RASKOLNIKOV AND THE PROBLEM OF VALUES

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To: Jennifer, David, Barb, Chris, and Russell
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The Genesis of *Crime and Punishment*:
Dostoevsky’s Early Years and Prison Experience

In Fyodor Dostoevsky’s early years, he became quite interested in the prominent social questions of the day; his first published book, *Poor Folk*, became Russia’s first social novel (Mochulsky 114). Writing a social novel served as a fundamental philosophical transition for Dostoevsky who initially aspired to the heights of romantics like Schiller. Rather than trying to romanticize the human experience, Dostoevsky tried to depict his characters realistically in *Poor Folk*, leading him to join a group in 1847 with Mikhail Butashevic-Petrashevsky to discuss social-political issues. Dostoevsky found a new kind of idealism as a socialist. He believed the world could be renewed and improved so all men could achieve mutual happiness (114).

In 1848, while revolutions were taking place across Europe, Dostoevsky joined a secret society organized by Nikolai Speshnev within the Petrashevsky circle. The aim of this circle was to create a secret printing press to circulate propaganda to stir up a peasant revolt (Dostoevsky, *Selected Letters 5*). The Russian government soon arrested most of the group’s members, and Dostoevsky spent a year in solitary confinement in the Peter-and-Paul Fortress. After a mock execution that Dostoevsky would describe vividly in
later novels like *Demons*, he was sent to a hard labor camp in Siberia for a four-year term, followed by service in the Russian army until 1854. During Dostoevsky’s time in prison, he began to rethink his social idealism, leading him eventually to denounce it. In a letter to E.I. Totleben, Dostoevsky explains his view of his time in prison and how this sentence affected his worldview. He says

> I was sentenced justly and in conformity with the law. My long, arduous, and painful experience has sobered me and, in many respects, changed my ideas. But then, then I was blind and I believed in various theories and utopias…[during] the period of penal servitude—four years of a bleak, horrible, existence, I lived with brigands, men devoid of human feeling, men with perverted values; and during all those four joyless years I did not see, nor could I possibly have seen, anything except the darkest and ugliest aspects of life. I did not have by my side a single living creature with whom I could have exchanged a heartfelt word…What caused my greatest suffering was the fact that I came to understand my delusions, and the realization that I had been cut off from society by exile and that I could no longer be useful to it and serve to the best of my abilities, aspirations, and talents. Thoughts and even convictions change, even the whole person changes, and imagine what it means to me today to suffer for something that is no longer there, and about which I’ve completely changed my mind. (Dostoevsky, *Selected Letters* 100-101)

This fundamental change in his ideas led Dostoevsky to rethink the heart and soul of man by dividing the prison convicts into two groups of men: good and evil. It was the latter group of convicts that changed the way Dostoevsky thought about the conscience and nature of man. Prior to this prison experience, Dostoevsky’s social idealism led him to hold optimistic ideas about the nature of man in relationship to the human conscience. This perspective suggested humans do bad things not because they are evil by nature but because of their ignorance or moral incompetence; the problem, therefore, is that humans lack moral development. Through education, then, humans can come to understand why what they did was wrong and repent for what they did. Dostoevsky’s early understanding of repentance stemmed from a reason-based ideology that humans can, through logic and
education, fundamentally change. Dostoevsky’s idealistic thinking did not hold up when he, in disbelief, discovered more than half of the prison convicts already knew how to read and write. This means that well-educated humans still made bad choices. Based on this profound revelation, Dostoevsky made the following assertion about humans that became one of the main themes in *Crime and Punishment*. He observes that

> These [convicts] are, perhaps, the most gifted, the strongest people of our entire nation. But mighty forces have perished in vain...So, the preconceived point of view concerning conscience and moral law does not explain anything. The best people, literate, gifted, strong, do not experience any pangs of conscience...The philosophy of crime...is a little more difficult than is supposed. (Mochulsky 193)

The “strong” men are those who have an iron will and complete control over their actions and conscience. What is considered conventional morality is not applicable to a “strong” man; such men view the “good,” law-abiding men as meek, submissive, and inferior to them in all respects.

In *The House of the Dead*, Dostoevsky describes one “strong” convict named Gazin who was in prison because he would cut up little children just for the pleasure of doing it (50-51). Generally, a convict would feel remorse for what he did; Gazin felt no such remorse. Dostoevsky concluded that evil gave Gazin “strength” that ordinary, weaker men did not have, for morality made the weaker men seek a repentance that Gazin did not desire. Thus, Dostoevsky realized his pre-conceived understanding of the human conscience based solely on reason was problematic.

By classifying men as good and evil, “strong” and weak, Dostoevsky’s new insight into the human conscience and soul soon led him to write his first major work, *Notes from Underground*, the philosophical preface to *Crime and Punishment* and his
other four major novels that followed\textsuperscript{1}. \textit{Notes from Underground} is also Dostoevsky’s critique of Chernyshevsky’s \textit{What’s to be Done?} in which the latter tries to create an ideal society based on a rational agreement of wills, according to utilitarian principles. Such liberal principles aligned with Dostoevsky’s social idealism prior to his prison sentence.

The Underground Man questions the place of reason in human life by addressing the nature of consciousness and suffering in relationship to personality and reason. He will not renounce his suffering because he would have to renounce his humanity or personality; his assessment of Chernyschevsky’s rational philosophy of necessity is that it makes a human inhuman by dictating that he bows to necessity. Necessity does not allow for free will or an individual personality; rather, human personality is dictated by sheer logic. But for the Underground Man, reason is only a part of human life, not its entirety; he is willing to act irrationally, refusing to treat his toothache just to preserve his humanity and his individuality (Dostoevsky, \textit{Notes from Underground} 14ff). That is, not receiving treatment for a toothache is an exercise of free will—not based on something outside himself that would say it is irrational not to treat a toothache. The Underground Man finds “pleasure” in this toothache (14) in the way that men such as Gazin contrive evil as an act of free will, finding “pleasure” in transcending the boundaries of good and evil.

Transcending the boundaries of good and evil is the problem that Raskolnikov deals with in \textit{Crime and Punishment} as he tries rationally to create his own good and evil to prove to himself that he is an extraordinary man, one of a unique and superior group of

\textsuperscript{1} \textit{The Idiot, Demons (or The Possessed), The Adolescent (or A Raw Youth), and The Brothers Karamazov}
humans like Napoleon. Proving himself extraordinary would also validate his rational theory that all humans are divided into ordinary and extraordinary categories (Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* 259ff²).

This leads to the question in *Crime and Punishment* of whether creating one’s own good and evil is altogether bad or if the novel would suggest it is permissible under certain conditions like killing someone to feed the poor. If creating one’s own standards of good and evil is bad, can a character still be good even if he transcends good and evil? That is, if a character is forced to step beyond good and evil such as Sonya’s prostituting herself to feed her family, does the novel view this action differently from Raskolnikov’s desire to step over the moral line to prove that he is extraordinary? What about the case of a character like Svidrigailov, who is brutally honest with himself and does what he does because his passions and desires are part of his humanity? How does the novel view someone like Svidrigailov who naturally contrives evil?

The Genesis of *Crime and Punishment*:

Dostoevsky and Values

Dostoevsky once said that *Crime and Punishment* is about a young student who “succumbs…to certain strange, ‘incomplete’ ideas that are floating in the air…,[so this] subject will in a way explain what is happening today” (*Selected Letters* 223). While it is reasonable to read this statement as a personal reflection on the “incomplete ideas” that shaped the ideology of Dostoevsky’s own early years, the “young student” in this

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² I will be working with Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky’s translation of *Crime and Punishment*. 5
statement is obviously Raskolnikov, a fictional character in *Crime and Punishment*.\(^3\)

Because Dostoevsky and Raskolnikov are two separate beings that live in two different worlds—the former in nineteenth-century Russia, and the latter in a fictional version of nineteenth-century Russia—we should not assume that the two worlds are comparable when evaluating the morals that each world promotes. Even a thorough understanding of Dostoevsky will not explain everything that we need to know about Raskolnikov.

However, some critics like Otto Kaus and Edward Wasiolek\(^4\) feel that the way to determine the values in Dostoevsky’s texts is to look at those values that he professes to have himself. While some of Dostoevsky’s characters may share many of his own personal views, the other issue here is not simply determining which values the novel supports but whether we can identify the issues Raskolnikov sponsors by identifying the issues that Dostoevsky sponsors.

To elucidate briefly why comparing a fictional character to a non-fictional person is not helpful, an outside example may be useful: some Shakespearean critics like to interpret King Lear as William Shakespeare’s father. It might be true that King Lear and Shakespeare’s father share many similar qualities that would make it tempting to consult Shakespeare’s biography in order to understand King Lear. However, they are

\(^3\) V.F. Pereverzev believes that the fictional characters that Dostoevsky portrays are a projection of the type of “social character inevitably formed by the social milieu” from which the author lives (quoted in Seduro 146).

\(^4\) Otto Kaus, in his book *Dostoewski und sein Schicksal*, explores the “many-sidedness” of Dostoevsky, for the writer lived in an age where there are many contradictions (quoted in Bakhtin 14-15, 29). Dostoevsky’s “many sides” are part of the fabric of his books, revealing the “duality” of the writer’s own social personality and his “oscillations between revolutionary materialistic socialism and a conservative (reactionary) religious Weltanschauung, oscillations which never brought him to a final decision” (29). Edward Wasiolek, in his book *Dostoevsky: The Major Fiction*, suggests that consulting Dostoevsky’s notebook on *Crime and Punishment* proves that Raskolnikov’s murder is the “first step toward his salvation” (56).
completely separate beings who do not even share the same sphere of existence. We have no indication in the play that King Lear is Shakespeare’s father; we must accept him as a fictional king, not the playwright’s father, a non-fictional person.

Dostoevsky himself suggests that one cannot understand even another human by consulting one’s own life experiences; how much less will consulting Shakespeare’s relationship with his father provide a useful measure to understand King Lear, or Dostoevsky’s life to understand Raskolnikov. Writing a letter to N.D. Fonvizina—who had written Dostoevsky about her sadness upon returning to her native land—Dostoevsky said, “I have not lived your life, and there are many things in it that I know nothing of, for no one can know another person’s life” (Selected Letters 68). While human feelings like sadness and joy are common to all humans, one cannot “know” fully the experience of another human without being that person. Given there are “many things” in a person’s life that we can “know nothing of,” it seems pertinent to take what we do “know” about someone quite seriously if we want to truly understand him. In the fictional novel Crime and Punishment, to “know” Raskolnikov better, we ought to focus on what he thinks and feels rather than what Dostoevsky says about him in his letters and notebooks, especially when assessing Raskolnikov’s values.

One reason that prevents simply correlating Dostoevsky’s views with those of his characters is that the fictional contexts found in Crime and Punishment intentionally complicate the way in which these values present themselves to the reader. Far from inviting the interpreter to match up biographical and textual views, the novel intentionally frustrates these comparisons.
Another reason that we do not simply correlate Dostoevsky’s views with the novel’s views to assess the values of *Crime and Punishment* is that Dostoevsky does not have unqualified access to everything that he thinks and feels. Writers such as Dostoevsky, Sigmund Freud, and Friedrich Nietzsche have made great revelations in our understanding of human consciousness and self-awareness that lead to the conclusion that authors certainly have subconscious motivations for writing a work of fiction. Even if we were to interview Dostoevsky or consult his letters, we only have access to his conscious motivations; his subconscious thoughts are left to speculation. Since humans make decisions based on subconscious motivations, at least some of an author’s intention for writing a fictional novel will remain mysterious; it is unclear, then, how we should evaluate any account of this novel that such an approach might bring forward.

