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## DOSTOEVSKY'S "RASKOLNIKOV": THE CRIMINALISTIC PROTEST

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In May of 1858 Fyodor Dostoevsky wrote his brother Michael from bleak Semipalatinsk: "I want to write something this year also for the Roussky Slovo—not the novel, but a tale. I won't write the novel till I've got out of Siberia. I must put it off till then. The motive of this book is most excellent, the principal figure is new and has never yet been done. But as to-day in Russia such a figure frequently emerges in actual life. . . . I feel sure that I shall succeed in enriching my novel, after my return, with fresh observations."

This figure is Rodion Raskolnikov of *Crime and Punishment*, which appeared in 1866, exactly forty years before Dr. Eugen Bleuler of Zürich initiated his memorable series of publications setting forth the psychodynamic viewpoint in the approach to the understanding and treatment of mental disorders, with special application to that group of bizarre cases termed by him schizophrenia, or "splitting" of the mind.

Dostoevsky, in his epochal work, has anticipated in masterly fashion the main tenets of interpretation long afterward developed and scientifically refined by Bleuler, thereby demonstrating his right to be placed among the great psychologists of our time. The pressing contemporary problem presented by the youthful offender makes most appropriate further thought about Dostoevsky's attitude toward the phenomena of criminal psychology.

The problem that the novelist places before himself is, Why did Raskolnikov, the twenty-three year old student of law, kill the aged pawnbroker woman? Stated in another and more psychological manner, What was the personality back of the murder and what were the specific mental processes preceding, and consequent upon, the act?

The scene opens with the emergence of the poverty-stricken Rodion from his garret cupboard. Numbed by the oppressive feeling of financial helplessness, he had for some time past been becoming increasingly overstrained, irritable, and hypochondriacal. Hav-

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ing withdrawn from the university, he had isolated himself from his former companions. The possibility of meeting anyone inspired him with a nameless dread. Overcome by the humiliation of his position, he had ceased to occupy himself with practical matters.

"It would have been difficult to sink to a lower ebb of disorder, but to Raskolnikov in his present state of mind this was positively agreeable. He had got completely away from every one, like a tortoise in its shell, and even the sight of the servant girl who had to wait upon him and looked sometimes into his room made him writhe with nervous irritation. He was in the condition that overtakes some monomaniacs entirely concentrated upon one thing." During the past fortnight he had scarcely eaten; no concern was shown with the appearance of his person.

Nastasya the servant asks him why he is doing nothing now. "I am doing . . ." Raskolnikov begins sullenly and with reluctance. "What are you doing?" "Work . . ." "What sort of work?" "I am thinking," he replied seriously, after pondering a while. Lost in the haze of a perpetual day-dream, he was groping around on a two-dimensional psychic level.

"It was remarkable that Raskolnikov had hardly any friends at the university; he kept aloof . . . , went to see no one, and did not welcome anyone who came to see him, and indeed everyone soon gave him up. He took no part in the students' gatherings, amusements or conversations. He worked with great intensity without sparing himself, and he was respected for this, but no one liked him. . . . There was a sort of haughty pride and reserve about him, as though he were keeping something to himself. He seemed to some of his comrades to look down upon them all as children, as though he were superior in development, knowledge and convictions, as though their beliefs and interests were beneath him."

He soliloquizes: "It would be interesting to know what it is men are most afraid of. Taking a new step, uttering a new word is what they fear most." Then he asks himself: "Why am I going there now? Am I capable of *that*? Is *that* serious? It is not serious at all. It's simply a fantasy to amuse myself; a plaything! Yes, maybe it is a plaything." He says this as he is on the way for the 'rehearsal' of the crime. At first he had looked upon the hideous and daring imagery as devoid of realistic implications. But after a month of dalliance with dreams of violence, after deriding his own impotence and indecision, he had unconsciously come to accept the

playthings of his imagination as events to be enacted, "although he still did not realize this himself."

Reconnoitering at the pawnbroker's shop, he is filled with revulsion. How degrading the very idea is! Coming out, he mutters, "No, it's nonsense, it's rubbish! And how could such an atrocious thing come into my head? What filthy things my heart is capable of. Yes, filthy above all, disgusting, loathsome, loathsome!"

