

Review

A socio-psychological exploration of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's crime and punishment

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Using a socio-psychological approach, the essay explores Fyodor Dostoyevsky's Crime and Punishment. The exploration highlights Dostoyevsky's heavy reliance on the use of psychological realism, showing in the process the intricate interplay between psychology, sociology and literature. In the novel, the reader comes across the merging of the philosophies of Hegel, Nietzsche, Sartre, Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Marx. The essay concludes that Crime and Punishment is a mixture of four novels: the psychological novel, the novel of detection, the novel of character, and the philosophical Four voices, namely: voices of the existentialists, Marxian, Freudian, and Christianity are intertwined in the novel. Fyodor appears to be saying that the world is meaningless but it is through the Christian faith meaning could come to life.

Key words: Crime, punishment, existentialism, psychoanalysis, dostoyevsky.

INTRODUCTION

Dostoyevsky's *Crime and punishment* (1866) is based on the writer's terrifying experience with summary justice and the cruel penal system of Tzarist Russia. It is a tale set in the dingy tenements, backstreets and dram-shops of pre-revolutionary St. Petersburg, and concerns the actions or inactions of a murderer, Raskolnikov, who in setting himself in the role of a superman of Napoleonic and Nietzschean Hue, decides to commit murder as a matter of principle to pursue a higher purpose. The novel can be viewed as a detective novel but not one detecting the criminal, rather the motives behind the perpetration of the crime. It is also a novel that centers on psychological observations and analyses.

In this essay, an attempt is made to explain the uniqueness of Dostoyevsky's form of writing by focusing on his characteristic devices and techniques as well as his relation to and use of existentialism. In addition, this explorative essay proposes to highlight the author's heavy reliance on the use of psychological realism. In the process the intricate interplay between psychology, sociology, and literature is showed. In addition, how Dostoyevsky has manipulated all the three areas to become the master craftsman in world literature is highlighted.

Dostoyevsky and the human condition

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky's writing (1821 - 1881) was influenced by Alexander Pushkin, the highly celebra-

ted Russian poet who died in 1837. According to Frank (1976), Pushkin dominated Dostoyevsky's literary entire life. Dostoyevsky was of the strong view that Raskolnikov, the hero (anti hero?) of *Crime and Punishment* recreates the murderous folly of Pushkin's Herman in *The Queen of Spades*, who is equally obsessed by an *idée fixe* and equally ready to murder to obtain wealth and power (Frank, 1976). Pushkin was seen as a model for Russian writers. Like Dostoyevsky, Pushkin was both "a great virtuoso and something of a sphinx. Pushkin developed the art of exploring the world in terms of the experience and mental outlook of his creations" (Lord, 1976).

Dostoyevsky's novels concern themselves with the behavioral patterns of several people from different walks of life. A fitting typology of the above description can be sighted in Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed*, which uses a large number of characters representing all classes of the Russian society. In the novel, he shows how an idle interest in nihilism causes robbery, arson, and murder in a Russian community. The "plot is exceedingly complex but this very complexity tends to emphasize a similar quality in the nineteenth century Russian life" (Welleck, 1962).

Dostoyevsky is also known for his existentialist views. This is in spite of his involvement in radical socialist politics. Among his works, which espouse existentialist principles are *The House of the Dead* (1860), which was influenced by his experiences in Omsk labor camp and the compulsory military service he underwent for eight years,

Notes from the Underground (1864). The Gambler (1866); The Idiot (1868); The Devils (1872) and The Brothers Karamazov (1880). In his works, Dostoyevsky addresses the concept of free will or freedom as can be clearly seen in Notes from the Underground. The underground man is the totally a freeman. He carries a revolt against himself, in the present, future and into eternity. He refuses to allow the law of nature and science to operate. This is because if the laws of nature (defined by reason) really exist, then free will is an illusion that will be dispelled by reason. Dostoyevsky did not believe that the laws of nature existed. For him, reason did not exist as an objective entity.

According to Dostoyevsky, "there is no reason, but only reasoners; behind every rational formula there is a formulator; behind every generalization there is a generalizer" (Dostoyevsky, quoted in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1972). He argued that the universe does not make sense and that there are no rational patterns discernible in it. Order is a deceptive mask that the universe wears and which may break down at any time. According to him reason only leads man astray. One would rely on it only to be disappointed by it. This view is a complete opposite of the Neo-Classicals.

