CONFESSION AND THE VIA DOLOROSA IN CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

THESIS

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This study provides a detailed analysis of the confession motif in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. It discusses Dostoevsky's use of the sacramental concept of confession, in which the estranged person is reunited with the human community through contrite confession.

Throughout the novel, Raskolnikov wavers between desiring estrangement and seeking union. These two poles are shown in his encounters with Sonya and Porfiry (who represent union) and Luzhin and Svidrigaylov (who represent estrangement). Sonya and Porfiry tell Raskolnikov to confess and accept responsibility for his life; Luzhin and Svidrigaylov show him how to continue passing responsibility to others.

This study also demonstrates that the epilogue is not merely a tag, as some Dostoevsky critics have argued. Rather, Raskolnikov's redemption is the only thematically and psychologically valid conclusion.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Confession is one of the leading motifs in Crime and Punishment, for to confess is what Raskolnikov must do if he is to regain his life—as Sonya and Porfiry tell him. Yet why confession is so essential is never sufficiently explained. Certainly it will relieve Raskolnikov somewhat from the burden which murder has placed on his conscience, and it will help atone for his crime; but these are not the main reasons for his need to confess. Rather Raskolnikov must affirm that he is part of the human family—a mortal man of flesh, not a great "man of bronze." Until he does so, he will remain estranged from others and from himself; he will be a half man, diminished by his quest for greatness. It is only in acknowledging his humanness that he begins to fulfill his true potential for greatness, and confession is the means for him to do so.

Because Dostoevsky makes use of the sacramental concept of confession found in both Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic theology, it is therefore necessary for us to understand the nature of sacramental confession. Unfortunately, when most people think of confession, they think of a dark booth with a kneeling penitent whispering sins into the ear of a priest whose eyes are averted; they think of penance and
absolution and the various other parts of the ritual as they have traditionally appeared in the Roman Catholic liturgy. What such people often fail to consider is the meaning of the event. Yet the meaning is what is most significant, for the ritual can change—and it has.

The concept of sacrament has its origin in the doctrine of the Incarnation. In becoming a human being, born of a woman, God invested all nature with an immensity of splendor previously unknown, for the Creator had been born into the physical world. Though Christ is the consummate sacrament, in His absence certain physical elements became sacramental signs of the grace of God working in the lives of human beings, for God realized that humans live in a physical world and need tangible means of recognizing spiritual realities. Likewise these sacraments were entrusted to human beings, ordained in succession from Christ.

As a sacrament, confession involves the tangible presence of a human being who represents God by means of his ordination and the human community through his humanity; in the absolution, the priest gives tangible assurance that a

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person's sins are forgiven. Sacramental confession is thus a reconciliation both to God and to humans, through the presence of the priest. While any sin is considered to be an offense which does damage to the welfare of humankind, mortal sins—those bringing spiritual death—grievously harm the human family and isolate and estrange the sinner from others.

In Roman Catholic moral theology, mortal sin is now viewed less as a specific action than as an attitude in which the individual cuts himself off from God and others by making himself the center of the universe. Such an attitude culminates in specific actions, but it is the attitude itself which constitutes the gravity of the sin. In existential terms, mortal sin translates hubris. In the Catholic tradition, sacramental confession is considered helpful but not necessary for less serious sins; for those bringing death, it is essential. Because he is out of fellowship with God and others, a person in mortal sin cannot receive communion, for the Eucharist is the one bread uniting the communicant

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5Wilhelm, op. cit., p. 284.

6Ibid., p. 300.
with God (through the literal Body of Christ) and with the community (in the Mystical Body of Christ).  It is in confession that the spiritually dead person is restored to fellowship and communion with God and others.

Though confession is practiced differently among the Orthodox, its meaning is the same as in the Catholic tradition. To the Orthodox, confession is the "power of baptism as it lives in the Church." Baptism itself frees the individual from original sin and incorporates him into Christ—in Whom all creation is fulfilled. In Christ, therefore, a baptized person is cosmically united with the whole of creation and with the human community specifically; to symbolize this unity, "baptism and chrismation [confirmation in Roman Catholicism] were always fulfilled in the Eucharist." In confession, the communal unity achieved through baptism is symbolized by the traditional practice of confessing to one's family and friends before confessing to the priest, and by the presence of the Eucharistic loaf of bread at confession. Orthodox receive communion

7Ibid., p. 286.
9Ibid., pp. 73-74.
10Ibid., p. 68.
11Hardon, Religions of the World, p. 137.
rarely, and in Dostoevsky's time, they confessed before each reception of the Eucharist, regardless of how serious their sins had been. The infrequency of communion stresses the importance of confession in Orthodoxy, for Eucharistic unity is not even possible without first confessing.

The importance of Christian confession is that it is an acknowledgment of our faults--of falling short of perfection. In our imperfect humanness, we have a need to admit that we do not attain the perfection of God. Stripped of its theological import, confession in its starkest sense is an admission of humanness and fallenness, mortality and imperfection, of being "born of woman." It is the enemy of hubris, for it requires the humility and honesty to say: "I am a human being, not a god." For this reason confession without contrition has no effect. The person without contrition clings to hubris and is not renewed.

\[^{12}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 138.}\]
\[^{13}\text{Wilhelm, op. cit.}, \text{p. 302.}\]
CHAPTER II

RASKOLNIKOV'S ESTRANGEMENT AND SELF-BETRAYAL

Raskolnikov's estrangement from others is evident from the first page of the novel. He has already "cut himself off from everybody and withdrawn so completely into himself that he now shrank from every kind of contact."\(^1\) This statement is significant, for we learn immediately that the protagonist has placed himself at the center of the universe and has shunned the community of human beings. Though we are not here told the cause of his withdrawal, we later learn that he has been contemplating the implications of a theory which divides humans into the categories of ordinary and extraordinary.\(^2\) The ordinary exist solely for the purpose of reproduction, while the extraordinary are the leaders, the men of genius who conceive of "something new." The extraordinary man has the inherent right to "march over corpses, or wade through blood" in order to make his great new idea known to the human race.\(^3\)

As he lies in his room avoiding all contact with ordinary human beings, Raskolnikov has been envisioning


\(^2\)Ibid., p. 400.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 250.
himself as this great man for whom all things are permitted. He has severed his ties with others both through his withdrawal and through the theory which denies his mortality and fallenness. By dividing humans into the categories of ordinary and extraordinary, he perpetuates the view that he is a great man who can purchase super-humanness at the cost of others' lives. He can sacrifice others to his quest for personal greatness by scapegoating them, for they are after all only ordinary—or perhaps even less than human. In calling Alëna Ivanovna a "louse," Raskolnikov shows that he regards her as being as expendable as an insect.⁴

Through his hubristic attitude, Raskolnikov is in a state of "mortal sin" even before he kills; in consequence, he is radically out of communion. When he goes into the tavern after deciding that his murderous thoughts are "vile, filthy, [and] horrible," he feels as if he has been "freed from a terrible burden."⁵ He looks on others briefly with a sense of oneness with them, but even here he realizes that these sensations are false, that his feeling of communion is false.⁶ He can make it true by humbly accepting that he really is no greater than these others. But despite his

⁴Ibid., p. 399. ⁵Ibid., p. 7. ⁶Ibid., p. 8.
"thirst for society," he is angry when Marmeladov disturbs his privacy and seeks to draw him into conversation. The encounter with Marmeladov is the first confession scene in the novel, and it is therefore supremely important for Raskolnikov to listen to what his companion has to say. Marmeladov singles out the young stranger because he "read a certain affliction" in his features. The affliction, as we already have seen, is that he refuses to accept that he is a human being but insists on making himself a sort of god. Marmeladov appropriately delivers to Raskolnikov the message of fallenness.

Marmeladov confesses himself unreservedly to Raskolnikov and does not seek to justify his destructive behavior. His story is a horrifying one of his own debasement and the debasement he has imposed on those he touches. His wife has been reduced from a lady to a poverty stricken consumptive, her children go hungry, his daughter has become a prostitute to support the family, and he has lost yet another position through drink. Marmeladov is aware of the destruction he has wrought and feels intensely the horror of it. He cannot understand why he has repeatedly drunk when he knows the results, and he bears tremendous guilt for what he has done.

\[7\text{Ibid., p. 10.} \quad 8\text{Ibid., p. 13.} \quad 9\text{Ibid., pp. 16-19.}\]
Though he is a destructive figure, sucking up his family's resources like a leech, he is yet closer at this point to redemption than Raskolnikov is. Marmeladov admits that he is fallen, and though he on occasion laughs about it, it is the hysterical laughter of the man confronted with terror. He takes seriously the effect his actions have on others; as he drinks, he feels Katerina Ivanovna's helpless despair, and he feels the "pitiful details of [his] domestic life." He feels, and he tells, but he does not excuse himself or resort to scapegoating theories and assert that he is a great man. Instead, he insists that he is actually less than human, that he is, in fact, a swine.

Marmeladov does understand elements intrinsic to existential tragic vision and introduces these to Raskolnikov. He refers several times to his own search for suffering. He claims that he drinks to "multiply" his sufferings and that he has found suffering in the very bottle he has been drinking. Perhaps his confession also is an attempt to taste his suffering. This suffering motif pervades the novel, and Porfiry later tells Raskolnikov that suffering is essential—not only for the murderer in expiation for his crime but for any human being. That is, suffering

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will always be present anyway, so one must accept and not run from it.

In addition to delivering the message of suffering, Marmeladov tells Raskolnikov of redemption through humility and love. In his vision of redemption before God, he tells his young companion that God will have mercy on the drunkards, for they all had enough humility to count themselves unworthy of the kingdom of God. 

His account of Sonya's redemption is equally striking:

In that day He shall come and ask: "Where is the daughter who gave herself for a harsh and consumptive stepmother and the little children of another? Where is the daughter who showed compassion to that filthy drunkard, her earthly father, and did not shrink from his beastliness?" And He will say: "Come unto me! I have already forgiven thee ... I have forgiven thee ... Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven, for thou didst love much ..." And He will forgive my Sonya; He will forgive her; I know that He will forgive ... When I was with her, a short time ago, I felt it in my heart.

Marmeladov is essentially telling Raskolnikov that what really matters is not how great one is (for even the drunkards and harlots are able to find redemption) but whether one has humility and love. Sonya has selflessly sold herself so that her family will eat, and she has done so not in anger and defiance but out of love. She will be accepted

\[16\] Ibid., p. 21.

\[17\] Ibid., pp. 20-21. Ellipses are in text and are transcribed exactly as they appear in print.
by God because of her great love—not because she has made herself greater than other people.

