and lead one to reject Christianity. Instead of confronting this argument directly, Dostoevskii sets up repelling resonances between the Inquisitor's argument, the Inquisitor, his herald Ivan Karamazov, and other negative characters in the book. By using *rhetorical*, and not *rational*, techniques, Dostoevskii "refutes" the Inquisitor's argument on an emotional level, on the level of *faith*.<sup>46</sup>

43. Gary Saul Morson, "Introductory Study," in Dostoevsky, *A Writer's Diary*, 1:43 and 54.

44. As Dostoevskii writes in his personal notes for the March article: "On spiritualism and about how it is deeper than the lectures of Mendeleev and that its depth lies in the instability of contemporary people, etc. . . . Here is the search for moral pacification upon the loss of religion—and that's *where the true depth is*." *PSS*, 24:158–59, emphasis in the original.

45. Letter dated 17 December 1877, Petersburg (letter 722), *PSS*, 29(ii):179; translation from *CLA*, 400.

46. Robert L. Belknap, "The Rhetoric of an Ideological Novel," in William Mills Todd III, ed., *Literature and Society in Imperial Russia, 1800–1914* (Stanford, 1978), 197–223. See also Belknap, *The Structure of The Brothers Karamazov* (The Hague, 1967). Linda Kraeger and Joe Barnhart use the opposite analytic strategy to provide a rational reconstruction of Dostoevskii's religious arguments (expressed largely by Zosima) against the

The spiritualism articles are part of the same strategy of a rhetoric of resonances, which Dostoevskii honed throughout the *Diary*. At the very least, Dostoevskii worked out the elements of the Grand Inquisitor's argument through the pages of the *Diary*, even, some have argued, drawing it *directly* from the spiritualism pieces.<sup>47</sup> Here we see dialogic devices working in Dostoevskii's journalism: when arguing against real positions taken by his contemporaries, Dostoevskii portrays their ideas clearly and then uses structural resonances to undercut their position on a suprarational, emotional level.<sup>48</sup> How does this resonant strategy work in the *Diary* with respect to spiritualism? There are a few outstanding examples. First, the story "Bobok" from the 1873 *Diary*, narrated by a boorish clerk with journalistic aspirations, tells the story of a visit to a graveyard where the narrator eavesdrops on the boring, uncultured, and mundane conversations of the recently deceased. Hailed by Mikhail Bakhtin as the centerpiece of menippean satire in Dostoevskii, "Bobok" is also in part a remarkable parody of spiritualism: a mediator listens to the other world and finds nothing extraordinary, just as Dostoevskii's "devils" deliberately proclaim irrelevancies in the January *Diary*. The bitter narrator's unconscious self-satirization clearly beckons the reader to dismiss such beliefs. Similarly, in the controversial utopian (or anti-utopian?) story "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man," the belittled narrator is taken to an alternative world where he meets Edenic children of paradise who lead a carefree existence. The ridiculous man soon corrupts these children and then returns to earth to preach the need to strive for divine paradise, even though it will inevitably be corrupted. This story has been subjected to much analysis; here I only wish to note that the children of the utopia commune with their dead, an ability they lose when they "fall" into our earthly corruption. The ambivalence with which these "utopians" are treated also

Inquisitor. See Kraeger and Barnhart, *Dostoevsky on Evil and Atonement: The Ontology of Personalism in His Major Fiction* (Lewiston, Me., 1992).

47. A specific example from the Grand Inquisitor's monologue reads: "But did you not know that as soon as man rejects miracles then he simultaneously rejects God, because man is not looking for God so much as for miracles. And since man is hopeless without miracles, he will create new miracles for himself, will turn to sorcery and witchcraft, even though otherwise he may be a rebel, a heretic, and an atheist." PSS, 14:233. The strong case for the spiritualism articles being the basis for the Inquisitor's claim is made in Tunimantov, "Publitsistika Dostoevskogo," 199; D. V. Grishin, *Dostoevskii—Chelovek, pisatel' i mify: Dostoevskii i ego "Dnevnik Pisatel'ia"* (Melbourne, 1978), 100, 241; and Vasily Rozanov, *Dostoevsky and the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*, trans. Spencer E. Roberts (Ithaca, 1972), 50. Robert Belknap notes that the scientific "materialism" attacked in *The Brothers Karamazov* was in part drawn from Dostoevskii's view of Mendeleev, but he does not clarify what kind of materialism Mendeleev stood for or the link to the Grand Inquisitor. Robert L. Belknap, *The Genesis of The Brothers Karamazov: The Aesthetics, Ideology, and Psychology of Text Making* (Evanston, 1990), 34 and 140.

