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THE IMAGE OF RODION RASKOLNIKOV IN FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY'S NOVEL "CRIME AND PUNISHMENT": A PHILOSOPHICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract: This article examines the image of Rodion Raskolnikov in Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel "Crime and Punishment". The study explores the philosophical foundations of the protagonist's theory, the peculiarities of his psychological state following the commission of a crime, and the process of his moral and spiritual transformation. Particular attention is paid to the role of Sonya Marmeladova in Raskolnikov's spiritual development and moral awakening. The article argues that Dostoevsky affirms the supremacy of moral law over the ideology of individualistic superiority and demonstrates the destructive consequences of justifying violence in the pursuit of allegedly higher goals.

Keywords: Rodion Raskolnikov, Fyodor Dostoevsky, "Crime and Punishment", moral responsibility, conscience, psychological analysis, philosophy, spiritual rebirth, extraordinary individual theory, humanism.

Introduction

Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel "Crime and Punishment" is widely recognized as one of the most significant works of nineteenth-century world literature. The novel addresses fundamental questions of human existence, including the nature of good and evil, moral choice, individual freedom, and personal responsibility. At the center of the narrative is Rodion Raskolnikov, a former student living in poverty who attempts to test his philosophical theory through the commission of murder.

The relevance of this study lies in the enduring significance of the issues explored by Dostoevsky. Questions concerning moral responsibility, the spiritual crisis of the individual, and the justification of violence for the sake of achieving particular goals remain highly relevant in contemporary society. More than a century and a half after its publication, the novel continues to provoke scholarly discussion and philosophical reflection.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the image of Rodion Raskolnikov from philosophical and psychological perspectives and to identify the key stages of his spiritual development throughout the novel.

The object of the study is Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel "Crime and Punishment".

The subject of the study is the philosophical and psychological dimensions of Raskolnikov's character.

The research is based on methods of literary analysis and incorporates comparative-historical and philosophical-psychological approaches.

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Main Body

Rodion Raskolnikov is one of the most complex and psychologically profound characters in world literature. Dostoevsky portrays him as an individual whose consciousness is shaped by a constant struggle between opposing ideas and emotions. On the one hand, Raskolnikov is capable of compassion, sympathy, and self-sacrifice. He demonstrates genuine concern for the suffering of others and offers assistance to the Marmeladov family. On the other hand, he develops a theory that seeks to justify the violation of moral laws in the name of supposedly higher purposes.

At the core of Raskolnikov's worldview lies the theory that divides humanity into two categories: “ordinary” and “extraordinary” individuals. According to this concept, ordinary people are obliged to obey existing laws and social norms, whereas extraordinary individuals possess the right to transgress moral boundaries if their actions contribute to significant historical or social progress. As an example, Raskolnikov refers to Napoleon Bonaparte, whom he regards as a figure capable of changing the course of history through determination and strength of will.

The formation of this theory is influenced by both the social realities of nineteenth-century Russia and the philosophical ideas of the period. Living in extreme poverty and constantly witnessing injustice and human suffering, Raskolnikov becomes convinced that the murder of the pawnbroker Alyona Ivanovna could benefit society. He perceives her as a harmful and exploitative individual whose death might improve the lives of many others. However, Dostoevsky demonstrates the moral fallacy of such reasoning by emphasizing the inherent value of every human life.

The murder of the pawnbroker and her innocent sister Lizaveta constitutes the central turning point of the novel. By committing the crime, Raskolnikov attempts to prove his belonging to the category of extraordinary individuals. Yet the outcome of his experiment differs dramatically from his expectations. Instead of experiencing liberation and superiority, he is overwhelmed by fear, anxiety, and psychological torment.

A key element in understanding the protagonist's inner conflict is his famous question: *"Whether I am a trembling creature or whether I have the right?*" This statement encapsulates the central philosophical dilemma of the novel. Raskolnikov attempts to place himself above conventional morality; however, his conscience and innate sense of compassion prevent him from fully accepting the implications of his theory.