The first-order reference for understanding Raskolnikov, then, is not Dostoevsky’s life but his fictional world and its characters. Readers must first understand what is going on in the novel; any information regarding Dostoevsky’s biography, while not totally irrelevant, must be subordinated to the information presented in the text. The words of the novel are clearly related to Raskolnikov’s character while Dostoevsky’s biography has only an oblique and undetermined relation to it. “Knowing” Raskolnikov is based on Dostoevsky’s experience is not taking the best evidence for the task at hand because it is too imprecise to unlock the text’s meaning. Only a consideration of the words of the novel allows a reader to come to grips with the text in all its depths. Once these are understood, one can ask the broader question about Dostoevsky’s life experiences in relationship to Raskolnikov’s experiences.
Finally, the impermanency of values makes assessing the values of Dostoevsky’s fictional characters all the more difficult because a character can be both good and bad in a given context depending on the perspective that the novel gives us in that specific scene. It is an important feature of *Crime and Punishment* because it provides many different perspectives on the same character; the reader must take all these perspectives into consideration when assessing a character’s moral worth in the novel.

In what follows, I will propose in chapter four of my thesis a framework based on the ideas found in Russell Weaver’s book *Questioning Keats: An Introduction to Applied Hermeneutics*. Weaver’s contribution to Dostoevskian criticism provides a way to assess values in *Crime and Punishment* and expands on Mikhail Bakhtin’s ideas of polyphony and doubling in his book *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Bakhtin is important because he is the first major Dostoevskian critic to suggest a character’s voice is separate from Dostoevsky’s voice; chapters two and three of my thesis will elucidate Bakhtin’s contributions. While Bakhtin’s contribution is important to our understanding of *Crime and Punishment*, he falls short of addressing the novel’s central concern: the problem of values.

To understand the way values seem to operate in *Crime and Punishment*, the ideas of Nietzsche in chapter one of my thesis will give us a kind of framework to understand the temporal nature of values. This temporality of values is also an important key to understanding Weaver’s idea of the “text’s view” in chapter four of my thesis because *Crime and Punishment* provides a reader with multiple perspectives on each character in

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5 Weaver’s credentials are listed in a footnote in chapter four.
6 This term will be explained in chapter four.
the novel. So, the “text’s view” is an important feature of *Crime and Punishment* because perspectives, by their nature, often contradict each other, requiring a reader to continually re-think and re-assess what he knows about the moral world of the novel.
CHAPTER II
NIETZCHE AND THE REVALUATION OF VALUES

The philosophy of Nietzsche sheds light on the impermanency of human values by providing a set of ideas that helps us understand those operative in *Crime and Punishment*. Even Nietzsche testifies to the possible congruence of these ideas. In *Twilight of the Idols*, he says that Dostoevsky was the only “psychologist, incidentally, from whom I had something to learn; he ranks among the most beautiful strokes of fortune in my life, even more than my discovery of Stendhal. [Dostoevsky is a] profound human being” (Nietzsche 549).

Nietzsche explains how and why humans form values in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, when Zarathustra proposes that man can create his own set of values, but to do so he must free himself from the restraints of the old ideas of reason to “annihilate” old values and “create” new ones (171). However, Nietzsche also believes that most people are not capable of assigning themselves their own good and evil. He suggests that it is “terrible to be” the “judge” and “avenger” of one’s own “law” (*Zarathustra* 175). This is an important point since one of Raskolnikov’s prime goals is to define his own good and evil without regard to conventional values.

In Zarathustra’s speech “On the Three Metamorphoses,” Nietzsche says that disregarding absolute values is important because old values lead to moral complacency;

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7 Original Emphasis
old values deny an individual the right to create new meaning and new values (137-140). Once a person, like Zarathustra’s lion, can free herself from old reason and learn to command herself, she unleashes a new source of power previously unknown to her. Given that this is a power from within, the values of one individual may consequently be different from the values of another person. Humans form values, Nietzsche says, to support the perspective they hold to be true in a particular context. The formation of new values can only happen, Nietzsche believes, when humans begin to rethink.

Rethinking—or what Nietzsche, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, calls “going under”—refers to a person’s willingness to start over at square one without any presuppositions (127ff). Nietzsche believes that genuine re-thinking can only occur if the person is withdrawing herself and her own assumptions from the situation, allowing the situation to dictate which perspective is appropriate to the situation. He says, “One will let strange, new things of every kind come up to oneself, inspecting them with hostile calm and withdrawing one’s hand. To have all doors open, to live servilely on one’s stomach before every little fact” (*Twilight of the Idols* 512). Nietzsche feels the stance humans should have in relationship to the object of interpretation is to “lie servilely” and to “withdraw one’s hand.” What this means is that we should not try to be in control or to dominate the facts relevant to a situation. Humans must postpone their judgments. If the interpreter does not postpone judgment, she does not learn to “grasp each individual case from all sides,” Nietzsche says (*Twilight of the Idols* 511). Instead, the interpreter acts on her first impulse.
While acting on impulse is not necessarily bad in every situation, this quick response is often governed by atemporal ideas or subjectivity; in other words, she does not allow those “little facts” to exist as they are. When we do not try to control the “facts” or the situation, all “doors are open,” Nietzsche says, and we allow the situation to present itself to us. That being said, this does not mean that re-thinking something for one’s own personal gain is necessarily a bad thing, for many changes for a good cause can happen when one rethinks something.

Because perspectives continually shift, according to Nietzsche, values in themselves are not absolute; they have no inherent meaning or permanence. It is only when man gives meaning that values emerge. What man once called truth then is put into question when the values that support such truths are re-evaluated and “facts” are not dominated or controlled by older values.

Countless perspectives make up multiple points of view; no single perspective can give an absolute account of the truth or an accurate explanation of a phenomenon, according to Nietzsche. *Crime and Punishment* contains a variety of perspectives on problems like suffering and creating one’s own good and evil. The many perspectives the novel requires the reader to take into consideration greatly complicates the question of which values the novel deems to be good or bad. Nietzsche’s way requires a re-thinking of the way that we evaluate the values that are held to be true in a novel like *Crime and Punishment*.

The characters of *Crime and Punishment* illustrate Nietzsche’s idea concerning each person’s having a distinct perspective by which he or she lives. For example,

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8 See relevant speeches in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* like “On the Thousand and One Goals.”
Razumikhin is a practical man driven by passion, whereas Sonya lives by a religious idealism based on her Christian values. Each of these perspectives shape the way these characters process reality; often such perspectives will be at odds with the reality of the text, another character, or the characters themselves depending on the context in which these characters are situated. Each perspective of the novel and its respective context require the reader to think about the various problems (e.g., justice, creating good and evil, suffering, love, and so forth) in the novel differently.

One of the most important differences arising out of this change of perspectives is the way in which what the text values most seems to change. Given that values change when the perspective changes and the perspective changes when the situation changes, according to Nietzsche, the values the text supports may also change at various times in Crime and Punishment. The text might value Svidrigailov’s honesty in relationship to human desires in a particular context, but this does not mean it values his honesty any more than it does Sonya’s purity or that it values his honesty in the pursuit of young women or girls. Of course, the text could value honesty more than purity depending on the perspective the novel gives us on both of them in context.

Crime and Punishment rarely gives full endorsement to any single character’s system of values because a novel’s views are not dependent upon absolutes; instead, a novel provides the reader with multiple views on each character. For this reason, a character’s values will rarely be fully supported by a novel.

Because Crime and Punishment provides the reader with many perspectives on each character and the values that the text endorses changes depending on these
perspectives, the fundamental question is how ought we to assess the complex ever-changing of values in *Crime and Punishment*. How can we distinguish between a character’s view and the novel’s view, or whether a good character can live by bad values or a bad character hold good values? A character can be both good and bad depending on the context in which we assess the values that she holds. This means that even a character like Sonya, who could be viewed by a reader as the moral center of the novel, does not always align with the views that the novel holds to be good in context.

An even more difficult problem is trying to determine where Raskolnikov, the novel’s protagonist, fits into the moral universe of the novel since the text provides the reader with so many perspectives to take into consideration when evaluating the moral worth of his character.
CHAPTER III

CHARACTER AND PERSPECTIVE:

BAKHTIN

We need to develop a way of talking about the relationship between what a character in *Crime and Punishment* says and what he feels or thinks, and Nietzsche’s understanding of values is the lens that helps us understand how values operate in *Crime and Punishment*. Nietzsche’s perspectivism provides a continual critique of values as opposed to an absolute account; he also gives a reader grounding to understand the multiple value systems in *Crime and Punishment*. The relationship Nietzsche has to the novel is an analogical one. Mikhail Bakhtin’s contributions to criticism on *Crime and Punishment* are also important here because he argues that a fictional character in this novel has a voice individual and distinct from the author.

Prior to Dostoevsky’s fiction, Bakhtin, in his book *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, felt that all fictional novels were monological. A monological novel means that all characters share the same voice, be it the author’s view or an idea found outside of the novel. Textual meaning in a monological novel would not be found in the textual words that house the thoughts and feelings of the characters nor does a monological novel take into account the individual perspectives of each character. Instead, the reader would have to consult the author’s biography, letters, or notebooks to understand his perspective on the characters of a novel. In other words, the author’s perspective was generally the
dominant perspective of the novel; all characters were orchestrated to his position in a monological novel. To understand Raskolnikov, according to monophony, the reader would have to research information such as the “incomplete ideas” that were floating through the air in nineteenth-century Russia and read all of Dostoevsky’s relevant letters and biographical information to account for his perspective on Raskolnikov. The grounds for understanding Raskolnikov, then, would not be the textual words; meaning in a monological novel is found predominately in empirical data located outside the novel or in the voice and perspective of the novel’s author.

The manifold elements in the text also spawn meanings beyond the author’s control. If Dostoevsky’s word becomes the final word about his fictional novels, the words in these novels do not contain their own meaning; their meaning is pre-determined, according to monophony.

Bakhtin and the Polyphonic Novel

But, it is Bakhtin’s assertion that Crime and Punishment is not a monological novel. This means textual meaning is not dependent upon the author’s word. Bakhtin says Dostoevsky’s characters are “free” and stand “alongside” their creator, having the ability to tell the author no (4, 10, 54). Standing “alongside” the author means that Dostoevsky and his characters are on the same level. Being on the same level does not give the author pre-eminence over his characters’ thoughts and feelings as he would have if Crime and Punishment was a monological novel; Dostoevsky does not have the final word about his novel. Having the final word means that the characters of the novel do not have meaning outside of the author’s view; their views are restricted to what the
author says about them. Such a character does not have an individual personality aside from the author’s personality. This also means that the views that are part of a non-fictional world outside of the novel explain the views of the fictional characters who live in a fictional world of the novel. When this happens, characters become an idea rather than a living person, and the novel becomes a novel “with” an idea (quoted in Bakhtin 18), according to critic B.M. Engelgardt. Needless to say, while the author can certainly control what happens in terms of plot development and has a special relationship with the characters he has created, the individual “freedom” of characters suggests that they seem to have perspectives that are not determined by the author’s views. With “freedom,” Bakhtin says, multiple voices can exist simultaneously in the novel. Multiple voices refer to numerous characters having their own independent views undetermined by the author’s views. Bakhtin calls this literary phenomenon polyphony.