48. Mikhail Bakhtin, in his immensely influential interpretation of Dostoevskii, specifically exempts the *Diary* from any polyphony, except for the fictional inserts. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis, 1984), 91, 95, 166. For a dialogical reading of the journalism, see Charles A. Moser, "Dostoevsky and the Aesthetics of Journalism," *Dostoevsky Studies* 3 (1982): 27–41, and the work of Gary Saul Morson.

resonates with spirit communication and mysticism.<sup>49</sup> Dostoevskii's resonances may not seem powerful here, but that is precisely because they were never meant to function when rationally articulated or viewed out of context. A more obvious resonance is the implicit comparison of Mendeleev's commission to the insincere rationalizations of scientizing lawyers, a refrain that runs throughout the text. A host of other resonances can be found: spiritualism as a disease of the western proletariat; blind adherence to science as the cause of atheism and socialism from Vissarion Belinskii to the 1870s; and the impossibility of "proving" issues of faith as the only barrier to suicide and immorality.

Dostoevskii had carefully considered the proper form and structure for his *Diary*; he did not develop the resonant method of persuasion lightly. He had, for instance, mocked spiritualism in his two preceding novels. In *Besy* (The demons), spiritualism makes its first appearance in Dostoevskii's literary creations. Shatov, the former idealist, cuckold, and victim of the novel's murderous revolutionaries—a figure who consistently represents misguided enthusiasm in intellectual thought—tells the narrator that he and the suicidal atheist Kirillov had encountered spiritualism on a trip to America and loved it just as they loved "lynching, revolvers, vagrancy."<sup>50</sup> Both the association with America and the character of the travelers are meant to repel the reader from spiritualism. Even more explicitly, *A Raw Youth*, written in between the first two waves of the *Diary*, concludes with the befuddled old Prince Nikolai Sikel'skii going into raptures to the narrator about the wondrous stories he has heard of spiritualism.<sup>51</sup> With this tale, spiritualism moves from being dangerous to appearing plain ridiculous, for much of this novel's plot centers on the prince's inability to comprehend life's realities.

Part of the innovation of the *Diary*, I argue, was to take this type of resonance from the realm of the fictional and inject it into the journalistic and polemical. As he wrote to Khristina Alchevskaia on 9 April 1876, already months into the publication of the self-standing *Diary*: "Would you believe, for instance, that I still haven't managed to work out for myself the form of *The Diary*, and I don't even know whether I'll ever get it right."<sup>52</sup> He was certain, however, that he could not just bluntly state his conclusions. As he wrote in a revealing letter to his close friend Vsevolod Solov'ev:

One bright correspondent from the provinces even reproached me for starting up conversations about lots of things in *The Diary*, touching on lots of things, but never yet having taken them to their conclusion, and encouraged me not to be timid. And so I up and stated the last word of

49. Lantz edition, 953–54; PSS, 25:13. Morson notes that in the prophecies of the ridiculous man and the millenarian diarist one finds many resonances with Dostoevskii's tales of failed or misguided religions, like spiritualism, although he does not make much of it. Morson, *Boundaries of Genre*, 182; and Morson, "Introductory Study," 68.

50. PSS, 10:112.

51. PSS, 13:424–25.

52. Letter 612, PSS, 29(ii):78; translation from *CL4*, 277.



my convictions. . . . And what do you think—exactly what I had foreseen happened: even the newspapers and publications friendly to me right away started yelling that I had paradox on paradox, and other journals didn't even pay any attention, while, it seems to me, I have touched on a most important question. That's what taking an idea to its conclusion means! . . . [I]f many of the most famous wits, Voltaire for instance, instead of gibes, hints, bare suggestions and insinuations, had suddenly ventured to state everything they believed, had shown their whole underpinning all at once, their essence, then, believe me, they wouldn't have obtained even a tenth of the earlier effect.<sup>53</sup>

Resonance was the only way Dostoevskii felt he could communicate his message.