Suffice it to say that in Dostoyevsky's novels the reader comes across the merging of the philosophies of Hegel, Nietzsche, Sartre, Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Marx. Of these important philosophers all were existentialists except for Marx. It is instructive to note that Jean Paul Sartre before his death embraced Marxism, thereby becoming an existentialist Marxist.

Dostoyevsky's novels focus on the theme of man as a subject of his environment. His novels can be seen as "a means of penetrating into the hidden depths of human psychology and tearing of all the different kinds of veils and masks which conceal the nature and content of man's inner world" (Frank, 1976). This is exactly what he does with the character of Raskolnikov, while in the process indicating that Crime and Punishment is not one of a crime, but one of a discovery of the motive behind the crime.

Crime and society

As indicated earlier on, crime and punishment is a novel based apparently on the interior of Raskolnikov's mind. It is also an apt representation of a social situation with its social inequalities and how this inequality affects the personalities of individuals and their reactions towards certain situations.

In describing the process by which criminal values are taken over by the individual. Sutherland (1937) says:

"Criminal behavior is learned and it is learned in interaction with others who have already incorporated criminal values and illegitimate opportunities including conditions favorable to the learning of such a role (Sutherland, 1937)."

Crime is as old as man. In the book of Genesis 4:8 the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, it is stated that Cain killed his brother Abel. Cain committed a criminal act, pates referred to as homicide in Criminal Law. The early common law regarded such a killing as so serious that it was scarcely inexcusable (Okonkwo, 1980). Folklores of several societies in the past such as ancient Greek, Rome and Medieval Europe have reflected on man's concern with crime.

However, the understanding of crime and the criminal, did not engage the attention of scholars until after the enlightenment in Europe. Scholars of diverse areas of study were prompted to consider the crime problem during this period as a result of the operation of the legal system in Europe. People who committed crime were treated as demons as they were treated as witches and wizard who tied to the sticks and burnt. Punishment was arbitrary and barbarous. This led to the development of different schools for the understanding of crime and the criminal (Oloruntimehin, 1995). These schools are the classical school, the biological and the sociological. Within the sociological school we have the Chicago school and Critical school of criminology with its labeling theory. The sociological school captures the tenor of this essay.

Most serious crimes are violations of mores, the norms of behavior that are considered vital to preserving society. They fall into three broad categories: crimes against persons, crimes against property, and crimes against morality. Crimes against persons consist of domestic violence, child abuse, and wife-battering. Of all crimes against property, theft is the most common. Modern computer technology has greatly increased the opportunity of embezzlement and other forms of economic crimes. Crimes against morality; the most controversial section of the criminal law consists of the statutes enforcing conventional standards of moral behavior. Examples are, gambling, obscenity, prostitution, public drunkenness, and the possession of certain drugs. These offences are often called victimless crimes, since they are voluntary activities that typically harm no one but those who commit them. In examining a criminal, one could use Sigmund Freud's personality analysis which says that traumatic experiences, which have occurred during infancy and childhood, could affect an adult personality (Freud, 1933).

There are different kinds of criminals as Lombroso has correctly identified. There are petty thieves, shoplifters, tax evaders, white collar criminals, hardened criminals. In fact, hardened criminals do not commit crimes on impulse or as an occasional sideline, but as a regular way of making a living. They are habitual offenders/recidivists. They never have honest jobs, but devote all their working time to their illegal pre-occupation. Criminal organizations are a group of criminals organized for illegal purposes, operating a number of rackets, gangs and syndicates (Sutherland, 1937).

Several questions have been asked about the nature of the criminal mind and several answers have also been given. Basing on the nature-nurture debate, some psych-

logists believe a criminal behavior is inherited, while others believe it is acquired from the environment. Human beings are genetically primed. It is believed that human beings, as they go through life present a fixed process. One is what one is because nature has made it so. On the other hand, human beings are seen as the products of their environment. One's circumstances, such as birth, and status, eventually determine what and how one thinks and what one is. From the sociological perspective, the causes of crime and violence lie deep within the social structure defined by poverty, unequal opportunities for the minorities and the under class, cultural emphasis of being on top and lording it over others, exploitation and deceit on the part of the ruling class and so on (Marx, 1984).

