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Dreams and Substance in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*

Dr. Disha Madan

P.G. Department of Studies in English
Nehru College and P G Centre,
HUBLI-580020 (Karnataka)

Abstract:

Fyodor Dostoevsky weaves the intuitive elements and abstract thoughts of man in his novels. He opens the aesthetic dimensions of human existence with realistic appreciation of the beauty of life. This in turn opens the door for the affirmation and acceptance of life as it is. This further brings restoration of trust into the meaning of existence and strives one towards faith and hope. This paper puts forth the paradoxes and dilemmas of life as projected by Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment*. He is well acquainted with evil and misery which do not seem to be hideous abstractions but an extended self of man. His philosophical concepts nullify the existing concepts in society through experimentation and testimony in the acts of the characters. This gives a realistic approach to his characters in the novels. This concept is rooted in *Crime and Punishment* which in turn requires to be chewed and digested by the readers.

Keywords : Nihilism, Utilitarianism, Rational Egoism, Existentialism, Superman, intelligence and free will, Diaspora, Absurd Theory.

INTRODUCTION

The Russian writer Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky is one of the first writers to explore the ideas of psychoanalysis in his works. His religious ideas are still relevant in theological debate. He is also one of the seminal creators of the ideas of existentialism. Despite his varying success during his lifetime, today Dostoevsky is considered to be one of the preeminent Russian novelists—one of the preeminent novelists –of all time.

In his letter to Madam Dostoevsky in the summer of 1839, he writes, that it is considered helpless to unravel the mysteries of the human personality, “man is a mystery, you must bring this mystery to light, and if I have to dedicate my whole life for this mission, I have to believe that we lost during gratuitously: I’m focussing on this mystery because I want to be a man.”¹

Midway this way of life we’re bound upon,

I woke to find myself in a dark wood,

Where the right road was wholly lost and gone.²

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky was also the first writer to focus on the tragedy of the underground consisting of suffering and self punishment. When he was twenty eight, he along with other revolutionaries was arrested by the Czar’s secret police and sentenced to

death. Their particular crime was publishing illegal articles advocating changes in Russian society. When the prisoners were bound and waiting to be shot, and as the Czar's firing squad readied for the execution, a royal messenger dramatically announced a reprieve. Their lives were spared.

The fear of death can motivate an individual to confront his or her own mortality strongly. Death, war and turmoil elicited intellectual growth in Russia. Turgenev, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky flourished and laid their foothold on the global landscape.

The world depicted in Dostoevsky's works is more of a world in which we live than the world of Tolstoy and Turgenev. George Steiner's challenging assertion is that, "Dostoevsky has penetrated more deeply than Tolstoy into the fabric of contemporary thought," having done more than any other writer of the nineteenth century to set the agenda and determine the "shape and psychology" of modern fiction, does not seem over-extravagant.³ He is acclaimed by Albert Camus as a sort of prophet of twentieth century Existentialism.⁴ For Albert Einstein, the father of the modern scientific world-view, " he provided an inspirational glimpse into the relativism and instability of reality and gave him more than any other thinker, more even than Gauss." ⁵

Dostoevsky had two works planned; *The Drunkards*, which was to be a long novel concerning the current problem of drunkenness. The other sprang from an idea that had come to him in prison. It would be an exploration of the psychological account of a crime. Both the ideas found the impulse and thought of the novel called, *Crime and Punishment*. These ideas would be the radical social ideologies that gripped Russia in the 1860's, particularly Nihilism, which was emerging around the time Dostoevsky was beginning work on what would be *Crime and Punishment*.

Stemming from personal experiences that horrify most, Dostoevsky ultimately brings up important philosophical conclusions that have made the foundations of modern existentialist thinking. The role of the individual, the freedom to make decisions, and the rejection of the rationalist world are all things that make *Crime and Punishment* ground work for this philosophical concept. And, it is these very concepts that have reverberated around the world and echoed in the works of others such as Nabokov, Nietzsche, Kafka, Hemingway and Camus. All these authors shocked the academic area, and it would never have been so if it wasn't for one man – Fyodor Dostoevsky.

PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS

Significant philosophical concepts were in the air in the late twentieth century. The philosophical, political and academic circles in Russia, Germany and many other European countries were undergoing a vast change. The philosophical writings of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Ubermensch' and the 'Last Man' was popular. Such and many other concepts influenced Dostoevsky's works.