He is suddenly seized with a desire to be with people, and steps into a dirty tavern. "Just a glass of beer, a piece of dry bread—and in one moment the brain is stronger, the mind clearer and the will is firm! Phew, how utterly petty it all is!" Yet, looking in a friendly manner on those in the room, he is vaguely aware that this happier feeling is not normal. He is in the dive merely to get rid of himself for the time being.

The letter from his mother arrives, telling of the engagement of his sister Dounia to the lawyer Luzhin. "I won't have your sacrifice, Dounia, . . ." Long since he has vowed to devote his whole future to the care of his mother and sister, *when he has finished his studies and obtained a post*. But how is he to attain this goal without ready money? Well, the old pawnbroker vampire has plenty of ready cash.

Raskolnikov overhears a conversation between a student and an officer about the hag, which is nothing more or less than his own thoughts: rationalization, working up his courage. The student says: "I could kill that damned old woman and make off with her money . . . without the faintest conscience-prick." She is a vicious, worthless creature who would shortly die in any case. Listen: ". . . fresh young lives thrown away for want of help and by the thousands, on every side! A hundred thousand good deeds could be done and helped, on . . . money which will be buried in a monastery! . . . Kill her, take her money and with the help of it devote oneself to the service of humanity and the good of all. What do you think, would not one tiny crime be wiped out by thousands of good deeds? . . . One death, and a hundred lives in exchange—it's simple arithmetic." To do away with such a "louse," such a "black beetle," would be a positive favor to the world. And then, note well: ". . . we have to correct and direct nature, . . . But for that, there would never have been a single great man."

His casuistry is complete; there are no rational objections to the deed which he can find. "But in the last resort he simply

ceased to believe in himself, and doggedly, slavishly sought arguments in all directions, fumbling for them, as though someone were forcing and drawing him to it."

The dreadful fantasy is compulsive; Rodion is and has for a considerable time been in a virtually somnambulistic, dissociated state. He dreams about the brutal killing of the horse, and hears Mikola (the dreamer himself) shout, brandishing the bar, "My property!" Thus is his egomania symbolically portrayed. He wakes up in terror. Can it come to pass "that I shall really take an axe, that I shall strike her on the head" (as Mikola did with the poor animal), split her skull open . . . that I shall tread in the sticky warm blood, break the lock, steal and tremble; hide, all spattered in the blood . . . with the axe?"

Quivering, he continues: "I knew that I could never bring myself to it, so what have I been torturing myself for till now? Yesterday, yesterday, when I went to make that . . . *experiment*, yesterday I realized completely that I could never bear to do it. . . . Why am I going over it again, then? Why am I still hesitating?"

Rising from the grass, he experiences a sudden relief, as though he had cast off a suffocating burden. "I renounce that accursed . . . dream of mine." Free at last from that spell, that sorcery! But is he? Why does he, so nervously exhausted, go homeward by a circuitous route through the Hay Market, instead of by the direct way? This he was never able to understand. Lately he had grown quite superstitious, and was unwilling to attribute his direction toward the Market to his habitual wandering about that place. For here—quite by accident, it would seem—he runs across Lizaveta, feebleminded sister of the pawnbroker, and listens to her conversation with the huckster, whereby he obtains information enabling him to time the murder advantageously.

Arrived at his lodging, he "went in like a man condemned to death. He thought of nothing and was incapable of thinking; but he felt suddenly in his whole being that he had no more freedom of thought, no will, and that everything was suddenly and irrevocably decided." He had become an automaton, driven blindly onward by a powerful *repressed* motive.

Very early, Raskolnikov had begun to ponder questions of criminal psychology. Of especial interest to him was the fact that nearly all criminals leave such obvious clues. The chief reason for this, he concluded, was to be sought in the mental processes of the wrongdoer; material difficulties in the concealment of the crim-

inal act assume an entirely secondary importance. "Almost every criminal is subject to a failure of will and reasoning power by a childish and phenomenal heedlessness, at the very instant when prudence and caution are most essential. It was his conviction that this eclipse of reason and failure of will power attacked a man like a disease, developed gradually and reached its highest point just before the perpetration of the crime, continued with equal violence at the moment of the crime and for longer or shorter time after, according to the individual case, and then passed off like any other disease. The question whether the disease gives rise to the crime, or whether the crime from its own peculiar nature is always accompanied by something of the nature of disease, he did not yet feel able to decide."

