



The Guilt Full Morality: A Study on the Consciousness of the Protagonists of Fyodor Dostoyevsky with Reference to Crime and Punishment

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ABSTRACT

A convolution of complexity, the human mind is stretched beyond one's understanding. Various theories and philosophies have been developed to attempt the exploration of it. In literature, many writers have endeavoured on this path of exploration and the works of Fyodor Dostoyevsky has been regarded as the most lucrative of it all (Ewald,2011). The novels of Dostoyevsky probes in to the consciousness of a human being and portrays the hidden complexities (Uwasomba,2010). The current study has selected Dostoyevsky's crime and punishment to explore the consciousness of the human mind through its protagonists with reference to the theme of criminality. With crime and criminality being the central theme the study aims to explore the crime in the novels and the effect it has on the protagonists. To carry out a deeper exploration of the consciousness of the protagonists of Fyodor Dostoyevsky with reference to the theme of criminality. To assess the impact of crime, in order to analyse the psychological transformation of the protagonists.

The psychological approach is rooted in the idea that literary works are the reflection of experiences and it assists in the understanding the problems that are caused by experiences. The struggle in mind the mental instability how poverty, prostitution and alcoholism strongly manifested in the society also appends to a complex psychological and mental state of the criminals mind. The theme of alienation depicted in crime and punishment by Dostoyevsky the theory he contrives that humans are separated into two categories: 'ordinary and extraordinary'. According to which individual belonging to extraordinary such as Napoleon Bonaparte -(the personage he refers to as an

example of extraordinary) working for a more progressive or higher cause do not come under the dictum that apply to ordinary people. The protagonist of the novel tries to verify that he belongs to the former class, the class of extraordinary. The explanation or theory which he has contrived makes him immune to any kind of regulation or law that society imposes.

The novel has hues of existentialism, nihilism and Freudian philosophies to it suggesting strongly the meaninglessness of the world. Commitment of crime is voluntary but punishment for the crime is compulsory. Crime is always followed by the punishment.

Keywords: *Guilt, psychoanalysis, dual personality, crime, redemption, alienation*

Introduction:

Russian writer Fyodor Dostoyevsky (born november 11,1821 moscow). Wrote the classics Crime and Punishment and The Brothers karamazov. His work explored psychology and existentialism. He studied to be a military engineer, but shortly after graduating decided to become a writer. He experienced traumatic events, including a mock execution and exile. His work explored the human condition and is credited with shaping existentialism. Crime and punishment is one of his well known novels. (biography.com editors). Psychology is the science of behaviour and mind, embracing all aspects of conscious and unconscious experience as well as thought. It is an academic discipline and a social science which seeks to understand individuals and groups by establishing general principles and researching specific cases

(wikipedia). Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel crime and punishment (1866) is the novel pertaining actions and occurrence in the life of Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov. The protagonist of the novel, a former student who is living in an apartment building in St Petersburg. His psychological condition is depicted on the onset of the novel, he is presented to the readers as sickly, hungry and short of money who is socially withdrawn. His socio-economic status appends more to his present state. All these issues resulting in a dropout student also gives us a picture of the Russian society of that time. Marginalised and exploited people who are depicted as lesser mortals. Various questions have been brought about the state of mind of a criminal and many have been answered. The debates about the criminal mind that is inherited or is it gathered by the surroundings in which the individual dwells. To get a deeper insight psychoanalysis would be more appropriate which deals with conscious, unconscious state of human mind: According to Eagleton (1983), it was Sigmund Freud who introduced this field of knowledge in his epochal work 'Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis.' A form of literary criticism which uses some of the techniques of psychoanalysis in the interpretation of literature (Barry, 1995). In this novel Raskolnikov plans to murder and rob a pawn broker whom he considers very despicable, and justifies it by his theory of ordinary and extraordinary. The world which is depicted in this novel also has a tinge of nihilism according to which all values and set of beliefs are baseless and nothing in the world holds any value, purposelessness of everything. A philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche is most associated with nihilism, Nietzsche states-

"Nihilism is ...not only the belief that everything deserves to perish; but one actually puts one shoulder to the plough; one destroys" (Will to Power 1968). Raskolnikov associates such beliefs to the society in which he lives and pushes away all the people close to him resulting in his absolute alienation. After much contemplation and brooding he sneaks into Alyona Ivanovna's (pawn broker) apartment where he gruesomely murders the old lady with an axe and also ends up killing her half sister Lizaveta who just coincidentally becomes an eye witness to the murder, totally rattled by the murders Raskolnikov steals only few items of intrinsic value and leaves much of the wealth untouched. After this debacle his arduous psychological torment starts to genesis. The internal struggle his perplexed state of mind delineate his psychological punishment. Raskolnikov falls sick and intensely broods over the murder. His outlandish

behaviour towards his only friend Razumikhin and people around him devises more suspicion. The only reason he has to justify his crime is that he empathizes himself as Napoleon hence putting him under the category of extraordinary people. (The theory devised by him about ordinary and extraordinary people). Following lines depicts his comparison "I wanted to become Napoleon, that is why I killed her... Do you understand now?" (Crime and Punishment 2000 p 349).