The encounter with Marmeladov introduces to Raskolnikov a way out of his hubris. He is told that he must accept the necessity of suffering and that through humbling himself and loving, he can find redemption. Though he listens to the confession, he wants for a long time to leave—perhaps because he does not like to be reminded of his own fallenness and need to be human. Yet Marmeladov's words do make a deep impression on him: Raskolnikov helps him to get home and leaves the family money; he helps when Marmeladov is run over, and goes to Sonya when his own burden becomes too great.

Instead of accepting suffering, however, Raskolnikov seeks to annihilate his capacity to feel anything—suffering or compassion. Shortly after he instinctively helps a drunk and abused girl, he wonders why he should care at all. He murders Alëna Ivanovna as an attempt to crush all his natural human feeling, as he later tells Sonya. The moneylender's death will stave off his own suffering, for by causing her to suffer, he will prove his significance. Though Raskolnikov apparently thinks (at least consciously) that he will rob Alëna Ivanovna and use her money to launch

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18 Ibid., p. 21. 19 Ibid., p. 47. 20 Ibid., p. 402.
his career, he later repudiates this motive and claims that instead he killed to prove that he was already a great man who had the right to kill.\textsuperscript{21} His murder of Alëna Ivanovna is therefore a sacrificial killing, designed to provide him with a sense of his greatness and a lessening of his mortality. Alëna Ivanovna becomes merely a scapegoat, an expendable object whose main purpose is to be killed in order to confer immortality on her killer.

The murder does not, however, provide Raskolnikov with more life; instead it diminishes his life. Immediately after he kills Alëna Ivanovna, he cannot think clearly enough to find the right key to fit her trunk; he wonders if he is losing his sanity when he thinks that blood will not show on red garments.\textsuperscript{22} When Lizaveta wanders into the flat, "he stopped and remained motionless as the dead."\textsuperscript{23} He is forced, against his plans or desire, to kill her and is immediately filled with "horror and repulsion for what he had done."\textsuperscript{24} He escapes the flat merely by luck, for he is paralyzed and unable to think coherently enough to run.\textsuperscript{25} He wanders into a side-street "half dead," and as he tries to walk home, he "no longer knew quite what he was doing."\textsuperscript{26} In taking the

\textsuperscript{21}Ibid., p. 402. \textsuperscript{22}Ibid., p. 75. \textsuperscript{23}Ibid., p. 76. \textsuperscript{24}Ibid., pp. 76-77. \textsuperscript{25}Ibid., pp. 77-78. \textsuperscript{26}Ibid., pp. 82-83.
moneylender's life, Raskolnikov is surrounded only by the death he has tried to escape: the literal death of Lizaveta and the death of his own reasoning ability.

After the murder Raskolnikov is more than ever estranged from other people. The murder seems to be an expression of his desire to sever himself from humanity by proving his greatness, but it also causes an even deeper alienation and spiritual death. At the police station, he is so entirely self-centered and inward that he cannot think of anything "outside himself," even though he tries to do so. After he pleads with Nikodim Fomich to understand the circumstances of his poverty, he feels completely alone:

In his soul he was tormentingly conscious of a dreary feeling of eternal loneliness and estrangement. Something new and unexpected, something hitherto unknown and undreamt of, had taken place in him. He did not so much understand with his mind as feel instinctively that he could never again communicate with these people in a great gush of feeling, as he had just now, or in any way whatever. Even if they had been his own brothers and sisters, instead of police officers, it would still have been impossible for him to turn to them for any reason or in any circumstances. He had never in his life experienced so strange and desolate a feeling, and the most painful thing about it was that it was a feeling, an immediate sensation, and not knowledge or intellectual understanding.

He is so cut off from others that he feels that he cannot communicate even with members of his own family. This feeling proves prophetic, for we later see that he cannot

27 Ibid., p. 91.  
28 Ibid., p. 98.
bear to be with his mother and sister, and he eventually abandons them.  

It is significant also that Raskolnikov feels rather than intellectually apprehends that he is cut off, and he is most frightened by the fact that it is a feeling. Since the murder, his reason has been submerged in his feelings and unconscious: the opposite of what he had supposed was to happen. Feeling has not been destroyed, as he had hoped; it has only taken the hideous and terrifying form of despair. Because of despair, he is unable to face Razumikhin and finds that he is now "less inclined than ever to enter into personal relations with anybody on the face of the earth."  

He is also unable to take the money forced into his hand by a merchant woman. Instead he flings it into the Neva as a gesture symbolizing that he is cut off from "everybody and everything."  

By committing murder and estranging himself from the human community, Raskolnikov brings intellectual and spiritual death on himself. Confession is the only means by which he can regain his life, as he almost instinctively knows. Immediately after the murder, he thinks of giving himself up. While he is still in the flat, he wishes to betray 

\[\text{29} \text{Ibid., p. 300.} \]
\[\text{30} \text{Ibid., pp. 105-106.} \]
\[\text{31} \text{Ibid., pp. 108-109.} \]
\[\text{32} \text{Ibid., p. 77.} \]
his presence to Koch, who is rattling the door bolt. The next morning, when he is summoned to the police station, he imagines that he will confess, and he is quite tempted to confess to Nikodim Fomich. Instead of confessing, however, he wanders the streets estranged from all human beings. He clings to the idea that he is greater than others, but when he falls into delirium, his body and unconscious mind at least attest to his mortality.

After emerging from several days of delirium, Raskolnikov goes to the "Crystal Palace" to read newspaper articles on his crime. There he unexpectedly sees Zametov, the chief clerk at the police office. After Zametov comes over to him, the conversation quickly turns to what newspapers the protagonist is reading. Raskolnikov cryptically "confesses" that he is interested in articles on the murder of the money-lender—the one they were talking about when he collapsed in the police office. Raskolnikov blatantly begins his statement by saying, "I'll 'confess!'" and "I will 'make a statement', and you shall take it down"; after he finishes his "statement," he asks Zametov if he understands. He feels the same sensation that he felt when the bolt was rattling.

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33Ibid., p. 81.  
34Ibid., p. 89.  
36Ibid., p. 152.  
37Ibid., pp. 154-155.  
38Ibid., p. 155.
in Alëna Ivanovna's flat, and again he desires to betray himself: "he was suddenly filled with a desire to shriek out, to exchange oaths with them, stick out his tongue at them, mock at them, and laugh, laugh, laugh." When Zametov makes an incomplete statement, saying that he is either "mad, or...," Raskolnikov tries to coax him into completing the sentence. He wants to hear Zametov tell him who the murderer is.

Later on in the conversation, Raskolnikov actually does try to confess, and his inability is pathetic:

He leaned as near as possible to Zametov and began moving his lips, but no sound came from them; they remained like this for half a minute. He knew what he was doing, but he could not restrain himself. A terrible word trembled on his lips, as the bolt had trembled then on the door: now, now, the bolt will give way; now, now, the word will slip out; oh, only to say it!

"And what if it was I who killed the old woman and Lizaveta?" he said suddenly, and--came to his senses.

He strongly desires to confess but is unable to do so; and when he does "confess," he phrases his statement as a question, again hoping that Zametov will tell him who the murderer is. In shifting the responsibility to Zametov, Raskolnikov has the advantage of perhaps being caught and

39 Ibid., p. 155.

40 Ibid., p. 155. Ellipses are in text and are transcribed exactly as they appear in print.

41 Ibid., p. 159.
put away "safely" without ever having to reveal to the world who he is. Zametov, however, cannot do for him what only he can do. Raskolnikov alone can admit his murder, if he is to become whole. Since he does not want to admit that he is human, he tries to get others—several others—to do it for him.

After he leaves the "Crystal Palace," he decides that he will go to the police to confess, but he suddenly finds himself in front of the house where Alëna Ivanovna and Liaveta had lived. Instead of going to the police, he goes to the flat, rings the bell, and asks the workmen why the blood of the murdered women has been washed out. When one of the workmen asks him "what sort of man" he is, Raskolnikov tells him that he will reveal that at the police station. The workman's question is important because he is asking about what Raskolnikov is. Raskolnikov's hesitation to answer the question stems not only from his hope that he will be taken to the police and forced to admit to their voiced suspicions but also from his fear of admitting that he is a mortal man.

When Raskolnikov starts to leave, he attracts the attention of the porter by asking if the police station is open, and when the workmen tell the porter about the young

\[42^{\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 164.} \quad 43^{\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 166.} \quad 44^{\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 166.}\]
man's strange behavior, Raskolnikov not only tells his name but where he lives. He invites them to take him to the police, and after he is literally thrown out, he begins to wonder if he should go to the police and confess. But he does not go. As in his "confession" to Zametov, he coaxes others to believe he is the murderer, but he leaves the responsibility for his destiny on them.

The theme of self-betrayal to avoid confession is further played out in Raskolnikov's first two meetings with Porfiry Petrovich. Though Raskolnikov knows that Porfiry is the detective on his case, he makes an excuse to get Razumikhin to introduce them: he claims that he wants to let Porfiry know that some of the articles in the moneylender's flat were his. He could easily make this same report to the regular police, but he instead chooses Porfiry, and he is well aware that going to the detective is "the moth flying into the candle of itself."

In his entrance into Porfiry's flat, Raskolnikov forces a situation that will produce laughter and waits "for the right moment to stop naturally." When he flares up at Razumikhin, he wonders if his "artfully contrived

irritation" seemed "natural." By cutting himself off from others, he is compelled to act in order to seem normal, but his true condition quickly makes itself apparent. When Porfiry has only barely hinted at his suspicions and has expressed his awareness of Raskolnikov's illness, the protagonist insists "rudely and angrily" that he is well. Immediately after this outburst, he becomes aware that anger will only betray him, yet he is enraged by Razumikhin's claim that he was delirious the day before, and bursts out to Porfiry: "Rubbish! Don't believe him! However, you don't need me to tell you; you don't believe him anyway." Though Porfiry's comments thus far can be taken quite innocently, Raskolnikov insists—out loud—that the detective suspects him. In his interior monologue, he wonders why they "torment" him. He further betrays himself by responding to Razumikhin's claim that he was mad when he gave his money to Katerina Ivanovna when he says: "Perhaps I have found a treasure somewhere, that you know nothing about," and "Mr. Zametov knows I found a treasure." The references to the treasure and to his conversation imply the murder of the moneylender, for that is what he was discussing.