So the *Diary*, and particularly the articles on spiritualism, was not an expression of sarcastic polemicism, obscurantist antiscientism, or religious fanaticism—or, rather, it was not *just* that. It was also an attempt to embody in journalism a new ethic of action, an attempt to develop a non-rational technique of persuasion to steer the Russian narod between Mendeleev's rationalism and Aksakov's mysticism. In doing this, Dostoevskii actively responded to Mendeleev's text, the final report of the Commission to Investigate Mediumistic Phenomena. Whether or not we believe in the efficacy of Dostoevskii's technique of persuasion, he does present a powerful argument against Mendeleev's attempt to dissuade the spiritualists. But was this a fair reading of Mendeleev's text?

### Mendeleev's Rhetoric of Juxtapositions

The answer to the question just posed is yes and no. Mendeleev's text does appear to have a "haughty" tone, just as Dostoevskii noted. Nevertheless, Mendeleev tried to create a document that would be just as persuasive as Dostoevskii was trying to be, but he employed a different rhetoric, one of juxtaposition. By juxtaposing his own voice with the voices of his opponents, Mendeleev did not drown them out as Dostoevskii had, but rather trusted readers to follow the logic on the way to forming their own (correct) conclusions. This, however, still provided his opponents with a voice in his text, planting the seeds of future refutations. There is a strong tendency not to read scientific texts rhetorically, since, following Bakhtin, scholars have assumed these texts are simply "authoritative discourse" that are not supposed to engage readers.<sup>54</sup> Let us take Mendeleev's manifesto against spiritualism, a segment of which Dostoevskii lampoons in his *Diary*, as a potential counterexample.

53. Letter 631, dated 16 (28) July 1876, Ems, PSS, 29(ii):101–2; translation from CL4: 305, emphasis in the original.

54. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (Austin, 1981), 351. This point is echoed by Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, "Introduction: Rethinking Bakhtin," in Morson and Emerson, eds., *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges* (Evanston, 1989), 47; and in Thompson, "Poetic Transformations of Scientific Facts in *Brat'ja Karamazovy*," 73.

Mendeleev's text, *Materialy dlia suzhdeniia o spiritizme* (Materials for a judgment of spiritualism), emerged out of the complicated workings of his commission, whose course it documents. The commission was born on 6 May 1875, when Mendeleev proposed to the Russian Physical Society that they form a commission to investigate "mediumistic phenomena." The ostensible goal at the beginning of this investigation, as stated in these *Materials*, was to remove the cloak of mystery from spiritualism. Both spiritualists and antispiritualists agreed that it was crucial to fight off mysticism in society, and this agreement was central to the idea behind the commission from the very start.<sup>55</sup> At the first meeting of the commission on 7 May 1875, Mendeleev insisted on inviting spiritualists A. M. Butlerov, N. P. Vagner, and A. N. Aksakov to join the commission. The idea was that they (in practice Aksakov) could recruit mediums and teach the members of the commission's nonspiritualists what to look for. Mendeleev was taking a gamble: if the commission conducted a fair deliberation and came out endorsing spiritualism, his plan would backfire in a big way. Mendeleev took pains to ensure that this did not occur.

On 9 May, the first session attended by the spiritualist members, the commission decided to bring spiritualist mediums from abroad and experiment with them under controlled séance conditions.<sup>56</sup> Forty séances in all were to be held from September 1875 to May 1876. Mendeleev attended a series of private séances throughout the late spring, but the first true commission séance was set for 27 October, when Aksakov made plans for the Petty brothers from Newcastle to come to St. Petersburg. It was decided that they would conduct two sessions a week at Mendeleev's apartment.<sup>57</sup> Six meetings later, on 20 November, Mendeleev violated the agreed-upon experimental conditions and lit a match in the middle of a séance, catching the Pettys committing fraud.<sup>58</sup> On 15 December Mendeleev gave his first public lecture, the proceeds from which were sent to help Christian Slavs persecuted by Ottomans. In January the commission met four times with Madame Claire as the medium. On 13 April, having completed only a fraction of the séances proposed, the commission published its conclusion in the newspaper *Golos*: "Spiritualist phenomena occur from unconscious movements or conscious deception, and spiritualist teachings are superstition."<sup>59</sup> A month later, Mendeleev published the *Materials*.