A polyphonic novel means that characters are not only products of an author’s word; they are “subjects of their own directly significant word” (Bakhtin 4). Being “subjects of their own “directly significant word” suggests that something Raskolnikov says is unique to him. Because Raskolnikov exists in the world of Crime and Punishment, something that he says is a product of his own thoughts and feelings that do

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9B.M. Engelgardt, in his article “Dostoevsky’s Ideological Novel,” calls Crime and Punishment an ideological novel. In an ideological novel, the hero becomes defenseless before the idea that controls him and the power the idea has over him. Because the hero is defenseless before an idea, he becomes the “man of an idea” (quoted in Bakhtin 18). A character like Raskolnikov, who is inhabited by powerful thoughts, can be seen as liable to becoming a “man of an idea” because, without the buffer of tradition, whatever operates within him has nothing preventing it from taking him over. This idea becomes an “idea-force,” which distorts a hero’s consciousness (18). When an idea “distorts a hero’s consciousness,” he no longer lives as an independent being; it is the idea living within him that dominates his consciousness. Engelgardt feels that Dostoevsky no longer describes the life of a hero when an idea “distorts” a hero. Instead, Engelgardt believes that Dostoevsky describes the life of an idea in the hero, making the hero the “historiographer of an idea.” In other words, Engelgardt believes that Crime and Punishment is about the life of an idea that grows in a character like Raskolnikov.
not have “significance” outside of his own fictional world in the novel. That is, if the reader was to take Raskolnikov’s words and situate them in a different context outside of the novel, these words would no longer pertain to him. They would be symbols void of meaning; Raskolnikov gives his words “significance” and meaning.

This same way of thinking, Bakhtin would suggest, applies to the author’s having the final word on a character. While the author’s view is somewhat relevant, it does not give Raskolnikov’s words “significance.” Since Raskolnikov’s views are constantly changing throughout the novel, creating many contradictions as the reader tries to “know” him better, relying on the author’s voice to give an absolute account of him would deny Raskolnikov’s existence as a human with an individual will and consciousness; it also does not situate the reader to “withdraw” her judgment, according to Nietzsche.

Bakhtin feels that multiple voices exist in the novel and characters have their own “directly significant word”; he believes Dostoevsky views time in the novel not as things that formerly happened or will occur later. The interconnectivity of all phenomena makes everything simultaneously coexist in a single point in time (Bakhtin 23). No explanations of the past, influence of environment, a character’s upbringing, and so forth can cause a character to behave in a certain way.

For example, while we do learn about Raskolnikov’s past in Crime and Punishment at various times in the novel, these previous experiences do not factor into his motive to prove that he is an extraordinary man and can create his own good and evil, thus permitting the murder of the pawnbroker. That is, creating his own good and evil is
not dependent upon his past because it is a new personality that he is trying to create for himself; the novel also does not provide us with evidence that suggests his past experiences correlate with his present motivations. Bakhtin feels that a character’s every act is in the present and is not pre-determined; all character action is conceived of and depicted by Dostoevsky as being in “freedom” since his characters have individual voices. All “interconnectivity” that makes everything exist “simultaneously” originates in the textual words. While Bakhtin does not directly suggest that we ask what the textual words mean, his contribution is important because such “interconnectivity” is not self-evident without attending to the textual words that have their own “significance” as said by a character.

Bakhtin further suggests that Dostoevsky dramatizes “in space the inner contradictions and stages of development of a single person, causing the characters to converse with their double” (23). Given the frequent internal contradictions within Raskolnikov, Bakhtin says that Dostoevsky always matches two characters (e.g., Raskolnikov and Svidrigailov or Raskolnikov and Sonya) to “dramatize [a character’s] contradiction and reveal it extensively (24). Each pairing will also bring to light the “stages” of Raskolnikov’s “development” and “reveal” his “internal contradictions.” Since all character action is un-predetermined, “free,” coexistent, and “side by side,” doubling is possible, according to Bakhtin.

To “reveal” a “contradiction” requires the reader to familiarize herself with Raskolnikov’s psyche since the words of the novel and his doubling to other characters “reveal” something about his internal state of affairs. For example, the conversation that
Raskolnikov overhears in *Crime and Punishment* between the two young students in a bar gives us another perspective on him to help us understand the “significance” of his own word. To understand this “significance,” Bakhtin first suggests we familiarize ourselves with the voices of the two students.

The logic of the conversation between the two students is that the pawnbroker is old and does nothing with her money to help others who are in need. By killing her and using her money to feed many people, one student suggests this humanitarian deed would make up for the crime of murder. It is “simple arithmetic,” the student argues (Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* 65). “Simple arithmetic” is reason’s way to prove that killing the pawnbroker is lawful. While murder is normally not permitted, “simple arithmetic” promotes utilitarian logic that poverty is a crime and there are thousands of people without food. A humane person would find a way to feed these people because it can be considered a moral crime not to help one’s neighbor when he suffers from starvation. Given that no aid is available for thousands of people to acquire food to live, something must be done, according to the student’s logic. Sonya’s prostitution to feed her family and Dunya’s decision to marry Luzhin to help her brother pay for his studies are selfless acts that follow a similar vein as the student’s logic thus far.

While the student’s motives may be good because the poor would benefit from the pawnbroker’s money, he must still transcend good and evil to make murder lawful just as Sonya and Dunya must find a system of values to make their lives possible. Of course, the two students do not actually follow through with their theory; they were just
philosophizing on the idea that the pawnbroker has cheated so many people out of money.

One of the students also says that killing the pawnbroker is “justice” only if one is willing to do the deed himself, demonstrating the logic of the extraordinary-man theory Raskolnikov has been trying to promote (Dostoevsky 66). That is, redefining “justice” requires an individual to create his own good and evil. Defining “justice” according to his own standards would then allow the student in the bar to murder the pawnbroker to help feed the poor.

It is important to note, however, that the student in the bar does not want to be the man of “justice” or to prove that he can create his own good and evil, just as Sonya does not become a prostitute to prove that she can do it. The humanitarian motive is the sole basis for the student’s theoretical murder of the pawnbroker and for Sonya to prostitute her body. When the student’s friend asked if he would kill the pawnbroker himself, the student says that he was only stating his theory for the “sake of justice.” His friend, however, feels that one must “dare” for there to be “justice” (Dostoevsky 66), thus echoing Raskolnikov’s utilitarian logic.

Bakhtin’s double voices are applicable here. The student who proposes the humanitarian theory may serve as Raskolnikov’s double in this scene because Raskolnikov, later in the novel, says that he did not kill the pawnbroker to help others (Dostoevsky 418-19); he killed solely for himself. Raskolnikov may have used the humanitarian motive as a reason to justify killing the pawnbroker and to make creating his own good and evil easier for his conscience to accept, but his true motive was really
for power (329-330). Since this revelation is a contradiction, doubling illustrates that the students in the bar could possibly represent part of Raskolnikov’s continual “contradictions” in his moral development throughout the novel. Unlike Raskolnikov, the student never follows through with his idea because he realizes he does not have it in him to kill. This perspective doubles Raskolnikov’s own doubts that he himself is truly capable of murder. Such doubts are constantly in conflict with another part of Raskolnikov that feels he must prove that he is an extraordinary being.

Yet, the student’s friend tells the student that one must “dare” for there to be any “justice” in a deed. The voice of the student’s friend doubles Raskolnikov’s own voice that wants to “dare” to create his own good and evil when the former asks his friend whether he would be able to commit the deed himself (Dostoevsky 66). Later in the novel, Raskolnikov says that he only kills to see if he could “dare” to do it (418). While the student says he only wants to murder for “justice” alone, his voice may parallel Raskolnikov’s voice when he tries to convince himself that he wants to murder for humanitarian reasons, but the friend’s posing the question of whether the student would “dare” commit the murder himself is Raskolnikov’s true reason for wanting to murder. This means selfish motives rather than humanitarian ones seem to be his real motive.

At this point, however, it is not clear as to whether Raskolnikov realizes the selfishness of his desires, but the doubling “reveals” these “internal contradictions.” The

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10 The analogical relationship between Dostoevsky and Nietzsche applies here. The soul of Nietzsche’s pale criminal wanted “blood” and “thirsted after the bliss of the knife.” However his “poor reason did not comprehend this madness and persuaded him: ‘What matters blood?’ it asked; ‘don’t you want at least to commit robbery with it? To take revenge?’” He did not want to be “ashamed of his madness,” so he robbed (Thus Spoke Zarathustra, 150-151).

11 There are numerous passages in Crime and Punishment where Raskolnikov questions whether or not he should follow through with the murder (e.g., page 9).
selfish motives behind Raskolnikov’s desire to murder the pawnbroker stand in stark contrast to Sonya’s self-denial.

Raskolnikov’s attraction to Sonya is important to our understanding of him and the problem of values in *Crime and Punishment*. 

“Revealing” the nature of the Sonya-and-Raskolnikov doubling also helps readers understand better why Raskolnikov might be attracted to Svidrigailov since he represents a different “stage” of Raskolnikov’s “development,” according to Bakhtin. Svidrigailov is evil, whereas Sonya is good.

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12 Bakhtin does not analyze specific passages from *Crime and Punishment* in the sections of his essay that are relevant to my thesis, so I have chosen the passages from the novel that we could read through his lens.
CHAPTER IV

BAKHTIN’S DOUBLING:

RASKOLNIKOV AND SONYA

Raskolnikov first hears of Sonya when her father, Marmeladov, describes to him the consequences that his drinking has had on his family. Prior to this scene, Raskolnikov had just visited the pawnbroker to study her apartment because he wanted to see if he could actually carry through with her murder. He also wanted to see where she stored some of her possessions that she had pawned from others. When Raskolnikov needed to pawn his watch to her for money, she did not give him a fair deal, so he angrily left her apartment.

After leaving her apartment, Raskolnikov soon finds himself in a tavern where he meets Marmeladov who proceeds to tell him that his daughter carries a yellow pass due to his excessive drinking (Dostoevsky 14). Raskolnikov eventually takes home a drunken Marmeladov who receives a beating from his wife, Katerina. Instinctively, Raskolnikov puts money that his mother had given to him to fund his studies on the Marmeladov’s windowsill and leaves the apartment. Raskolnikov then reflects on his action. The narrator says

[Raskolnikov] put [the coins] unobserved on the windowsill. Afterwards, on the stairs, he thought better of it and wanted to go back. ‘What a stupid thing to have done,’ he thought. ‘They have their Sonya, and I need it myself…What a well they’ve dug for themselves, however! And they use it! They really do use it! And they got accustomed

13 Marmeladov’s home
to it. Wept a bit and got accustomed. Man gets accustomed to everything, the scoundrel'. (27)

Everything that we know about Sonya prior to this passage has been filtered through Marmeladov’s account of her. This means that Raskolnikov’s mind, both consciously and unconsciously, has been forming an image of her. At this point, we cannot speculate what his unconscious thoughts might be, but we do have access to his conscious view of Sonya.

While Raskolnikov was forming thoughts of what Sonya was like when he listened to Marmeladov describe her life as a prostitute, we never had access to his thoughts. After he leaves the money that his mother had given to him on the windowsill, he begins to “think.” When he “thinks,” he assesses the Marmeladov’s situation by comparing it to his own. Here, Raskolnikov puts forth his view on Sonya’s prostitution for the first time in the novel. This view is important because Sonya later becomes one of the paths that he can choose on his road to “salvation,” according to Wariolek (56)\textsuperscript{14}.

