

Note: page numbers from Mikhail Bulgakov, Heart of a dog, are given in brackets, while the end notes include the other referenced texts.

Truth coming only through suffering
this is true, rest assured. But they do not
pay money or give out rations for the
knowledge of the truth. Sad, but true¹

Mikhail Bulgakov (1891-1940) was a doctor by profession and later became famous as a writer and playwright. The apogee of his creative years occurred during the second decade of the 20th century, the time of Stalinism, political purges and distorted moral values. He is best known for his novel *The Master and Margarita*. He himself experienced the surrealism of life in the Soviet Union. When in the 1930s he could not publish his works and his plays were banished from the stage, in desperation he wrote to Stalin, the Soviet dictator. In his letter to the Soviet government Bulgakov said that if it has no interest in his work, it has to give him his freedom and let him leave the USSR, because his current state was poverty, and impending death. He wrote, “the impossibility to write for me is equivalent of burial alive.”² Stalin gave a call to Bulgakov, allowed him by the highest authority to stage one of his plays, but otherwise the prospects in Bulgakov’s life did not change, as he still was not allowed to publish his books. It was one of the cruelties of the regime, where one strategy of extermination was to ignore people as if they were non-existent. Within ten years Bulgakov died, not as commonly believed from normal causes, but rather from a psychosomatic disorder. It seems that in his book *Heart of a Dog* Bulgakov foresaw some tendencies in Soviet society, including how a call from an authority could change someone’s life as it happened to him five years after his book was written. At the time *Heart of a Dog* was written (1925), the formation of a new political order in the young Bolshevik republic had begun to take shape as the Soviet Union. This book was forbidden publication in Bulgakov’s lifetime and remained unpublished until 1987, during perestroika. Nevertheless some people in the USSR read the text published in samizdat (self-publishing), which not only was illegal but dangerous, as the publisher and a reader risked losing their freedom by doing so. Outside the USSR the book was published several times and in 1973 even a libretto for the opera “The Murder of Comrade Sharik” was written.³

Bulgakov’s works are allegorical. He used this approach for a number of reasons: first, everyone knows that the use of allegory is a very powerful way to lead a reader indirectly to a conclusion; secondly, the relationship between the writer and ruling power in Russia was never easy and it

formed a literary tradition of allegorical social satire, which sometimes allowed their authors to escape punishment, but at the same time enabled the careful reader to recognize the real life models the allegory was shaped on.⁴ In this reading I will follow the plot directly to explore the author's intentions in using the allegory of a dog, which can be summarized as the battle between science and nature, and that between scientific Marxism and society. The main characters are: a dog, a world famous surgeon, the new tenants in his house, and the members of the house management who represent the Soviet regime. Bulgakov brought them together in a house in Moscow where intellectuals historically lived.

The story takes place in December 1924. The civil war had ended in 1922, and the new Soviet country was beginning to take shape. The story begins from the perspective of a dog, who is cold and is suffering from an injury caused by “the cook of the Normal Diet Cafeteria for employees of the People’s Central Economic Soviet.” “The scum,” says the dog, who goes on to remark that the cook who threw boiling water at him and scalded his left side dares to call himself a proletarian! (Bulgakov,1).⁵ The dog, a homeless mutt, skinny and always hungry, makes observations about people and their attitudes, especially people’s attitudes in the bygone time of the tsar and the new time of the hegemony of the proletariat. And the smells! Of course, smell, which is very important for an animal. The dog howls from pain and thinks that the act of the cook was not justifiable since he did not do anything to annoy or provoke him. “Would the People’s Economic Soviet get any poorer if I rotted in a the garbage heap? The greedy brute! Take a look at that mug of his sometimes – it’s wider than it’s long” (Bulgakov, 1). The sick dog sees a little typist and feels pity for her because she is cold, not well dressed, and eats terrible food, the stinky corned beef in a Soviet eatery to which even a dog feels aversion. Moreover, the dog reflects on the fact that the typist is involved with a partitocrat (bureaucrat, a member of the Bolshevik party) who with his position and money is able to take her out to a bar and restaurant, where she can get better food than she normally can afford on her paltry salary. The dog thinks that she deserves a better man in her life. It looks like the dog is capable of empathy and those who are in power, the representatives of a new breed of man, “Homo Socialisticus,”⁶ are not. The dog pictures in his head a partitocrat who justifies his attitude in life by saying: “I’m chairman now, and whatever I filch, all of it goes for female flesh, for lobster tails, for Abrau-D’urso wine. Because I’ve been starved long enough in my youth, I’ve had it, and there’s no life after death” (Bulgakov, 4). The woman whistles and calls the dog Sharik (balloon or a small ball – in Russian – the most typical name for a dog). The dog feels irony as he reflects that he cannot be a balloon. “Sharik is somebody round, plump, silly, a son of aristocratic parents who gobbles oatmeal, and he is shaggy, lanky, tattered, skinny as a rail, a homeless mutt” (Bulgakov, 5). So the name is

introduced. The mood is set.