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with Zametov the night before. In making these remarks, Raskolnikov overtly incriminates himself.

The desire for self-betrayal is mixed also with a desire for a sort of "confession." Raskolnikov becomes convinced from fairly innocuous remarks that Porfiry believes he is guilty. Though it is true that the detective does suspect him, his comments have been of the sort that could arise in any normal conversation; he has not yet revealed the depth of his suspicions. Still, Raskolnikov believes that he is being played with "like a cat with a mouse" and that they are laughing at him. In response, he thinks that he might perhaps "blurt out the whole truth" so that he can show how much he despises them. Though he would in one sense be confessing, it would not be the redemptive confession that he needs, for it would be motivated by hatred and the insistence that he is better than other human beings. True confession requires humility and contrition: the awareness that one is human and the desire not to continue to harm others or oneself through selfishness. Blurtling out the truth would give an outlet to his anger, but it would do nothing for his soul.

It is in the discussion of Raskolnikov's theory that Porfiry points out to him that he does have the capacity

55 Ibid., p. 244. 56 Ibid., p. 244.
for redemption. Porfiry claims that the major portion of Raskolnikov's article was "very, very original": his argument that "the act of committing a crime is always accompanied by some morbid condition." In essence, Raskolnikov has argued for the humanness of the criminal; he cannot commit a crime without an accompanying revolt from his nature, and the crime itself is a result of his morbidity. Raskolnikov's condition before and after the murder proves that, at least for him, the thesis is correct. Yet he has chosen to disregard the major portion of his article and its warning that he is human; he has chosen instead to cling to what his article merely glossed over—that the great man can commit crime without culpability in order to benefit humankind. He has accepted the argument that he can escape his mortality through sacrificing others and has forgotten his original theory (regarding the criminal's illness), which contains the more tragic attitude of not denying his humanness.

In the second meeting with Porfiry, the detective does "play with" him and try to trick him into admitting that he is the murderer, but Raskolnikov's further self-betrayal does not depend on Porfiry's trickery. He actually goes to the detective with the idea of possibly confessing.

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57 Ibid., p. 248.
or—perhaps more accurately—of getting himself caught. When he arrives at Porfiry's flat, he is surprised that nobody pays him particular attention; yet despite his belief that everybody should recognize him (since he is certain that they all know he is guilty), he has come here on his own, quite unnecessarily. In fact, he has told Sonya the previous night that he might not be back to see her, implying that he might instead be in custody. When he speaks with Porfiry, he insists that the detective had expressed a desire to interrogate him formally, though Porfiry had actually said that they might have a "little talk" and that a formal interrogation would be "quite unnecessary." Still Raskolnikov rather violently demands an interrogation. Certainly he would know that such a demand, voiced in so abrasive a manner, would not allay suspicions, that it would in fact arouse them.

In addition to asking for an interrogation, Raskolnikov comments on Porfiry's techniques, using imagery that cannot help but betray him. He remarks that investigators divert a suspect's attention by discussing "trivial matters" but that they then "stun him by hitting him on the crown of his head with the most dangerous and fatal question." Porfiry

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has been bouncing about the room discussing nothing of any importance, so Raskolnikov's remark could not easily be taken as an abstract observation on police procedures. Rather it is immediately evident to Porfiry that he is referring concretely to the current situation. Raskolnikov thus labels himself a "suspect" by implication and further implicates himself by using the imagery of his crime: hitting the victim on the crown of the head. Porfiry responds to this peculiar imagery and adds "as if with an axe," thus indicating that he is entirely aware that Raskolnikov is referring to the murder of Alëna Ivanovna.63

Porfiry's method in this scene is intriguing. He plays with Raskolnikov's desire to betray himself and tries to confuse him into confessing. Porfiry has profound insight into the young man's nature and manipulates him accordingly. Though on the surface he seems to be instructing Raskolnikov in detective strategy, he tailors his remarks to describe the protagonist. He tells Raskolnikov that one must understand the nature of the specific criminal, for a man's nature can be made to betray him, and one must deal with a peasant and a contemporary intellectual in entirely different ways. The high-strung intellectual will come to the detective,

63 Ibid., p. 324.
even thrust himself upon him, and will find unbearable the
suspense of not knowing if he is suspect.\textsuperscript{64}

In speaking of the criminal's nature betraying him, Porfiry presents a parallel to Raskolnikov's discussion of
the "morbid condition" accompanying crime. Both refer to
nature, which is quite distinct from intellect. Raskolnikov
has tried to run from nature, but (as Porfiry says) he cannot
possibly succeed. Even if he handles himself rationally much
of the time, his nature \textit{will} betray him, as it inevitably
does.\textsuperscript{65} During Porfiry's remarks, Raskolnikov turns pale,
then screams that he should be prosecuted or arrested if he
is suspect.\textsuperscript{66} In losing his temper, he nearly provides the
"mathematical proof" of guilt that Porfiry has spoken of.\textsuperscript{67}

In other instances when his temper supersedes his rea-
son, he obliquely admits that he is a criminal. In one of
these he tells Porfiry that "the criminal's best plan is to
tell the truth as far as he can \ldots{} to hide, as far as
possible, nothing that he can reveal."\textsuperscript{68} In responding to
the detective's remarks about his behavior by applying
the term \textit{criminal}, Raskolnikov labels himself. In a

\textsuperscript{64}Ibid., pp. 325-326. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{65}Ibid., pp. 328-329.
\textsuperscript{66}Ibid., p. 329. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{67}Ibid., p. 326.
\textsuperscript{68}Ibid., p. 333. Ellipses are in text and are
transcribed exactly as they appear in print.
similar instance, he screams, "You are teasing me to make me betray myself," to which Porfiry responds, "But you can't betray yourself any further." In fact, he could not betray himself at all if there were no secret or crime to betray, as Porfiry understands. Raskolnikov's statement is a covert admission of guilt, made when his nature is not being controlled by his intellect. And "like a child crying for the fire to play with," Raskolnikov has come forward to betray himself before anybody has even begun to "worry" him—all because his nature could not bear the "uncertainty."

69 Ibid., p. 336.  
70 Ibid., pp. 334-335.
CHAPTER III

THE MESSAGE OF REDEMPTION

FROM SONYA AND PORFIRY

Porfiry delivers to Raskolnikov the message that no one—not even the cleverest—can escape nature. Every human being is made of mortal flesh, not bronze. Sonya Marmeladova's complementary message is that to be fully alive, one must find hope through humility, love, and suffering. In the first meeting in Sonya's room, the contrast between the murderer and the harlot is striking. With his "abstract and consequently cruel mind," Raskolnikov can think only of tormenting Sonya with the problems she faces and hence try to justify the barbarity of what he has done. By causing her to see the injustice of life, grow angry, and despise those who have forced her position on her, Raskolnikov would affirm that it is acceptable to live in hatred and estrangement. But despite the seeming hopelessness of her position, Sonya affirms the values of love and union with others.

It would be impossible to divorce Sonya's values from her faith in God, for it is her faith which has sustained and shaped her. Sonya's love is like the self-giving love of Christ. As Christ forgave, she forgives her father,

1Dostoevsky, op. cit., p. 310.
Katerina Ivanovna, and Raskolnikov; as Christ accepted
death for the sake of others, she takes on herself a form
of death—prostitution—so that her family will not starve;
as Christ had compassion, she empathizes with the plights
of others and cares more for them than for herself. Her
attitudes have been molded by the vision of Christ as seen
in the Gospels, and, to Sonya, God is with her despite her
suffering; God in fact "does everything" and is everything.\(^2\)
She humbly accepts that her life is dependent on One other
than herself, does not shrink from her smallness, and does
not assert that she is the center of the universe.

Like her father, Sonya confesses herself to Raskolnikov
and shows him how to escape the spiritual death he has
brought on himself. She tells him that despite the burden
on her, she loves Katerina Ivanovna and the children and
cannot bear the thought that her stepmother will die and
the children be reduced to beggary.\(^3\) She accepts her step-
mother's failings and says that she is "like a child" who
"loves justice" but who does not realize that "one can't
expect justice from people."\(^4\) Sonya recognizes that life
is unjust, yet she loves anyway. She refers to her father
compassionately as "my poor father" and does not blame him

\(^{2}\) Ibid., p. 311.  \(^{3}\) Ibid., pp. 304-307.  \(^{4}\) Ibid., p. 305.
for the sort of life she must lead. Her love for the orphans and her recognition that she is their only source of sustenance have prevented her from ending her own suffering in the Neva. Sonya's love unites her with others and helps her to accept, not hate, them.

In addition to affirming love, Sonya confesses her imperfection, her failing to love. She says that she has not always been kind to Katerina Ivanovna or her father, that she has in fact often "driven" her stepmother "to tears" through her own selfishness. Sonya is tortured by the memory of the times she has not taken into account the feelings of others. She realizes that she was unkind in not reading to her father and in not letting Katerina Ivanovna have the collars, even though the requests themselves were rather selfish. Sonya apparently believes that sin is the act of making others unhappy by not considering their feelings more than her own, regardless of how much those people may have harmed her.

We can easily see how radically different Raskolnikov and Sonya are. His whole philosophy is selfish while hers is selfless. He desires to make himself a great benefactor at the expense of others' having to suffer. Sonya, however,
believes that it is wrong even to deprive others of their happiness; certainly it is horribly wrong to make them suffer. While Raskolnikov theorizes about becoming a benefactor of humankind (but actually increases human suffering), Sonya—by living for others—actually is a benefactor. Her tremendous humility contrasts sharply with Raskolnikov's destructive hubris.

In his first meeting with Sonya, Raskolnikov asks her to read to him the story of Lazarus. Porfiry has asked him if he believes in the raising of Lazarus, and now he insists on hearing the story of resurrection from death. Sonya is reluctant to read to him, for she would be revealing the most personal part of herself; she would be telling him all. Yet despite her unwillingness to confess herself completely, her desire for him to believe and be raised from the dead overwhelms her reluctance, and she reads. To Sonya there is resurrection and life, hope in the midst of suffering. She has been preserved from spiritual death by her faith in God and her compassion for others. Likewise Raskolnikov is not irretrievably ruined; he can be raised from the dead, as Jesus raised Lazarus. Her proclamation of the passage is a

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9 Ibid., p. 312.
10 Ibid., p. 251.
11 Ibid., pp. 313-315.
message to Raskolnikov that he is not hopelessly lost and that he can be reborn.