Instinctively, Raskolnikov does what many people would do in this situation by giving money to a family in dire need of it. His donation is not reasonable, but rises out of immediate sympathy and a grandiose spirit. Sonya, from what we have gathered from Marmeladov thus far, does not want to be a prostitute, so Raskolnikov’s money certainly would be of great use to her family to help them survive. Of course, Raskolnikov’s own

\textsuperscript{14} Wariolek says, “Dostoevsky’s moral world is dialectical: man is poised with every choice he makes between the self and God. These two poles are absolute and unqualified, and man makes his nature by choosing his acts to serve one or the other” (56). All choices serve either the self or God. Wariolek calls these choices “poles,” which are “absolute.” Following this logic, Wariolek believes what we might ordinarily understand to be good may actually be evil if it serves man. Alternatively, what we generally consider evil may actually be good if it serves God. For example, murder is morally bad, so most people would not disagree that a murderer has breached morality and should be punished. Wariolek, as mentioned above, suggests that Raskolnikov’s murder is the “first step toward his salvation.”
financial situation is not much better than the Marmeladov’s, for he is psychologically “crushed” by the poverty that surrounds him and has become his life (Dostoevsky 3). The scene between Marmeladov and his wife, who suffers from consumption and has several hungry children to care for and feed, however, may have moved Raskolnikov to put his seemingly hopeless situation aside and to give money to a family in great need of it. It is also possible that Marmeladov’s account of how he spent all of his money on booze, forcing his daughter into prostitution, factored into Raskolnikov’s charitable gesture towards this family. Being moved by compassion to help others is a human response to suffering, so Raskolnikov’s humanitarian deed after hearing about the Marmeladov family’s dire situation indicates his instinctual desire to help others is still present.

Raskolnikov and Sonya’s doubling has not been evident other than both characters are in bad situations (e.g., Raskolnikov is “crushed” by poverty, and Sonya is a prostitute). Because Raskolnikov is the “subject of his own significant word,” according to Bakhtin, we should continue to think about the “significance” of Raskolnikov’s words in the above passage when he begins to “think” about his charitable actions as being “stupid” since the Marmeladov family uses Sonya’s prostitution as their sole means to acquire money.

When Raskolnikov says, “stupid,” it is unlikely that giving money to others in general is “stupid.” As Raskolnikov re-thinks his action, he feels that bestowing money on others when he “needs it” himself is “stupid,” especially when they “have their Sonya,” who earns money as a prostitute. This means that while Raskolnikov, a student
in poverty, does not have the financial means to provide for himself, the Marmeladovs “have their Sonya” to support themselves. In consideration of the perspective that the text has given us of Raskolnikov, the view of him when he turns to “thought” seems confusing and may be an “internal contradiction,” as Bakhtin mentions. Since there is an “internal contradiction,” this means, according to Bakhtin, that doubling must be present in this scene. Thus, we need to understand the “contradiction” to understand better the doubling.

Seemingly, Raskolnikov, at first blush, would say prostitution is a consequence of social injustices placed upon people who do not have any other means to make money, so we would not expect him to say that they “have their Sonya.” Given Marmeladov’s excessive drinking, his wife’s inability to abandon her domestic responsibilities, and Sonya’s incomplete education, her family has no place to go—just like Raskolnikov, who is “crushed” by poverty. After all, without “having their Sonya,” they would all be on “dry beans.”

Despite these realities and Raskolnikov’s natural humanitarian inclinations, he does not dismiss the moral problem of Sonya’s actions when he says that her family “wept a bit.” Here, “weeping” may refer to regretting that they have to do something immoral to survive. Breaching one’s morals, regardless of the situation, generally puts someone in a difficult position; prostitution not only violates Sonya’s Christian ideology, it makes her a social outcast.

Despite Sonya’s status as a social outcast and her violation of her Christian ideology, when there are no other alternatives available, something must be done even if
that course of action does not coincide with her system of values. It is her need to compromise her values to earn her money from prostitution in order to support her family that makes her family “weep”; an alternative set of values would be needed to support prostitution without “weeping.”

But, Raskolnikov says that the Marmeladovs “got accustomed” to their daughter’s prostitution. Being “accustomed” to something, in the general sense of the word, means familiarizing one’s self with something after doing that thing for a certain length of time. This does not necessarily mean that one is happy or satisfied with doing that thing, for being “accustomed” does not always mean that a person has morally accepted it. Here, being “accustomed” means that while the Marmeladovs are not morally satisfied with prostitution, they have gradually accepted it as a necessity, thereby becoming “accustomed” to it. Sonya would not prostitute herself if her family were not poor. Because they are in dire need of money to survive, she has to have the means to support her family.

For Raskolnikov’s part, he seems to accept the reality of moral boundaries in theory because he must “accustom” himself to stepping over the line. Stepping over lines is sometimes not good, so Raskolnikov feels man is a “scoundrel” for becoming “accustomed.” This means that being “accustomed” is bad from Raskolnikov’s point of view, which is interesting given that he is also a proponent of making murder lawful to prove that he is extraordinary. But, Raskolnikov is not consciously thinking extraordinary-man thoughts at the moment. This suggests that he has not attempted to align or co-ordinate his thoughts and responses between his extraordinary-man theory.
and his present behavior. Regardless, Raskolnikov’s response to Sonya’s prostitution suggests that he possibly does not sanction prostitution despite the “contradictions” that have been noted above.

Sonya is already of interest to Raskolnikov even though he himself may not know the full nature of what that interest is at the moment. His interest in Sonya allows us to see a perspective on Raskolnikov that “reveals” his uneasiness with “scoundrels,” who are those that become “accustomed” to something unsavory. His uneasiness is present despite his attempt to make murder moral. Without his reflection on Sonya’s situation, this “contradiction” is not “revealed” to us, according to Bakhtin.

Although Raskolnikov calls man a “scoundrel” for becoming “accustomed,” he “falls to thinking” again. He says, “But if that’s a lie…if man in fact is not a scoundrel—in general, that is the whole human race—then the rest is all mere prejudice, instilled fear, and there are no barriers, and that’s just how it should be!” (Dostoevsky 27). “Falling to thinking” suggests that Raskolnikov’s mind is consciously shifting from what he conventionally accepts to be true to what he feels could be true based on reason. That is, like Shakespeare’s Brutus in *Julius Caesar*, Raskolnikov tries to work out reason with pencil on paper when he “falls to thinking.” Within the sphere of thought, all conjectures are possible, whether they be moral or not. In the above passage, the “lie” means man does not become “accustomed”; he does not see a given action as bad based on a conventional understanding of morality. That is, a given action is only bad because pre-established morals and values make such action bad. Consequently, morality is “prejudice,” and all of mankind is really not a “scoundrel.” If all morality is “prejudice,”
then “barriers” are merely a product of pre-established norms, meaning this perspective would reject prostitution as being bad. Man then, theoretically, can do whatever he wants to do.

It also seems in this passage that Raskolnikov is trying to shore up his moral framework by working out in his mind the idea that all is permitted if “barriers” are “prejudice.” When we take Bakhtin’s doubling into consideration, based on Marmeladov’s account of Sonya, we do not have any indication that she has tried to work out in her mind the theory that everything is “prejudice,” or that to her “barriers” should be non-existent. That she has not re-configured morality with pencil on paper will be important when we examine the passage where Raskolnikov mocks Sonya for her belief in God by questioning His existence. The nature of Raskolnikov and Sonya’s doubling becomes clearer.

For now, we see that Sonya’s motivations for becoming a prostitute are different from Raskolnikov’s intentions to commit murder. Their doubling illustrates both Raskolnikov’s sympathy towards Sonya’s situation and his seeming indifference when he argues that morality is “prejudice,” so “barriers” do not exist, and man is not a “scoundrel.”

The next step in our discussion on doubling is to consider what has already been said and to compare further Sonya and Raskolnikov’s similarities and differences. Both characters have natural inclinations to help others. Sonya gives up her body to feed her family; Raskolnikov leaves money that he could use himself on the windowsill to help the Marmeladov family. We have no reason to think that Sonya wants to sanction

15 My emphasis
prostitution morally; she does it because there is nowhere else for her to go for money. Raskolnikov, on the other hand, also needs money, but for himself. His humanitarian motive in murdering the pawnbroker is self-serving since his primary motive has been to achieve something “without fail,” which is not Sonya’s motivation (Dostoevsky 45). Raskolnikov chooses to step over the moral line when he murders the pawnbroker, chooses to create his own good and evil to give himself the moral right to murder, whereas Sonya has none of these personal desires in pursuing prostitution. Her motives are practical. Sonya and Raskolnikov both transgress the moral line: the latter eventually commits murder and the former is a prostitute. However, their motivations are much different since Raskolnikov wants to prove his extraordinariness and Sonya wants to support her family. Their differences in motivation establish the foundation of their doubling, according to Bakhtin’s theory.

While Raskolnikov himself does not consciously realize that he is attracted to Sonya at this point, reading Marmeladov’s death scene through the lens of Bakhtin’s doubling raises the possibility that he unconsciously becomes attracted to her during this death scene. This is the scene where Katerina refuses to embrace her dying husband. She feels that he does not deserve forgiveness (Dostoevsky 184).

As Marmeladov sees Sonya enter the room, he, the man responsible for her life as a prostitute, reaches out to her in hope that she will embrace him in his final moments of suffering. Seeing him collapse to the ground, Sonya embraces her dying father, not speaking to him or anyone else in the room.
Raskolnikov’s first experience of Sonya was in Marmeladov’s account of her prostitution. Here, in Marmeladov’s death scene, Raskolnikov sees her for the first time in person: the prostitute he has heard about is standing before him in the flesh. To understand the possible doubling in this scene, we would have to guess what Raskolnikov might be thinking since he simply observes. But, his observation suggests that he is attracted and interested in Sonya. So, Raskolnikov and Sonya’s voices might be “interconnected” in this death scene, especially when Marmeladov asks for Sonya’s forgiveness. She decides to embrace her dying father.

Before asking Sonya for forgiveness, Marmeladov seeks his wife’s forgiveness. The narrator says that Marmeladov was

in his final agony; he could not take his eyes from the face of Katerina Ivanovna, who again bent over him. He kept wanting to say something to her; he tried to begin, moving his tongue with effort and uttering unintelligible words, but Katerina…understanding that he wanted to ask her forgiveness, at once shouted at him peremptorily: ‘Be quiet! Don’t…I know what you want to say!...’ And the sick man fell silent; but at the same moment his wandering eyes rested on the doorway, and he saw Sonya. (Dostoevsky 184-185)

It is understandable that Katerina denies giving Marmeladov “forgiveness” since he has spent all of their income on alcohol. She is a consumptive who works until dawn every day, cleaning her house and tending to her children’s needs. With Marmeladov’s death, she feels her family will have “fewer losses” (184). By doing these things and taking care of Marmeladov when he came home drunk every night, Katerina feels as if she has already “forgiven” him; she does not want to give him the satisfaction of knowing he has her “forgiveness” (184). Her refusal contrasts Sonya’s willingness to embrace her dying father. Her choice to embrace her dying father also affects our view of Raskolnikov.
Katerina’s saying that Marmeladov’s death will create “fewer losses” for her family follows a similar logic to the student in the bar who argues that the pawnbroker’s death would provide money to help feed the poor. Obviously, the pawnbroker does not spend her money on alcohol, but she does hoard her money to cheat those who try to pawn objects to her for money. Getting cheated puts her clients in tough financial situations, making it difficult for them to survive. Her tactics are similar to Marmeladov who takes money from his family for alcohol, putting them in insurmountable financial difficulties.

If we follow the student’s line of thinking, the pawnbroker’s death would feed many people just as Marmeladov’s death would create “fewer losses” for his family. It is hard to argue that Marmeladov’s family is not better off without him since he used Sonya’s money to procure alcohol. However, Katerina did not create her own good and evil to improve her family’s situation. Marmeladov’s drunkenness led to his death when a carriage ran over him, so Katerina’s family now has “fewer losses.” The “fewer losses” were not the product of utilitarian theory or Katerina’s attempt to acquire “justice.” Even Sonya, who is forced into prostitution, does not theorize about killing her father to improve her situation. For her, prostitution is a practical matter of avoiding starvation.