In this story there is a tension between the old and new order of things. After the cold wind drew the lady away, Sharik smells a gentleman, “not a comrade,” who “eats well and does not steal. He won’t kick you, but he isn’t afraid of anything himself. And he is not afraid because he is never hungry. He is a gentleman engaged in mental work” (Bulgakov, 6). He has a sausage in his pocket, the dog thinks that the man should not buy this kind of stuff, as the Soviet sausage is so terrible. “Sir, if you could see what this sausage is made of, you’d never come near that store. Better give it to me!” (Bulgakov, 6). Sharik got lucky. The man feeds him and takes him to his apartment. The man is a world famous surgeon, Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky. He performs surgeries of rejuvenation by implanting the testicles and ovaries of animals into humans. As a result, the surgeon observes a youthful transformation to his patients’ appearance and an increase in their sexual activity. Professor Preobrazhensky thus brings in a homeless dog and waits for the occasion to implant into the dog the testicles and hypophysis (pituitary gland) of a human, if there will be “a suitable death” (Bulgakov, 39). A scientific experiment, which was planned for a while, now begins! At the same time a lot of new people are moving in the house the Professor lives in, causing a big impact, as they are trying to change the private multi-room apartments into something that the Soviet government called the common apartment. This meant that each apartment was shared by several tenants, including the common use of kitchen and bathroom. New tenants, bonded by the ideology of bolshevism, have a meeting every night, where they would sing a chorus of proletarian songs and discuss different matters: from reading Friedrich Engels to naming the newborn babies with revolutionary names. The house definitely represents the country itself and the hope is that, if tenants come and go, the house will keep the order out of respect for the habitual things or, if that order changes, it will be for the best. This routine involves regular maintenance, heat in winter, water in pipes, and the presence of a stand for the overshoes (galoshes), one was expected to find in place any time they were needed. Unfortunately with the new order the heat and lights went off quite frequently, and someone stole all the overshoes. Professor Preobrazhensky claims that no one who used to live in the house had ever done such things in the 14 years he had lived there (Bulgakov, 35). And since April 1917, along with the overshoes a lot of other things had disappeared. The Professor learns from a doorman that new tenants would divide each apartment and squeeze in as many people as possible, except for his apartment, and concludes that this is the end of the house. April is singled out by Bulgakov precisely as a reference to Lenin’s *April Theses*, written by the leader of Bolsheviks just a few months after the February Revolution of 1917 that overthrew the monarchy of Tsar Nikolai II and established a liberal Provisional Government. The Provisional Government established the bourgeois republic, which was

governed mostly by liberals and moderate socialists who initiated political reforms with the intention to establish democracy, with an elected executive and a constituent assembly. In his 10 April theses Lenin denounced the Provisional Government as bourgeois and declared no support for it, and then established the main points of actions for Bolsheviks that became the basis for the dictatorship of the proletariat.⁷ Mikhail Bulgakov points out precisely that April 1917 is the date when all the problems with the house began. At the time the book was written oppression was visible in many ways and Bulgakov was trying to expose it in his allegory. He also makes the point that using Marx's name rhetorically may permit the abuse of political power: "Why was the rug removed from the front stairway? Does Karl Marx forbid rugs on the stairs? Does he say anywhere in his writings that the second entrance of Kalabukhov house on Prechistenka must be boarded up, and people must go around the house and enter through the backyard?"(Bulgakov, 35).