55. Dmitrii I. Mendeleev, *Sochineniia*, 25 vols. (Leningrad, 1934–1956), 24:186, 204. For a detailed chronology of Mendeleev's daily activities in this period, see A. V. Storonkin, ed., *Letopis' zhizni i deiatel'nosti D. I. Mendeleeva* (Leningrad, 1984), 154–60.

56. Mendeleev, *Sochineniia*, 24:187, 189.

57. For an account of these séances by both the pro-Mendeleev and pro-spiritualist sides, respectively, see Aleksandr A. Makarenia and Anatolii I. Nutrikhin, *Mendeleev v Peterburge* (Leningrad, 1982), 150; and Britten, *Nineteenth Century Miracles*, 355. Britten takes a dim view of Mendeleev, accusing him of having "passed judgment before they met at the first séance."

58. For an amusing account of Mendeleev's openly rude behavior at this particular séance, see that given by his daughter in Aleksandr A. Makarenia and Irina N. Filimonova, eds., *D. I. Mendeleev v vospominaniakh sovremennikov* (Moscow, 1969), 175.

59. Dmitrii Mendeleev, ed., *Materialy dlia suzhdeniia o spiritizme* (St. Petersburg, 1876), 60.

The text of the *Materials* covers almost 400 pages, and there is no space here for the detailed analysis the text deserves. Instead, I shall confine my comments to its structure alone, which has been little noticed even by Mendeleev scholars.<sup>60</sup> The book declares on its title page that all proceeds were earmarked for the construction of a meteorological aerostat, which would measure the temperature of layers of atmospheric air in a proposed balloon expedition.<sup>61</sup> Why such a declaration? The point is driven home in the book's foreword: "However far apart these two subjects, spiritualism and meteorology, appear, there exists between them a certain connection, a remote truth. 'Spiritualist teachings are superstition,' thus concluded the commission that examined mediumistic phenomena, and meteorology has also battled and will still battle with the superstitions that dominate with respect to the weather. In this battle, as in any other, material means are needed. Thus let one superstition help against another however it can."<sup>62</sup>

Mendeleev not only wanted to use the debunking of one superstition to end another, he also wanted to boost science's status by juxtaposing a pseudo-science (spiritualism) with a real science (meteorology). At precisely this moment, meteorology was undergoing a public transformation from a changeable and erratic collection of sailors' catchphrases and astrological predictions to a science battling for respectability.<sup>63</sup> Mendeleev played on these open themes.

The rest of the *Materials* employs a similar rhetoric of juxtapositions. Mendeleev reproduced the minutes of every meeting of the commission, including any relevant correspondence as appendixes. The early meetings were purely organizational, yet all the participants are named, and each proposal is cataloged in neutral language. The reader realizes that Mendeleev was never the chair of any meeting of the commission, and he was never the scribe who kept the minutes. These minutes continue for over 100 pages and are followed by the itemized appendixes, thus providing the "materials for judgment" advertised by the title. But Mendeleev does not give the reader's judgment too long a leash. Mendeleev extensively comments on almost every entry of the minutes through his dutifully signed footnotes that tell the reader how to interpret individual statements. Although Mendeleev had used footnotes extensively in revising his famous textbook, *The Principles of Chemistry* (1st ed., 1869–1871), they perform an entirely different role in the *Materials*.<sup>64</sup> Here he spars with the

60. Part of the reason the *Materials* have been so underutilized by scholars is that some of the most interesting aspects of book are not included in Mendeleev's more widely available collected works, which include only the foreword and Mendeleev's two public lectures.

61. Mendeleev, *Materialy dlia suzhdeniia o spiritizme*, frontispiece.

62. *Ibid.*, x. Mendeleev makes this connection again at the end of his second lecture.

63. On the "taming" of meteorology in the British case, see Katherine Anderson, "The Weather Prophets: Science and Reputation in Victorian Meteorology," *History of Science* 37 (1999): 179–216; and Jennifer Tucker, "Voyages of Discovery on Oceans of Air: Scientific Observation and the Image of Science in an Age of 'Balloonacy,'" *Osiris* 11 (1996): 157–70.