When Katerina, then, chooses not to create her own good and evil by murdering Marmeladov, we do see the effect her decision has on her family. Their circumstances

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16 When I refer to Katerina’s not choosing to “create her own good and evil, this is a speculation made to contrast Raskolnikov and Katerina: the former creates his own good and evil to improve his situation and possibly the situation of others, and the latter refrains from doing so. Her decision allows Marmeladov to live, whereas Raskolnikov’s decision murders the pawnbroker. We also see that most people who have hardships do not try to create their own good and evil to improve their lives; they either endure or passively give-up.
do not improve, so, theoretically, it would be tempting for her to do something about it so
her family has “fewer losses.” Of course, given the nature of Sonya’s profession, it is
impossible to say whether they would be able to overcome poverty even if Sonya’s
money was not spent on alcohol and Marmeladov had died much sooner. That is,
Sonya’s profession depends on clients and her ability to keep herself looking attractive,
which also costs money. She must also be able morally to endure being a prostitute.

In terms of Raskolnikov’s motivation to cross the line, if his main motive was to
create his own good and evil solely to improve his situation or to help feed the poor or
both, then this perspective still would not condone murder, but his actions would be more
understandable and more humane. That is, it is humane to want to help others and to
desire a better life for one’s self. With Sonya, her motives seem to be pure because they
stem from the unconditional love that she has for her family; she does not prostitute
herself to prove to herself that she has the moral right to do so nor does she receive any
sexual gratification from the act. However, Raskolnikov’s motive to murder the
pawnbroker is to contrive his own good and evil to prove to himself that he is an
extraordinary man. By doing this, he must make himself become less human. Of course,
Sonya, in a way, must find the means to overcome her morality to support her lifestyle as
a prostitute, but she still maintains her heart’s purity and her ability to feel compassion
towards others whereas Raskolnikov does not\textsuperscript{17}.

\textsuperscript{17} For example, Raskolnikov notices a man observing a young girl, whom the man likely will rape
(Dostoevsky 47-50). Initially, Raskolnikov wants to prevent the rape. He even calls the man a
“scoundrel.” Ironically, Raskolnikov also feels that man is not a “scoundrel” if “barriers” stem from
human “prejudice.” Because this view allows for various perspectives to exist and determine the morality
of a specific course of action, the man, by all rights, ought to be able to rape the girl as long as his own
system of values permits it. Yet, Raskolnikov is deeply troubled by the man’s unwanted advancement
towards this young girl. Calling upon an officer, moreover, reinforces Raskolnikov’s inherent belief in the
The other significant image in this death scene is when Marmeladov’s eyes “wandered” from Katerina to Sonya after the former rejected his plea for forgiveness. When his eyes “rest” on the doorway, Marmeladov did not know that Sonya would be standing there. Sonya was even standing in the “shadows” prior to his identifying her (Dostoevsky 185). Initially, it seems that his eyes “resting” on her may have been coincidental, for he does not immediately recognize her until he notices her work attire. However, because Raskolnikov is in the room, Bakhtin would suggest Marmeladov’s eyes “wandering” to Sonya and “resting” on her does not seem to be coincidental. If Marmeladov feels that he cannot receive consolation from his own wife, then his eyes may shift to find someone who can forgive him. His wanting compassion and forgiveness is in some ways comparable to the redemption from suffering that Raskolnikov seeks in the novel. This perspective helps establish Marmeladov and Raskolnikov as doubles.

Raskolnikov, in this scene, is also witnessing a dying man, an unpardonable alcoholic, denied forgiveness from his own wife. Sonya’s emerging from the “shadows” and into Marmeladov’s line of vision might have significance, for she also emerges from value of law and order. Without such order, young girls are raped, and man does not have to worry about the law to regulate his sexual impulses. When the officer says, “depravity,” this “stung” Raskolnikov, for “depravity” means there is a permanent morality to determine what is “depraved” and what is not. The officer’s saying that the rapist’s intentions are “depraved” undermines Raskolnikov’s working theory that man is not a “scoundrel” and is not “depraved.” To acknowledge “depravity,” in turn, would not give Raskolnikov his own moral right to kill the pawnbroker. Therefore, he needs to undo what he himself knows to be “depraved” by denying the man’s actions towards the girl are “depraved” so he can become the extraordinary man who can commit murder. It is not really in Raskolnikov to feel that a young girl should be raped, but, when the officer mentions “depravity,” Raskolnikov inserts the young girl in place of the pawnbroker, suggesting that if murder can be allowed, then rape must also be sanctioned. If not, then Raskolnikov would have the right to interfere with the rapist. Interfering with the rapist would then infringe upon the rapist’s giving himself the right to rape the young girl. Consequently, when Raskolnikov falls to thinking again, he disapproves of his weakness to sympathize with the young girl, so he must continue to strengthen his moral framework to feel no pity or remorse for victims.
the “shadows” into Raskolnikov’s line of vision. As Raskolnikov then observes Marmeladov’s eyes “resting” on Sonya, her response to her father’s eyes “resting” on her might be significant to our understanding the attributes about Sonya that attract Raskolnikov to her.

After Marmeladov reaches out for Sonya, despite his wife’s continual protest, he slips from the sofa and crashes onto the floor. When he is almost dead, Sonya cries out “weakly, ran and embraced him, and remained so in that embrace. [Marmeladov] died in her arms” (Dostoevsky 185). Even though Marmeladov does not receive verbal confirmation that Sonya has forgiven him, she still chooses to “embrace” her father. Raskolnikov, who continues to observe this scene, knows that Marmeladov seemed to care for and love his family, but he also knows that his drinking caused great harm to them.

While Marmeladov in this scene struggles with the image of his daughter dressed in her street attire, the consequence of his drinking, his conscience wants to be at peace before he dies, knowing that his daughter has forgiven him. Raskolnikov’s situation is similar to Marmeladov’s in the way that he struggles with the image of murdering the pawnbroker. His struggles may stem from several reasons, but he is still searching for a way to redeem himself from his suffering. That is, he wants to be able to live again without having to confess to his crime.

When Raskolnikov sees Sonya “embrace” her father when nobody else would, this sets her apart from everyone else. While it is possible that any daughter would “embrace” her father if he was uttering his last dying words to her, Sonya’s motivations
may have more to them. She is somehow able to keep any ill feelings towards her father from affecting her heart; a hard heart would not be able to “embrace” a man whose drinking forces her into prostitution and makes her violate her Christian values.

Due to her continual suffering, Katerina’s heart has hardened towards her husband, so she is not able to forgive him when he asks her for it. This sets her apart from Sonya, and Raskolnikov observes this difference. Because Sonya’s “embracing” her dying father is a contrast to her mother’s refusal to forgive him, Raskolnikov continues to add to the picture of Sonya that has already formed in his mind when he heard Marmeladov’s story about her prostitution.

We do not get insight into Raskolnikov’s interpretation of Sonya’s actions towards her father in this scene. This means that we must use what we already know about the Raskolnikov-and-Sonya doubling to determine what significance her “embrace” might have to him. The similarities that can be drawn from the “embrace” may be that Raskolnikov’s heart, like Sonya’s heart, instinctually has good intentions.

For example, depending on how one interprets Raskolnikov’s childhood dream of the angry drunken peasant whipping the old horse, one can argue that this dream represents how he is not at ease with killing the pawnbroker (Dostoevsky 54-59). Raskolnikov’s heart is naturally inclined to feel sympathy, for he, as the child, “embraces” the dying horse in his dream when he witnesses it suffering. He even tries to stop the drunken peasant from beating the horse. Since it is possible to interpret the drunken peasant as what Raskolnikov is trying to become in the way that the former can beat the horse and not feel remorse, the child’s trying to stop the peasant may indicate
Raskolnikov trying to stop himself from going through with the murder even though the idea to murder to prove that he is extraordinary has become so engrained into his mind that the conflict between his heart and mind wears him out.

It is possible that Raskolnikov could double Marmeladov in this dream passage since the latter was once a good man who succumbed to alcohol. This means that Marmeladov may have wanted to stop drinking, but he could not stop himself despite the inevitable harm that he was doing to his family. Raskolnikov could be similar in the way that his heart did not really want to kill the pawnbroker, but his mind had become too engrossed with the idea of proving to himself that he is extraordinary. This means that his idea had begun to penetrate his heart, hardening it towards others whenever he thinks about not achieving his goal (i.e., doing something without failure).

Feeling remorse or sympathy towards others only makes Raskolnikov more vulnerable to human emotions, so he tries to cut himself off from these feelings to make bearing the image of the murder easier. It is hard for him to project the pawnbroker’s murder into reality without removing all feeling from his heart. That is, the more that he feels, the more he suffers. Raskolnikov, however, does not want to suffer, whereas Marmeladov claims, though it is not clear as to how seriously we are to take him, that he drinks because he “wish[es] doubly to suffer” (Dostoevsky 16).

The effect that crossing the moral line can have on the human heart is a commonality that both Sonya and Raskolnikov share. For the latter, his heart is constantly in conflict with his brain; in the case of the former, her heart has not been touched by the depravity of prostitution. At an unconscious level, Raskolnikov might
realize the purity of her heart when he witnesses Sonya “embracing” her alcoholic father. Just like murderers and prostitutes, alcoholics tend to be outcasts. That is, these people have broken society’s moral code and can no longer integrate themselves into it fully. From this perspective, Sonya, Raskolnikov, and Marmeladov all share the commonality of being social outcasts. This may mean that Raskolnikov is unconsciously attracted to Sonya in this death scene because he feels he has met someone who may be equal to him, for they have both crossed the moral line; he feels she can understand him since she has stepped over the line; in other words, those who step over the moral line are, in a way, morally connected together. He unconsciously might feel that she would be the only person with whom he can share his guilt and onto whom he can unload his burden to have someone else help him carry it, for he is having trouble carrying it on his own.

Given that she “embraces” an alcoholic who is responsible for her becoming a prostitute, Raskolnikov may feel that she could show him a similar kind of love since he has “cut himself off from everyone and everything” (Dostoevsky 115). Having a human connection may be what he truly wants to have at an unconscious level. Then again, Raskolnikov might not understand Sonya at all in this passage; that is, it may be hard for him to understand how someone could still “embrace” the same man who has oppressed her for quite some time. Marmeladov’s oppressing her may be similar to the way that Raskolnikov feels about the pawnbroker since she oppresses others and, in his mind, does not have a life worth preserving. This perspective would help establish a Marmeladov-and-pawnbroker doubling.
While there are many possibilities in terms of what Raskolnikov’s doubling to Sonya could mean in Marmeladov’s death scene, we have not yet asked which views the novel might support and which ones it might not. This means that I am not attempting to prove that any of the aforementioned ideas are true; rather, I am proposing different possibilities based on speculation when we read this passage through Bakhtin’s lens. The text also has not provided evidence that would support or refute the aforementioned speculations.

The Raskolnikov-and-Sonya doubling also has raised moral questions we have not assessed. Instead, we have been trying to understand the nature of the Raskolnikov-and-Sonya doubling. With the current picture of their doubling in mind, in the scene below where Raskolnikov questions Sonya about the existence of God, there is a rift in the Raskolnikov-and-Sonya doubling that forces us to rethink the nature of their doubling. Rethinking their doubling will ask us to address the moral questions that have been raised and will be raised in the novel.