Nihilism

Nihilism comes from the Latin word 'nihil' which means 'nothing'- to annihilate or destroy completely. This philosophy and its proponents believe that all values are baseless and that nothing can be known or communicated. It denies all traditional and moral values. The only way to achieve anything was to destroy the prevailing systems completely. Associated with extreme pessimism, this philosophy carried corrosive effects that would destroy all moral, religious, and metaphysical convictions.

In Russia, it was identified with loosely organized revolutionary movement that rejected the authority of the state, church, and family. It advocated the social arrangement based on rationalism and materialism as the sole source of knowledge and individual freedom as its highest goal. It believed that ethics should be based on scientific claims. Man could create a perfect society (rational utopia) if he lived according to the principles of enlightened self interest.

The distortion of this concept can be seen in *Crime and Punishment* in Raskolnikov's justification of murder to Sonya. It is also highlighted in Luzhen's self-centred motives and his manipulating his relationship with Dounia as her benefactor. In Luzhen, the theories are presented in an absurd way which mocks what he tries to defend. Characters act only in accordance when their selfish interests are met and they do not work for the good of society.

SUPER MAN THEORY

Hegalian Superman

The German philosopher, Hegel believed that if the ends are noble then the means can be justified. This emphasis on the ends rather than the means is evident in *Crime and Punishment* through the pawnbroker who is evil and harms the society. Murdering her would be removing a harmful thing from society. She has lots of money which will be wasted on requiem services after her death. Money could help Raskolnikov to complete his education so that he could devote himself to humanity. One small crime can be wiped out by thousands of good deeds. Raskolnikov could use the money to distribute to families and hundreds of people could be helped.

This philosophy fails in *Crime and Punishment*, as Raskolnikov though murders the pawnbroker but the good could not be done to society.

Nietzschean Superman

This concept exists not for the benefit of society but exists for man's personal gratification. Its aims are not prompted by nobility. Svidrigailov represents this concept in *Crime and Punishment*. It concludes that god is dead. And, since, there is no will beyond man's will, and then man has to assert his will. There is no power beyond man to punish; hence, man is free to do his own will. Nietzsche's Superman is the one who possesses the strongest will and is able to dominate.

Svidrigailov is instrumental in causing death of the servant or wife. He pursues Dounia without fear of punishment. This superman stands alone, isolated from society.

This superman also fails in *Crime and Punishment* as he commits suicide when his desires and aims are not fulfilled.

Raskolnikov Superman

All men are divided into two categories, ordinary and extraordinary. Ordinary man is inferior and can only reproduce his own kind. He has to live in submission and has no right to transgress law. Extraordinary men have right to commit any crime and transgress law. They have talent to utter new word and to forge civilization inward to new heights. Since, these achievements are important to all mankind, he has the right to decide whether to overstep the law or not. Besides, he must not submit to common law or otherwise they cease to be great. They create new laws and should have the right to eliminate a few men in order to make new discoveries.

Raskolnikov uses Napoleon as a point of reference. He is daring like him. He commits murder only to see if he has the courage to commit it and to prove to himself that his will is strong. He also commits the crime to serve a noble purpose. But, here he contradicts himself. Like Shakespeare's Hamlet, Raskolnikov thinks too much, continually brooding upon the crises in his poverty-stricken life as well as that of the people he sees in the street.

Dostoevsky wanted to show the young intellectual using the theories before he had a chance to analyze them. Raskolnikov maintains that the murder was committed to benefit mankind. But, then, he maintains that he is above mankind and cannot be concerned with what a common man thinks.

Dostoevsky also uses comic characters as vehicles for compelling ideological issues. Marmelodov is alcoholic with ironic metaphysical side. It draws readers' attention to the quest about environment's influence on the individual.

Dostoevsky embraced his faith in Christianity and spurned the Western ideas that were infiltrating his country. In *Crime and Punishment* he refuted many popular ideological movements of the time. These included Utilitarianism-which insisted upon ideas about the collective goods and ends justifying the means. Rational Egoism-which purported that human beings exist to seek pleasure and to perpetuate self-interest. Nihilism-which declared that human life is meaningless and lacks any kind of purpose.