64. The first edition of the *Principles* is almost devoid of footnotes, as more technical material was placed in smaller print for advanced students. In later editions, this technical

arguments made in appendixes, newspaper articles, and other interventions that might "distort" the reader's *proper* interpretation of the text: "With my notes I wanted to illuminate certain short and fragmentary segments of the minutes, to supplement certain places, and to compare and present at places my thoughts, because in this way I think [I will] contribute to the distinctness of the impression that can be drawn from a familiarity with what the commission did[.] In other places I wanted above all to present my views in opposition to the results presented by the spiritualists in defense of their doctrine."<sup>65</sup> So the echoing of the neutral voice of the minutes with Mendeleev's authoritative voice was meant to convince readers while leading them to believe that they were deciding on their own. To seal the verdict, Mendeleev included the commission's formal "Report" at the very end of the minutes, so that the reader would approach it *after* having been massaged along the way by Mendeleev's juxtaposed notes.<sup>66</sup>

The juxtapositions do not end there. The second half of the *Materials* consists of a set of articles on topics "related" to spiritualism, in order to further the readers' judgments, as was delicately stated in Mendeleev's *second* foreword. These articles contain not only the two public speeches Mendeleev gave and to which Dostoevskii reacted, but also Antoine Lavoisier's statement against mesmerism in late eighteenth-century France, laboratory investigations of supposed mediumistic phenomena, and other examples to show both historically and methodologically different attacks on spiritualism. These juxtapositions of scientific and historical articles with the supposedly unadorned (but heavily footnoted) minutes of the commission work further to persuade the reader of the truth of his position.

These repeated juxtapositions were carefully crafted. In fact they formed part of a general popular style that Mendeleev cultivated in trying to present science to the Russian public as a form of authoritative knowledge, in contrast to the impersonal style of his scientific publications. Mendeleev spent a significant amount of time developing his footnotes to

material was moved into footnotes. Furthermore, as Mendeleev revised the text over the course of his lifetime—there were eight editions by his death in 1907—he heavily annotated the text with footnotes that not only added technical information but also provided updates on crucial chemical developments, such as the discovery of radioactivity or of the noble gases. In the *Principles*, footnotes were a solution to the problems of revision and also served to divide advanced readers from beginners. In the *Materials*, however, Mendeleev employed footnotes as *necessary* companions to the text, and (as there was only one edition) clearly did not serve as a revision device.

65. Mendeleev, *Materialy dlia suzhdeniia o spiritizme*, 1.

66. One could also end up hoisted by one's own petard. Aleksandr Aksakov, furious at the way Mendeleev treated his mediums during the official séances and upset at the tone of the *Materials*, republished the minutes of the commission with his own rhetoric of juxtapositions: he put his commentary in the text immediately following each sentence that he felt required exegesis. A. Aksakov, *Razoblacheniia: Istoriia mediumicheskoi Kommissii Fizicheskago Obshchestva pri S.-Peterburgskom Universitete s prilozheniem vsekh protokolov i prochikh dokumentov* (St. Petersburg, 1883). He also published a separate pamphlet excerpting just his attack on the commission's official conclusion: *Pamiatnik nauchnogo predubezhdeniia: Zakliuchenie mediumicheskoi Kommissii Fizicheskago Obshchestva pri S.-Peterburgskom Universitete s primecheniiami* (St. Petersburg, 1883).

the minutes and collecting the various appended articles, as well as editing his own public lectures and giving *even them* a set of footnotes to explicate their original meanings—including a note targeted at Dostoevskii's *Diary*.<sup>67</sup> Mendeleev's title was not a joke: one could clearly deploy the materials in the *Materials* in order to form a "judgment about spiritualism." But it was equally true that Mendeleev closely guided the reader while that judgment was being formulated. Mendeleev employed both the haughty tone and the positivism that Dostoevskii deplored as a straightforward strategy of juxtaposition meant to shock the educated public out of the spiritualist fad.