As for *himself*, he was convinced that his will and reasoning functions would not break down at the crucial moment, since the act he planned was "not a crime." All that was requisite for the perpetration of his design was to gain intimate familiarity with the material, practical details, and mental control would turn the trick. But the material intricacies of the "affair" never were attended to by Rodion, and when he had once been launched upon the overt act, everything turned out strangely unlike what he had designed, as if accidentally and unexpectedly.

Raskolnikov's friend, Razumihin, remarked that the psychological data alone will enable one to get on the track of the guilty man. This truism applied with particular force to the unfortunate Rodion. The description of him, put into the mouth of the faithful Razumihin, is a masterpiece of psychology: "he is morose, gloomy, proud and haughty, . . . suspicious and fanciful. He has a noble nature and a kind heart. He does not like showing his feelings 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 we were alternating between two characters. Sometimes he is fearfully reserved! He says he is so busy that everything is a hindrance, and yet he lies in bed doing nothing. He doesn't jeer at things, not because he hasn't the wit, but as though he hadn't time to waste on such trifles. He never listens to what is said to him. He is never interested in what interests other people at any given moment. He thinks very highly of himself . . . ." A perfect delineation of the schizoid personality, surely. The negativism and all the rest of the traits are right there.

The essence of Raskolnikov is his intense love of self. Over-

weening vanity is paramount. In his judgment of people he was hasty and severe, as his mother pointed out to him. She tells Razumihin how capricious her son has been. "I never could depend on what he would do when he was only fifteen. And I am sure that he might do something now that nobody else would think of doing. . . . Well, for instance, do you know how a year and a half ago he astounded me and gave me a shock that nearly killed me, when he had the idea of marrying that girl—his landlady's daughter? . . . Do you suppose that my tears, my entreaties, my illness, my possible death from grief, our poverty would have made him pause? No, he would calmly have disregarded all obstacles."

The girl just referred to was downright ugly to the eye, was invalidated and gravely psychopathic; she had died a short time previously. Raskolnikov later said to his sister: "To her heart I confided much of what has since been so hideously realized."

As regards his asociality, we have already dwelt upon that. Apropos Rodion's capacity for love, Razumihin avers, "He loves no one and perhaps he never will." More of this later, when we study the rôle played by Sonia.

Raskolnikov's article, in which he divided all men into "ordinary" and "extraordinary" went a long ways in helping to direct suspicion for the murder toward him. The famous interview between himself and Inspector Porfiry, wherein the article is discussed, demonstrates the youth's preoccupation with the "man of the future," the superman. Obedience, passivity, is the rule for the herd. "The second category all transgress the law; they are destroyers or disposed to destruction according to their capacities. The crimes of these men are of course relative and varied; for the most part they seek in very varied ways the destruction of the present for the sake of the better. But if such a one is forced for the sake of his idea to step over a corpse or wade through blood, he can, I maintain, find within himself, in his conscience, a sanction for wading through blood— . . ."

He cites historical evidences to back up his argument, which he admits is not a novel formulation. "Lycurgus, Solon, Mahomet, Napoleon, and so on, were all without exception criminals, from the very fact that, making a new law, they transgressed the ancient one, handed down from their ancestors and held sacred by the people, . . . It's remarkable, in fact, that the majority, indeed, of

these benefactors and leaders of humanity were guilty of terrible carnage.”

Napoleon is his idol. Why? Because he had the courage, the “strength to transgress.” This is Raskolnikov’s conception of strength, his obsession. Being abstract, he is cruel. The key to the solution of his criminal act is handed us. Did he murder for the sake of the three thousand rubles he expected to get? Was the support of his widowed mother and sister the true motive for the destruction of the hag? No! Under terrific emotional pressure he confesses to the prostitute Sonia: “I wanted to become a Napoleon, that is why I killed her. . . . I too . . . left off thinking about it . . . murdered her, following his example. . . . I . . . resolved . . . to build up a completely new career and enter upon a new life of independence. . . . He who despises most things will be a lawgiver among them and he who dares most of all will be most in the right! So it has been till now and so it always will be.” *And at last:* “I . . . I wanted to *have the daring* . . . and I killed her. I only wanted to have the daring, Sonia! That was the whole cause of it!”