Dostoevsky believed that god did exist and is found everywhere and in everyone. And, the sufferings will lead to forgiveness. His focus on man's part of the equation earned him a reputation as one of the forerunners of Existentialism. It was a movement which centred on questions regarding the nature of human existence. In his book, *Twilight of Idols*, the most famous existentialist, Friedrich Nietzsche, said of Dostoevsky that he was, "the only psychologist from whom I have anything to learn."⁶ Dostoevsky represents Western European ideas as dangerous diseases infecting, or as spirits possessing his morally shaken characters.

The capital of Russia, St. Petersburg was built by Italian and Western European architects and intended to be Russia's window on to Europe. To the Russian eye, there was something terrifyingly artificial about this beautiful watery and haunted city. Besides the cramped poverty, disease and crime resulting from rapid urbanization, Petersburg was built on swampland and by the means of forced labour. Dostoevsky also borrows in this vein from the London of Charles Dickens. And, recurrent and devastating floods could easily seem like nature's own revenge on the lofty architecture and aesthetic lay out of the city's canals and streets.

The burning question of Dostoevsky's day was arguably facing Russia even in the twentieth and twenty first centuries was that, is Russia European or not and if not, then should it be so. Besides, the people influenced by Western culture in Russia continued the older aristocratic trends of speaking French at home, and dressing in the latest London fashions, or completing education abroad. But, the voice of protest was heard in Russia to look to the people and to find roots in local folk tradition.

TRACING THE STRUCTURE OF *CRIME AND PUNISHMENT*

Dostoevsky writes, that, for *Crime and Punishment*, he had chosen "narration from point of view of the author, a sort of invisible but omniscient being who does not leave his hero for a moment." 7

Raskolnikov, the protagonist, is young, good-looking ex-student of the university. Dressed in rags, he goes to the pawnbroker, Alyona Ivanovna's house. She is a mean lady who lives with her half-sister Lizaveta. Lizaveta is though mentally challenged, but a sweet person. Raskolnikov pawns his father's watch, and it becomes clear that he wants to murder Alyona and rob her money. But, he is not sure if he will be able to do it.

He meets Marmeladov who is unemployed and hears the sad story of his life. Marmeladov is married to Katerina. Katerina has three young children from the previous marriage. Marmeladov has an eighteen year old daughter, Sonya, from the previous marriage. As the economic condition of the Marmeladov family is devastating, hence, Sonya becomes a prostitute in order to earn money. Raskolnikov drops some money unnoticed, at Marmeladov's place.

Raskolnikov receives a letter from his mother, Pulcheria. He learns that his sister, Dounia is finally free from working as a nanny for the Svidrigailov family. Mr. Svidrigailov had harassed her sexually and as she owed money to that family, hence she had continued with the job despite of the indignity she underwent. Now, she plans to marry Pyotr Petrovitch Luzhin, and expect that he will help Raskolnikov economically. Raskolnikov compares Dounia to Sonya and does not want this sacrifice from Dounia.

Later that night, he manages to find an axe and splits the skull of the pawnbroker. Raskolnikov steals pawnbroker's belongings, Lizaveta enters and he murders her too. He escapes unseen and reaches home and sleeps.

One evening he finds Marmeladov on the verge of death. In a drunken state, he is run over by a carriage. Raskolnikov gets him back home. Marmeladov dies and Raskolnikov meets Sonya. He gives all the money he possesses then to Marmeladov's widow.

Raskolnikov's mother and sister come to stay with him. He expresses his anger upon Dounia marrying Luzhin. Razumihin looks after them and he falls in love with Dounia.

Porfiry investigates pawnbroker's murder. Razumihin introduces Raskolnikov to Porfiry as it would help him to get back his belongings pawned to the pawnbroker. Porfiry brings to their notice a published article written by Raskolnikov. In that article, he argues that there are ordinary and extraordinary people and that the extraordinary people have the right to kill if the murder is necessary in order to help make progress in the world.

Svidrigailov overhears the conversation between Sonya and Raskolnikov where he confesses to her that he had killed the pawnbroker and her sister. The next day, Raskolnikov goes to see Porfiry at the police station. Porfiry basically accuses Raskolnikov of the two murders. But, Nikolay comes to the police station and confesses that he committed the murder.

Svidrigailov shoots himself when he is unable to convince Dounia to marry him. Sonya insists upon Raskolnikov to confess and surrender at the police station. He does so with hesitation. He is sentenced to eight years of imprisonment in Siberia and Sonya follows him there. Meanwhile, Razumihin and Dounia get married.

