

Exploring the Psychological Complexity of Raskolnikov and the Concept of the Superman in *Crime and Punishment*

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Abstract

It's an attempt to study and scrutinize the inner psyche of Raskolnikov, his concept of the Superman, and the conflict in his tormented soul. Dostoevsky has shown us existential dilemmas, inner turmoil, and the Superman complex. In the novel Crime and Punishment, Dostoevsky depicts Raskolnikov as a Superman who considers himself superior to society and thus alienates himself from everyone. The protagonist has a nihilistic disposition and thinks of himself as an extraordinary person who is above moral laws. He propounds the bizarre theory that the world is divided into two parts: ordinary and extraordinary, asserting that an extraordinary person can transgress the law for the sake of humanity in some particular situation. Can a crime be justified for the sake of a great purpose? Furthermore, it explores the juxtaposition of Nietzsche's concept of the superman with Raskolnikov's interpretation, examining themes of free will and utilitarianism in pursuit of the greater benefit of society. Through his characters, the writer demonstrates human disposition, their sin, and then how they achieve atonement through conscience punishment and intense tribulations. So, this research paper seeks to Dostoevsky's infamous character Rodin Raskolnikov's crime, and the consequences of it.

Keywords: Nihilism, Existentialism, Superman Complex, Atonement, Free Will, Utilitarianism, Conscience Punishment.

Introduction

Crime and Punishment is a seminal work written by Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky. He is known as a great writer who delves deeply into the inner psyche of men. He was not born into the landed gentry like his contemporary Leo Tolstoy, and his novels explored the complexity of the human psyche in the turbulent social and political atmosphere of 19th-century Russia. His first novel, *Poor Folk*, was published in 1846, which gained him entry into St. Petersburg's literary circles. In his novels, there are varied characters, and "His novels contain a wider array of fully realized character types, a broader spectrum of conflicts and themes, drawn from different developmental levels, and more forms of conflict resolution" (Santayana 07). His literary works have diverse elements, including nihilism, existentialism, philosophy, psychology, and morality. He was influenced by his environment "Among the many influences on Dostoevsky, the major force was the Orthodox religion of his family and second wife, of the monasteries and peasants he encountered, and of the Russian culture." (Leigh 86). His major literary works are *Crime and Punishment*, *The Idiot*, *Demons*, *Notes from*

Underground, and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880). His tribulations—the death sentence, exile, epilepsy, and compulsory military service—are reflected in his major novels. Fyodor Dostoevsky's pain, his experiences, and his struggles are often reflected in his great characters.

Raskolnikov is a poverty-stricken, intelligent law student who considers that an intelligent person has a right to assert dominance over the weak and vulnerable. And this character has been presented as brutal and unexpectedly humanistic. His dualistic disposition confuses the reader about whether he is a good or evil person. Dostoevsky deals with many aspects "Through the portrayal of Raskolnikov, the central protagonist of the novel, Dostoevsky brings home many complex psychological and religious issues like alienation or monomania, crime, suffering, morality, and traditional orthodox Christian morality based on faith, suffering, and redemption" (Mahammad Ali 273). He is an intricate and ambiguous character who considers that we must have the courage to take a new path and have some innovative ideas so that the world can evolve and progress in unexplored dimensions. To become a benefactor of

mankind, a superman must do what is required regardless of thinking about morality and ethics. Men abandon opportunity due to the difficulty of new steps. Dostoevsky considers men fear from attempting new things.

Napoleon is his idol because he could violate the law. And according to Raskolnikov, to make a new law, the old one must be abolished. He thinks of utilitarianism, which means good and evil should be seen by the outcomes of an action. In the novel, on one side, there is an ill-tempered old woman who is next to demise, and on the other side, there are thousands of young, innocent people who can choose vileness due to a lack of money. Raskolnikov believes that eliminating the life of one person for the betterment of society is justified. So, one has to kill that wicked old woman to maintain the balance of existence. The concept of utilitarianism is reflected in this novel when Raskolnikov listens that killing of an old woman can be beneficial to society. Those people who are financially unstable can be supported by old woman's money. He can devote himself to the service of humanity by killing that lousy old woman.

Critical Analysis

In the novel, Raskolnikov thinks he is superior to society; thus, it's his moral obligation to serve society even by transgressing the law. To prove his theory, he kills an older woman and his sister Lizaveta and justifies his crime by giving examples of Napoleon and Mahomet. For him everything is justified for the sake of great purpose, "If thinks he, the "perfect crime" beckons as his only hopes 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." (Squires 485). He wants to demonstrate his dominance because of his superman complex and his inclination toward free will. Great men are above moral laws, and to come out of the common rut, they must be cruel. Great men have a right to transgress, to overstep, and to discover some new ideas. In the novel, Dostoevsky divides people into two categories and he contends that "I only believe in my leading idea that men are in general divided by a law of nature into two categories: inferior (ordinary), that is, so to speak, material that serves only to reproduce its kind, and

men who have the gift or the talent to utter a new word" (246).