Too late, he emerges from his trance with the realization that the superb Will-to-Dare possessed by the man of Austerlitz and St. Helena is not for him, that he is nothing but a weakling. “I am just such a louse as all the rest.” He admits himself to be “vain, envious, malicious, base, vindictive and . . . well, perhaps with a tendency to insanity.”

In the catharsis experienced in and evoked by the presence of the unhappy Sonia there is a full and unreserved self-confrontation, which is nevertheless later on repressed. “I wanted to murder without casuistry, to murder for my own sake, for myself alone! I didn’t want to lie about it even to myself. It wasn’t to help my mother I did the murder—that’s nonsense—I didn’t do the murder to gain wealth and power and to become a benefactor of mankind. Nonsense! I simply did it; I did the murder for myself, for myself alone, and whether I became a benefactor to others, or spent my life like a spider, catching men in my web and sucking the life out of men, I couldn’t have cared at that moment. . . . And it was not the money I wanted, Sonia, when I did it. It was not so much the money I wanted, but something else. . . . I know it all now. . . . Understand me! Perhaps I should never have committed a murder again. I wanted to find out then and quickly whether I was a louse like everybody else or a man. Whether I can step over barriers



or not, whether I dare stoop to pick up or not, whether I am a trembling creature or whether I have the *right* . . . .”

Is there, in all literature, a more terrible confession of social impotency than this? Who can begin to rival Dostoevsky's insight into the mind of that class of murderers typified by Rodion Raskolnikov?

The wretched youth goes on in his outpouring to the girl: “Listen: when I went then to the old woman's I only went to *try*. . . . You may be sure of that!” “And you murdered her!” “But how did I murder her? Is that how men do murders? Do men go to commit a murder as I went then?”

Yes. Most assuredly they do. There are many Raskolnikovs on this earth who, writhing under an agonizing sense of inadequacy, go to their crimes as did the young Russian. The partition between the image and reality is often all too thin and fragile, especially in the psychopathic. The beginnings of the sick phantasies are insidious, the growth processes treacherous and appallingly persistent; the tentacles reach out until they have penetrated the most obscure regions of a man's being. They sap, day by day and hour by hour, the latent energies which might well be directed toward constructive activities.

So, Rodion cannot bring himself to believe in the gross reality with which his criminal imagery is charged. Particularly at the instant when the axe crashed into the brain of his victim, everything remained a chimera—only more intensified and vivid than before. It was as though he were an onlooker—as though, however, he suffered from grave doubts as to the identity of the actor in the hideous scene, and, in order to reassure *himself*, said, This is *not* I who do this.

A frustrated, inhibited soul, inordinately vain and sensitive as a mimosa plant, Raskolnikov longed for nothing so much as independence. The Will-to-Dare expanded for him into a fatal fixed idea. He cannot bring himself to admit his own impotency. *One must excel in some way*. “Or throw up life altogether!” he cries in a frenzy—“accept one's lot humbly as it is, once for all and stifle everything in oneself, giving up all claim to activity, life and love!” If, thinks he, the “perfect crime” beckons as his only hope for bursting asunder the slave-shackles of fear, why, so be it. Napoleon is the captain of those supermen who have been *strong* enough to commit crime. Success is its own eloquent justification. He who with magnificent daring can “step across the line” has

attained the supreme goal—the conquest of the demon Fear. The chosen of history have never flinched before the use of force.

Rodion's crime represented, was a symbol of, his protest against the maddening realization of failure. The act had as its true objective the satisfaction of a *psychological*, rather than an economic need. Rage against himself was transferred to hatred of the prospective victim. She conveniently crystallized for him in her repulsive, thieving person, an unappreciative society. The eternal paradox of the miserable band of whom Raskolnikov is the chief, expressed in Sonia's outburst, "And how could you give away your last farthing and yet rob and murder!", now ceases to puzzle us.

Emotionally immature, he had no practical comprehension of the basic principle of successful living contained in the well-known lines from Faust, and which are no doubt the unconscious utilization of a passage from Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*:

"He only earns his freedom and existence,  
Who daily conquers them anew."

The routine and pettinesses inevitably brought forth by the return of each day disgusted Rodion; he spurned them. He labors under an impulsive urge to "get there at one jump." He has no patience whatever with the throng of material details standing between him and his goal. The genius possesses consummate self-mastery in the arduous task of learning to manipulate these details; but this Rodion does not perceive.