Sometimes criminals are arguably not aware of the reasons why they commit crimes. Examples of this type of criminals are Kleptomaniacs, hate-criminals, passion offenders and insane offenders. In order to explain why an incident happened or why a deed was done one has to understand that people's actions are caused by different factors. Economic hardships, family problems, situational conditions, the person's psyche or psychological make-up, unfulfilled desire, and other forms of frustration can lead to a commission of crime (Marx, 1984).

When crimes are classified according to kinds of offences that are committed and the reasons, it is clear that different explanations are needed to account for apparently identical crimes. Different causes of crime call for different social responses. For example, a man who kills his wife, in a blind rage, is not treated in the same way as a mafia hit man who kills on the job, and neither is regarded in the same light as the corporate executives responsible for killing their customers with unsafe products. A good example of a man who kills his wife in a blind rage is Othello in Shakespeare's play, Othello.

As has been earlier mentioned, crimes are committed for various reasons. While some kill as part of business transactions, such as the "crime trust", which murders impersonally and solely for business (Menton, 1957), some kill for personal reasons as a reaction to societal pressures. For instance, in the case of Raskolnikov, he revolts against the crushing socio-economic conditions in which he lives. Members of his class were not only alienated from the products of their labor but also suffered in the hands of a callous minority bent on exploiting the majority.

Society, according to sociologists, not only controls our development, but also shapes our identity, our thoughts, and our emotions as the works of scholars like Herbert Mead, Charles H. Cooley; Emile Durkheim have shown. The structure of society becomes the structure of our consciousness. As has been articulated by Sartre (2003) "the meaning anything will have in the world will depend... upon the choices people make." Society does not stop at the surface of our skins. Society penetrates us as

much as it envelops us. An examination of Raskolnikov's role models will reveal that his orientation is a product of some influences:

"...further on my article, I remember insisting on the idea that all legislators and rulers of men commencing with the earliest, down to Lycurgus, Solon, Mahomet, Napoleon, etc. have one and all been criminals for whilst giving laws, they have naturally broken through older ones which had been faithfully observed by society and transmitted by its progenitors. These men most certainly never hesitated to shed blood as soon as they saw the advantages of doing so" (Crime and Punishment, 193 - 194)."

If these great men of old mentioned in the above excerpt had at one time or the other shed blood to transform the society, Raskolnikov did not see anything wrong in doing so for his society. These men obviously made an impact on Raskolnikov's thinking. This statement was when Raskolnikov tried to figure out why he committed the crime. He mentioned the desire to become a Napoleon as follows:

"I was ambitious to become a Napoleon; that was why I committed the murder. The fact is that one day I asked myself the following question supposing Napoleon to have been in my place. Supposing that to advance his career had neither Toulon nor Egypt nor the crossing of Mont Blanc, but in lieu of all he these brilliant exploits was on the point of committing a murder with a view to secure his future would he have recoiled at act of killing an old woman and robbing her of three thousand Roubles? Would he have agreed that such a deed was too much wanting in prestige and much too a criminal one? I finally came to the conclusion that he not only would have but that he would not have understood the possibility of such a thing. Every other expedient being out of his reach he would not have flinched, he would have done so without the smallest scruple (Crime and Punishment, 329 - 330)."

Socio-psychology as an elucidation

Social Psychology is the study of how the behavior of an individual is influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of other people (Roland et al., 1986). Social Psychology is a branch of Sociology. Sociologists and Social Psychologists do share some common interests—they study how people behave in groups. Moreover, Social Psychology is a sub-field of both its parent disciplines (Psychology and Sociology). However, it is not a grand synthesis of the two fields. The subject matter and methods of Social Psychology differ from those of sociology. Most sociologists study the structure and functioning of groups from small groups to large groups (societies). Social Psychologist on the other hand, are usually interested in how groups behave and how the individual

members are influenced by the group in which they belong how a person thinks about other people, is influenced by them and relates to them (Meyers, 1987). Thus, while Social Psychologists are interested in groups, they generally want to ascertain how groups affect individual persons or sometimes, how an individual can affect a group. Thus Sociology involves the understanding of what goes on in terms of social interaction. According to Berger (1963), the sociological problem is not so much why some things go wrong from the viewpoint of the authorities and the management of the social scene, but how the whole system works in the first place, what its presuppositions are and by what means is it held together.