### Spiritualism as a Question of Urgency

It is clear, then, that Mendeleev was trying to *convince* people, and he developed a rhetorical form that would convey not only the appropriate *message* against spiritualism, but also the correct *method* by which one would come to those conclusions. But if this was the case, why did Dostoevskii "misread" Mendeleev's aims so badly? The question is poorly posed. Barring complete cynicism or total naiveté on Dostoevskii's part (neither a plausible characterization), the reader would have to assume that Dostoevskii understood and agreed with Mendeleev's aims—he just differed strongly about the method and tone used. Dostoevskii, unlike Mendeleev, did not see spiritualism as a passing craze, but as a serious threat that demanded urgent pacification. Dostoevskii's oblique rhetoric of resonances was not an attempt to duck the issue of correcting spiritualists; it was a head-on confrontation with a fad Dostoevskii considered "dangerous" in the extreme. Dostoevskii believed Mendeleev's direct attack to be a dismissal of its seriousness.

Dostoevskii was immensely troubled by what he saw as destructive "isolation" in Russian society after the Great Reforms, whether it came in the form of suicide, the abandonment of religion, public cynicism, or spiritualism. These concerns, reflected in the *Diary*, run throughout all his novels from *Poor Folk* onward.<sup>68</sup> And so when his publications against spiritualism failed to convert people to his millenarian cause or to stop Mendeleev from publishing the *Materials*, Dostoevskii took up his pen again in his last satirical feuilleton, "From the Country Walk of Kuz'ma Prutkov and His Friend," originally published in *Grazhdanin*, 10 October 1878, while Dostoevskii was on hiatus from the *Diary*.<sup>69</sup> The narrator reports taking a casual stroll on Elagin Island in St. Petersburg, when Triton appeared to

67. This footnote in particular reflects the contrast in approach between the two. Mendeleev claimed that it was possible to be a spiritualist in spirit (*po dukhu*) like Dostoevskii, and to "believe in devils and reject spiritualist facts," citing Dostoevskii's January *Diary* as an example. Mendeleev, *Materialy dlia suzhdeniia o spiritizme*, 357n. The fact that he missed Dostoevskii's irony is quite characteristic.

68. Jones, *Dostoyevsky*, esp. 14–15; Ronald Fernandez, "Dostoyevsky, Traditional Domination, and Cognitive Dissonance," *Social Forces* 49 (1970): 299–303.

69. PSS, 21:248–51. On humor and satire as techniques in Dostoevskii's work, see R. L. Busch, *Humor in the Major Novels of F. M. Dostoyevsky* (Columbus, 1987); and Peter Petro, "Dostoyevsky the Satirist," *Russian Language Journal* 40 (1986): 95–102.

the flower of high society in a puddle of water. After convincing everyone of his reality, Triton promptly disintegrated into the puddle and immediately people "began to doubt themselves and not believe, although they had seen it with their own eyes." Soon Triton's appearance or nonappearance became a cause célèbre, with a scientific commission formed under Mendeleev's auspices to show that it could not have happened. "Of course, they did not know what to decide and stood there like lost ones, denying the appearance [of Triton] just to be on the safe side." Triton's adherents protested the findings of the commission in vain. No one in this brief satire comes off well, and the connection to spiritualism, even two years after the fact, would be apparent to the informed reader. Dostoevskii's tactics and argument had not changed.

Why did Dostoevskii speak out yet again? He was unable, I argue, to let his lack of success the first time dissuade him, since the issue was vital and needed to be resolved *as soon as possible*. For example, Joseph Frank has noted that when Dostoevskii's criticism of nihilism in *Notes from Underground* failed to generate the desired effect, he recapitulated similar themes in the much more successful *Crime and Punishment*.<sup>70</sup> Spiritualism, as we have seen, was for Dostoevskii a form of "isolation" that trivialized religion through mysticism, and what was needed was more faith in true Orthodoxy. Following Vladimir Solov'ev, Dostoevskii perceived his writings as part of a religious mission to provide, through a suitably purified Orthodox Church, the unity sorely lacking in Russian culture.<sup>71</sup> Since this was his goal, and since throughout the *Diary* Dostoevskii stressed the imminence of the Apocalypse, every soul that was deluded by spiritualism was a soul that was not saved and thus could not set a religious example of true faith to Europe. This was an issue of urgency. For Mendeleev, spiritualists just needed to be confronted; for Dostoevskii, they were devils to be exorcised—and soon.