Brooding over his problems as he did, the certain result was a solipsistic universe. Society receded until it approached the dimension of a point. Retreating into the carapace of his congenitally psychopathic constitution, the "I" alone exists for him. He regards his miseries as unparalleled. No one has ever had such hardships imposed upon him. Why has he been picked out for sacrifice by a revengeful Moloch? It is not right. He will not endure it. Passivity must be replaced by activity. What sort of activity? Oh, any activity which will prove to himself that he has superior courage, is not a worm after all.

"So he tortured himself, fretting himself with such questions, and finding a kind of enjoyment in it. And yet all these questions were not new ones suddenly confronting him, they were old familiar aches. It was long since they had first begun to grip and rend his heart. Long, long ago his present anguish had its first beginnings; it had waxed and gathered strength, it had matured and concentrated, until it had taken the form of a fearful, frenzied and

fantastic question, which tortured his heart and his mind, clamouring insistently for an answer." Constant introspection entailed too heavy a drain upon his poorly balanced affective disposition. He reminds us of Kurtz, the enigmatical "universal genius," in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, who was always talking about ". . . my ivory, my station, my river, my'—everything belonged to him." Like Kipling's Bimi the ape, Raskolnikov was afflicted by "too much Ego in his Cosmos."

Concerning the dissociated mental condition under which he murdered there can be no serious question; we have already adduced plenty of evidence to prove this. His heavy, lethargic sleep—with distinctly narcoleptic qualities—which overcame him shortly before the commission of the crime, should also be carefully marked. "It seemed to him strange and monstrous that he could have slept in such forgetfulness from the previous day and had done nothing, had prepared nothing yet." And: "We may note in passing, one peculiarity in regard to all the final resolutions taken by him in the matter; they had one strange characteristic; the more final they were, . . . the more absurd they at once became in his eyes. In spite of all his agonizing inward struggle, he never for a single instant all that time could believe in the carrying out of his plans."

"He was thinking of the chief point, and put off trifling details, until he *could believe in it all*. But that seemed utterly unattainable. . . . He could not imagine, for instance, that he would sometime leave off thinking, get up and simply go there. . . . Even his late experiment (i. e., his visit with the object of a final survey of the place) was simply an attempt at an experiment, . . . as though one should say 'come, let us go and try it—why dream about it!'"

What were Raskolnikov's reactions to the accomplished crime? Why did he confess? All, including the prosecuting authorities, were quite agreed that the defendant at the bar was not the ordinary kind of murderer and robber. As for the valuables, he had made no attempt to dispose of them gainfully; he had hidden them. One might very well conclude that he had meant to get rid of them profitably later on, after the hue and cry had blown over. True enough; but still, the purse, which he had concealed with the rest of the plunder beneath the stone, contained over three hundred rubles. This fact he had never discovered, and this especially was difficult for the judges and lawyers to understand. It was inconceivable to most of them that a man should commit murder for

gain—as they not so unnaturally supposed—and fail to remove the money from a purse. “Finally some of the lawyers more versed in psychology admitted that it was possible he had really not looked into the purse, and so didn’t know what was in it when he hid it under the stone.”

Dostoevsky goes on at once to remark that the legal body “immediately drew the deduction that the crime could only have been committed through temporary mental derangement, through homicidal mania, without object or the pursuit of gain. This fell in with the most recent fashionable theory of temporary insanity, so often applied in our days in criminal cases.”

Apparently, then, “*dementia Americana*” as a plea is not so modern, or indigenous to us, after all. There were plenty to testify to the defendant’s hypochondriacal condition: his physician Dr. Zossimov, former fellow students at the university, his landlady and her servant. Here was a murderer who, as Razumihin proved, had once assisted a poor consumptive student, pauperizing himself by maintaining the boy for half a year; more than that, after the death of the student he assumed the care of the deceased’s old father, getting him into a hospital and ultimately paying for the burial of the aged man. Furthermore, the landlady gave evidence that he had rescued two small children from a fire and had been injured in so doing. These facts led to the imposition of a comparatively mild sentence.

But why did he surrender himself to the state? Upon the trial he assigned conventional reasons for his act. To the great irritation of his attorneys he hardly made the shadow of a defense. Why had he done it? Because he was poor, and made desperate by privation;—true enough, as far as it went. And why had he confessed? Answer: “heartfelt repentance.” Now—“all this was almost coarse . . .”