It is a well-known fact in the history of the Russian revolutionary movement that many intellectuals, such as Professor Preobrazhensky, welcomed and supported the overthrow of the monarchy. But they did not necessarily support bolshevism and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The surgeon prefers to do what he does the best – to operate and to live the usual life of an intellectual who is not involved in any political debate. This is what he is trying to do in his apartment, but the new tenants constantly disturb him in every possible way. The members of the house management do not see the value of the Professor's work and are trying to take rooms away from him in order to move in more people. Their argument is based on an assumption that if Isadora Duncan (a famous American-Soviet dancer) does not have a dining room, then the famous Professor Preobrazhensky should not have this luxury either. Moreover, he shouldn't have it even though he has a special document from the authorities that protects him (Bulgakov, 25). The house management is informed about the document, but they prefer to ignore it, and the Professor has to be "understanding and cooperative" (Bulgakov, 26) with the local authorities. He refuses to cooperate and they claim that he "does not like the proletariat!"(Bulgakov, 30). The Professor openly admits the lack of such affection, and to protect himself from the debate, which the visitors try to impose on him just before dinnertime, he gives a call to an undisclosed Soviet authority, one of the Professor's patients waiting for rejuvenation. The Professor explains what is going on and claims that if the house management will not leave him alone, he will have to leave the country, cancel this patient's and all other planned surgeries. He suggests that the head of the house management, an active participant in the chorus, Shvonder, can take his keys: "Let him operate!"(Bulgakov, 28).

The authority promises to give the Professor a new and "iron clad" document to protect his

apartment, work, life and from further intrusions by the local authorities. The Professor feels relief. At dinnertime, when the voices from the chorus of the house management reach the Professor, he points out in his conversation with his assistant, Doctor Bormenthal, that he is “an advocate of the division of labor. Let them sing at the Bolshoi,⁸ and I will operate. Then everything will be fine. And there will be no ruin” (Bulgakov, 39). Indeed, the Professor avers “nothing will change for the better in our house, or in any other house, until these singers are quieted down! As soon as they stop their concerts, the situation will take a turn for the better by itself” (Bulgakov, 38). Doctor Bormenthal is afraid that someone can overhear their conversation, which could be considered counterrevolutionary. “Nothing counterrevolutionary. And, incidentally, that’s another word I can’t endure. It’s absolutely impossible to tell what it covers! And so I say: there isn’t any of this counterrevolution in my words. There is only common sense and good advice based on practical experience” (Bulgakov, 38). Bulgakov shows how already in the early stages of the Soviet Union political rhetoric and censorship were a part of daily life. It was simply not possible to know if the authorities would judge your actions as counterrevolutionary. Many actions of the Soviet regime were justified by the theory of the class struggle and dictatorship of the proletariat as the concept of Red terror (1917-1923), and later on the political purges of Stalinism prove. Therefore, a person was always vulnerable. Society was divided and confused in its perception of moral values. Lenin said in the 1920 address to young communists: “We reject any morality based on extra-human and extra-class concepts. We say that this is deception, dupery, stultification of the workers and peasants in the interests of the landowners and capitalists. We say that our morality is entirely subordinated to the interests of the proletariat’s class struggle. Our morality stems from the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat.”⁹ Bulgakov’s story uses the word proletariat all the time instead of Bolsheviks, as the dictatorship of a proletariat was confirmed by the Russian constitution of 1918 and then the first Soviet constitution of 1924. Bolsheviks were one of many political parties only during the revolutionary period of 1903-1917, and later on they were the only party when the dictatorship of proletariat was announced. It maintained its abbreviation as the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) until 1952, when the party’s name was changed to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.¹⁰

As the story unfolds, a few days later there was a “suitable death” and the Professor was able to follow his plan to implant in Sharik the testicles and pituitary gland of a human. Together with his assistant Doctor Bormenthal, the Professor performed the surgery, and the Doctor kept notes of the outcome of the surgery. What we find interesting here is a new level of significance. The surgery takes place in the Professor’s house on Christmas Eve according to the Gregorian calendar, December