Psychoanalysis involves the study of human personality. It can also be referred to as the psychology of humans. Psychoanalysis deals with terms such as the unconscious, repression, sublimation, condensation. Also, it examines the ego, superego, and the id. According to Eagleton (1984), it was Sigmund Freud who introduced this field of knowledge in his epochal work, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. Psychoanalysis is therefore:

“A form of literary criticism, which uses some of the techniques of psychoanalysis in its interpretation of literature. Psychoanalysis itself is a form of therapy, which aims to cure mental disorder by investigating the interactions between the conscious and unconscious elements in the mind (Barry, 1995).”

Psychoanalysis according to Hartman (1959) is concerned with the knowledge of human behavior and motivation (the exploration of human behavior).

In the exploration of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, a socio-psychological theoretical construct is employed. What is taken into account is the nature of the society of the novel, the effect of the society on the individual characters, especially, Raskolnikov. Also, the reaction(s) of the characters to the society and the social types that are portrayed in the novel are explained.

The following questions are addressed in this essay: Is society class-based? Why will an otherwise bright forward-looking undergraduate of Raskolnikov's standing be entrapped in a deviant murderous engagement? Can psychotic behaviors be explained from the prism of the social? Is man a subject of his environment?

Structure of the novel

The novel, *Crime and Punishment*, is a psychological account of a crime. A young man of a middle class origin, who is (living) in dire need, is expelled from the University. His name is Rodion Romanovitch Raskolnikov. He owes his landlady some money and he has tattered garments. For some time he has fallen into a (state of) nervous condition, monomania and depression. Based on

very superficial and weak thinking, and influenced by certain unrealized ideas in his head, he decides to quickly get out of a difficult situation by killing an old woman of sixty years, a usurer, Alena Ivanovna whom he had been patronizing.

Raskolnikov's mother and his sister Dounia come into the lime light of the novel when he gets back to his room and finds them waiting for him. Being emotionally unstable he places them in the care of his friend and colleague, Razoumikhin. Svidrigailoff (Raskolnikov's double), as introduced into the novel; had caused Dounia great suffering through sexual harassment while she had been in his employ as a governess. Raskolnikov meets Sonia the prostitute, gets involved in deep conversations with her and plans to tell her who committed the murder. Raskolnikov's behavior following the commission of the crime reminds us of Skies, the robber in Charles Dickens' novel, *Oliver Twist* after he had killed Nancy, the lady who used to act as their great informant:

“For now, a vision came before him, as constant and more terrible than that from which he had escaped. Those widely staring eyes, so lustreless and so glassy, that he had better borne to see them than think upon them, appeared in the midst of the darkness: light in themselves, but giving light to nothing. There were but two, but they were everywhere. If he shut out the sight, there came the room with every-well known object-some, indeed, that he would have forgotten, if he had gone over its contents from memory-each in its own accustomed place. The body was in its place, and its eyes were as he saw them when he stole away. He got up, and rushed into the field without. The figure was behind him. He re-entered the shed, and shrunk down once more. The eyes were there before he had lain himself along (*Oliver Twist*, 360).”

Tortured by his own mind, Raskolnikov goes to the police station where Porphyrius (the Magistrate), torments him with self incriminating questions and ironic statements. Later, Raskolnikov confesses his crime to Sonia and admits that in killing the two women – Alena Ivanovna and her servant and sister, Elizabeth - he actually destroyed himself. Svidrigailoff having overheard the confession discloses his knowledge of it to Raskolnikov. Believing that Porphyrius suspects him of the murders, and realizing that Svidrigailoff knows the truth, Raskolnikov finds life unbearable. Convinced that Dounia would have nothing to do with him, Svidrigailoff, after an indecent assault on the former walks off and ends his life by pulling a trigger against himself. Raskolnikov turns himself over to the Police and is sentenced to eight years in Siberia. Sonia follows him to the prison yard and with her help, he begins his regeneration.