The power of Sonya's humility does elicit a positive response from Raskolnikov, though he tries to fight his awareness of her strength. He tells himself that she is mad, deranged by "religious mania," and that she should kill herself. Yet he prostrates himself before her in homage to "all human suffering" and is aware that her suffering has made her as honorable as his own sister. He also admits covertly, the day before he confesses to her, that he is a murderer:

I know [who killed Lizaveta], and I will tell you ... You, and only you! I have chosen you. I shall not come to ask your forgiveness, I shall simply tell you. I chose you long ago to tell this thing to, when your father talked about you. I thought of it when Lizaveta was alive.

Raskolnikov admits his guilt, for he cannot be forgiven for what he has not done, and he could not have thought of telling who murdered Lizaveta before she was dead, unless he had been planning to kill. This statement is significant also, for we learn that Marmeladov's confession and his account of Sonya so impressed the young man that he planned to seek her out from the time he first heard of her. Thus

\[12\text{Ibid., pp. 308-311.}\]  
\[13\text{Ibid., p. 309.}\]  
\[14\text{Ibid., p. 317. Ellipses are in text and are transcribed exactly as they appear in print.}\]
we see that Raskolnikov has long been aware that Sonya's power is the type of power he needs: the power of humility, love, and union with others, not the brutal power gained by sacrifice.

In Raskolnikov's first meeting with Sonya, she confesses herself to him. In his second meeting with her, he intends to confess to her and actually does make her aware that he is the one who killed Aléna Ivanovna and Lizaveta. On his way to Sonya's flat, he tries to avoid thinking about his impending confession because it is too unbearable, yet he feels "obliged" to tell her.\(^{15}\) When he reaches her flat, he feels "a sudden sensation of impotence and fear," wonders if he really needs to confess, and realizes "not only that he must tell her, but that he could not put it off even for a short time."\(^{16}\) It is significant that he only feels that he cannot put it off, that he has no rational knowledge of why and is helpless to do anything but confess.\(^{17}\) Once again the great man is driven by his nature, by inner compulsion, and cannot control his actions rationally.

When Raskolnikov appears, Sonya is humble and honestly thankful for how he has just rescued her from Luzhin; he, on the other hand, torments her again with her social position,

\(^{15}\)Ibid., p. 389.  
\(^{16}\)Ibid., p. 389.  
\(^{17}\)Ibid., p. 389.
in an attempt to forestall confessing. Though he has said
that he will not ask her forgiveness but will simply tell
who killed Lizaveta, he tries to make Sonya decide whether
Luzhin or Katerina Ivanovna should live if one of them had
to die. In doing so he is trying to get her to understand
his crime from his point of view, for if she answers that
Luzhin should die, then her conclusion would be the same as
Raskolnikov's was when he killed Alëna Ivanovna--that is,
that she ought to die and that it is therefore acceptable to
kill her. Instead Sonya acknowledges that she is not God
and therefore has no right to determine the fates of other
people. In effect she is confessing her humanness. By
saying that she has no right to determine other peoples' fates, she demolishes Raskolnikov's argument that as a great
man he can sacrifice human life.

The confession to Sonya reveals how deeply Raskolnikov
dreads telling what he is. Just before he is about to con-
fess, he feels a "bitter hatred" for Sonya but realizes
(when he sees her love for him) that his feeling was mistak-
en, that he was simply frightened by what he had to do. When he finally is going to confess, he cannot speak: "The
silence became unendurable; he turned his deathly-pale face

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18 Ibid., pp. 389-390.
19 Ibid., p. 391.
20 Ibid., p. 391.
21 Ibid., pp. 391-392.
towards her; his lips moved impotently, striving to speak."

As in his attempted confession to Zametov, he can only move his lips silently. Later he trembles, loses control of himself, and becomes "quite without strength." These physical reactions, coupled with the image of a face pale as death, dramatize the fact that he is only human, whether or not he is willing to admit it.

When Sonya finally asks how he knows who killed Lizaveta, he passes to her the responsibility of revealing who he is. He tells her to guess and gives her hints using the third person. He cannot bear to tell her, so she must tell him. As she stares at him, guessing, he sees Lizaveta as she appeared just before he killed her. In drawing this parallel between Lizaveta and Sonya, Raskolnikov is intuitively reminded that he has killed not only a vicious old moneylender but also an innocent—a person like Sonya. His seeing the similarity between Lizaveta and Sonya shows that he can find redemption if he is willing to admit what his insight implies—that killing is not justifiable regardless of the grounds. But he is not yet able even to admit that he is the killer. Only after Sonya has told him does he refer to the murder from the first person point of view, but he still attempts to justify himself.

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In trying to explain his motive to Sonya, Raskolnikov travels through a mental labyrinth of half truths. Perhaps it is for this reason that confession is so painful and terrifying: it requires the honesty to look at himself objectively and see his real reasons. He alternately tells Sonya that he killed to commit robbery, to make himself Napoleon, to put himself through university and launch his career, to see if (like the superior great man) he could simply dare, to see if he had "the right," and to try to kill himself. All of these factors contributed to the murder, but the essential motive was that he grew to despise his own humanness (and therefore other human beings), and began to think people stupid; he wanted to see if he was greater than these ordinary idiots; and he wanted to destroy all that was ordinary about himself. Through Sonya's help, Raskolnikov begins to see through his lies when he realizes that it is not true that Alëna Ivanovna was "a louse"; and he admits that it has been a "long time" since he has "told or known the truth." He realizes that in cutting himself off from others and not speaking with anybody, he has reached this state of not knowing the truth. He partly recognizes

26 Ibid., pp. 395-402.
27 Ibid., p. 399.
that by estranging himself, retreating into the dark, and thinking, he has devised his own self-deception.\textsuperscript{28}

The contrast between Sonya and Raskolnikov is height-ened in this scene of confession. She understands immediately that by killing he has destroyed himself, and she claims that he has made himself the most unhappy person in the world.\textsuperscript{29} This statement is especially shocking in its context: Sonya has been forced into prostitution, her father has died, she has been accused unjustly of theft, and her stepmother has been evicted and is going mad. But Raskolnikov is the most unhappy because of what he has done to himself. He has killed his own humanity; they have not.

Sonya is compassionate towards him, despite his murder, just as she is compassionate towards her father and stepmother. But she is too compassionate to accept his self-justifying explanations. She tells him that he's all wrong about life, that human beings are not expendable lice, and that he has fallen away from God. Because of her insistence that he is wrong, he begins to be at least a little bit honest with himself. However, if he wants to rise from the death he has dealt himself, he must confess by reconciling

\textsuperscript{28}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 399.

\textsuperscript{29}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 394-395.
himself both to the earth he has "defiled" and to the human community he has despised. 30

Though Raskolnikov has admitted his crime and attempted to unearth his motive, Sonya tells him that he must make what would be, in effect, a sacramental confession. Confession to the earth was an old practice in Russian Orthodoxy and would immediately have been understood by Raskolnikov as having a sacramental nature. 31 This confession derives its significance from the Russian pagan attitude toward Mother Earth, an attitude which survived into Christian times.

In The Russian Religious Mind, G. P. Fedotov writes that the pagans loved Mother Earth not for her superficial beauty but for her "black moist depths, the source of all fertilizing powers, the nourishing breast of nature," and the "resting place" of humans. 32 The image of Earth in Russian paganism was as mother, not virgin, "as a mother who nourishes man during his life and after death gives him rest," and who is thus "the embodiment of kindness and

30 Ibid., pp. 394-405.

31 In Orthodoxy, the sacraments are less carefully defined than in Catholicism. Signs that would be called "sacramentals" in the Catholic Church might be considered actual sacraments among some Orthodox. Confession to the earth is one such sign. John Hardon, Religions of the World, p. 135.

Mother Earth is not "celestial" but cthonic power: nurturing, kind, and embracing mortality. In Christian times the earth retained the image of Mother. She was regarded as sacred and even as a "keeper of the moral law." Considering the Russian reverence for the earth, it is not surprising that confession to her took on a sacramental nature. The earth would be both a symbol of transience and mortality (through the cyclic rhythm of nature) and of permanence and transcendence. She would both represent the natural world of humans and transcend it, just as the priest represents both the human community and God in the sacrament of reconciliation.

Both the schismatics, who had no priesthood, and the Orthodox in the absence of a priest would use the earth as their confessor. In fact, Sonya admits to Raskolnikov that she does not attend church often, presumably because her social position would make it difficult. She is an Orthodox without access to a priest, so her own confessions would probably be to the earth. She is aware also that Raskolnikov is not a believer and would probably not willingly

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33 Ibid., p. 13.  
34 Ibid., p. 13.  
36 Ibid., pp. 135-136.  
37 Dostoevsky, op. cit., p. 312.
confess to a priest. Therefore confession to the earth would be the only sacramental action that he might be willing to perform in order to atone for his crime. By making a true confession, he would at least reconcile himself to the natural world and to the human community. Sonya's advice is very wise. She tells him that he must humble himself, seek union and reconciliation, and "accept suffering and achieve atonement through it" if he wants to be raised from the dead.  

In his final meeting with Raskolnikov, Porfiry Petrovich further elaborates on this need to confess and suffer. He has come to explain matters openly and to invite Raskolnikov to make a confession. Like Sonya, he feels compassion toward the protagonist, even though he knows he has murdered. He does not like having to discuss this matter, and before he begins, "his face took on a serious and troubled look; a veil of melancholy seemed to be drawn over it."  

Porfiry appears on the surface to do what Raskolnikov accused him of in an earlier scene: lulling his victim's suspicions and then stunning him with the direct evidence of who he thinks the killer is. If one reads carefully, however, it becomes evident that Raskolnikov allows his

38Ibid., p. 403. 39Ibid., p. 439. 40Ibid., p. 430.
suspicions to be lulled. Though Porfiry says that he is no longer making any "allegations" and that Mikolka has "solved" the "problem," we can read these words in an entirely different sense than at first seems apparent.41 Mikolka has solved the problem by showing that he cannot possibly have been the murderer, and Porfiry is not making any allegations but is about to make a direct accusation. He does give what is basically a simple and straightforward report of the history of his suspicions, and he never comes close to recanting. Before he gets very far, in fact, he tells Raskolnikov, "I can understand what it must be like for a man like you to have brought all this on himself."42 He really has come to "confess" openly to Raskolnikov, not to trick him.