24th, and the transformation of the dog into a human being ended on the Orthodox Christmas Eve, January 6th, according to the Julian calendar. Hence in two weeks the dog became a man. Professor Preobrazensky's name translated into English is Professor "Transfiguration." The organ donor was a common criminal, a drunkard, who played the balalaika in pubs, and was killed in a drunken fight. His name was Klim Chugunkin ("cast iron" in English). Some researchers believe that it resembles the name of Josef Stalin ("steel" in English).¹¹ The Professor's intentions are clear: he is trying to do something radically new, so the result is not quite predictable. In his notes Doctor Bormenthal describes "Preobrazensky's experiment with the combined transplantation of a pituitary gland and testes to determine the viability of pituitary gland transplant and, subsequently, its effect on the rejuvenation of human organism" (Bulgakov, 56). But the result was shocking, and late in the evening of January 8th: "Philip Philippovich, like a true scientist, acknowledged his mistake: a change of pituitary gland produces not rejuvenation, but complete humanization (*underlined three times*). This does not detract in the slightest from the staggering importance of his amazing discovery"(Bulgakov, 60). This is something the Professor did not expect. Earlier he had claimed to be "a man of facts, a man of observation. I am an enemy of unfounded hypotheses... If I say something, you may be sure it is based on certain facts, from which I have drawn conclusions"(Bulgakov, 34-5). Apparently his assumption was that if surgical transplants of animal parts in humans bring about a positive result, transplants of human parts in an animal would lead to a positive result as well. It did not work out that way, however, and he admits his mistake without a doubt. Let us see the outcome of this surgery.

The dog Sharik, as I noted before, perceives the world by smell and sight, and he had learned to read the name of stores to be able to go to the right place to get food. He connected the letters that he saw to their color and the place where he got the food. If "Meat" was written in blue-green, any sign in acid-blue with an unknown word would mean meat. Once he entered the electric supply store, tasted insulated wire, and learned that the color blue did not always correspond to "meat"; hence he decided to be more careful in his decision-making. This sounds remarkable for a dog. When the dog was being transformed into a human, the first thing he did was to shout the signs backward, as this was the way he had learned to read them. After taking on more and more a human appearance, the new animated creature started shouting what Klim Chugunkin, the transplants' uneducated and drunken donor, knew. He cursed a lot and abused language, which really depressed Professor Preobrazhensky. Keeping a record of the changes that occurred with the dog, Doctor Bormenthal calls the Professor a creator and assumes that they "may develop Sharik into a personality of a high psychic order"(Bulgakov, 64). The Professor is very skeptical about this possibility. Admitting his mistake with horror, he observes the changes: the dog loses its tail and develops humanlike limbs.

Everyday he develops new skills. However, he becomes more and more like the transplants' donor Klim rather than a personality of a high psychic order. Of course, rumors spread about the Professor's experiment, and people started camping out around the house, and publishing in the newspapers nonsense about Martians, the end of the world, a newborn baby that from the moment of its birth was able to play the violin. The head of the house management Shvonder wrote in a newspaper that Sharik was an illegitimate son of Professor Preobrazhensky, who is a pseudo-scientist belonging to the corrupt bourgeois class and that "anyone can occupy seven rooms – until the gleaming sword of justice flashes its scarlet ray over his head" (Bulgakov, 67). Sharik could put together facts in a better manner than the journalists. Bulgakov shows that a class morality, where the principle of the "means justifying the ends" is substituted for the moral values of citizens, is a morality that will lead to no positive result. Shvonder (having neither reason nor knowledge) accuses the Professor of having an illegitimate son, calls him a pseudo-scientist, and it discloses clearly the basis of this accusation, "highlighted" by the scarlet rays of the social justice-sword: the Professor occupies 7 rooms which is, according to Shvonder, the source of corruption and a rotten morality.

After Sharik became humanlike, Doctor Bormenthal bought him clothes. Sharik started to go out. The house management learned that there was a new tenant, they invited him to their meetings, where Sharik found out about the class struggle, and was given by Shvonder the correspondence between Engels and Kautsky. Reading this book made Sharik's head spin, and he learned only one thing from it: "Just take everything and divide it up"(Bulgakov, 89). The Professor said that he had nothing against division and suggested that Sharik contributed to the household not by offering "advice on a cosmic scale and equally cosmic stupidity on how to divide everything," but instead that he would "try to learn, try to become a more or less acceptable member of socialist society"(Bulgakov, 91). After the education offered by Shvonder, Sharik demanded that the Professor give him a proper name, documents and a registration card. "A man is strictly forbidden to exist without documents,"(Bulgakov, 72) since he needs to serve in the army, to be a member of a trade union and the labor exchange. He calls himself working class, wants to get a newly created Soviet name that he has chosen at a meeting—Polygraph Polygraphovich—and as a last name he demands the hereditary name "Sharikov"! The Professor was astonished, since Sharik was the result of an experiment, and was therefore "an unexpectedly evolved being, a laboratory product"(Bulgakov, 73). Sharik in reply said that he did not give the Professor permission to operate on him and that he could sue him for that. Professor Preobrazhensky could see in the speech of the dog that he had been brainwashed by Shvonder, quickly learning the new jargon; the Professor felt danger approaching, since he did not belong to the working class. Professor Preobrazhensky was trying to explain to Shvonder that this