Raskolnikov falls sick and rummages his impulses and feelings. On doing so he realizes that he loves Sonya. He will have to go through lots of sufferings and struggles before he can achieve her. But, after he is released from the prison, he would, perhaps, find a new way to live and will be happy with Sonya.

THE THEORY OF CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

In the Russian language, 'crime' means "prestuplenie" which literally means "transgression." To commit a crime refers, then, to the transgression of a certain limit or boundary defined by law. There are boundaries, and when they are crossed, a crime is committed and an appropriate punishment should follow.⁸

Marcel Proust maintained that "Crime and Punishment" could be the title of all of Dostoevsky's novels.⁹ Crime, or more generally transgression of some significant boundary, is Dostoevsky's point of departure, and then the characters are placed under a magnifying glass. Dostoevsky's main preoccupation is a scrutiny of the inner life of his characters, an approach that may seem more appropriate for philosophical or psychological analysis than for works of fiction. This interior probing of the soul attracted an immediate attention of philosophers and psychologists, such as Nietzsche and Freud, and then gradually became a major focus of the twentieth century novel.

According to Dostoevsky certain boundaries are not arbitrary and conventional, that they should not be violated under any circumstance. The life and dignity of every human being, for instance, is sacred and should not be violated. If it is so then the punishment—not necessarily legal, but of our own conscience—will inevitably follow. This is why Proust could insist that all of Dostoevsky's novels could be entitled "Crime and Punishment." Dostoevsky discovered that in order to destroy evil, good also has to suffer and it gets

entangled along with the evil. This happens, as the strong conflicting impulses reverberate the human beings constantly. He does not define the world by an absence of the sacred, but by the perversion and corruption of the sacred, which gradually poisons the meaning of life and creates the sense of a spiritual homelessness in modern man. This spiritual homelessness finds respite in happily accepting the punishment and then the salvation stands next door.

DREAMS : A NOISE WITHIN

The protagonist, Raskolnikov has four dreams which are symbols and indication of his actions. They are the clues to understand Dostoevsky's key themes and concepts more specifically. Each of these dreams leads into the next. They illustrate both the significance in the complex psychology of Raskolnikov. Besides, they are instrumental in creating the realm like aura in the novel. In creating these dreams, Dostoevsky has repeated events and reshaped ideas in the realms of the unconscious mind of the character who is dreaming. Thus, the succession of dreams forms a psychic pattern of motivation as valid as the course of external episodes.

The novel is centred on Raskolnikov's theory of the self-willed criminal, the extraordinary man, the Napoleon. A man who has the right to transgress the laws of ordinary men in order to carry out an idea. The test of this theory, the proof that Raskolnikov himself is one of these extraordinary men, is to be the murderer of an old pawnbroker. And, that the novel opens with an experimental visit to the old woman's flat. The first four scenes of the book – the visit to the pawnbroker's flat; the meeting with Marmeladov; the letter from Raskolnikov's mother; the encounter with the drunken girl- all these form the substance of the first dream.

FIRST PHASE

Dream of the Mare

The four scenes are associated in Raskolnikov's mind by the conscious theme, the state of poverty and degradation into which he has fallen. He counts his money given to him by the old pawnbroker in exchange for his father's watch. This money is given to Marmeladov, to the servant Natasya for his mother's letter and to the policeman. They are linked by purely mechanical means. They have implicit connection in its convergence and translation into the dream of the beaten horse.

This dream moves swiftly, wherein Raskolnikov as a child accompanies his father to a requiem service for his grandmother and a visit to the grave of his brother. The road to the church runs past a tavern, and there the child is frightened by the rough sport of a group of drunken peasants. Outside the tavern a heavy cart with a mare is standing. Mikolka, the owner of the cart calls his friends to get in so that the mare can pull them all. When he finds that the horse cannot move the heavy load, he asks his comrades to beat her to death before the eyes of the child Raskolnikov. The mare is killed with whips and Raskolnikov awakens from the violent nightmare.

The letter received from his mother closes with these words, “Remember...when your father was living...how happy we all were in those days.”¹⁰

The childhood experience in the dream evolves as one of the intense fear and suffering from which even his father cannot shield him. In this lost protection of the father he needs to commit murder in order to get money and provide security to his sister and mother. Dounia and his father have a definite symbol association with the murder. It is the ring which his sister had given him and which he takes to the pawnbroker on his first visit. And, it is his father’s silver watch which he uses as the excuse for his experimental visit to complete his preparations for the murder.