When Raskolnikov wants to present Sonya a hypothetical picture of what could happen to her siblings if something happened to her, her mother, or both of them, he asks her

‘What will happen to [the children] then? They’ll wind up in the street, the lot of them; she’ll cough and beg and beat her head against the wall, like today, and the children will cry…then she’ll collapse, then the police station, the hospital, she’ll die, and the children…’ ‘Oh, no! God won’t let it happen’ burst from Sonya’s straining breast… ‘It’s bound to be the same with Polechka,’ he said suddenly. ‘No, no! God will protect her! God!...’ she repeated, beside herself. ‘But maybe there isn’t any God,’ Raskolnikov replied, even almost gloatingly, and he looked at her and laughed’. (Dostoevsky 320-21)

Raskolnikov suggests Polechka could become a prostitute; something that is “bound to be the same” means the outcome is inevitable. Sonya, with a “strained breast,” says that
God will not “let it happen” and will “protect” her family. This idealism is essential to understand the framework that keeps Sonya from jumping into a canal or going to a madhouse (323). Having an unrelieved awareness of one’s depravity can make living unbearable.

The perspective that the text gives us of Sonya’s thinking here is also essential to her view of justice in the novel. In her mind, God would not “let” something terrible happen to Polechka even though He allowed bad things to happen to her. Her faith in God gives her reassurance, regardless of whether such reassurance is at odds with reality or not. At the same time, the text also gives us access to Sonya’s strong response to Raskolnikov’s inquiry about her siblings. This suggests she has certainly thought about his questions about God prior to this moment.

With the above perspectives of Sonya in mind, we continue to discover similarities between Sonya and Raskolnikov’s doubling. Their doubling gives us two alternate views on the same problem: human suffering. Sonya’s idealism is faith-based, and her overall nature is a blanket of compassion; she does everything out of genuine love. This kind of strength and will power is not one that can be worked out logically. Even if her faith would be rational, her belief requires an absolute, unshakable faith that God will not permit bad things to happen to her siblings. Alternatively, Raskolnikov’s view that all morality is “prejudice” is his attempt to work out his own good and evil with pencil on paper; it is also the framework that makes murder permissible in his mind. Yet, he has had trouble dealing with the murder, and his heart and soul are suffering. Sonya, on the other hand, has not allowed depravity to “penetrate” her heart (Dostoevsky 323).
Her suffering also leads her to increase her faith in God, whereas Raskolnikov’s suffering causes him to feel great anguish and confusion as he tries to live with murder and understand his true motivation behind it. Even when Raskolnikov felt that he was following God’s plan for his life, he felt like a man “condemned to death” (Dostoevsky 62). Generally speaking, when one is following God’s will, he does not feel “condemned to death.” The will of God may not always be easy or pleasant, but one does not feel as though he is walking a death sentence if he is doing what God asks of him. Faith in God’s sovereignty gives one confidence to follow His will despite the inevitable hardships that one will eventually experience.

Raskolnikov then questions God’s existence. These questions cause Sonya’s face to “change terribly” as “spasms ran over it” (Dostoevsky 321). Raskolnikov “gloats” and “laughs” at Sonya as he paints her a realistic picture of what is “bound” to happen if Katerina dies and Sonya ends up in the hospital. When Raskolnikov “laughs” at Sonya after he questioned God’s existence, this is the continuation of the rift in their relationship. This rift requires us to deal with the moral questions that will arise when we analyze why Raskolnikov questions God’s existence and “laughs” at Sonya while making his inquiry. Bakhtin’s doubling has not provided a way for us to think about whether Raskolnikov is good or bad and whether Sonya is good or bad. That is, the problem of values in *Crime and Punishment* has not been addressed when we use Bakhtin’s lens to analyze the text.
CHAPTER V
FROM BAKHTIN TO WEAVER

Russell Weaver’s concept of the “text’s view”\(^{18}\) will be necessary for the discussion that follows where Raskolnikov questions Sonya about God’s existence. Their conversation will require us to make moral judgments about both characters. The concept of the “text’s view” takes some of what has already been revealed through Bakhtin’s doubling and evaluates whether what has been revealed is good or bad.

We will also begin to use terms such as “conscious view” and “subconscious view.” While we have already used the term “conscious view” to differentiate between what Raskolnikov may have been thinking and feeling consciously and unconsciously, we are now using the “conscious view” and “subconscious view” to distinguish Raskolnikov’s view from the “text’s view.”

Weaver’s Method:

Important Terms to Know

A character’s “conscious point of view” is what she is “consciously” thinking in context. In other words, she means exactly what she says; she is not knowingly trying to

\(^{18}\) Russell Weaver is a Professor of English at Ashland University in Ashland, Ohio; he has taught *Crime and Punishment* in two different courses for many years. His research interests include the relation between theory and practice in literary criticism, nineteenth-century British literature, and Shakespeare. In his book *Questioning Keats: An Introduction to Applied Hermeneutics*, he proposes a new way of approaching textual analysis by basing his ideas of language and meaning on the work of Martin Heidegger. The goal of Weaver’s project is to show how the meaning of the textual words from “Ode to a Nightingale” being analyzed in critical essays has been assumed. I feel that Weaver’s approach to Keats’ poem is applicable to all fictional texts.
deceive anyone or herself. If she were trying to deceive herself or others, then we would divide her “conscious point of view” into “public” and “private” views. Her “public view” refers to what she wants another character to gather from what she says, and her “private view” refers to what she herself knows to be true.

For example, in Shakespeare’s *Othello*, Iago obviously “publicly” lies and manipulates characters like Othello and Roderigo for his own “private” gain in numerous passages. In Flannery O’Connor’s short story “The Lame Shall Enter First,” it is not clear whether Rufus lies when he tells Sheppard that “[y]ou don’t want to steal and smash up things when you’ve got everything you want already” (174). In context, Sheppard is a youth counselor who has a “resolve” to “save” Rufus from a life of crime (O’Connor 180). The latter has resisted the former’s help because he feels he is in Satan’s “power” (O’Connor 150); only Jesus can save him. Thus, Rufus’ apparent gratitude towards Sheppard in the above passage does not make sense. Rufus may “consciously” be serious when he says he has everything he wants already; it is also possible that he is “publicly” saying he has everything he wants already to “privately” manipulate Sheppard into believing that he did not steal and vandalize property, thereby covering his lie. Rufus could also mean what he says but still want to “privately” deceive Sheppard. Regardless, when a reader takes Rufus’ statement in the above passage as the starting point to ask about his thoughts and feelings towards Sheppard by separating his “public” and “private” meanings, she will realize that the meaning of Rufus’ statement is not clear. This Rufus passage clearly differentiates from the Iago passage because a character’s point of view is not always an obvious lie to the reader.
While the “conscious point of view” is where we always want to begin when we think about what a character is thinking, we soon find ourselves revealing a character’s “subconscious view,” which refers to the thoughts that a character has but is not aware of at the moment for whatever reason. Because the “subconscious” view is in many ways speculative, our speculation is based on what is known about a character from the textual words. Thus, carefully considering the meaning of the words as said “consciously” by Raskolnikov in context, we can reasonably speculate what he might be thinking, both “consciously” and “subconsciously.”

After both “conscious” and “subconscious” views have been made known to us, we are ready to present the “text’s view,” which is a hypothetical construct that asks us to think about whether a character is good or bad as presented in our analysis of the textual words that pertain to that given character. Thinking about good or bad allows us to determine which values the novel as a whole seems to endorse and which ones it seems not to value as much or at all.

In Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart,” for example, the narrator’s obsession with the old man’s eye is certainly not a good reason to kill him. Clearly, the horizon of the text’s view in “The Tell-Tale Heart” is not controversial. Obviously, the “text’s view” would not support the murder of the old man whose Evil eye “vexes” the narrator (Poe 229). In other words, the narrator’s values are not shared by the text as a whole in “The Tell-Tale Heart.” In Crime and Punishment, the “text’s view” of Raskolnikov’s character is not obvious because the text does share19 some of Raskolnikov’s values even though he is a murderer. What this means is the “text’s view” generally resists moral

19My emphasis
closure because it presents both positive and negative aspects of a character like Raskolnikov. Each judgment made for or against a character will continually be refined by a reader upon further inquiry. This will be seen below.

From Bakhtin’s Doubling to Weaver’s ‘Text’s View’:
Raskolnikov and the Problem of Values

With Weaver’s method in mind, we can turn back to Raskolnikov’s conversation with Sonya about the existence of God and apply Weaver’s terms to further our understanding of their relationship.

Raskolnikov “consciously” may be trying to make Sonya feel worse about herself by asking about the existence of God and laughing at her. This could be his “conscious” goal because we do not have textual evidence that supports Raskolnikov not believing in God. If he believes in God, then it would not make sense for him to question God’s existence and laugh about it, at least theoretically.

But, there may also be other factors that tie into Raskolnikov’s questioning Sonya about God’s existence. If he is “consciously” trying to present reality to her by pointing out the potential bad things that could happen to her family, then he could be doing her a favor by making her more aware of the reality of her surroundings even though he could still be trying to upset her. While making Sonya aware of her surrounding circumstances seems good although not necessarily desirable, Raskolnikov’s trying to upset her is not good, from the “text’s view.”

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20 My emphasis
Hypothetically, if Raskolnikov was to question God’s existence without laughing and having the goal to upset her, then it is possible that Raskolnikov would not be viewed badly here from the “text’s view.” Being upset would only be an issue for Sonya because thinking about reality without God’s existence does not coincide with her idea that God will not let worse things happen to her. The “text’s view” would then suggest that Sonya’s idealism is problematic because she is not attuned to reality. Sonya’s faith would be similar to rowing with only one oar in the water of reality. Her limited view of reality prevents her from changing the course of her dire situation. Prostitution is making an attempt to improve her situation by making money, but if she were to rely on her job alone to save her family, Sonya would not be able to endure such hardships.

Because she cannot endure this burden alone, she needs to have faith that God will not let anything more happen to her or her family. From this perspective of Sonya, the “text’s view” seems to present her faith as good; it allows her not to sink into depravity, and it keeps her heart from being penetrated by the reality of prostitution. Faith also gives her hope, and having hope in this novel is also good.

In asking about God’s existence, Raskolnikov may “consciously” be curious to know how Sonya can do something that clearly violates her system of values but not commit suicide or sink into depravity (Dostoevsky 323). He wants to know more about the source of her strength. Though he does not “publicly” let Sonya know that he is asking about God’s existence to understand better the source of her strength, this could be Raskolnikov’s “private” reason for asking Sonya about the existence of God. This means
that his laughing and trying to upset her so she has to think about reality without having God in her corner could just be his “public” meaning of questioning God’s existence.

Because Raskolnikov still aspires to be an extraordinary man, he “privately” might view Sonya as one of the weak creatures that he wants to stand above as an extraordinary human. Part of him “privately” could be upset that she is able to endure crossing the line while he himself is having trouble doing so. He had worked out crossing over the line in his mind, thinking that he could prove himself to be extraordinary. Sonya, on the other hand, had no choice but to cross over the line, but she is doing better than he is. Thus, he could “privately” laugh and question God’s existence for these reasons.

It is also possible that Raskolnikov “subconsciously” envies Sonya for not having the struggles that he does. This is different from his “private” anger because he could “privately” feel as though having faith in God is comparable to looking over one’s shoulder all the time, so it could bother him that she is successful through faith, something that requires a belief in the supernatural. Belief in the supernatural is opposed to his extraordinary-man theory, which requires belief in human reason and a man himself to carry out the deed. This perspective would reinforce Raskolnikov’s earlier desire to achieve something without failing. If he needed to rely on God to achieve something without failure, then he would not feel as if he did something on his own; he needed supernatural intervention.

“Subconsciously,” if Raskolnikov wants to be more like Sonya, then his extraordinary-man theory would seem problematic. Ironically, Sonya would be more of
an extraordinary being than he is for being able to endure suffering while he greatly
struggles. As a double, Sonya might represent the part of Raskolnikov that
“subconsciously” realizes living by theory is problematic and that he needs Sonya; he is
having a hard time accepting this right now at a “conscious” level. We see that his heart
is working towards her, but his mind and pride interfere. This aspect of Raskolnikov’s
“subconscious” point of view seems both good and bad. It is good because he is trying to
work his way towards Sonya; it is bad because he realizes his theory is problematic but
he does not want to renounce it.

