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Raskolnikov's world and double personality in Fyodor Dostoevsky's "Crime and punishment"

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Abstract
The life and literary career of the author makes for as much fascinating reading as that of any of his great novels. Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment is a novel that embodied both the writer's personal dilemma and the dilemma facing his country in its attempts to liberalize or modernize itself and to liberate the common people from the tyranny of the Tsars and their autocratic supporters. The theme of the extraordinary versus the ordinary man relies on this sort of calculated logic. Raskolnikov uses to commit the murders, symbolizes the two halves of Raskolnikov's nature these opposing sides are in conflict throughout the novel and are reflected in his victims.

Keywords: raskolnikov's world, fyodor dostoevsky's, crime, punishment

Introduction: Raskolnikov' world

The setting of crime and punishment creates an atmosphere in which is dreadful crimes Dostoevsky describes are all too believable. The novel is set in Haymarket square, a slum section of St. Petersburg notorious for its intolerable living conditions. As he knew the city so well, and had lived of the kinds of tenement rooms he describes, Dostoevsky is very specific about the sights and smells his characters experience.

The city of St. Petersburg as represented in Dostoevsky's novel is dirty and crowed. Drunks are sprawled on the street in board daylight, consumptive women beat their children and children and beg for money, everyone is crowed into tiny, noisy apartments. The clutter and chaos of St. Petersburg is a twofold symbol. It represents the state of society, with all of its inequalities, prejudices, and deficits. But it also represents the state of society, with all of its inequalities, prejudices, and deficits. But it also represents Raskolnikov's delirious, against state as he spirals through the novel toward the point of his confession and redemption. He can escape neither the city nor his warped mind from the very beginning, the narrator describes the heat and "the odor" coming off the city, the crowds, and the disorder, and says they "all contributed to irritate the young man's already excited nerves." Indeed, it is only when Raskolnikow is forcefully removed from the city to a prison in a small town in Siberia that he is able to regain compassion and balance.

By choosing to set the novel in the summer, when the drunken crowds filled the streets and the air recked, Dostoevsky was able to create the feeling of physical repulsion brought on by an oppressive environment. By mentioning particular street names and tracing the routes of the characters, he was emphasizing the novel's realism. Raskolnikov knows, for instance, that it is exactly 730 steps from his house to the pawnbroker's. Even today, you can walk the route he followed and count the steps. When the physical details are concrete, you tend to accept the rest of the information in the novel too; even the most bizarre things seem believable.

Crime was a very real problem in Russia at the time the novel was written. An especially gruesome axe murder of two old women in Moscow in the summer of 1865 had received enormous play in the press, and Dostoevsky clearly had it in mind as he formulated his novel. Drunkenness and prostitution were commonplace, and the gap between the middle class and the poor was enormous. By documenting these facts of life, Dostoevsky provides social history—and even social protest—as part of his study of Raskolnikov's character.

When the scene shifts to Siberia, in the epilogue, the physical change signals an enormous change in subject matter as well, The transformation of raskolnikov's character, from arrogant to penitent, happens in the stark, repressive atmosphere of a prison camp. When he is physically confined and publicly humiliated, he is finally able to find meaning in life that he could not discover when he was free to act as he chose.

As the epilogue is short, and the emphasis is on raskolnikov's "resurrection," there isn't much detail about life in prison. Dostoevsky's own prison experience was still vivid in his mind a dozen years after his release, but his purpose in this section is not realism, but resolution of his theme of salvation. That is why raskolnikov's reconciliation—with Sonia and with his humanity—takes place at Easter, the Christian season of hope'

As crime and punishment is a novel set against the sociological conditions prevailing in 19th-century Russia, it is necessary to understand something of the repressive nature of the tsarist regimes that ruled this great country at that time.

From the times of its founding is the early 18th century by tsar peter the great, St. Petersburg was Russia's "window to the west" (the rest of Europe). One of his successors in the latter half of the 18th century, Catherine II, made Russia a formidable European power. In 1801, Tsar

Alexander I tried to introduce a few social reforms. Actually, he did fairly little to reduce the Tsar's despotic power or to end the cruel practice of serfdom under which the vast majority of Russian peasants were forced to live. Other parts of Western Europe discontinued the practice of serfdom soon after the renaissance (by the 16th century).

After Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812, the Tsar's reform program was further reduced. Hence, many young aristocrats and intellectuals turned to secret revolutionary organizations to overthrow the Tsar. In 1825, the year Dostoevsky was born, the new Tsar Nicholas I was crowned. Later the same year, he suppressed the Decembrist revolt and introduced strict control over the press, education, foreign travel and political organizations through his secret police system. He soon came to be called, "the policeman of Europe." A number of educated Russians and intellectuals began to conventional and repressive Russian system. Orthodox Russians, however, favored the older ways that included a strong Russian orthodox church, a tsarist government and the traditional lifestyle of the vast Russian countryside.

When Dostoevsky was a young man in the 1840s, many new and radical ideas were entering Russia from West European countries, especially France and Germany. Like Raskolnikov in crime and punishment, Dostoevsky soon came under the influence of such revolutionary ideals and he hoped that Russia could also became a liberal country by adopting freer systems of thought and life, as then prevailed in western Europe. However, destoevsky's soul-shattering experience with death (when he and his revolutionary friends were arrested and almost execute by the tsar) and his later experience of squalid prison life forced him to do some serious thinking upon his return from Siberia in 1858. He now began to feel that rash acceptance of every new idea from the west was perhaps not the best thing for Russia.