Extraordinarily suggestible under the paralyzing sway exercised by the psychic trauma precipitated by his fearful act, he was for the time being—immediately following the murders—incapable of reflection. Faced with the crucial problem of restoring the axe, he walked right into the porter’s room, although it appeared that the man was probably home. If the porter had asked him “What do you want?” Raskolnikov would most likely have handed him the axe. Once at his lodging, he sank into oblivion for several hours without making the slightest attempt to conceal the evidences of his crime. He felt the impulse to go off somewhere and

fling away the booty, but could not rise. The strange coincidence of the summons for debt to the police office occurred the very next morning, after his terrible night. "If they question me, perhaps I'll simply tell," thinks he. "I'll go in, fall on my knees, and confess everything . . ."

"A gloomy sensation of agonizing, everlasting solitude and remoteness, took conscious form. . . . He had never experienced such a strange and awful sensation. And what was most agonizing—it was more a sensation than a conception or idea, a direct sensation, the most agonizing of all the sensations he had known in his life . . . ." He signs the undertaking. Why, now, does he not leave the police office? He tarries at the table. "He felt as if a nail were being driven into his skull. A strange idea occurred to him, to get up at once, to go up to Nikodim Fomitch, and tell him everything that had happened yesterday, and then to go with him to his lodgings and to show him the things in the hole in the corner. The impulse was so strong that he got up from his seat to carry it out. 'Hadn't I better think a minute?' flashed through his mind. 'No, better cast off the burden without thinking.'"

The officials are discussing the double murder. Rodion faints. They suspect him, but allow him to go. He rushes to his quarters, takes the stolen things from the hole in the wall and, after wandering about the city for some time hesitating as to how to dispose of them, puts them under the stone. And now that there is "no clue," that "it" is over? What about the "new life" that was to begin when the deed was once accomplished? "Damn it all!"—this in fury—"If it has begun, then it has begun. Hang the new life." He pauses, as if dumbfounded. Then: "If it all has really been done deliberately and not idiotically, if I really had a certain and definite object, how is it I did not even glance into the purse and don't know what I had there, for which I have undergone these agonies, and have deliberately undertaken this base, filthy, degrading business? . . . How's that?" He feels suddenly a malignant hatred for everything around him.

Lashed by the coachman for "drunkenly" getting in the way of the horses, Raskolnikov, looking like a beggar, receives money from a passing woman who takes pity on him. He goes to the bridge over the Neva. "He felt as though he were flying upward, and everything were vanishing from his sight." He becomes aware of the money clutched in his hand. He stares at it; then flings it

into the water. "It seemed to him, he had cut himself off from everyone and from everything at that moment."

Back in his room again, he collapses. Coming to himself after a while, he has the hallucinatory experience of hearing the landlady being beaten. The functional illness which for so long has enmeshed him, now tightens its strands ten-fold. Hysterical fever and delirium, withal a clouding of consciousness strongly suggestive of hystero-epilepsy, occur. Amnesia for his act, due to repression, exists. Afterward he recollected a great deal of what went on around him during these days.

When Rodion was able to get about again, he revisited the scene of his crime. This visit took place after he had gone to the Neva to commit suicide; but the incident of the woman who tried to drown herself disgusted him with that avenue of escape. Apathy succeeded at this stage. "Anyway, I'll make an end, . . ." Tired out, completely. Why not go to the police? Might just as well. And that "square yard of space"—at least he might be able to preserve this much for himself; thanatophobia always had had its hold over him, from earliest childhood. Within the last hour or so he had baited the police clerk Zametov, during a chance meeting at an inn. A manic boldness had seized him, and he had finally said to Zametov, without consciously understanding what he was doing, "And what if it was I who murdered the old woman and Lizaveta?"

Thereupon Raskolnikov went out of the tavern, "trembling all over from a sort of wild hysterical sensation, in which there was an element of insufferable rapture. . . . His face was twisted as after a fit. His fatigue increased rapidly. Any shock, any irritating sensation stimulated and revived his energies at once, but his strength failed as quickly when the stimulus was removed." The typical picture of epileptic bliss, which crops up time and again in the works of Dostoevsky, himself an acute sufferer from the dread disease!