The plot of this novel is subjected to the rich flow of various mental states. It is therefore difficult not to know that there are internal forces motivating many of the characters-Raskolnikov, Marmeladoff, Svidrigailoff, Sonia,

Catherine and even Alena Ivanovna, the money-lender herself. This view is informed by their character traits and idiosyncrasies. There appears to be too much of uncertainty and indeterminacy in the behavior of these characters. Raskolnikov is suffering from schizophrenia and plagued by dementia. He is capable of both good and bad deeds. Svidrigailoff is a Byronic hero and a gothic villain. Sonia is kind-hearted but pushed into whoredom by her social and economic condition. Marmeladoff, an otherwise civil clerk, because of misfortune is pushed from bad to worse as he ends up in self-inflicted suffering. Peter Petrovitch Looshin (Dounia's fiancé) is a calculating manipulator who knows how to exploit his helpless victims. Alena Ivanovna is said to have sharp evil eyes representing the heart of a corrupt and exploitative society against which Raskolnikov revolts.

The author's understanding of crime and punishment

Crime and Punishment raises the problem of freedom of choice, which in this case has been "imposed" on man. The novel is a trying out of the consequences of a "free-will" unleashed on society and at the same time an attempt to find a force to restrain the freewill. Crime and Punishment according to Wasioleck (1964) is the drama of the terrible consequences that follow an unleashed will and the groping for psychological and metaphysical roots of God in reality. It reveals to the reader a protagonist whose psychological trauma overshadows and leads him to the confession of a sin he committed with a view to pleasing the society and solving his own monetary problems in the process.

Raskolnikov is carved in the image of the Nietzschean metaphysical rebel who has pushed things too far to a nihilistic end. To Nietzsche, the superman commits crime or does anything for self-gratification, and not for humanity. Raskolnikov is confronted by a world without mercy, faith, hope, charity, justice, or purpose. Like other metaphysical heroes, he challenges the very condition of his being, the needless suffering, the absurd contrast between the inborn sense of justice and the morality and injustice of the external world. But instead of mobilizing members of his class to fight this unacceptable injustice in the system he does it alone and is ultimately weighed down by internal and external forces beyond his control.

There is no doubt, the fate of Raskolnikov who drops out of school due to lack of funds and other existential needs is the fate of the underclass in Russia where the novel is set and the entire marginalized and exploited members of the lower classes worldwide. Raskolnikov has two faces: the humane and warm side represented by Sonia and even his sister Dounia and the intellectual and selfish side represented by Svidrigailoff and Peter Looshin. Sonia is kind and is ready to suffer to make mankind happy. This is why she takes to prostitution. Although only eighteen, she could almost be taken for a lassie. Everything in her house denotes poverty. She has

a kind heart, and genuine concern for the welfare of her family and people who come across her. She is characterized by a patient and quiet but determined love for Raskolnikov.

Dounia, in spite of her view that Raskolnikov is selfish, hard, and pitiless; is ready to do anything to satisfy him. She had gone through all kinds of humiliation in the household of Svidrigailoff to sustain her family; she is ready to abandon Looshin to satisfy him. In fact, even if she had married Looshin, the expectation was that her brother would have been the greatest beneficiary. Svidrigailoff is the aspect of Raskolnikov that does anything, not for the sake of humanity but for purely self-gratification. Even the money he gives to Sonia cannot be said to be an act of kindness, but an act that gives him pleasure at that point in time. Looshin is a calculating manipulator. He is too presumptuous and reckons too much on his own power on the helplessness of his victims. Pulcheria Alexandrovna (Raskolnikov's mother) describes him as stern, haughty, and even rude. He is vain, cold, calculating and boorish. He is a member of the exploiting class and therefore does not have qualms in subjecting those below him to his ruthless will.

It is worth noting that even before the commission of the crime, Raskolnikov is presented to the reader from the outset as a man lacking in decision. He is hungry, schizophrenic, psychotic and withdrawn. These manifestations are a product of his socio-economic condition for he was not born with them. He begins to patronize dram-shops with a view to staving off his existential problems. It is in one of his drinking outings that he comes in contact with a fellow citizen, Marmeladoff who comes to the tavern to do away with his own sorrows. Marmeladoff tells Raskolnikov: "I think I can read trouble in your countenance. As soon as you entered I received that impression..." (Crime and Punishment 12). It is this condition of ravaging poverty and acute destitution that confronts us in the novel with the like of Raskolnikov, Razoumikhin, Marmeladoff, Sophia as the scum of the society while the like of Alena Ivanovna, Peter Looshin represent the upper and bourgeois class.