As Porfiry outlines the anatomy of the criminal's psyche, he all but tells Raskolnikov that he is guilty; he tells him that he was relying on his nature to make him confess; and he says that Mikolka confessed only in order to seek suffering.43 In typical fashion, Raskolnikov reads Porfiry's remarks in the way they are not intended and sees them as a recantation—probably because his own desires are so mixed up. Since the murder, he has wanted both to get

41 Ibid., pp. 430-433.  
42 Ibid., p. 431.  
43 Ibid., pp. 431-437.
caught and to continue struggling; now he is frightened by the thought that Porfiry does not suspect him and yet hopes that he does not.  

When Porfiry directly confronts Raskolnikov with the evidence of who the murderer was, Raskolnikov again refuses to make a direct admission of his guilt. Though Porfiry's description of the criminal can refer only to Raskolnikov, Raskolnikov asks who committed the murder, and "Porfiry Petrovich almost recoiled, as though startled by so unexpected a question." The detective finds it difficult to be the one to say, "But it was you, Rodion Romanovich! You murdered them!" Not only does Raskolnikov force Porfiry to tell who committed the murder, but he also tries to convince him to jail him, thus making the police responsible for his life. Porfiry, however, insists that he take responsibility for himself by confessing. Without any trickery Porfiry tells Raskolnikov that he will be locked up whether or not he confesses, so Raskolnikov now has what he has long wanted—the certainty that he is suspected and will be jailed. Porfiry, however, does not play the game Raskolnikov has wanted him to play. The murderer has gotten himself caught, but now he is being told that he needs to

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confess anyway. His self-betrayal has backfired, for he still needs to tell the truth about himself.

Porfiry's advice to Raskolnikov, like Sonya's, is very wise. After Raskolnikov (who is no longer able to "conceal anything at all from Porfiry") says that a sentence reduction is "not worthwhile," Porfiry tells him not to "loathe life" but to humble himself by accepting the suffering involved in being what he is.\(^5\) Porfiry understands that if Raskolnikov accepts his suffering, rejects his confused logic, and plunges "straight into life without deliberation," then he will find his life and perhaps find God.\(^5^1\) He knows that, regardless of having killed, the young man still has the potential to become a "sun"; his life has not been destroyed by what he has done.\(^5^2\) He lets Raskolnikov know that "suffering is necessary" and great, and that to reach his potential and live again, he must accept suffering.\(^5^3\) Porfiry's definition of greatness appears to be similar to Sonya's: the truly great man accepts being human, lives life, and does not seek to escape his own suffering by making others suffer but accepts what he must endure.

\(^{50}\)Ibid., p. 440.  
\(^{51}\)Ibid., pp. 440-441.  
\(^{52}\)Ibid., pp. 440-442.  
\(^{53}\)Ibid., p. 436.  
\(^{54}\)Ibid., p. 436.
CHAPTER IV

ESCAPE FROM CONFESSION AND RESPONSIBILITY:
LUZHIN AND SVIDRIGAYLOV

From Sonya and Porfiry, Raskolnikov has heard that he must accept responsibility for his actions and life, and that he must accept his fallenness and suffering. Peter Petrovich Luzhin and Arkady Ivanovich Svidrigaylov, however, present the protagonist with an entirely different message: that it is not wrong to scapegoat others or to make them responsible for one's life. The tension between these two poles of thought has been present in Raskolnikov from the beginning, as we have seen in his wish for spiritual suicide and in his desire for union and confession. Though he is as guilty of scapegoating as these two men, Raskolnikov is repelled by their actions and is thus perhaps encouraged to acknowledge the emptiness inherent in sacrificing other people instead of oneself.

Though Luzhin is considered respectable, his pompous and self-righteous bearing make him appear even more despicable than Svidrigaylov. He is proud and vain, spiteful and domineering, a narcissist obsessed with his own talents, who perhaps loves only his money as much as he loves himself.¹

¹Dostoevsky, op. cit., pp. 294-295.
When he enters Raskolnikov's flat, he expects to be received as a generous "benefactor" and to "taste the sweetness of compliments." Like Raskolnikov, Luzhin has dreams of being a "benefactor" and wants the power to dominate others while "benefitting" them—as we see in his attitude toward Dunya. Luzhin's desire to marry Dunya is purely selfish. He longs to raise a beautiful but poor girl from poverty so that she would be "completely humble before him" and "all her life would think of him as her saviour, reverence him, obey him, admire him and him alone." In essence he wants his wife to see him as a god and to give him the kind of devotion that is usually reserved only for God. In turn his charming wife would help him to be a success in St. Petersburg. Though it is obvious that only Luzhin would profit, he believes that his hope to raise a poor girl to his own social level is "heroic." Because he is blinded by his vanity, Luzhin cannot even see, much less admit, that he is actually sacrificing another for his own gain.

In Raskolnikov's flat, Luzhin propounds an economic theory in which he contends that utter selfishness is in fact selfless; that is, that by considering only oneself and one's own economic advancement, the general economy is aided

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2Ibid., p. 294.  
3Ibid., p. 295.  
4Ibid., p. 295.  
5Ibid., p. 294.
and society benefits. The basic meaning of his remark is that not considering, and perhaps crushing, others is acceptable if one wants to benefit society at large. Raskolnikov sees the parallel to his own theory and informs Luzhin that he has argued that it is all right to "cut people's throats." But Luzhin has apparently not thought out the implications of his theory and denies that it can be given that reading. This denial, however uninformed it might seem, is only indicative of Luzhin's character. He can never admit that anything about himself is less than noble, so he denies also that he knew that the hotel where he has housed his future wife and her mother is disreputable or that he longed to dominate over a completely submissive wife.

The letter Luzhin sends to Pulkheria Alexandrovna reveals a glimpse of the depths of immorality to which he is capable of descending. In his letter Luzhin demands that Raskolnikov not be present at their meeting, if they want to prevent him from withdrawing his offer to marry Dunya; he also lies by saying that Raskolnikov gave all his money to Sonya—implying that he wasted all that his mother sent him on a prostitute. Both the demand and the

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6 Ibid., pp. 142-143. 7 Ibid., p. 145. 8 Ibid., p. 145. 9 Ibid., pp. 141-146. 10 Ibid., p. 210.
lie demonstrate that Luzhin is not averse to hurting others to attain his ends. His threat to withdraw is designed to instill in the two women the fear that he may abandon them to complete destitution if they do not cater to his wishes. They have forsaken all to come to St. Petersburg, and they believe that they are completely dependent on him for their survival. His lie demonstrates how little he cares for the feelings of his fiancée or her mother. Luzhin denigrates their beloved Rodya simply to create the appearance that only Raskolnikov could possibly have been at fault in their disagreement. By exalting himself in this manner, Luzhin not only sacrifices Raskolnikov in order to obtain his own desires but also completely disregards the effect his lie would have on the woman he is hoping to marry. Such a report could only wound her, for she loves her brother. But Luzhin seems to care for nobody but himself.

In his meeting at the hotel with Raskolnikov's family, Luzhin again tries to assert his power. He refers to Raskolnikov as an "outsider," in the presence of his own mother and sister, and claims that by placing that "insolent youth" and himself on the same level, Dunya shows that she sets little value on her fiancé. 11 Her response is predictably angry and incredulous: "I put your interests alongside of

11Ibid., p. 289.
everything that has until now . . . formed the whole of my life, and you are offended that I set too little value on you!" 12 In his prideful arrogance, Luzhin goes on to argue that she should love her future husband more than she loves her brother. 13 When the dispute grows more heated, Luzhin accuses Dunya of encouraging Svidrigaylov’s designs—showing precisely how much he values her—and states that because he disregarded the rumors about her, he is entitled to demand her "gratitude." 14

Though Luzhin has claimed that Raskolnikov distorted his words by saying that he wished to "dominate over" his wife and "reproach her with the benefits" he has bestowed on her, Luzhin’s own words indicate that Raskolnikov has given an accurate description of his designs. 15 He has tried to dominate Dunya by her supposed financial dependence on him. He refers resentfully to the "new tone" she has taken towards him since she has learned of the three thousand roubles left her, and he says with equal irritation that he can "no longer count on" her helplessness. 16 This statement indicates that he desired her to be helpless and unable to defend herself. In addition, by demanding

12 Ibid., p. 289. 13 Ibid., p. 290.
14 Ibid., pp. 292-293. 15 Ibid., p. 146.
16 Ibid., p. 292.
that she love him more than her brother, Luzhin states exactly how submissive he wishes her to be: she is to sublimate all her feelings, all her happiness, all her life to his. She is not to have a life of her own, only a life in him.

Luzhin blames Raskolnikov entirely for all that has gone wrong, never considering for a moment that he himself has brought about the destruction of the relationship through his own selfishness. He is willing to admit only that he had been "the tiniest bit overbearing"—not that he had actually demanded slavish obedience. The morning after the break up, Luzhin muses:

Another mistake I made was in not giving them any money. . . . why the devil was I such a Jew? It isn't even as if I were being careful of my money. I simply wanted to keep them as badly off as possible and so lead them to see me as their Providence, and now look! . . . Pah! . . . No, my position would have been much better . . . and stronger, if only I had given them some fifteen hundred roubles, for example, for the trousseau, and little gifts, various fancy boxes, dressing-cases, ornaments, materials, and all that sort of rubbish from Knopp's or the English stores! They would not have cast me off so lightly now!

From this interior monologue, we can readily see the truth about Luzhin. He is scheming all the time to make himself look good. We find that he had first thought that by

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16 Ibid., p. 293.  
17 Ibid., p. 295.  
18 Ibid., p. 346. Single-spaced ellipses are in text and are transcribed exactly as they appear in print.
keeping the women poor, he would elevate himself to the position of "Providence"—another image of Luzhin seeing himself as a god. As he recognizes that this plan did not succeed, he thinks that perhaps he could have bought their love with money and gifts. In fact, Luzhin is deceiving himself by not admitting that his entire orientation is faulty. He will acknowledge—"only to himself, of course"—that in not giving Dunya and her mother money, "he had been a fool," but he cannot admit that his selfish willingness to destroy people is wrong.19

Our final glimpse of Luzhin is in his attempt to sacrifice Sonya to win Dunya back. Luzhin, unknown to Sonya, has slipped one hundred roubles into her pocket so that he may accuse her of theft, discredit both her and Raskolnikov, and show Dunya that he was not wrong about her brother.20 Instead of admitting to Dunya that he was wrong and asking her forgiveness, Luzhin seeks to make the innocent suffer so that he will benefit.