Raskolnikov’s “subconscious” jealousy might then help explain why he laughs at
Sonya. Because Raskolnikov wants to be a superior being by finding strength within
himself, not God to provide intellectual aid, laughter may “subconsciously” be his
attempt to make himself feel better about his own suffering because he is not trying to
look for strength outside of himself and he is not trying to find someone else to help carry
his burden. He is carrying the burden by himself, but Sonya is succeeding while he is
not. Faith is able to provide Sonya with a kind of strength that sheer reason cannot give
to Raskolnikov. If laughing at Sonya is only to make himself feel better, this is not good,
from the “text’s view.”

Below is another passage that I want to analyze because it seems to contradict
Raskolnikov’s “conscious” reasons for upsetting Sonya in the passage above. I chose to
analyze the questioning-of-God passage before the passage below because the former is
what I consider to be the rift in Sonya-and-Raskolnikov’s doubling. Since this rift has
been made known, earlier passages in the novel such as the one below need to be
reexamined. That is, we need to “go under,” as Nietzsche says, and rethink everything we have said about the Sonya-and-Raskolnikov doubling. “Going under” will also demonstrate how the “text’s view” continues to change in *Crime and Punishment* when the situation and perspective change.

After Sonya thanks Raskolnikov for providing money for her father’s funeral, he wishes his sister well as she departs. Then he looks at Sonya “brightly,” and says, “‘May the Lord grant rest to the dead, but the living have still got to live! Right? Right? Isn’t that right?’…[F]or a few moments, he gazed at her silently and fixedly: the whole story her deceased father had told him about her swept suddenly through his memory” (Dostoevsky 240). Here, Raskolnikov’s silent and fixed gaze is similar to his “studying” Sonya “closely” and feeling “involuntarily drawn” to her when she first enters his flat to thank him for the funeral money (Dostoevsky 238). This gaze is also comparable to Marmeladov’s looking at Sonya with hope of finding forgiveness.

Being involuntarily drawn to Sonya suggests that Raskolnikov is attracted to her, but he may not be aware of the nature of this attraction. When he questioned God’s existence, his laughter masked his “subconscious” envy; he was also trying to make himself feel better. Here, involuntarily may continue to suggest he “subconsciously” is working his way towards Sonya since they have both stepped over the line. This involuntary attraction might indicate that Raskolnikov needs Sonya to live, but he does not “consciously” realize his need for her at this time.

Given that Raskolnikov is involuntarily drawn to Sonya, we should consider this in relationship to the meaning of “brightly.” When Raskolnikov “consciously” looks at
her brightly, he may want her to confirm that he still has a life left to live. Throughout the novel, he has felt like a man “condemned to death,” stranded on a ledge (Dostoevsky 158-9), troubled by the image of his deed, and so forth. Sonya obviously did not want to step over the line, but she had to to survive. Knowing that he tried to prove rationally that he could kill and not be bothered by it, Raskolnikov would be drawn to Sonya to study her closely.

While studying her, he notes that she physically appears weak and child-like to him (Dostoevsky 238). Being extraordinary does not depend on physical attributes, but Sonya does not appear to be strong given how weak she looks. Prostitution has obviously taken its toll on her; though she is more than likely exhausted, she still is able to embrace her dying father and work every night to bring home money—which her father would spend on booze every night—to her family.

In the brightly passage, Raskolnikov obviously does not know that the source of Sonya’s strength is God (as he does in the “laughter” passage), but he does know that they have committed similar deeds as both prostitution and murder are breaches of morality. Raskolnikov’s “conscious” meaning of his brightly looking at Sonya is that it gives him hope. He might think that her confirming that he can still live is the kind of moral support he needs to live. We know that he feels that he cannot tell anyone else about the murder. This creates an interesting problem because Raskolnikov chooses Sonya here to get her approval. His bright face illustrates his need for someone else who has stepped over the line to tell him that there is still a life to be lived. Nobody else in this novel, until he later meets Svidrigailov, has really committed the kind of moral
breach he has. While Svidrigailov does represent a possible path for Raskolnikov to choose, the latter does not really know much about the former, other than accounts from his mother and random gossip, until well after he has become acquainted with Sonya.

Raskolnikov’s bright look suggests that he is also “consciously” looking for a way to live without dealing with his crime. If Sonya was to confirm that he can still live, then he might be at ease. Being at ease does not mean that he has dealt with the moral implications of his actions. This is not supported from the “text’s view.” The text does not endorse a character’s trying to create his own good and evil, especially when we compare Raskolnikov to Sonya, who only steps over the moral line because her circumstances make her do so. Even if Sonya did give confirmation to Raskolnikov, we have already said that her view, despite her being a pure character, is not always endorsed by the “text’s view.” Because the “text’s view” wants Raskolnikov to pick up his suffering and accept responsibility for his crime, it probably would not approve of Sonya’s giving him this confirmation if she were to do so. While this does not mean that Sonya’s character would be bad, this does mean that the text would not accept her perspective if she were to confirm Raskolnikov’s inquiry. Even if she did confirm it, this does not mean that living for her is the same as living for Raskolnikov.

The “text’s view” might approve of the idea that one can still live even after breaching the moral line, but it is not ready to endorse Raskolnikov’s wanting to live in this passage given that he has not accepted full responsibility for his crime. The “text’s view” obviously does not want him to die a thousand deaths, for there are still aspects of Raskolnikov that the text seems to favor, so it is good that Sonya gives him hope.
Since Raskolnikov studies Sonya closely, it begins to make more sense as to why he questions her about God’s existence. By understanding her faith in God better, he would have a way to live. If we take brightly into consideration, he is “subconsciously” more than likely interested in God, but his “conscious” mind will not allow God to penetrate the hardness of his heart. To penetrate his heart would mean he has to suffer and renounce his theory. Renouncing his theory would be admitting that he is ordinary and not extraordinary; he would also have to acknowledge that he did not achieve something without fail. This may be another “subconscious” reason for his laughing and trying to pull Sonya down to his level. If he can do this, he not only has human companionship, which he seems to want “subconsciously,” he also can prove to himself that his theory could still work if she follows him rather than him following her. Following her means renouncing his theory and taking up his suffering and his cross (Dostoevsky 522). At this point, he is not ready to carry his cross, but Sonya is now allowing us to see the path available to him if his pride will allow him to follow it.

A few pages after Raskolnikov questions God’s existence, his “conscious” mind gradually begins to understand more clearly why he is involuntarily drawn to Sonya. Raskolnikov tells Sonya that he

only know[s] that it’s on the same path. I know it for certain—that’s all. One goal!’ She went looking at him, understanding nothing. She understood only that he was terribly, infinitely unhappy…‘I need you, so I’ve come to you.’ ‘I don’t understand…’ Sonya whispered. ‘You’ll understand later…Haven’t you done the same thing? You, too, have stepped over…were able to step over. You laid hands on yourself, you destroyed a life…your own (it’s all the same!). You might have lived by the spirit and reason, but you’ll end up on the Haymarket…But you can’t endure it, and if you remain alone, you’ll lose your mind, like me. You’re nearly crazy already; so we must go together, on the same path. Let’s go!’ (Dostoevsky 329)
Raskolnikov alludes to the moral “line” he had referenced earlier in the novel (Dostoevsky 227). This line refers to the moral boundary that determines what is and is not permitted. Raskolnikov, while acknowledging that this line exists, feels that it can be moved; the location of this line depends on the context of the situation. For him, stepping over the line refers to killing the pawnbroker; for Sonya, stepping over the line would be prostitution. Only strong individuals, according to Raskolnikov, have the right to step over the line. His extraordinary-man theory, he felt, permitted him the right to step over the line and give himself his own good and evil.

Raskolnikov continues to compare himself to Sonya. They both destroyed a life when they stepped over the line. He has killed a person, and Sonya has, in a way, killed herself, so Raskolnikov suggests they are one and the same. He feels that she cannot remain alone or she will lose her mind. Losing her mind may reinforce Raskolnikov’s “public” questioning of Sonya’s belief in God’s existence. Her faith in God’s justice has given her the framework that He would never allow terrible things to happen to Polechka. This faith has also kept her from losing her mind, as Raskolnikov feels she is bound to do. If he truly believes what he says here, he may be returning to logic to convince Sonya that she is no different than he is. By making this comparison, he not only validates his earlier point that faith in God is similar to rowing with one oar in the water, he might continue to make himself feel better by making Sonya feel worse.

His wanting her to follow him might also stem from his continual desire for human companionship since he has alienated himself from human company. She has stepped over the line, so she is of the same mold as he is. Other people who have not
crossed the line will not be able to understand his situation; if he can convince her that
she is the same as he is and that they are both on the same path, he does not have to admit
that his theory was wrong or that he committed a crime. He would have human
companionship and a path that offers a way out of picking up his suffering to accept
moral responsibility for his crime. He might also feel as though he can be stronger than
she if he can get her to understand that they are on the same path.

Despite his critique of Sonya’s idealism, Raskolnikov confesses his murder to her.
The narrator says

Powerlessly [Sonya] fell onto the bed, face down on the pillows. But after a moment she
quickly got up again, quickly moved closer to [Raskolnikov], seized both his hands, and,
squeezing them tightly with her thin fingers, as in a vise, again began looking fixedly in
his face, as though her eyes were glued to him. With this last, desperate look she wanted
to seek out and catch hold of at least some last hope for herself. But there was no hope;
no doubt remained; it was all so²¹! (Dostoevsky 411)

Sonya quickly moves to Raskolnikov and squeezes his hands. From the perspective of
doubling, her gesture towards him is similar to the embrace she gives to her dying father.
Embracing and squeezing both indicate Sonya’s natural inclination to sympathize with
those who suffer. Like Marmeladov, Raskolnikov also needs Sonya. He chooses her as
the person to whom he confesses the murder, just as Marmeladov on his death bed
chooses her when he sees her standing in the doorway. Marmeladov needed to know his
daughter forgave him since her image horrified his dying eyes; Raskolnikov, who wants
to live, seems to find strength in Sonya.

While there are similarities between these two scenes, there is an important
difference. In Marmeladov’s death scene, Sonya does not fixedly stare at her father; she

²¹Original emphasis
just embraces him. When she squeezes Raskolnikov’s hand, she fixedly stares at him, and her eyes are glued on him. Realizing that it was so, meaning Raskolnikov is a murderer, Sonya realizes that no doubt remained and no hope was left. She never had to doubt whether her father was an alcoholic, so he had no hope. With Raskolnikov, she initially never suspects him to be one to transgress the line (though, she later acknowledges that she should have realized it the entire time). Since Raskolnikov had paid for Marmeladov’s funeral and had even defended her honor in front of his family, Sonya may have assumed that he was a noble man. He seems to share the same kind of selfless love she herself values. She also does not seem to remember his earlier jabs when he laughed at her and questioned her having faith in God. She is focused solely on Raskolnikov’s spiritual needs in this passage.

As if “forgetting herself,” Sonya then “embraces” Raskolnikov and “presse[s]” him “very, very tightly in her arms”; she also asks what he has “done” to himself (Dostoevsky 411). She does not call him a murderer or a scoundrel; instead she senses how “unhappy” he is and tells him that she will “follow” him and “never” leave him wherever he goes (Dostoevsky 412). By forgetting herself, Sonya does not view Raskolnikov as others who do not forget themselves would have. Forgetting one’s self means to put one’s own interests aside for the sake of another person; it also means that what normally constitutes the way a person is has also been forgotten. Most people would not embrace a murderer and follow him wherever he goes without forgetting herself. Humans tend to be concerned with the moral problem of murder, but Sonya focuses on Raskolnikov’s spiritual condition when she wonders how he could do this to
himself. She might not understand how someone would willingly want to cross the line since she herself had no choice but to step over.