The philosophical significance of Raskolnikov's character lies in Dostoevsky's critique of individualistic superiority. The novelist argues that no individual possesses the moral authority to place himself above others or to determine the value of another person's life. Raskolnikov's attempt to transcend moral law results not in greatness but in profound spiritual and psychological disintegration.

The image of St. Petersburg plays an important role in revealing the protagonist's inner world. The city functions not merely as a setting but as a symbolic reflection of Raskolnikov's psychological condition. Narrow streets, overcrowded courtyards, cramped rooms, and an atmosphere of poverty create a sense of oppression and hopelessness. Through these urban images, Dostoevsky intensifies the protagonist's feelings of isolation and alienation.

Dreams serve as one of the most important psychological devices in the novel. Particularly significant is Raskolnikov's dream of the brutally beaten horse, which occurs before the murder. In this dream, the young Raskolnikov experiences deep compassion for a defenseless animal subjected to

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senseless cruelty. The episode reveals the fundamentally humane nature of the protagonist and highlights the contradiction between his innate moral sensitivity and the inhuman logic of his theory.

Following the crime, Raskolnikov enters a prolonged period of psychological suffering. He is constantly troubled by fear, suspicion, and inner discord. Gradually, he becomes increasingly isolated from society and obsessively focused on his own emotional turmoil. His condition demonstrates that true punishment begins long before legal prosecution or formal sentencing.

An essential role in the protagonist's spiritual transformation is played by Sonya Marmeladova. Despite enduring poverty and social humiliation, she preserves her faith, compassion, and moral integrity. Sonya becomes a spiritual guide for Raskolnikov, helping him recognize the destructive nature of his beliefs. Through her influence, he gradually comes to understand the necessity of repentance and moral renewal.

Raskolnikov's confession represents a crucial stage in his development. He ultimately realizes that the crime has destroyed not only the lives of its victims but also his own spiritual identity. This realization is reflected in his famous statement: "*It was not the old woman I killed; it was myself.*" These words express the central moral lesson of the novel. The murder becomes the source of a profound spiritual catastrophe and the loss of inner harmony.

The climax of the novel is Raskolnikov's voluntary confession and subsequent exile to Siberia. Paradoxically, it is through suffering that his moral rebirth begins. Influenced by Sonya's unwavering faith and his own experiences of guilt and punishment, he gradually abandons his false beliefs and comes to recognize the value of love, compassion, and human dignity.

Thus, punishment in Dostoevsky's novel possesses not only a legal but also a profound moral and philosophical dimension. The protagonist's true punishment lies in the suffering of his conscience, while the path toward redemption is achieved through repentance, self-awareness, and spiritual renewal.

Conclusion

The image of Rodion Raskolnikov represents a complex philosophical and psychological character that reflects the crisis of human consciousness resulting from a conflict between moral principles and intellectual ambition. Through the protagonist's fate, Fyodor Dostoevsky explores the problem of individual moral responsibility and exposes the dangers of ideologies that seek to justify violence in the name of supposedly higher objectives.

The novel demonstrates that no philosophical theory can abolish universal moral values or exempt an individual from ethical responsibility. Raskolnikov's attempt to place himself above moral law leads not to greatness or liberation but to profound spiritual suffering and inner fragmentation. Through this portrayal, Dostoevsky emphasizes the inseparable connection between conscience, morality, and human dignity.

At the same time, "Crime and Punishment" affirms the possibility of moral regeneration. Through repentance, suffering, compassion, and the acceptance of personal responsibility, the protagonist gradually overcomes his spiritual crisis and moves toward renewal. In this respect, the novel conveys a deeply humanistic message concerning the capacity of individuals to transform themselves through moral self-awareness.

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Therefore, the image of Raskolnikov remains highly relevant in the contemporary world, as it addresses enduring questions of conscience, responsibility, justice, and moral choice. The philosophical and psychological depth of this character continues to attract the attention of scholars and readers, confirming the timeless significance of Dostoevsky's artistic and intellectual legacy.

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