In spite of the effete response of Raskolnikov to the challenges of his society, his single mindedness in killing the pawn-broker is a statement that evokes the irreconcilable antagonism between the oppressed and the oppressor. This novel is therefore one that raises a protest against an existing order that is found to be agonizing but in quest of a new society and another kind of persona.

Dostoyevsky's style in crime and punishment

Dostoyevsky's writing style is a logical outcome of various influences which he had both from the literary world, and from his life experiences. Crime and Punishment, the first of Dostoyevsky's great long novels reveals the author's mastery of psychological observation and analysis.

Rahv (1978) provides us with an explanation of how

Dostoyevsky came about his style:

“One cannot ignore Dostoyevsky’s literary association with the traditions and influences of the European novel. He was influenced by Balzac, Dickens, Hugo and E. T. A. Hoffman. Nor can his ideology be detached from the western tradition of Christian and nationalist thought. There appear in Dostoyevsky, versions of romantic historicism and folk worship that came to Russia with the great vogue of Shelling and Hegel in the question immediately preceding Dostoyevsky’s. Even Dostoyevsky’s Psychological depth with its interest in the life of dreams and the splitting of personality is heavily indebted to the theories of romantic writers and doctors such as Reil and Carus (Rahv, 1997).”

In the novel, we discover a direct and obvious source of Raskolnikov’s notion of inferior and superior men: the superior ones having the right to commit breaches of morality while the inferior ones are obliged to mind their own business which is to stay put in the common rut. “Hegel’s world historical individuals such as Alexander The Great, or Caesar, or Napoleon, the names invoked by Dostoyevsky’s protagonist, perform the grandiose task set for him by the “Wettgeist” irrespective of moral considerations” (Rahv, 1978).

Two systems of thought and two personality traits are contrasted (Raskolnikov’s individualism and Sonia Marmeladoff’s loving and submissive outlook). Razoumikhin also proves himself to be a loving and reliable friend as can be seen in all his selfless efforts for his friend, Raskolnikov. Raskolnikov’s ethical code, which is based on atheism, allows him to transgress the norms of social behavior, regarding himself as a bearer of new ideas to act against established laws. Raskolnikov is severely wounded psychologically exposing himself to extreme individualism and consequent dementia. But Sonia’s way of submission is justified by her deeds. She endures poverty, sorrow, hunger, humiliation and mockery with equanimity.

The individualism of Raskolnikov and Svidrigâiloff portrays them as people who are not governed by reason. They are lacking in focus. Raskolnikov as an ambivalent personality makes him a different person at different times. He is said to hate the other “Raskolnikov” that erupts from some suppressed layer (subconscious) of his consciousness to contradict the natural image of himself. He is always muttering to himself. He is schizophrenic; thus no wonder he is socially withdrawn, reclusive, alone and appears to be unable to form warm, close, social relationships. People who are schizophrenic have odd ways of thinking, communicating and behaving. They suffer from delusions of all sorts.

Raskolnikov can be said to be suffering from a personality disorder. This can be observed from the description he is given in the novel:

“He wondered at himself. Razoumikhin was one of his

most intimate friends at the University, although, it must be observed, Raskolnikov had very few. He shunned everybody, went about with no one, and studiously kept aloof from all, and soon he became equally avoided (Crime and Punishment, 41). “

From the beginning of the novel up to the time that Raskolnikov confesses before Elia Petrovitch, he is presented as one who is in one form of delirium or the other. The commission of the crime aggravates the disorientation and personality disorder of Raskolnikov as is exemplified in his persistent mutterings and murmurings:

“It is sufficient!” he muttered solemnly and decidedly. “Away, specters! away, fear!, away, visions! This is life. Am I living now? Did my life not leave me together with the old woman’s? Heaven be hers and—Enough! Peace to her! The reign of reason and light commences now, of will, of force (Crime and Punishment, 137).”