But why did he not go straight to the police station from the bridge? Hesitating, he turned off and passed into *the* house. Workmen are fixing over the flat. He examines everything with the greatest interest. He steps out into the passage and rings the cracked old bell—exactly as he had done on *that* day. He must ring a second and third time. "The hideous . . . sensation he had felt then began to come back more and more vividly. He shuddered at every ring and it gave him more and more satisfaction." The

reinstatement of the emotional processes yielded him an unspeakable thrill. One of the workmen asks him what he wants, who he is. Rodion tells him he is looking for a flat and inquires, "Is there no blood?" "What blood?" "Why, the old woman and her sister were murdered here. There was a perfect pool there." "But who are you?" . . . "You want to know? Come to the police station, I'll tell you."

So, like Bill Sikes after the murder of Nancy, he returns to the spot as if drawn thither by a lodestone. And always, now, in search of distraction. The fatal accident to the alcoholic Marmelodov is a regular boon to him, giving him the opportunity of forgetting himself a little while. Would Rodion have gone to the police but for this incident, so important to him for his whole future because it gave him Sonia? He had stood at the cross-roads, as later he would do at the command of Sonia, and said, "Shall I go there or not?" He had looked about him as if expecting someone to speak the decisive word. But the decisive word was not yet to be spoken.

Raskolnikov's confession came four months after the crime. That confession has long since become one of the classical episodes in the literature of psychology. Did his "conscience" drive him to it? Hardly; for he was guilty—so he reasoned—only *legally*. *The moral law he had not transgressed.*

There were times during these months when his "split" condition gave him the *semblance* of normality. Although he was sore at every point, he could, on occasion, hide his feelings—he, who on the "previous day had, like a monomaniac, fallen into a frenzy at the slightest word." His speech in defense of Sonia, who had been "framed" by the vicious Luzhin on a theft charge, serves as a notable instance of how an intense emotion directed toward an object other than the self, can raise the disrupted mind temporarily to the plane of the normal.

Inspector Porfiry subjected Rodion to the most terrifying of all methods of inquisition: torture purely mental. He jokes with his prey, he cajoles him. Of course he is "only joking"; but then, you know, a man guilty of a crime can at last find freedom only in prison. Needless to say—so runs on the inspector—he would not dream of accusing Rodion. But doesn't Rodion think that *whoever is guilty* would be wise to confess and thereby obtain a favorable bargain with the law?

Sonia, to whom, as we have seen, he told all, urges him on to

face his punishment. She reads to Rodion the story of Lazarus. The youth's burden has become too heavy for him; he is looking for release from the incubus which weighs upon him increasingly. When he upbraided Sonia for having sold herself for *nothing*, he was really accusing himself of having done so. His rationalizations weaken—but only momentarily: "I certainly hadn't the right." *At least*, murder wasn't for *him*. That is to say, he does not repudiate his rationalizations out and out, but qualifies his act only to the extent of admitting that *he* was not *big enough* to justify it.

The girl exhorts: "Go at once, this very minute, stand at the cross-roads, bow down, first kiss the earth which you have defiled and then bow down to all the world and say to all men aloud, 'I am a murderer'." His resistance flares up. He will *not* confess; he would be called a fool, to have done murder and not dare to use the money. A few moments later: "Will you come and see me in prison when I am there?" Yes, she will.

But even at this pass his egotism is dominant, for he thinks *what a sensation* his confession will make. Mingling with the crowd in the Hay Market he sees the drunken man trying to dance and continually falling down. Raskolnikov stares at the man, laughs, moves on and forgets the spectacle he has just witnessed. He finds himself in the middle of the square. Sonia's command suddenly comes over him. He trembles. "And the hopeless misery and anxiety of all that time, especially of the last hours, had weighed so heavily upon him that he positively clutched at the chance of this new unmixed, complete sensation. It came over him like a fit; it was like a single spark kindled in his soul and spreading fire through him. Everything in him softened at once and the tears started into his eyes. He fell to the earth on the spot . . ." With masochistic self-abasement, he knelt down in the middle of that square and "kissed that filthy earth with bliss and rapture." A second time he prostrated himself. Someone remarks, "He's boozed." Another, "He's going to Jerusalem, brothers, and saying good-bye to his children and his country. He's bowing down to all the world and kissing the great city of St. Petersburg . . ."