creature could not have a document. Shvonder rejected it by saying that “a document is the most important thing in a world!” (Bulgakov, 76), and whatever was originated in the Professor’s apartment had become a citizen. Thus, Sharik had to have a document, which allows one be on the military rolls in case of war. Sharik learned fast! He yelped that he needed a document and a registration, but also that he was not going to war, as he had been “severely wounded during the operation” (Bulgakov, 77). Everyone, including Shvonder, was paralyzed, and even though Shvonder accused Sharik of lacking “in social consciousness”(Bulgakov, 76), he was sure that they could manage it later, as the registration card was the most important thing for the moment. Bulgakov is pointing out the absurdity in decision-making on behalf of the new authorities that have a pious attitude toward documents, regardless of evidence and meaning. When Bulgakov himself came to Moscow he could not register since he was from Kiev, and it was only because Lenin’s wife (Krupskaya) helped him, that he got his registration card.¹²

The new Soviet citizen Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov is an allegory not only for the unexpected and horrifying result of a scientific experiment, but also for the Bolsheviks’ attempt to create a new human being, *Homo Socialisticus*, who was supposed to construct a new communist society. The question is: is it possible to create a personality of a higher psychic order, if the morality of the dictatorship of the proletariat is filled with hatred? Reflecting on the result of his experiment, the Professor concluded that an investigator had to move parallel to nature rather than force the question. Thus he asks, “Why is it necessary to manufacture Spinozas artificially when any peasant woman can produce them at any time?”(Bulgakov, 103) With this quip, Bulgakov confirms the total failure by the Bolsheviks to force society to develop something that has to evolve naturally to a new stage; in fact, he criticizes Lenin’s words: “it is more advantageous for the working class if the necessary changes in the direction of bourgeois democracy take place by way of revolution and not by way of reform; for the way of reform is the way of delay, of procrastination, of the painfully slow decomposition of the putrid parts of the national organism. It is the proletariat and the peasantry that suffer first of all and most of all from their putrefaction. The revolutionary way is the way of quick amputation, which is the least painful to the proletariat, the way of the direct removal of the decomposing parts, the way of fewest concessions to and least consideration for the monarchy and the disgusting, vile, rotten and contaminating institutions which go with it.”¹³

After getting the document, Sharikov, with a recommendation from Shvonder, gets a job as a director of the sub-section of the Moscow Communal Property Administration (Bulgakov, 110) for purging the city of Moscow of stray animals (cats, etc.). He borrows money from the house management, steals

from the Professor, drinks and becomes more obnoxious. Life in the Professor's apartment becomes unbearable. One day "a perfectly delightful dog" is transformed into "such filthy scum that your hair stands up to think of it" (Bulgakov, 102-3). Doctor Bormenthal suggests poisoning Sharikov, but Professor Preobrazhensky rejects it. "Never attempt a crime, no matter against whom it might be directed. You must reach old age with clean hands" (Bulgakov, 104-5). The Professor remarks that he understood who Sharikov was ten days after the surgery, but Shvonder "is the worst fool of all. He does not understand that Sharikov is a far greater menace to him than he is to me. Today he does everything to sick him on me, without realizing that if anyone should then turn him against Shvonder himself, nothing will be left of him or his" (Bulgakov, 105). Here Bulgakov predicted Stalin's political purges in 1930, when ordinary members of the Communist Party were manipulated against old Bolsheviks.