Throughout this scene, Luzhin refuses ever to confess that he planted the money on Sonya, as he refused to admit earlier that he lied about Raskolnikov's giving money to Sonya. In that instance, he simply changed the issue from his accusation to whether or not the money had been wasted,

19Ibid., p. 346.  
20Ibid., p. 385.
thus trying to shift attention away from his lie.\textsuperscript{21} In Katerina Ivanovna's flat, Luzhin again tries to "twist things to his own advantage" to avoid admitting what he has done.\textsuperscript{22} He accuses Lebezyatnikov of being too blind to have seen the money clearly, when the latter says that he saw him put a one hundred rouble note in Sonya's pocket; when nothing else succeeds, Luzhin claims that he is being slandered by atheists.\textsuperscript{23} Though he does not convince anybody that he is innocent, Luzhin leaves without ever confessing his guilt, still clinging to his insistence that, despite the evidence, he has done nothing wrong.

In many ways Luzhin is much like Raskolnikov. He is a selfish man who deludes himself into thinking that he is a benefactor, when in reality he is a destroyer. He is vain and arrogant, flattering himself with his belief in the superior nature of his mental abilities. He desires power over other peoples' lives and is willing to sacrifice them to his quest to be seen as a great man. He looks on himself as more than human and refuses to admit that he is fallen (that is, merely human). However, Luzhin is far emptier than Raskolnikov. Though Raskolnikov has actually taken lives and is afraid to confess his fallenness, he eventually

\textsuperscript{21}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 291. \textsuperscript{22}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 384. \textsuperscript{23}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 382-394.
does confess. Raskolnikov will admit that he was wrong, but it is unlikely that Luzhin will ever be able to recognize that he is a destructive figure. He is so engrossed in fantasies of his own nobility that it would be quite hard for him to look realistically at his life and see that he is actually a harmful man whose destruction of others has destroyed himself.

Like Luzhin, Svidrigaylov places his own desires before anything else and does not hesitate to use or destroy people to achieve his ends. From the very beginning of his acquaintance with Raskolnikov, it is evident how little responsibility he is willing to accept for his actions, as we see when he asks whether he was a "monster" or "victim" in his attempt to seduce Dunya.\textsuperscript{24} He further affirms this attitude when he says that it is better not to go abroad because at home "one can blame somebody else for everything and find excuses for oneself."\textsuperscript{25} He apparently knows--unlike Luzhin--that such scapegoating is a lie, but to Svidrigaylov it does not matter. A respectable appearance is very important to Luzhin, but Svidrigaylov's appetites, not his respectability, are what matter most to him. If scapegoating can help satisfy him, he will do it. The morality is irrelevant. Sacrificing others to his own needs or blaming them for what is wrong

\textsuperscript{24}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 269. \textsuperscript{25}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 274.
with him is effective, even though he knows that these actions are lies. He thinks he will get what he wants without ever having to take responsibility for his actions, and he can avoid the terror of facing himself honestly.

The life Svidrigaylov led with his wife was one of escape from responsibility. She freed him as he was about to be sent to debtors' prison and took him to the country "like some treasure." In doing so, she prevented him from having to suffer and instead allowed him to live an idyllic, perhaps even womb-like existence. His name, Arkady, suggests the pastoral setting of Arcadia, celebrated in idyllic literature since Alexandrian Greece. Pastoral literature tends to present a world unmarred by suffering, a world in which life is yet unblemished. Like the pastoral setting, Marfa Petrovna—a woman five years older than her husband—perhaps offered him a withdrawal into the womb of the mother. Certainly she took responsibility for the estate, provided her husband with all his needs (yet kept him financially dependent on her), and eventually was the one to provide him with his money. In addition, she allowed him to be unfaithful to her, according to a contract they drew up—once again catering to his irresponsibility and childish desire to live

\[26\] Ibid., p. 273.

\[27\] Ibid., pp. 273-274.
only for himself. Though we are dependent on Svidrigaylov for this information, and his veracity is certainly questionable, it seems apparent that in all his married life, he was allowed to satiate himself in the pleasant, irresponsible world of the womb. He was able to escape suffering and was never forced to confront himself.

On the surface, and certainly in his actions, Svidrigaylov does not give any serious consideration to other peoples' needs. In discussing Marfa Petrovna, he tells Raskolnikov that he has no "misgivings" about her death, that "everything was quite regular and correct," as revealed in the autopsy. Though he claims that in striking her he "behaved atrociously," his addition of "and so on and so forth" reveals that he does not especially care whether he behaved badly or not. He is willing, perhaps, to admit that he did not act properly towards his wife, but he is too self-centered to try, or even to think that it is desirable, to change. He further argues that his behavior was not really so bad after all because Marfa Petrovna probably enjoyed being struck by the whip: it gave her a reason to escape her boredom by flying into town. This insidious argument shifts to his wife the responsibility for his

\[28\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 453}. \ 29\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 270}. \ 30\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 270}. \ 31\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp. 270-271}.\]
having struck her. Just as he tells Dunya that she killed Marfa Petrovna, he tells Raskolnikov that his wife had desired the blows he gave her and that he therefore bears no guilt.\textsuperscript{32}

Though he seems unconcerned about others, Svidrigaylov is haunted by the ghosts of those he has destroyed. In this matter, he and Raskolnikov are very much alike. Luzhin cannot be haunted this way because he believes that everything he does is noble; Raskolnikov and Svidrigaylov are not so easily deceived by their fantasies. Just before Svidrigaylov appears in Raskolnikov's flat, Raskolnikov has been dreaming of the killing of the moneylender and has been feeling regret over murdering Lizaveta.\textsuperscript{33} As a parallel, Svidrigaylov tells him that he has recently seen Marfa Petrovna's ghost.\textsuperscript{34} Though he never admits it overtly, he probably did kill his wife. He almost tells Dunya that he poisoned her, but he makes Dunya responsible by claiming that he would have killed only to get Dunya's love.\textsuperscript{35} In addition to seeing Marfa Petrovna's ghost, he has seen the ghost of a servant he drove to commit suicide.\textsuperscript{36} The night before he kills himself, Svidrigaylov dreams of the fourteen year old girl whose suicide resulted from his violation of

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., p. 476. \textsuperscript{33}Ibid., pp. 265-267.
\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., p. 274. \textsuperscript{35}Ibid., p. 476. \textsuperscript{36}Ibid., p. 276.
of her.\textsuperscript{37} The fact that these ghosts have come to haunt him indicates that he perhaps retains some conscience; yet in speaking of these incidents, he refuses to take responsibility but instead tells Raskolnikov that they are simply "sombre and mysterious stories.\textsuperscript{38} Though Svidrigaylov is tormented subconsciously by the deaths he has caused, he dismisses them on the conscious level and claims that his "conscience is perfectly clear.\textsuperscript{39}

In his story about Dunya, and in his subsequent actions, Svidrigaylov reveals how capable he is of destruction. In the beginning of Dunya's stay at the estate, Svidrigaylov avoided her because in his contract with Marfa Petrovna, he was not to fall in love with a woman of their "own class.\textsuperscript{40} However, he did scheme to win her if he could, as he tells her brother:

You may judge then, after that, how grateful I was bound to feel to Marfa Petrovna for having told your sister so many mysterious and interesting things about me. I can't judge what impression they made on her, but in any case, it was all to my advantage. In spite of Avdotya Romanovna's real aversion for me, and my persistently gloomy and forbidding aspect, she grew sorry for me at last, sorry for a lost soul. And when a girl's heart begins to feel pity for a man, then of course she is in the greatest danger. She begins to want to "save" him, and make him see reason, and raise him up, and put before him nobler aims, and awaken

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., p. 487.  \textsuperscript{38}Ibid., p. 454.  \textsuperscript{39}Ibid., p. 270.  \textsuperscript{40}Ibid., pp. 453-454.
him to a new life and new activities—well, everybody knows what can be dreamt of in such circumstances. I realized at once that the bird had flown into the net of its own accord, and I began to make preparations in my turn.\(^4\)

He knows precisely what Dunya's aims were, and his own account virtually makes a mockery of them. He desires only to use her hope of saving him for the purpose of seducing her. He calculates that he might win her if he uses flattery and claims to be "greedy for light."\(^5\) As a side-note, he tells Raskolnikov of his strategy in seducing a very chaste married woman by convincing her that he was entirely at fault and that she was not responsible; he believes that he could have successfully used the same strategy with Dunya, had he been more patient.\(^6\)

Svidrigaylov's revelations about himself are not confessions because he will not admit to having any contrition or remorse for his destructive actions, and in fact he seems to be boasting about them. His straightforward account of the attempted seduction, however, does reveal a lot about him. He has no respect for Dunya, even though he claims to love her. If he had respected her, he would not have been silently mocking her hope of saving him by concentrating only on how he could use it to seduce her. Instead he

\(^4\) Ibid., p. 455.  
\(^5\) Ibid., pp. 456-457.  
\(^6\) Ibid., p. 457.
would at least have listened without plotting. Like Luzhin, Svidrigaylov is an actor, calculating what roles he must play to obtain his ends.

We can see Svidrigaylov's role playing in his conversations with Raskolnikov and in his meeting with Dunya. From the very start, he claims to want an interview with Dunya so that he may give her enough money to make her able to break with Luzhin. He also says that he knows he was unpleasant with her and wants to make restitution but that he no longer loves her. Svidrigaylov, as we later see, is lying. He is actually trying to use any means possible to get Dunya under his power. He will buy her if necessary, and thus make her a sort of prostitute. When he learns her brother's secret, he has an even more effective way of getting to her: he can demand her favors so that he will not betray her brother. He arranges a meeting with her and by deceptively playing the role of a concerned friend, he gets Dunya into his flat. In the flat, with the door locked, he is willing to rape her if necessary, but he would prefer to have her willingly submit, believing that she is not responsible because he would have used force.

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44 Ibid., p. 279.
46 Ibid., p. 474.
48 Ibid., p. 475.
47 Ibid., pp. 468-469.
Despite his claim to love Dunya, Svidrigaylov wants only to use her body to satisfy his sexual violence. He is willing to buy or rape her, so long as he conquers her. In fact, the theme of sexual conquest is reinforced by his use of the argument that she is not responsible—a parallel to his seduction of the married woman which was so much "fun" and so "little trouble." Conquest, not love, is all that matters to him. And the behavior he demonstrates with Dunya is indicative only of his attitude toward women in general. Svidrigaylov regards women as toys, to be played with and discarded. He knows that if he marries his fiancée and tires of her, Madame Resslich will make her a high class prostitute. He, of course, is indifferent, just as he is rather indifferent about whether he seduces or rapes Dunya.