Raskolnikov brutally murders a wicked old lady Katerina and her sister Lizaveta. But instead of feeling like Superman he starts feeling jittery. As his conscience relentlessly torments him, he begins to confront the harsh reality that he is not superman or Napoleon. His bizarre theory becoming a Superman and his exclusion of moral and societal constraints is failed. But his intellectual arrogance still justifies the crime and his theory and both killings were done to prove his theory of right to transgress for becoming a superman. And he confesses to Sonia that he killed them not for money but to test himself whether he is a Superman or not? Slowly and gradually his inner turmoil haunts him to confess his sin and look for atonement. The novelist Dostoevsky has shown that conscience punishment for Raskolnikov is much more significant than the real one. Because through his conscience punishment he can realize his sin and he has a potential to transform him by penance and retribution.

Dostoevsky shows through his character that the only way to escape from this crime is to confess and accept. We find that Raskolnikov, after committing crime, gives his money to the funeral of Marmaledov. Through this incident writer demonstrates that he has a dualistic nature, and we learn even after committing crime he supports others financially. The presence of discrimination in society undermines his faith in moral and ethical principles, and "The protagonist is struggling to break free from the conventional structures of an autocratic society. Raskolnikov has a problem with the discrimination in the society which is originated in the fundamental structure of the civilization" (Prajapati 251). His nihilistic tendencies lead him to question the legitimacy of moral and ethical norms. As a result, his existential emptiness makes him belief that he is beyond good and evil.

The concept of Nietzsche's superman is reflected in the character of Dostoevsky. The philosopher Nietzsche talks about transforming man into Superman "He opens the first speech by saying, "I teach you the superman." He tells the audience that man is only a bridge from beasts to the superman" (Seung 02). According to Nietzsche, man should overcome his weaknesses to become Superman.

An individual must create their own values and confront life's challenges. For him, Superman is an uplifting ideal for human greatness. We must relinquish this herd mentality and slave morality to achieve greatness. Nietzsche says that one must exclude societal constraints so that one can make their own path and establish personal values. However, Raskolnikov considers that specific individuals possess the right to commit crimes if they serve a higher purpose. His concept is that to attain greatness, one can violate morality and laws. An ordinary man preserves the world, but an extraordinary man moves the world. Transgressing old law is an inevitable part of transforming the world, and it's the moral obligation of great men because they are men of the future, not the present. They may be condemned in the present, but future generations will make them their pedestals and worship them.

Sonia emerges as a pivotal character in this novel, who is the lover of Raskolnikov. She becomes a slut to feed her family. She realizes his sin and resists the justification of his sin. And to get redemption, he must confess his sin because he has defiled the earth. Sonia asserts, "Go at once, this very minute, stand at the crossroads, bow down to all the world and say to all men aloud, "I am a murderer!" Then God will send you life again" (Dostoevsky 387). She is a lady who tries to console him while at the same time emphasizing confessing his sin and getting penance. "Suffer and expiate your sin by it, that's what you must do" (Dostoevsky 388). After killing, he goes through immense mental tribulation due to a conscience punishment for his sin. Dostoevsky considers that pain, suffering, and conscience punishment are necessary part for atonement. Raskolnikov confesses to Sonia, "Yes, that's what it was! I wanted to become a Napoleon that is why I killed her...Do you understand now?" (Dostoevsky 383).

Conclusion

So, from the in-depth examination of this work, we find that Raskolnikov's concept of the extraordinary is futile. And Sonia plays a significant role in his confession and redemption. The novelist emphasizes on confession, suffering, and expiation. He contends that through suffering, we can expiate our sins. Sonia asks to him, "Aren't you half expiating your crime by facing the

suffering?" (474). Due to her constant effort, his inclination is toward humanity. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, the philosopher *Friedrich Nietzsche* talks about loving mankind should be our ultimate goal, "To love mankind for God's sake- this has so far been the noblest and remotest sentiment to which mankind has attained" (67). Dostoevsky's treatment of his character from a murderer to a human is profoundly remarkable, and after his confession he finds inner peace. Through his journey, we see psychological complexity, suffering, conscience punishment, and eventually redemption. "I did not bow down to you; I bowed down to all the suffering of humanity,' he said wildly and walked away to the window" (Dostoevsky 300). His reconciliation with morality and humanity has been shown in the later phases of his life, which is an indication that rationalizing and justifying the murder was not appropriate. The writer is the master at demonstrating the psyche of a human through various lenses, like Raskolnikov, through which we learn about crime, guilt, and atonement. Thus, we conclude that he killed them not to help others financially or for the service of humanity but to prove that he is akin to Napoleon or not less than him. But his guilt does not let him sleep, and the only way to come out is to accept and confess.

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