Sonya seems to understand the undesirability of stepping over the line, so she is concerned about Raskolnikov’s happiness and salvation rather than the moral implications of murder. On one hand, forgetting herself to show Raskolnikov compassion is good from the “text’s view” because this is a compassionate thing to do. Sonya also seems to value Raskolnikov enough to be troubled by the thought of his choosing to step over the line and do this to himself. She might know that it is not in his nature to murder, and this makes Raskolnikov look better from the “text’s view” if Sonya endorses the thought that he could be a good man gone astray. This supports his renouncing his theory to follow Sonya’s path. Asking how he could do this to himself criticizes working morality out with pencil on paper because Sonya suggests that individuals with a nature like Raskolnikov’s should never willingly step over the line.

Despite Sonya’s goodness for concerning herself with Raskolnikov’s spiritual condition, the “text’s view” is also concerned that she seems to be more focused on Raskolnikov’s spiritual state rather than the moral problem of murder. While she is obviously not overlooking the murder, she does not feel that dealing with the moral issue is of first importance at the moment. Because the “text’s view” does not want to dismiss the moral problem of murder, it may not entirely agree with Sonya’s not concerning herself with justice despite her selfless motives.

When Sonya then wishes that she had “known” Raskolnikov prior to the murder (Dostoevsky 412), she seems to believe that she could have prevented him from
committing murder. This is a difficult argument for the “text’s view” to accept because Raskolnikov had known of Sonya prior to the murder based on Marmeladov’s account. While it is possible that he may have been “subconsciously” drawn to Sonya when Marmeladov told his story, Raskolnikov’s need for her is not made known to him until after the murder. The more he suffers and looks for a way to deal with the murder, the more Sonya becomes “consciously” relevant to him. This suggests that Sonya may not understand the hardness of Raskolnikov’s heart if she feels that she could have prevented him from following through with the murder. Prior to the murder, his pride would have prevented her from changing his course of action; he must be broken first before he will change.

Given that Raskolnikov chooses to confess to Sonya (though the confession did not happen as he had “intended”\(^22\)), he eventually seems to choose her path by turning himself in to the police. The final Raskolnikov-Sonya scene in *Crime and Punishment* is significant and powerful because the text intentionally complicates the question of whether or not Raskolnikov truly repents. Yet, Raskolnikov does choose Sonya’s path over, say, Svidrigailov’s path, so we need to consider whether the “text’s view” supports his reasons for choosing Sonya.\(^23\)

In the “Epilogue,” the narrator says

\[\text{[Sonya and Raskolnikov] were not alone; no one saw them. The guard had his back turned at the moment. How it happened he himself did not know, but suddenly it was as if something lifted him and flung him down at her feet. He wept and embraced her knees. For the first moment she was terribly frightened, and her whole face went numb…But all at once, in that same moment, she understood everything. Infinite}\]

\(^22\) Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* 411
\(^23\) The question of why Raskolnikov does not choose Svidrigailov’s path will not be directly addressed in this essay.
happiness lit up in her eyes; she understood, and for her there was no longer any doubt that he loved her, loved her infinitely, and that at last the moment had come. (Dostoevsky 549)

The narrator uses the ambiguous word “something” to describe Raskolnikov’s internal thoughts and feelings. Not knowing what makes him fall at Sonya’s feet is important because he is not using reason to dictate this action; his action is an impulsive movement. Gary Cox24 says that characters like Raskolnikov often are not “conscious” of internal shifts. Other characters like Svidrigailov take “voluptuous pleasure in every new twist of sensibility” (Cox 107). The narrator observes that Sonya and Raskolnikov were “resurrected” by love (Dostoevsky 549). If “something” is interpreted as love, then the power of human love may have forced Raskolnikov to Sonya’s feet. This suggests love creates Raskolnikov’s inversion, not necessarily the repentance. Raskolnikov’s heart leads him to Sonya, not his head.

With human love possibly being interpreted as the “something,” Raskolnikov would be caught up in a very powerful moment, allowing his emotions to run their full course. These emotions, overall, have been suppressed throughout the novel as his heart and mind constantly were at odds. This interpretation suggests that his feelings for Sonya have been buried and are finally now coming to the surface, making him fall at her feet. A resurrection of this nature would reinforce the power of human love as the means to redeem Raskolnikov from what seemed to be an irrevocable past.

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24 Gary Cox, in his book Crime and Punishment: A Mind to Murder, suggests that the characters in Crime and Punishment are part of a triangle schema. This schema consists of character pairings, and these pairings create triangles. Two of these triangles are the rescue triangle and the male-dependency triangle. Cox believes that Raskolnikov fits into both of the above triangles.
Cox’s working hypothesis that Sonya is a spiritual force that may be the “something” that brings Raskolnikov to her feet is still valid. The latter’s falling at Sonya’s feet may be Dostoevsky’s way to show us Raskolnikov’s final religious conversion (Cox 134). This would then mean his heart and head have fully repented, and Sonya, both as his love and spiritual force, causes him to change. This religious conversion would allow for Raskolnikov’s heart to be set free from the extraordinary-man theory that has been pressing down on it.

Because this is an emotional scene for both Raskolnikov and Sonya, it is also possible that love does resurrect the former but it does not fully set him free from ideas that possessed his heart. While the destruction murder has rendered on Raskolnikov’s heart might be mended by human love, this does not mean that he has fully repented in terms of a religious conversion nor does it mean that he has let go of his theory, as Cox argues. The ambiguous “something” may mean that Raskolnikov’s heart is working towards Sonya, but his head does not want to give up his theory.

To complicate the meaning of “something,” the narrator says Sonya understands the moment had come for Raskolnikov. While Sonya has certainly interpreted Raskolnikov’s thoughts and actions correctly at times in the novel, the “text’s view” is still not going to bow to Sonya as its moral center. Bakhtin agrees, saying that Sonya’s view is only an “ideological aspect” of her character; she has an independent voice. Her independent voice does not represent the voice of the novel or other characters (Bakhtin 20). Sonya may not necessarily understand Raskolnikov’s final action, for she, like him, is caught up in a very powerful experience in which two humans are sharing their love.
She may be correct to understand that he loves her at the heart level, but this does not mean that he is completely set free from the ideas that he had formed in his mind. Since the textual meaning of “something” is anything but clear, the narrator’s final assessment of Raskolnikov’s feelings towards Sonya and his murder further confuse our understanding of him. The narrator says

[Raskolnikov] was thinking of [Sonya]. He remembered how he had constantly tormented her and torn her heart; remembered her poor, thin little face; but he was almost not even tormented by these memories: he knew by what infinite love he would now redeem all her sufferings. And what were they, all, all those torments of the past! Everything, even his crime, even his sentence and exile, seemed to him now, in the first impulse, to be some strange, external fact, as if it had not even happened to him. (Dostoevsky 550)

This passage seems to support the theme that the power of human love can redeem. It is possible that Raskolnikov’s crime, sentence, and exile seeming like an external fact as though they had not even happened to him is the product of his “first impulse upon renewing his heart with Sonya’s love. He even asks whether her “convictions” were now his. If they were not, could her “aspirations” and “feelings” at least be his (Dostoevsky 550)? Raskolnikov “consciously” feels that his crime had never happened; the aforementioned questions may be his attempt to validate that his moral conversion has truly happened, for this self-awareness is new to him. This would mean his love for Sonya has the most significance to him at this moment.

If the crime seems external as though it had never happened, then the “text’s view” raises a few important questions. First, it is possible that love truly makes Raskolnikov feel as though the crime had never happened. While the “text’s view” may feel that human love makes Raskolnikov seemingly good here, he is not good if he has
found a way to release himself from taking moral responsibility for his suffering and his crime.

Another possible reading of this passage is that Raskolnikov’s resurrection has allowed him to hang on to his extraordinary-man theory, making him feel as though what he did was never a crime in the first place. If so, Sonya’s love has given him the strength to endure his suffering, face his time in prison, and still intellectually hang onto his idea that he had the right to murder. Sonya becomes his way out, but not entirely in the religious way that Cox seems to think. She is the means for him to take up his suffering, but this does not mean that he has completely admitted to doing anything wrong if he feels his crime never happened and is an external fact.

The external fact would then mean that Raskolnikov murdered the pawnbroker but no longer carries the burden with him; he no longer internalizes it. He will be part of history as the man who carried forth justice, not as a man who committed a crime if it becomes external.

The crime’s becoming external may also reinforce in his mind that only society views what he did as a crime. This explains why he must serve prison time. He can endure his time in prison if he believes that society is wrong and he is right about whether the pawnbroker’s murder is a crime. From this perspective, the “text’s view” does not endorse Raskolnikov’s feelings. Creating one’s own good and evil is not supported by the novel, so Raskolnikov’s desire to externalize his crime is problematic.

This then raises the question as to why Raskolnikov might really love Sonya. It is possible that what the narrator, Sonya, and even Raskolnikov himself feels is love may
also be his “subconscious” attempt to hang onto his pride and maintain the position that he was right to murder. If loving Sonya allows him to free himself from conviction and guilt, then he may be drawn to her for an escape, not as a person whom he loves in the way that she loves him. Of course, he probably does love her but still may not want to give up his extraordinary-man idea. From this perspective, the “text’s view” is not ready to endorse Sonya’s understanding of Raskolnikov even though they share a powerful love.

Since Sonya does champion Raskolnikov here, her approval still works in his favor more so than if she did not understand him. Despite the novel’s general tendency to side with Sonya’s values, the “text’s view” seems not to agree fully with the narrator’s conclusion that the novel’s final scene is an “account” of Raskolnikov’s “gradual regeneration,” if regeneration is synonymous with a moral repentance (Dostoevsky 551).
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing analysis, I have proposed an interpretive framework based on Russell Weaver’s method that expands on Mikhail Bakhtin’s contributions to Dostoevskian criticism and is mostly at odds with the other literary critics who rely heavily on empirical data like Dostoevsky’s biography to interpret Crime and Punishment. While not all empirical data is useless, it is not where we ought to begin when we interpret a fictional text. These approaches tend to misrepresent the nature of a fictional text by relying on arguments that do not concern themselves with pursuing the meaning of the textual words in what Weaver considers to be a serious way. Empirical data tends to bring a kind of moral closure to a fictional text that it, by its very nature, resists. What I mean by this has been shown in chapter four.

While Weaver acknowledges there are certainly other methods to interpret Crime and Punishment, these ways do not take a serious look at the novel’s central concern: the problem of values. Because this novel by its very nature intentionally creates an interpretive crux for a reader, an understanding of how values operate in Crime and Punishment is necessary. Following the tradition of Friedrich Nietzsche gives us a kind of framework to understand the temporality of values; this temporality is the key to a “text’s view” in Crime and Punishment because the novel provides the reader with
various perspectives on each character. By their nature, these perspectives often contradict each other, requiring the reader to continually re-think what is known about a character and the moral world of the novel. In other words, a reader’s inquiry into the moral questions of the novel will never bring permanent closure.

After all is said and done, approaching *Crime and Punishment* as Weaver’s method does allows the reader to be “engaged more deeply and productively in the life of the text” (Weaver 244). This kind of “productivity” is fitting for Dostoevsky’s fiction because he wrote to “depict all the depths of the human soul” (quoted in Bakhtin 49).
BIBLIOGRAPHY