Throughout his discussions with Raskolnikov, Svidrigaylov shifts the blame for his conduct to other people or is entirely indifferent to his own culpability. He is not to be blamed for his passions: women are. He claims that it was not his fault that Dunya had such a pretty face; he could not control his passion for such a lovely woman; Dunya, not he, is responsible. When Raskolnikov asks who he is, Svidrigaylov—like Raskolnikov—does not give a straightforward answer. Instead, he says: "Who am I? You know: a

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49Ibid., p. 457. 50Ibid., p. 460. 51Ibid., p. 456.
gentleman, who served two years in the cavalry, then knocked about here in St. Petersburg, then married Marfa Petrovna and lived in the country. There's my biography for you. 52

Svidrigaylov's glib response is only a superficial account of who he is. He does not face or reveal himself at all; rather he tells only a few external details about his life and nothing of who he is. In reality, Svidrigaylov is as afraid as Raskolnikov to admit his humanness by confessing his culpability. Instead of confessing, he merely tells, without contrition, some things he has done. Thus he escapes responsibility, never confronts himself, and destroys himself emotionally and finally physically.

Luzhin and Svidrigaylov are both irresponsible people, for neither of them ever faces the truth about himself and admits that he is a human being, responsible for his actions. These two men, and Luzhin especially, embody Raskolnikov's great man theory and present it to the protagonist in its true hideous form. Both men are capable of destroying others to advance themselves, and neither ever stops to think about the morality involved. Like Raskolnikov's great man, these men can "kill without casuistry"—whether literally or figuratively. 53

It appears, however, that Svidrigaylov is less

52 Ibid., p. 450.

53 Ibid., p. 401.
successful than Luzhin. At least his subconscious is haunted by his actions, while Luzhin's self-delusion has rendered him incapable of being haunted by anything.

Because they symbolize his theory, Raskolnikov's reaction to these men is significant. Luzhin, who actually regards himself as a great man and noble benefactor, is an "offensive fellow" in Raskolnikov's view. After he tries to sacrifice Sonya, Raskolnikov is so disgusted that he refers to Luzhin's actions as "evil"—though they are no more vile than Raskolnikov's sacrificial murder. Raskolnikov hates Luzhin from the first time he hears of him and becomes increasingly convinced that the man is a scoundrel. Yet Luzhin has only succeeded in doing what Raskolnikov has wanted to do: destroy his own humanity.

Raskolnikov's attitude toward Svidrigaylov is somewhat less severe. He is both repelled and fascinated by him. At one point he seeks him out, hoping he can learn "something new" from the older man. This decision is significant because he is trying to escape from what Sonya represents: the "irrevocable sentence" of his need to confess. Svidrigaylov, however, does not teach him anything except what he himself has been doing all along—escaping responsibility.

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54 Ibid., p. 309. 55 Ibid., p. 391. 56 Ibid., p. 444. 57 Ibid., p. 444.
After several minutes of listening to this empty chatter, Raskolnikov is "convinced that Svidrigaylov was the most shallow and worthless scoundrel on the face of the earth." In passing judgment on Svidrigaylov's scapegoating, Raskolnikov consciously passes judgment on himself as well.

In seeing through Luzhin and Svidrigaylov, Raskolnikov sees through and is disgusted by his own actions. By judging these men harshly, he implies that his own values have not been so entirely twisted that he can completely accept the sacrifice of others. Though Sonya and Porfiry represent a harsher destiny, their way is more attractive to Raskolnikov. When he seeks out Sonya, he is moved by her compassion; when he finds Svidrigaylov, he is revolted by his emptiness.

\[58\text{Ibid., p. 452.}\]
CHAPTER V

CONFESSION AND REDEMPTION

After confessing to Sonya and being told by Porfiry that he is a murderer, Raskolnikov is increasingly pulled apart by his dual desires for redemption and estrangement. It is significant that at the times when Raskolnikov's actions do not affirm his warped idea of greatness, he is alive enough to feel normal human feelings. After Sonya guesses that he is the murderer and shows her love for him, his hard heart is "melted . . . in an instant."¹ When she asks him if he suffers, his heart is again softened; but he regards his reaction as weakness rather than strength, when truly it is a sign that he has not completely destroyed himself.² Before his confession to Sonya, his heart was resistant to being softened in this way; now, however, after he has made a small step towards reconciliation with human beings, he is made responsive to feeling. In his final meeting with his mother, as he is about to confess to the police, he opens himself up to her, tells her he loves her, and asks her to pray for him; he lets her make the sign of

¹Dostoevsky, op. cit., p. 395.
²Ibid., p. 397.
the cross over him, and they weep together, for his "heart was all at once softened." 3

Though he does exhibit humility and feeling on some occasions, Raskolnikov vacillates between his desire for union and his desire for estrangement. After he confesses to Sonya, he feels that her love is a horrible burden. 4 Likewise he claims that if he were alone, unloved and unloving, "all this would never have happened." 5 In rejecting love, he tries to reject his tie with others. When he sees his sister before he goes to confess, he repudiates the idea that his murder was even a crime, that instead he should be absolved of "forty sins" for killing a person like the money-lender. 6 Yet he realizes, when he lets himself feel, that he is at least responsible for having made his mother and sister unhappy. 7 Depriving others of their happiness is Sonya's definition of sin, and in this one instance—when applied to his beloved mother and sister—Raskolnikov realizes that she is right.

The main difficulty that Raskolnikov has at this point is in reaching a state of contrition. His confession to Sonya at least begins to soften him, but he still holds

3 Ibid., p. 495. 4 Ibid., p. 404.
5 Ibid., p. 500. Italics are in text.
6 Ibid., p. 498. 7 Ibid., p. 499.
tenaciously to the hope that his *hubristic* ideal was not wrong. It is for this reason that we see the contradiction of his seeking union one moment and estrangement the next. On his way to visit Sonya before he gives himself up, Raskolnikov thinks that every person he sees is a "scoundrel and a criminal by his very nature, and worse still, an idiot"; he claims also to "hate them all." Yet at Sonya's he once again makes at least a small effort toward communion by taking the cross and making the sign of the cross "several times." In doing so he symbolizes his acceptance of suffering and of humbling himself, but he does not yet abandon himself to what his gestures mean.

Raskolnikov's confession to the earth does have a healing effect on him, but because he does not fully confess and is not yet humbled with contrition, it does not have the efficacy of a sacramental confession. Before he finds himself at the crossroads, he has been thinking of how much he wants to be isolated from everyone. When he recalls that Sonya told him to declare himself at the crossroads, he wants this "new sensation," but his reaction is not merely cynical sensation seeking; instead it involves all of him: "a single spark was kindled in his spirit and suddenly, like a fire,

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enveloped his whole being. Everything in him softened on the instant and the tears gushed out. " Again, in making a sort of confession his hardness is softened. In letting himself feel and weep, kiss the earth and embrace it, he shows that he wants to find union with the earth and his mortality. But he hesitates and does not say to the world, "I am a murderer"; he does not make a full confession but holds back what is most important.

The imagery Dostoevsky uses while Raskolnikov makes his way from Sonya's flat to the police station is colored strongly by the imagery of Christ's passion--His acceptance of mortality. At Sonya's Raskolnikov takes up his cross, and at the crossroads he realizes that Sonya is accompanying him on his "distressful way." The choice of words here is striking, for the Latin equivalent is via dolorosa. The Via Dolorosa was the road by which criminals were led from Jerusalem to their crucifixion on Golgotha, and the way Christ traveled to His death. In fact, as Raskolnikov embraces the earth, one of the bystanders says that Raskolnikov is going on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Christ's last journey to Jerusalem was the pilgrimage to His crucifixion. When Raskolnikov says, "if I must drink this cup," he echoes Christ's words from the suffering in the Garden of Gethsamane.

11 Ibid., p. 505.
12 Ibid., p. 505.
13 Ibid., p. 506.
14 Ibid., p. 505.
15 Ibid., p. 506.
Dostoevsky does not use these images ironically but instead tries to show that Raskolnikov is at least accepting the suffering for his crime. Through suffering he is making some atonement and is making himself capable of redemption, though he has no true contrition as yet. If he comes to understand that his power is in love and humility and that his strength was not "undermined" but increased through confession, then he will be reborn into life. Suffering is the source by which he can reach this understanding.

In his confession to the police, Raskolnikov volunteers, for the first time in the novel, that he is a murderer. Even here, after confessing to Sonya and to the earth, he finds the words almost impossible to say. Though the first time he actually calls himself a murderer is in front of Dunya, she already knows of his crime. The police, with the exception of Porfiry, do not. He must walk in and tell them who he is, and he must leave the guessing games behind. When the Squib speaks of Svidrigaylov's suicide, Raskolnikov thinks he has found a way out of confessing; he turns to leave, perhaps to kill himself or perhaps because Svidrigaylov can no longer reveal his secret. When he does return and is trying "vainly" to confess, "there

16 Ibid., p. 427.
17 Ibid., p. 499.
18 Ibid., pp. 509-510.
emerged only incoherent sounds," as in his attempts to confess to Zametov and Sonya.\textsuperscript{19} This time, however, he masters himself and says "quietly and brokenly, but distinctly": 

"It was I who killed the old woman and her sister, Lizaveta, with an axe, and robbed them."\textsuperscript{20} He finally tells the truth about himself, instead of forcing others to tell him.

Even after he has confessed to the police and has told who he is, Raskolnikov will not accept the meaning of his suffering and find redemption through it. At his trial he lies, saying that his murder was motivated simply by robbery.\textsuperscript{21} In prison he isolates himself from the other convicts and is brutally rude to Sonya, who has traveled to Siberia to be with him.\textsuperscript{22} He is sullen because his pride has been wounded,\textsuperscript{23} for he was unable to "kill without casuistry."\textsuperscript{24} He still believes that his theory was valid but that he was not the extraordinary man who had the right to kill; he will admit only that "an illegal action has been committed" and that it would have been perfectly fine had a great man done the killing.\textsuperscript{25} Raskolnikov at least sees the contrast

\begin{footnotes}
\item[19]Ibid., p. 510.
\item[20]Ibid., p. 511. Italics are in text.
\item[21]Ibid., p. 513.
\item[22]Ibid., pp. 518-519.
\item[23]Ibid., p. 520.
\item[24]Ibid., p. 401.
\item[25]Ibid., p. 521.
\end{footnotes}
between the other convicts and himself. He recognizes that they love life intensely while he is not even alive. He longs for remorse because he wants to feel *something*, but he feels only deadness and a "chasm" between himself and the others.  