The struggling mare symbolizes a whole class of sacrificial women. His mother, Sonya, Dounia and the drunken girl – all are represented in the form of the mare. Identified in the dream with the mare, helpless under the primitive passion of her tormentor, these women are translated by Raskolnikov into animals for hire. In the prolonged struggle of the mare is dramatized the senseless suffering and the strange endurance under that suffering.

There is a conflict in Raskolnikov’s mind, and the figures in this dream have double significance. Behind Mikolka’s act of violence lies the larger design of Raskolnikov’s intended murder of the old woman. Hence, Mikolka is Raskolnikov himself, and the mare, his victim. Mikolka is warm blooded and violent – just the opposite of Raskolnikov. But, the act of murder is same. Both abhor their victims.

At the time of the dream, Raskolnikov’s waking thoughts revolved around death, the violent death he would inflict upon the old woman. The dream concerns two forms of death, contrasting the ritual of the Church service, the solemn peace of the graveyard, with the horrible death of the mare. In the child there is respect even for those whom he does not know. But, in the mature Raskolnikov the outward isolation and indifference to humanity are frightening.

The terror which Raskolnikov experiences as a child over the death struggles of the helpless mare predicts his loss of control over the act of murder.

The dream serves as a warning which he partially realizes as he shudders at the recollection but, is yet powerless against the fixation of his theories. He still believes in his motive of the murder, but, unconsciously, he searches for an argument which will invalidate that motive. He is not released until he recognizes that there are no rational answers to his questions. The dream is a fatal renunciation of the child of the beaten horse dream, the child who had basic feelings of pity and compassion. These feelings transgress over to subconscious mind of the adult Raskolnikov.

SECOND PHASE

The Dream of the Police Official

The second dream which follows the actual murder has its direct stimulus, a summons to the police office. It was a coincidence involving not the expected accusation of murder, but only

a charge of non payment of an I.O.U. to his landlady. The latent content of the dream is the act of murder. In this dream Raskolnikov starts up in terror at the sound of the screams, blows, and curses coming from somewhere outside his room. In a moment he recognizes that the screams are those of his landlady and that her assailant is Ilya Petrovich, the “Explosive Lieutenant” of the police office scene.

Here, there is a return of the fear Raskolnikov had had on his facing that official in the police office. It is a subjective continuation of the beaten horse dream. It is also a reflection of the sordid surroundings of his present lodgings, in which, such an incident was not unlikely to occur. There is, more significantly, an adaptation of the murder, in which the hot tempered official takes the place of Raskolnikov himself.

This dream is imaginatively closer to his emotional experience of the crime than is the actual murder scene. There is no conclusion to the last part of this dream and intentionally no sense of Raskolnikov’s awakening from it. This dream is foreshadowing the terror of revelation and his relief when he is released from the trap unharmed. This occurs periodically throughout the remainder of the novel.

During the fever which follows the dream, the murder is so far repressed by Raskolnikov that he has forgotten something which he ought to remember. For Raskolnikov, the interval between the second and the third dream is longer than that between the first two. It indicates one of the alternate moods to terror and extreme lucidity.

THIRD PHASE

The Dream of the Stranger in a Long Coat

The third dream is an attempt to relive the murder, and its outline is closely drawn from the two specific scenes, the actual murder scene and Raskolnikov’s compulsive return to the flat after it. The immediate stimulus is the accusation from the man in the long coat. He is a stranger whom he meets on the street and who suddenly turns on Raskolnikov with the words, “You are a murderer.”¹¹ Raskolnikov unconsciously reproduces the scene of his crime in a dream in order to place this stranger there, to discover what evidence he might have for his sinister charge. The confusion of this dream is the direct return to the murder. It throws light upon Raskolnikov’s changing attitude towards his act. His uncertainty at the beginning of the dream indicates a clear break in the motivation of the crime.

Throughout the first part of the dream, Raskolnikov is not moving of his own accord but is following the stranger to the scene of murder, attributing to him the complete responsibility of the murder. As though, this dream figure was the projection of his act, as in the first two dreams. Once Raskolnikov is in the house and on the staircase, the stranger though still leading him, is not seen, and the details begin to draw on the other threads of thought.