His duel personality is also mirrored in this novel which is also an psychological aspect. When in his state of delirium he aimlessly wanders in streets and encounters Marmeladov who is injured mortally, Raskolnikov helps him and even gives the man his money which is a great respite to Marmeladov and his daughter Sonia who is forced into prostitution to provide for the family. This incidence shows his compassionate side which is totally in contrast with the detestable murder he has committed. His duel personality can also be seen when Raskolnikov's mother Pulcheria Alexandrovna and his sister Dounia comes to meet him and his behaviour makes them very unsure. A delineation of his duel personality which comes into play is described when Razumikhin tries to explain his uncanny attitude in following lines :

"He is morose, gloomy, proud and haughty, and of late - and perhaps for a long time before - he has been suspicious and fanciful. He has a noble nature and a kind heart. He does not like showing his feeling and would rather do a cruel thing than open his heart freely. Sometimes, though, he is not at all morbid, but simply cold and inhumanly callous; it's as though he were alternating between two characters (crime and punishment 2000 p 184)."

The oscillating behaviour makes us think that he is subjected to a mental illness, entangled in his own actions, thoughts unable to synchronize both. His thoughts are more elaborated and he spends much time in contemplating the crime but execution of crime is vague totally unco-ordinated, as a matter of fact its just sheer chance that he manages to elude the scene of crime. Many reasons which he ascertains to the killing include poverty, pride, but most clear one is the justification of utilitarianism and nihilism. His inner void is so deep rooted that at times it branches out very variedly. All this perpetuating into dementia further manifesting his body into a psychosomatic disorder like feverish state and unconsciousness. These changes ensuing unwanted attention and gathering suspicion.

The traits and the idiosyncrasies of the characters in this novel are to varied and one can find lot of equivocation. As we speak of the protagonist of the novel we can determine that he is suffering from deep sense of guilt which becomes self loathing and how this agonises him. The murder broods over him every time, he feels stifled all the time. He is at war with himself and for self satisfaction to console himself he gives the following explanation:-

"The old woman was a mistake perhaps, but she is not what matters. The old woman was only an illness... I was in a hurry to overstep, I stopped on this side... I was only capable of killing (crime and punishment 2000 p 234.)" These lines reflect that he is trying a psychological defence mechanism. Psychology and logic, rationalisation also known as making excuses (Simon,2009) is a defence mechanism in which controversial behaviour or feelings are justified and explained in a seeming rational or logical manner. This mechanism which Raskolnikov espouses illustrates his own insecurity and total incompetence in executing the crime and failing to legitimise his theory of being extraordinary like Napoleon. The guilt of Raskolnikov can also be compared to the guilt of Ancient Mariner in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (1798)". It tells about the titular Mariner who somewhat like Raskolnikov false for human follies and in the moment of utter foolishness shoots the innocent albatross that leads him and the crew to their doom. The consequences which the crew faces are like obliteration, and the most excruciating of all is the weight of the guilt by which the Mariner suffers and is only eased from this harrowing guilt is by learning and sharing the imperative lesson of love , compassion and significance of life .Following lines describes the guilt and loneliness of the mariner

"O Wedding - Guest! this soul hath been

Alone on a wide wide sea:

So lonely 'twas, that god himself Scarce seemed there to be.

(The Rime of the Ancient mariner)

Similarly Raskolnikov is also redeemed from his guilt which has been eating him up from inside and making life unbearable. By confessing his crime to Sonia and relinquishing his alienation towards the society. His state of total oblivion also renders a deep impact on people around him, like his mother and sister. The other character in the novel who also gets emancipated is

Dounias former employer Svidrigailov who in the past sexually harassed her to seek love but finds no reciprocation and finds solace by ending his own life.

CONCLUSION:

Crime and punishment can be seen as an amalgamation of so many diverse traits with aspects of psychological novel, detective novel, class struggle. A deeper understanding of the state of mind of our protagonist his interior monologues exhibiting different personalities we see he's not absolutely malevolent but has soft side as well. Towards the end getting his redemption for the crime hence maintaining a balance that crime is followed by the punishment both psychological and physical and how his own mind first becomes his psychological prison.

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