In the weeks surrounding Easter, the drama of Raskolnikov's resurrection reaches its crisis and consummation. While he is in the chapel preparing for Easter communion, the other convicts turn on him because he is an "atheist." Though he has never told them his beliefs, they do know that he is out of communion with humanity.  

Raskolnikov, in estranging himself, has no business partaking in the sacraments—particularly the Eucharist—and the other convicts feel instinctively that his presence is virtually a sacrilege. In fact, he falls ill at the end of Lent, before he even has the opportunity to receive communion on Easter. The dream Raskolnikov has during his illness shows him, finally, how wrong his theory was. The dream is the theory, pushed to its logical extreme. It reveals an anarchic world of "extraordinary men" murdering and cannibalizing their prey.  

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26 Ibid., pp. 520-522.

27 Ibid., p. 522.

28 Ibid., pp. 523-524.
he has not done with his previous dreams), and when he recovers from his illness, he anxiously desires the human companionship that Sonya can offer.

Raskolnikov is raised to life in the second week of Easter.²⁹ When Sonya is ill, he finally becomes aware that he wants to have her near him, and when she appears at his work, he gently, not irritably, holds her hand—until he casts himself on the earth at her feet, weeping with contrition and love:

For a moment she was terribly frightened, and her face grew white. She looked down at him, trembling. But at once, in that instant, she understood. Infinite happiness shone in her eyes; she had understood, and she no longer doubted that he loved her, loved her forever, and that now at last the moment had come ... They tried to speak, but they could not. Tears stood in their eyes. They were both pale and thin, but in their white sick faces there glowed the dawn of a new future, a perfect resurrection into a new life. Love had raised them from the dead, and the heart of each held endless springs of life for the heart of the other.³⁰

Though he speaks no words, this is Raskolnikov's true confession, both to Sonya and the earth. He again weeps before Sonya and flings himself down on the earth, but when he performed these actions before, he could neither admit that he was a murderer nor that he should be humble and seek

²⁹Ibid., p. 524.

³⁰Ibid., p. 526. Ellipses appear in text and are transcribed exactly as they appear in print.
communion. Though he did admit at the police station that he killed (and has no more need to confess it), he still lacked contrition. In this final confession, Raskolnikov gains the contrition which enables him to humble himself and accept both love and the community of human beings. That this is true is shown in his feeling of unity with others; after his resurrection we see that the other convicts treat him kindly, and he is aware that he is no longer estranged from them. He subordinates his reason to his feelings without shame and is so involved in living that "life" supersedes "logic." Raskolnikov has plunged into life, as Porfiry told him to do, and has found life by accepting human love.

31 Ibid., pp. 526-527.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Raskolnikov, as we have seen, vacillates between seeking spiritual death and redemption. Before he murders, he knows he will go to Razumikhin and confess to Sonya; even after he kills, he is revolted by Luzhin and Svidrigaylov. This inner struggle and frequent desire to confess make his rebirth in the epilogue the thematically valid conclusion to the novel. Yet such eminent Dostoevsky critics as Ernest J. Simmons and Konstantin Mochulsky have argued that the conclusion is merely a tag, that it is an artistically weak ending to a powerful novel.

In Dostoevsky: the Making of a Novelist, Simmons writes that the ending is "neither artistically palatable nor psychologically sound" and that Dostoevsky should have concluded the novel with Raskolnikov's suicide. Mochulsky, in his excellent critical biography, scornfully rejects the "pious lie" that Raskolnikov can be redeemed, for we know him "too well." In these remarks, both men reject the evidence

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present throughout the novel, from Marmeladov's confession to Raskolnikov's achievement of contrition.

Raskolnikov's dreams before the murder reveal his desire for contrition and communion. Though he has attempted to sever himself from humanity and has contemplated murder, the dream of the peasant Mikolka beating his mare to death fills Raskolnikov with horror and repugnance. As Ruth Mortimer points out, Raskolnikov confronts himself in this dream, both in the furious peasant and in the child: the boy's horror is Raskolnikov's own. When the boy Raskolnikov weeps over the victim, he foreshadows the murderer Raskolnikov's final achievement of contrition in the end, as he weeps at Sonya's feet.

The other dream, which recurs many times on the day of the murder, signifies Raskolnikov's wish for wholeness and communion with others. In the dream, he is at an oasis with palms encircling him; he is "drinking the water from a stream which flowed babbling beside him." In the symbolism of this dream, the oasis, of course, is a refuge in the midst of an arid desert—the desert symbolizing Raskolnikov's desolate inner life. The palms, significantly,

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3Dostoevsky, op. cit., pp. 52-57.


5Dostoevsky, op. cit., p. 65.
form a circle, symbolizing the psychological, spiritual, and emotional wholeness of the Self: internal unity and the unity of the Self with the external world. Water, a baptismal symbol, signifies rebirth and unity with others. The fact that this dream recurs shows how desperately Raskolnikov desires to be reunited with humanity, to be reborn, and to become whole within himself.

In the first dream, the juxtaposition of Raskolnikov the murderer and Raskolnikov the contrite penitent suggests that through murder he seeks to drive himself to contrition and communion. He has sought union in his encounters with the Marmeladovs and the drunk girl, but his theory—with its plaguing question of whether or not he is greater than others—continues to haunt and overwhelm him. It is important to note that Raskolnikov is driven by an inner compulsion to commit murder, against his own feelings of horror and loathing. The circumstance of hearing that Alëna Ivanovna would be alone the following evening decides for him that he will kill her, despite his prayer only moments before to "renounce this accursed ... fantasy." When his

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7 Dostoevsky, op. cit., pp. 57-59. Ellipses are in text and are transcribed exactly as they appear in print.
fate has been decided, he feels like a "man condemned to
death" rather than like a great man who can take life
without remorse. He is driven by his subconscious to kill,
yet he subconsciously wishes also to be reborn. The murder
then results from his need to be shattered in order to be
made whole; since his previous efforts have failed, it is
only by killing that he can finally answer the question of
whether or not he is super-human. In his conscious life,
murder is the catalyst which forces him to realize his sub-
conscious longings, for through it he confronts the truth
that he is only human, that he is not greater than others,
and that he can achieve wholeness only by accepting his
place in the human community.

Throughout the novel, Raskolnikov's search for con-
trition and communion is repeatedly dramatized in his own
actions and in his encounters with others. Marmeladov,
Sonya, and Porfiry tell him of his need to confess and
accept his place in fallen humanity; he attempts many
times to do so but continues to struggle with his great
man theory; he rejects the men who represent his theory;
he weeps and asks his mother for prayer and asks Sonya to
read him the raising of Lazarus; and after prostrating him-
sel on the earth and accepting his suffering, he admits

8Ibid., p. 59.
his crime to the police. Considering these facts, Raskolnikov's redemption is not psychologically unsound but is rather the logical psychological and thematic conclusion to the novel. He has wavered for a long time between rejecting the great man theory that he has already found repulsive and accepting the humanness and humility that he knows have given Sonya such great spiritual power.

That Dostoevsky intended Raskolnikov's rebirth to be a fulfillment of the reading of the Lazarus narrative is evident in his precise account of when his protagonist is redeemed: the second week of Easter.9 In both Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, the Gospel passage read that week is the account of St. Thomas's doubting and coming to believe in the resurrection. In Orthodoxy, this Sunday is called "St. Thomas's Sunday" and "Renewal Sunday"; its importance is demonstrated by the fact that it is celebrated with the brilliant hymns of the eighth century Greek father, St. John of Damascus—composer of the Easter Liturgy hymns.10 In one of the hymns for Renewal Sunday, St. John writes that it is a day of "triumphant gladness" because of the resurrection, that it is the "Spring of souls," for Christ, "as a sun, hath risen" to disperse "all the winter of our sins,"

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9Ibid., p. 524.

and drive them away with "His Light." It is thematically appropriate that the doubter Raskolnikov should find his own resurrection during the week of St. Thomas's Sunday and that he should be renewed and freed from his spiritual winter during the week of renewal.

Raskolnikov's redemption, however, is not directly a Christian conversion but a resurrection into life through love. Before, he has not wanted to be loved and has been unable to love. When he asks himself earlier if he loves Sonya, he tries to believe that he does not, for love requires an acceptance of humanness, and the person who seeks to be more than human can only be threatened by love. By accepting human love, Raskolnikov wants to atone for all his wrongs to Sonya; he feels alive and loves life, and he is open to other people, to life, to love, and to God. He has repudiated the idea that he is separate from human beings and has instead become one with them.

In trying to escape his humanness and become an extraordinary man, Raskolnikov has sought to escape the suffering and death which are the lot of mortal men. When he murders Alěna Ivanovna, he rejects his suffering by flinging her cypress wood cross down on her chest; but

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11 Ibid., pp. 53-54. 12 Dostoevsky, op. cit., p. 504. 13 Ibid., p. 75.
when he finally accepts his suffering by confessing, he is wearing the cypress wood cross which Sonya has given him. By taking up the cross, Raskolnikov symbolically unites himself with his victims and with humanity. Through trying to escape suffering and become super-human, he found only greater suffering and spiritual death. In estranging himself from life, he became a walking dead man. By not accepting his cross, he bore an intolerable burden.

Thomas à Kempis brilliantly describes the dynamics of accepting or rejecting the cross when he writes that the cross is ever-present and inescapable, for a person can never escape himself; if a person accepts his cross, he will be led to his "desired goal," but if he rejects it, he will find only a heavier burden. Suffering, as Thomas knew, is a powerful ally if we accept it, a deadly enemy if we refuse. By confessing himself to be human, by allowing himself to love and seek union with others, and by walking the Via Dolorosa through his life, Raskolnikov finds the life and peace in the way of the cross. In finally accepting the cross he has always carried—the suffering inherent in being human—Raskolnikov is borne towards the goal of

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14Ibid., p. 502.

becoming the truly great man: the man whose power is in his humility, suffering, and love; the man who finds redemption through sacrificing himself, not others.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

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