This dream is concentrated upon Raskolnikov himself performing the act of violence, whereas in the preceding dreams, the murder was so far repressed. This was caused by an unconscious refusal to admit his crime. The murder dream implies an extremely intricate psychic motivation. At the moment when Raskolnikov is able to recognize his act sufficiently

to reproduce it as his own, the final impression is of failure. Here he finds himself incapable of murder, from a purely physical standpoint. Under the blows of the axe, the old woman sits as though made of wood. This indicates the growing realization that psychologically Raskolnikov cannot endure the effects of the murder.

Once again the essential dream image has a dual meaning. The old woman sitting bent double so that Raskolnikov cannot see her face and she appears to be nothing more than a victim.

FOURTH PHASE

A Dream Remembered

The final dream is objectified in several respects. It is not told directly in the novel but is remembered by Raskolnikov as a dream he had had while in the prison hospital in Siberia. Nor did he himself take any active part in it. He seems rather to have observed its progress. Its purpose is to present the thesis of the novel in slightly different terms. The entire dream is the allegory, with uncomplicated symbolism. This dream is also indicative of a new attitude towards life. Raskolnikov has unconsciously begun to fit himself into society once more and to think in terms of humanity. He visualizes the dangers of the extreme relativism which his theory required, dangers not only to society but also to the man of will.

This idea is translated in the final dream into a plague; a disease brought on by an attack of microbes “endowed with intelligence and will.” The mad victim of these attacks believe themselves intellectually infallible and in complete possession of the truth. They cannot understand one another, and they can form no standards of judgement. Only a few chosen people will be saved from annihilation, and these will live “to found a new race” and “to renew the earth.” **12**

According to Dostoevsky, the ideas of intelligence and will are the diseases of humanity. The dream dictates a division also, but the chosen people are not the rationalists, the frustrated victims of the plague, but the quiet people like Sonya.

Based on the above assessment it can be analyzed that the central theme of these four dreams is violence. Psychologically, each of them has an effect of catharsis. It releases primitive forces by manifesting the dominant idea from both his conscious and unconscious thought. Before such release, he is in a state of disease and delirium and close to complete loss of control. There is a constant attempt to shift responsibility, as though he believed himself incapable of such imaginings. Unconsciously, however, he is grasping seemingly isolated threads in these dreams. The sympathy of the child in the dream of the beaten horse; the awareness of the crowd in the second dream, the projected mockery of his efforts in the murder dream, and the treachery of free will in the dream of the plague. Touching him first indirectly, these images approach conscious realization until, in the final dream, Raskolnikov himself recognizes the means for his spiritual regeneration. The awakening from the last dream is literally an awakening from the ‘dream’ of the murder.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IN DOSTOEVSKY

Crime can be compared to a fall from innocence; it is pollution of something that is pure or clean, a stain of some kind. What is characteristic of Dostoevsky's novelistic approach is that Dostoevsky is less interested in how and why the fall occurs, than in what happens afterwards. In *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky describes the hero's murder of two women in the first part, which then sets the stage for the preoccupation of this work: Raskolnikov's confrontation with his conscience, his torturous acceptance of responsibility for the crime, along with his self-inflicted punishment and resulting spiritual transformation.

The four years he spent in Siberia with the worst criminals of Russia convinced him that, though crimes often appear monstrous, they are performed by human beings, not by monsters. It is remarkable that Dostoevsky sees the potential saintliness in a sinner, and what Blake famously called the marriage of Heaven and Hell is for Dostoevsky a very real possibility.

Understanding exactly what kind of reaction is needed is the key to comprehending Dostoevsky's entire outlook. It is far easier to understand the transgressions of boundaries. They are an expression of freedom, of curiosity, of our desire to change the world according to our visions and needs. Not all the transgressions are crimes, and not all reactions to them are punishments. Yet there is an intimate connection between the transgressions and our reactions to them. In a way, it is a desire to restore order, to curb one's freedom, to accept responsibility for what one has done. Dostoevsky does not connect the voice of conscience directly to punishment. As he believes that god is inherent in this voice, Dostoevsky's god is loving but not overprotecting, not a grand inquisitor who would eliminate freedom and prevent one from straying over the established boundaries. His god is more like the father who always welcomes his stray child back home with a smile.

Dostoevsky admires those who stand up after falling down, who do not lose their faith even after witnessing the most unspeakable evils of dehumanization. In Dostoevsky's worldview, the fallen are by no means forgotten or excluded from consideration. On the contrary, if they could learn to die for the old self and be purified and reborn through their suffering, they may be the only ones deserving to carry the torch of heroism. Indeed, purification and redemption through pain and suffering are among Dostoevsky's central preoccupations.