The psychological description of the characters in the novel involves Dostoyevsky in the intimate delineation of the subconscious. In dreams, the subconscious manifests itself and achieves a special prominence. According to Freud (1932) dreams occupy a special place in Psychoanalysis: they are indispensable. It is the dream in part which symbolically directs our attention to the meaning of the story.

Dreams are often direct manifestation of a person’s unconscious mind (Hartman, 1959; Freud, 1933; Smith and Mackie, 1995). Dreams play a great role in the novel, as the fullest expressions of potentiality. Raskolnikov underlies this in his reaction to the fearful dream of the mare beating. The ostensible subject of his dream has been an incident from childhood, but he is quick to seize its real meaning: “My God!” he cries, “can it really be, that I will take an ax and strike her on the head, smash her skull that I will slip in the sticky warm blood... with the ax... my God can it be?” (Crime and Punishment, 211).

Svidrigâiloff’s hallucination, dreams and suicide comprise one of Crime and Punishment’s most powerful sequences. Dostoyevsky, in an attempt to show the relationship between Raskolnikov and Svidrigâiloff, seems to bring the dreams Svidrigâiloff had on his last night into correspondence, if not wholly exact with those Raskolnikov had had earlier. Svidrigâiloff’s first dream is of a spring day on which he looks at the dead body of a girl who had apparently killed herself because of the atrocity he had committed on her body. Svidrigâiloff’s second dream is of a little girl, in whose eyes, even as he tries to protect her, he sees a reflection of his rapacious lust.

Raskolnikov had four dreams, three of which are described by the narrator, and one that he himself describes and in which he does not appear symbolically. The first three dreams are tied together by violence, and each reflects light on the other and in turn it is illuminated. The dreams project backward, forward, and inward. Having

already thought of the crime, Raskolnikov is sub-consciously warning himself not to commit it. The savage beating of the mare in his dream foreshadows his own axe murder of the money lender and her sister.

A person's consciousness can also be detected through his thoughts and beliefs (Smith and Mackie, 1995), which is the reason Dostoyevsky makes use of the interior monologue, and the stream of consciousness techniques in the novel. Through the internal monologues, the author does a psychological exploration of the different characters. This gives a better understanding of the characters and why they do all that they do. The use of interior monologue also reveals the soul that is divided and a split personality. It is a self-questioning device which amounts to an easy way of bringing to the fore, the psychological state of a character as well as his/her type of consciousness. We notice a deliberate attempt by Dostoyevsky in this novel to accentuate the unexpected in his characters' behaviors so that they disrupt the lives of others around them. Each character is supplied with its own individual existential germ, which opens in the dark and secretes corners of the soul until one day, it breaks through into actuality. The characters are like creatures from different worlds, thrown into the same world.

The burden in the hearts of the characters will be understood in the context of the foregoing discussion. Svidrigailoff kills himself by pulling the trigger against his body. Dounia is willing to sacrifice herself to Looshin for her brother, Raskolnikov. Sonia is ready to give herself to several men to satisfy her economic needs and those of her family.

Conclusion

Crime and Punishment represents a trial of a class society. It is a castigation of the inhumanity of man to man inherent in the then Russian society and mirrors the people who have been deprived of any and all prospects of a better future in life. Raskolnikov sees the pawnbroker as a vermin who is part of a class sucking him and his like. But his effete individualistic revolt appears not enough to cleanse the rot in his society.

The novel is devoid of a gleam of hope and denies the existence of any possibilities of a social struggle but instead glories in Christian humility and suffering as can be seen in the life of Raskolnikov while in prison. The arch-individualistic revolt of Raskolnikov is to say the least a product of bourgeois anarchism. There is no doubt that the society of the novel is harsh, oppressive and injurious to the psyche of the individuals who occupy the lower rungs of the social ladder. This condition dehumanizes and negates the lower classes as represented by Raskolnikov, Svidrigailoff, Sonia, Dounia, Marmeladoff etc- the scum of the earth.

Crime and Punishment is a mixture of the psychological novel, the novel of detection, the novel of character, the philosophical novel, etc. There are a multiplicity of voices-

the existentialist voice, the Marxian voice, the Freudian voice and the Christian voice. The philosophical thought is that of existentialism. The writer appears to be saying that the world is meaningless as it is full of injustice, exploitation and other forms of inequities.

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