These jibes are not lost upon Raskolnikov, who has perhaps been about to repeat the words, "I am a murderer." He rises and makes for the police bureau. He collects his faculties, so that he can enter "*like a man*." Goes in, makes at the last second the pretense that he is only looking for Zametov. Hears that the



perverted Svidrigailov, uxoricide, professional seducer, and "philanthropist," has just committed suicide. Bows himself out. Finds Sonia near the entrance. Stops, grins in a meaningless way, goes back in. To the official: "*It was I killed the old pawnbroker woman and her sister with an axe and robbed them.*" He is rid of his burden. But will he rise from the dead, as did that Lazarus of long ago?

#### EPILOGUE

Siberia these past nine months, for the second-class convict Rodion Raskolnikov. Sullen, shut up within himself more than ever, isolated from all. Imprisoned by his Ego more surely than by spiked walls and vigilant guards. Inattentive and indifferent. He fell ill—from "wounded pride." He did not know why he had confessed. His "exasperated conscience found no particularly terrible fault in his past, except a simple *blunder* which might happen to anyone." But as to the crime itself, of that he did not repent. Only in his *failure* did he recognize any criminality. He was like a man congealed. The prison psychosis flourished upon the disjointed epilepto-schizophrenic constitution. Mutism strangled him.

He suffered from the question, Why had he not done away with himself? Was the desire for that "square yard of space" into all eternity so strong within him, "louse" as he undoubtedly was? Svidrigailov, although filled with terror of the "snub-nosed horror," had nevertheless removed himself from this world. Rodion "could not understand that, at the very time he had been standing looking into the river, he had perhaps been dimly conscious of the fundamental falsity in himself and his convictions. He didn't understand that that consciousness might be the promise of a future crisis, of a new view and of his future resurrection."

Egomania still consumes him. He has the dream about the "chosen." What force was to rouse him at last to social consciousness? It was Das Ewig Weibliche, in the form of Sonia, who followed him into exile. She, and she alone, was predestined to bring life into the place of theory for him.

"Seven years, *only* seven years! At the beginning of their happiness at some moments they were both ready to look on those seven years as though they were seven days. He did not know that the new life would not be given him for nothing, that he would have to pay dearly for it, that it would cost him great striving, great suffering.

"But that is the beginning of a new story—the story of the gradual renewal of a man, the story of his gradual regeneration, of his passing from one world into another, of his initiation into a new unknown life."

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And now, *Who was Raskolnikov?* We answer, He is of the very essence of Dostoevsky himself, he is the revelation of the novelist's secret being. *Crime and Punishment* is autobiography in the same sense as is Goethe's *Faust*. Raskolnikov in Siberia is Dostoevsky in the *House of the Dead*. Svidrigailov is the incarnation of the individual human Will. He is the first of that trinity of champions—Stavrogin of *The Possessed* and Alyosha Karamazov are the other two—whom Dostoevsky sent into the field to battle with life. He is the symbol of Dostoevsky's vehement denial of the existence of God, once he had gazed on Pain. Svidrigailov is what Raskolnikov longs to be, but can never hope to attain.

There is a "timelessness," a terror, a cruelty in Dostoevsky's creations surpassing anything known before or since. These demonic qualities derive directly from his "split," epileptic, hysterical organization which made of him a man who walked precariously along the rim of a volcanic crater. In that most wonderful of all descriptions of the epileptic experience, which he puts into Prince Myshkin's mouth in *The Idiot*, it stands written: "at that moment I seem somehow to understand the extraordinary saying that *there shall be no more time.*" (Revelation, 10:6.) "Yes," exclaims the Prince, "for this moment one might give one's whole life!" Like Faust:

"Then dared I hail the Moment fleeing:  
'Ah, still delay—thou art so fair!'"

Raskolnikov refused to accept the realities of life. So did his creator. His was the tragedy of the eternal "protest." Dostoevsky resided in the Ultima Thule of the human soul. When we read him, we feel as though we had suddenly passed over by some miraculous bridge into a dream existence—and yet, it all oppresses us with a strange conviction of objective reality. Herein lies the supreme attribute of the creative epileptic mind.

Melchoir de Vogüë who attended the last rites of the novelist, wrote: "As was said of the old Tsars that they gathered together the Russian soil, so this king of spirits had that day gathered together the Russian Heart." Dostoevsky ranks, with Tolstoi, as one of the giants of world literature. He is without a peer in the depiction of the psychic Pit and the Pendulum.