One day Sharikov brought the typist from his office to live in the Professor's apartment, promising her a luxurious home, advances everyday, at the Professor's expense of course. He "borrowed" her ring for a memento and announced that they were going to marry. The poor woman learned that Sharikov's scar had not been received on the battlefield as he claimed, but was the result of surgery. The Professor shamed the young woman, saying, "one should not take up with just anyone, simply because of his job" (Bulgakov, 113). She cried, "everyday it's corned beef in the cafeteria ..." (Bulgakov, 113). Sharikov states that he will use his administrative position to fire her and Doctor Bormenthal warns Sharikov: if he will fire the typist, the Doctor will shoot him (Bulgakov, 114). Bulgakov here makes a parallel between the dog's Sharik observation of the poor little typist, with her dependency on her lover, and the transfigured Sharik as Sharikov, now involved with the typist and taking advantage of his position. What a metamorphosis! The morality of the new rulers did not change much from previous times, even though they claimed that such behavior had only bourgeois roots. It also shows the dependency and low income of the ordinary Soviet worker, who could not afford decent food on the poor salary offered by authorities, therefore making them dependent, longing for mere survival rather than a normal life. In 1918 Lenin developed a system of food rationing (*paio*k in Russian), where all the population was divided into 4 categories, some categories had better access to the various products than the others. Although originally established during the civil war, later on all Soviet authorities adapted it to various degrees. This system aimed to supply products to the members of the Communist party and beneficiaries to the regime. This practice ceased to exist in the late 1980s, as a consequence of perestroika.

The next day Professor Preobrazhensky received an unscheduled visit from a former patient, a man in

a military uniform. He came to warn the Professor that Sharikov had written a denunciation of him, and the chairman Shvonder had confirmed it. The Professor could not believe his own eyes when he read it. It was his luck that a reasonable man with a good common sense, not someone who is ready to jump to conclusions, received the denunciation, otherwise the Professor could have been arrested like many members of the intelligentsia. When Sharikov arrived home, Professor Preobrazhensky and Doctor Bormenthal asked him to leave the apartment, but Sharikov refused and pulled out a gun, pointing it at Bormenthal. This was the moment when “Sharikov invited his own death” (Bulgakov, 117). In ten days the Professor received visitors, the criminal police and investigating officer accompanied by Shvonder, ready to arrest him for the murder of the director of Moscow Communal Property Administration, Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov. You want to see “my dog on whom I operated?” asked the Professor. Coming out from the office a monstrous-looking dog with a purple scar on his forehead rose to his hind paws in front of the authorities and sat down in a chair with a smile (Bulgakov, 120-1). The man in black became pale with astonishment and asked how that creature could work in the office. The Professor said that it was Shvonder’s idea and added: “Science has not yet discovered methods of transforming animals into humans. I tried, but unsuccessfully, as you can see. He spoke for a while, and then began to revert to his original state. Atavism” (Bulgakov, 120-1). The story ends with the dog Sharik lying on the rug, happy and gracious to the Professor, contemplating his lucky fate to be set for life in the Professor’s apartment.

This humorous story with a good ending, contrasts to the usual way we pay for our mistakes in real life. The changes in the Russian empire were necessary and welcomed by the majority of the population, but only a small amount of people thought that the Bolshevik revolution and its theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat could bring positive changes in society. It led instead to civil war, to Stalinism and a bureaucratic apparatus that cared for its own needs rather than serve those of society. The regime started to show its unpleasant “scarlet rays” in 1920s. Bulgakov was preoccupied with the possibility of reversing this process by going back to the original intention of the bourgeois revolution: to build a democratic society. Sharikov does not represent the working class as a whole, he is rather the prototype of the dehumanized by-product of revolutionary changes. But the amazing thing is that he almost became archetypical in the Soviet Union, especially during Stalinism. Indeed, Sharikovs continue to exist in contemporary Russia. In their appearance Sharikovs are humans, but their behavior is opposed to genuine human nature. Professor Preobrazhensky’s words best describe this situation: “The whole horror, you see, is that his heart is no longer a dog’s heart, but a human one. And the vilest you could find!” (Bulgakov, 105) This kind of creature is trying to turn everything inseparable from what is humane in human nature into something inhumane, which oppresses even

the last shred of human morality, so that instead of living their lives in a decent manner people are driven by the basic need to survive in a world where only Sharikovs are in power. Purification of the city from cats was only the beginning. In the real Soviet history political purges were the common practice of Leninism and Stalinism, and the entire Soviet era was defined by its struggle against dissidents with the Sharikovs, of course, playing the major role in this struggle. In his allegory Bulgakov shows the intellectuals' responsibility in the Bolshevik's revolution, when their good intentions led to an unimaginable result. Many of those responsible for this revolution became the victims of its eventual absurdity—the “scientific” Marxist-Leninist experiment. *The Heart of a Dog* is also a warning about the disastrous consequences of the weak analogies and hasty generalizations characteristic of sham science, a cautionary tale about the danger of what Socrates defined as the most blameworthy ignorance: “to believe that one knows what one does not know.”¹⁴

NOTES

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