The optimism of Dostoevsky is most deserving of further attention and a detailed account. His favourite part of the Bible was the Book of Job, and it is not too difficult to understand why this is so. Dostoevsky's life resembled that of Job in many ways: it was a life of enormous suffering, incurable disease, and loss of those he loved the most. And yet, as much as Dostoevsky may have anticipated Kafka, Camus, or Faulkner, in his novels there is no ominous sense of helplessness or resignation. A small but steady light of hope is always and recognizably present. This hope is not of the self-deluding kind. It is neither unfounded hope that blindly justifies all misfortune. Nor it is a belief that our Creator must have a good reason for permitting tragedy. Dostoevsky refuses to digest that in this world everything happens for a reason. He is aware that the world is—has always been and will always be—full of evil.

Evil for Dostoevsky is like a malaise inherent in the human condition. He does not see evil as a kind of a curable disease, which can be eradicated once and forever, when one finally restructures the society in the right way. Evil is inherent in the human condition because it is part of the same drive that leads one towards greatness and heroism. It is the drive to

transgress the existing boundaries and open new frontiers. Although, there must be limits to such strivings, one should not try to overprotect the innocent by eliminating freedom (which includes freedom to choose evil).

In Dostoevsky's novels there are two deadly dangers for humanity: having hopes and ideals that are not congruent with reality, and having no hopes and ideals at all. The former warns one never to close eyes to what the real world is and the latter indicates never to abandon a healthy hope. This unique combination of clear-headed realism and undeniable optimism is the most striking, and the least understood, feature of Dostoevsky's worldview. That Dostoevsky himself never fully succeeds in articulating where this vitalizing optimism comes from, nor how it could coexist with his uncompromising realism, makes this optimism so underappreciated. This optimism is an unmistakable pre-requisite to understand and appreciate his works. When these thoughts are seasoned in the right manner then it becomes a sudden ray of sunshine on a gloomy winter day.

A sounder and more adequate philosophical articulation of this unique combination of realism and optimism in Dostoevsky's great novels requires showing that on what ground he bases his affirmation of life, and how his affirmation can be reconciled with the overwhelming presence of evil in the world of his fiction.

According to Dostoevsky, we must learn how to accept the reality of evil and live with evil, and yet affirm life and love it. We need to find a way to feel at home in the world, without basing this feeling either on false denials of past and present reality, or on unfounded utopian promises of a glorious future and a new world. Dostoevsky believes that this is not only possible, but actually indispensable for our mental balance and health.

A more difficult obstacle in understanding Dostoevsky is that he is a most unusual thinker. More significantly, the view he claims to be defending—that unique blend of realism and optimism—appears to contain something paradoxical. In attempting to articulate and defend this combination, one encounters a strongly ingrained psychological mechanism which seems to prevent the reconciliation of these views.

Dostoevsky has a flair for paradoxes and the very fact that a viewpoint contains a paradox is not sufficient for him to reject it. On the contrary, he is convinced that “there is nothing more fantastic than reality itself.”¹³ Dostoevsky not only firmly follows this powerful insight throughout his literary career; he even ascribes to it his very birth as a writer. Moreover, his works display a conscious and systematic transgression of all three fundamental laws of logic: of non-contradiction, of sufficient reason, and of the excluded middle. One accepts his paradoxes not as whimsical expressions of one writer's unbounded imagination, but as deep insights into the nature of reality and one's place and role in it.

TRANSLATED PROJECTIONS

The Mother, landlady, and the pawnbroker exist as meanings within him. In killing them, he attempts to kill what he has decided them to be. In killing them, he attempts to kill what they mean in him, and they are his tormentors and victimizers. In striking at them, he strikes at himself. Hence, he is both the tormentor and the tormented. Though he had killed the pawnbroker, but he was unable to kill the pawnbroker within himself. The punishment of the tormentors is a punishment of him. He attempted to punish his tormentors but succeeds in

punishing himself only. Here, Dostoevsky feels it necessary to translate the punishment into self punishment.

Svidrigailov represents the hidden impulses of Raskolnikov. He is a philosophical embodiment of Raskolnikov's desire to be above morality. Svidrigailov is the bronze man Raskolnikov had hoped to become after committing the murder. They both have murdered. Svidrigailov has whipped his servant and wife; Raskolnikov has whipped his landlady. Svidrigailov is indebted to his wife; Raskolnikov is indebted to the pawnbroker, landlady and the mother. Raskolnikov is repelled by the dirt Svidrigailov has surrounded himself with, but he is also attracted to it.