Dostoevskii felt he had no choice but to intervene. Mendeleev's approach was simply inadequate, as Dostoevskii indicated in his rough notes to the March article on spiritualism: "Spiritualism. The absurdity of theories and irrefutable facts. Scientific research is the most normal road, but we need different researchers: *ours are uneducated [neobrazovanny]*. This very Mendeleev, for example, . . . is uneducated. . . . These are not Fausts, not Humboldts—scientists with world-class thoughts and worldly generality; these are petty technicians and hacks."<sup>72</sup> For Dostoevskii, there was an ironic mismatch of the impelling urgency he felt and the rhetorical caginess he had to use to meet his goal. His endeavors to reconcile feuding political factions—whether while editing *Vremia*, in his Pushkin speech, or through his Native Soil political philosophy—were part of this effort to convince through free dialogue.<sup>73</sup> The most urgent task was

70. Frank, *Dostoyevsky: The Miraculous Years*, 69.

71. Kostalevsky, *Dostoyevsky and Soloviev*, 3.

72. PSS, 24:292, emphasis in the original. Dostoevskii's rhetorical strategy demanded that he tone down such inflammatory observations in the published *Diary*.

73. See Frank, *Dostoyevsky: The Miraculous Years*, 500; Frank, *Dostoyevsky: The Stir of Liberation*, 51; and the intellectual history by Wayne Dowler, *Dostoyevsky, Grigor'ev, and Native Soil Conservatism* (Toronto, 1982).

to meet and discuss without urgency, to fulfill Russia's pressing destiny through relaxed conversation—a set of paradoxes worthy of one of Dostoevskii's literary creations. Dostoevskii's philosophy of art, his efforts to persuade by posing questions for the reader to answer rather than answering them directly, were products of the culture of chaos and possibility in which he found himself.<sup>74</sup> Mendeleev's stance was not appropriate to the times.

There was even some doubt about Mendeleev's stance altogether. In 1894, Viktor Pribytkov and Aksakov claimed that Mendeleev had finally recanted and admitted the existence of mediumistic phenomena. Apparently, Mendeleev approached Pribytkov while at a party, brought up spiritualism, and discussed some of the various hoaxes he had seen among professional mediums in America. Despite his mocking tone, Pribytkov asked Mendeleev if he now believed in the phenomena, and Mendeleev said: "They exist . . . I saw . . . But they are rare . . . It isn't worth paying attention to them, and not a single serious, busy man would get involved with them." When Pribytkov expressed surprise, Mendeleev responded: "What? You don't understand? All this is garbage, nonsense!" Exultantly, Pribytkov claimed that this was a recantation, and Aksakov offered evidence of the mediums who must have changed Mendeleev's mind. Maria Carlson has even taken this "admission" as evidence of a change of heart.<sup>75</sup> Did Mendeleev actually change his mind? I consider this extremely unlikely. First of all, the beginning of the conversation consisted of Mendeleev pulling Pribytkov's leg, a joke of this kind being entirely consistent with Mendeleev's character. Second, Mendeleev would hardly have made such an admission to a spiritualist journalist, given his concerns about using a proper forum. And, finally, in 1904 Mendeleev reaffirmed the commission's conclusions.

This article gave Mendeleev the last word, if only because he lived longer than all his interlocutors, spiritualist or diarist. In 1904, twenty-three years after the novelist's death, Mendeleev published an article in the newspaper *Novoe vremia* on psychic phenomena. Entitled "Spiritualist Knots," the article relates the story of Iosif Nikolaevich Livchak, a railroad consultant, who had come to Mendeleev's house thirty years earlier and demonstrated his ability to tie knots in a piece of string fastened at both ends to an oaken table. He performed this feat many times, not revealing the secret publicly, at one time tying the knots in front of Mendeleev's guests, including Dostoevskii (the only time, it appears, when the two men

74. Dowler, *Dostoevsky, Grigor'ev, and Native Soil Conservatism*, 121; and Richard Peace, "Dostoevsky and the Golden Age," *Dostoevsky Studies* 3 (1982): 73. The best analysis of Dostoevskii's belief that the artist can change society through aesthetics remains Robert Louis Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form: A Study of His Philosophy of Art*, 2d ed. (Bloomington, 1978); and Jackson, "The Testament of F. M. Dostoevskij," *Russian Literature* 4 (1973): 87–99.