When Dostoevsky travelled through Europe in 1862-64, he hated what he saw of capitalist western civilization and soon became an ardent Russian nationalist. These were trouble social change. Happily, serfdom was abolished in Russia in 1861 under the new Tsar, Alexander. The revolutionary populists in Russia, however, continued to be antitsarist and they staged a number of terrorist attacks in an attempt to destabilize the regime. More often than not, these attempts failed, and the revolutionary leaders landed either in prison for long-term sentences or before the Tsar's execution squad

Dostoevsky now began to believe that it was more important to cultivate and independent ideas that wear specifically Russian or Slavic in or in origin. Such a commitment to indigenous thought soon made him a Slavophile, like the characters of porfiry in crime and punishment. Hence, in this nivel, he contrasts the ultra-radical views of Raskolnikov on the''extraoradinary man,'' or "superman,'' with porfiry's slavophillic notions. These two characters essentially dramatize the conflict that every intellectual Russian faced in those trouble rimes when social change was imperative if the entrenched tsarist power was to be curtailed and the lot of the common Russian improved.

Thus, Dostoevskey's crime and punishment is a novel that embodies both the writer; s personal dilemma facing his country in its attempts to liberalize or modernize itself and to liberate the common people from the tyranny of the tyranny of the Tsars and their autocratic supporters.

Mood

The mood throughout Dostoevsky's crime and punishment is somber, brooding and profoundly contemplative. For the most part, the reader lives in the protagonist, Raskolnikov, who is introspective and rather gloomy. He first contemplates how to commit the perfect murder and thus eliminate the predatory moneylender. Afterwards, he is haunted by his guilt and the fear of exposure, and he is driven by a compulsive need to confess, which and anticipation is created, as in any good detective story. Here, the identity of the murderer is known to the readers, although not to the police, who are close to the criminal. There are also moments of extreme horror, as at the scene of the murder or when other characters die by accident, suicide or prolonged illness. A sense of panic and terror is also created by the nightmares that the murderer has and the almost claustrophobic ruminations that the murderer has and crime. Until he confesses and begins to serve out his sentence, he seems to undergo the tortures of a living hell.

The Dualism in Raskolnikov's Character:

The protagonist of crime and punishment is a rather solitary intellectual, an impoverished student of law at the university in St. Petersburg. If he seems somewhat introverted at times, there is good reason to attribute this to the constraints of his financial circumstances and his rather stifling attic-room. Sometimes' he can be warm, friendly and even compassionate to others more miserable and unfortunate than himself. For instance, he is extremely generous towards Marmeladov's family after the man dies in a street accident. The testimony of certain witnesses at his trial substantiates the general nobility of Raskolnikov's character. These witnesses cite examples of his many charitable acts before and after the murders.

One way of looking at this duality in Raskolnikov's character is to regard it as a conflict between the alienated intellectual and his hostile social environment. Another approach is to view Raskolnikov's mother and sister. It's as though he (Raskolnikov) were alternating between two characters." On the one hand, he finds raskolinikov "morose, gloomy, and haughty," and on the other, Razhumikin confirms: "He has a noble nature and a kind heart."

In a certain symbolic sense, the two murder that he commits correspond to these dual facets of raskolnikov's personality. While Alena represents the cold and vicious side of his nature, Lizaveta is the humane and submissive side. In killing these two women, he attempts to stifle or destroy both sides of his own inner characters. Ironically, he rarely thinks of the murder of Lizaveta and is disturbed mainly by the memory of his murdering alena. Significantly, again, he kills alena with the blunt side of the axe, while he murder lizaveta with the sharp blade. It is as if, in doing so, he smashes the submissive and

compassionate elements in his nature with greater ferocity and viciousness than he employs in killing alena.

A Walking Contradiction

James Roberts observes that Raskolnikov "is bast seen as two characters. He sometimes acts in one manner and then suddenly in a manner completely contradictory." Evidence for this can be seen throughout the novel. In this way, Dostoevsky makes clear, right from the beginning of his story, that Raskolnikov is not an extraortinary man, at least not in the sense in which Raskolnikov himself uses that term in his the theory of human nature.

In the opening pages of the novel, we see raskolinikov at war with himself as he debates his intention to murder an old pawnbroker. "I want to attempt a thing like that," he says to himself. Then, after visiting the old woman's flat, ostensibly to pawn a watch, but in reality as a sort of "dress rehearsal" for the murder, he again Question himself: "how could such an atrocious thing come into my head? What filthy things my heart is capable of. Yes, filthy above all….. loathsome !"

This inner battle suggests that raskolnikov has mistaken himself for an extraordinary man, a man bound neither by the rules of socity, nor the higher moral law. But in fact, he's actually just a conscientious ordinary man. The portrait Dosteoevsky paints of him is really quite complex. He often appears to be a sensitive, though confused, young intellectual, who's been led to entertain his wild ideas more as a results of dire poverty and self-imposed isolation from his fellow man, rather than from sheer malice or selfish ambition.

In fear and trembling he commits two murders, partly out of a confused desire to thereby benefit the rest of humanity, and partly out of a seemingly genuine concern to really live in accordance with his theories. Ironically, while the murders are partly committed with the idea of taking the old pawnbroker's money to advance raskolnikov's plans, he never attempts to use the money, but merely buries it under a stone. What's more, raskolnikov is portrayed as one of the more generous characters in the novel. On more than one occasions, he literally gives away all the money he has to help meet the meet of others. Finally, while raskolnikov is helped toward confessing his crime through the varied efforts of porfiry petrovich, the brilliant, yet compassionate, criminal investigator, and sonis, the humble, selfless prostitute, nevertheless, it's primarily raskolnikov,s own tormented conscience that, at length, virtually forces him to confess to the murders.

So while raskolnikov is guilty, he's not completely lost. He still retains a conscience, as well as some degree of genuine compassion toward others. Doestoevsky wants us to see that there's still hope for raskolnikov! [Michael Gleghorn]

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