Sonya's "clean dirtiness" fascinates Raskolnikov. She represents for him a resolution of what is clean and what is dirty. Dirtiness represents corruption or prostitution which is redemptive. She redeems in his eyes the dirty life she has been forced to lead, and it is this redemptive quality that attracts him to her. She takes him back to his real self and his whole self, in order for the mind-soul psyche to become whole again. The good Raskolnikov and the evil Raskolnikov have to become one. What is half confessed in dreams is wholly confessed to Sonya. And, it is Sonya who makes him confess and surrender finally. What is hidden must become open, because it is by becoming open that the self reclaims itself.

Beauty and ugliness, freedom and responsibility become one in the acceptance of oneself. This is what Dostoevsky meant by forgiveness and suffering. The fantasies and experiences of childhood leave deep ineradicable channels in human beings, through which flow the experiences one later characterizes as religious, social, economic and practical.

CONCLUSION

Dostoevsky hates no one, for behind every tendency he looks for the soul, and the tendency only interests him because of the soul that is concealed or betrayed by it. Thus his wicked people, and they abound, are never introduced into his books either to gratify his hatred of them or to make a plot with their wickedness. He is as much concerned with their souls as with the souls of his saints. But, Dostoevsky's worst characters are like Hamlet. He knows things about them that he could only know about himself, and they live through his sympathy, not merely through his observation. For him all men have more likeness to each other than unlikeness, for they all have souls; and because he is always aware of the soul in them he has a Christian sense of their equality. It is not merely rich and poor or clever or stupid those are equal to him, but even good and bad.

Nor is the soul made different for him by sex, for that is only a difference of the body; and so he does not insist on femininity in his women. He knows women, but he knows them as human beings like men; and he is interested in sexual facts not as they affect his own passions but as they affect the soul. He does not make a strong appeal to the passions of his readers.

Dostoevsky does not behold that crime is something good, but that—because of his peculiar understanding of crime in terms of transgression of boundaries – he sees transgression as something that happens to every normal human being. Each one of us transgresses existing boundaries every day—because of our desires for what is not and disagreements with what is. Each of us sees the rift between what the world is like, what it could, and what it ought to be. The crux of the matter does not consist in transgressing boundaries, for we all have to

transgress the boundaries. A far thornier obstacle consists in not always knowing which of these transgressions is appropriate. In many situations we are forced to choose not between good or evil, but between two goods or two evils. Dostoevsky realizes that it is too difficult to know what to do once the boundaries are crossed. And, to restore order to transgressed life is a herculean task. The crucial issue for him is what happens after the transgression. The trace of **diaspora** and crossing over of writers from one culture to the other and from one country to the other are inherent here.

Dostoevsky's characters show that one lives in a world which is pervaded with injustice. The one who commits the crime goes unpunished. And, the good suffers. This unjustified imbalance is painful and it is here that life loses the track of meaning and reasoning. Life turns out to be meaningless and the actors and characters become puppets. The deepest dilemma of life is that what comes first—the meaning of life or the affirmation of life? Why live in the world of suffering, a world which can have no meaning because of that suffering? But, what if life has no meaning? If there is so much undeserved and pointless suffering, if life is indeed as meaningless as it often appears, why not commit suicide? Why not trespass all boundaries? The roots of modern absurd theory are found in this argument of Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment*.

Mikhail Bakhtin has convincingly argued in his book *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* that Dostoevsky's works present a genuine polyphony of voices.¹⁴ The other voice comes from within, and this is the voice of human conscience. This voice leads us through fear of pointless suffering and fear of death. Those who transgress the boundaries of the permissible need no rational proof or an appointed judge is required to realize that they have done something wrong. Their inner voice tells them so. Conscience has nothing to do with reason or law, nor can it be identified with the prevailing morality. It often stands in an irreconcilable opposition to these societal forces. Dostoevsky is convinced that conscience is stronger than any mode of reasoning and any existing law, just as it is stronger than self-interest and pride. To a person in the deepest misery or confusion, conscience can show a narrow path. This path does not lead back to the world dedicated to our rational ego and its pride. On the contrary, it takes one over and away from it, towards something unknown, perhaps transcendent. And, this transcendent is the only window between the human and the spiritual.

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