75. V. Pribytkov, "Professor Mendeleev priznaet mediumicheskiia iavleniia," *Rebus*, 1894, no. 1:3–4; and A. N. Aksakov, "Po povodu odnogo iz 'pshikov' professora Mendeleeva," *Rebus*, 1894, no. 2:15–16. See also Carlson, "Fashionable Occultism," 138; and Maria Carlson, "No Religion Higher Than Truth": *A History of the Theosophical Movement in Russia, 1875–1922* (Princeton, 1993), 25.

met).<sup>76</sup> Livchak revealed the secret to Mendeleev but told him to keep it in confidence, since he did not want "to connect his name with spiritualist rubbish" (although Livchak soon published an admission of the fraud to cries of indignation by spiritualists).<sup>77</sup> Responding to a resurgence of spiritualism in Russia, Mendeleev now chose to explain this feat, which was taken by many (including Dostoevskii) at the time to be evidence of a fourth-dimensional phenomenon appearing in the three-dimensional world—and thus providing evidence of the dimension considered by some to be the domain of spirits. Mendeleev describes the rather tawdry parlor trick and replicates a brief letter by Dostoevskii to the editors of *Novoe vremia* praising Livchak.<sup>78</sup> So, in re-exposing this deliberate fraud meant to show spiritualists how easily they could be duped, Mendeleev employs Livchak's story in exactly the manner of his *Materials*: he replicates others' words and then comments on them to instruct the reader how to proceed. This article contains Mendeleev's only explicit statement of his philosophy of persuasion: "As [the spiritualists] did not reject the conditions of the commission formed under the Russian Physical Society in 1875, as they did not criticize the means by which it investigated spiritualism, so now, after almost thirty years, one can see clearly that the commission's considerations were not without reason, and the taste for spiritualist doings died down soon afterwards, perhaps thanks to the commission's results. Convinced spiritualists were not convinced by the commission, of course, but they lost the taste for whipping up spiritualist junk." But now it was a time of war (the Russo-Japanese), and spiritualists seemed to be developing a new following. It was time to reinvigorate the commission, but again Mendeleev does not impress the reader with any sense of urgency. When the dust settles, people will reflect calmly and reason correctly.

Spiritualism may have indeed suffered a blow in the late 1870s—although the evidence of a decline in popularity is equivocal—and the credit may be laid at either Mendeleev's or Dostoevskii's door (or at that of its many other critics), but the situation did not stay that way for long. The resurgence of occult beliefs that Mendeleev was responding to in this article only continued after 1905 with the relaxation of censorship and continues in some form to the present day.<sup>79</sup> But the issues raised by this reading of Dostoevskii and Mendeleev through each other's eyes remain

76. The string still survives in Mendeleev's archive.

77. I. Livchak, "Gg. Spiritam. Pis'mo v redaktsiiu," *Novoe vremia*, 25 January (6 February) 1879, no. 1045:4. Nikolai Vagner responded vigorously in "Otvēt na pis'mo g. Livchaka. (Pis'mo v redaktsiiu)," *Novoe vremia*, 7 (19) February 1879, no. 1058:4. The Mendeleev quotation is from D. Mendeleev, "Spiriticheskie uzly," *Novoe vremia*, 18 (31) May 1904, no. 10132:3.

78. Mendeleev, "Spiriticheskie uzly," 3. For the Dostoevskii article, see *PSS*, 30(i):16, and the accompanying editorial notes. The sole secondary account of this incident is almost 75 years old: N. Lerner, "Tainstvennye uzelki: Sluchai s Dostoevskim," *Literaturno-Khudozhestvennyi Sbornik "Krasnoi Panoramii"* (October 1928): 36–42.

79. See Carlson, "Fashionable Occultism," 138; Valentina G. Brougher, "The Occult in Russian Literature of the 1990s," *Russian Review* 56, no. 1 (January 1997): 110–24; and Holly DeNio Stephens, "The Occult in Russia Today," in Rosenthal, ed., *Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, 357–76.

as well. The concerns of faith, scientific belief, and the proper rhetoric were not resolved by the publications of either critic, just as Dostoevskii forecast in his April 1876 *Diary* entry. It is to these specific concerns, and not to generalizations about Dostoevskii's rejection of the "west" or "science," that we should address historical investigation. Dostoevskii was deeply involved in a culture that was in flux, and he chronicled the tensions between knowledge and belief, Russia and the "west"—the source of both Mendeleev's doctrine and the spiritualists'—that remain central to any cultural history of late imperial Russia.