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THE IMAGE SYSTEM OF F. M. DOSTOEVSKY'S NOVEL "CRIME AND PUNISHMENT" AS A REFLECTION OF THE WRITER'S EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract: The article examines how the existential philosophies of Karl Jaspers and Jean-Paul Sartre are reflected in F. M. Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment*. The approach to this problem is multi-layered and seeks to illuminate the essence of guilt, freedom, and moral choice through the novel's system of images.

Keywords: philosophy of guilt, crime, moral choice, suffering, the subconscious.

Jaspers's philosophy of guilt is grounded in an existential recognition of one's own culpability, undertaken in solitude. He distinguishes several forms of guilt—civil, political, moral, etc.—but considers metaphysical guilt the most significant. It renders "each and every person responsible for all injustice in the world, especially for crimes committed in his time and with his knowledge" [3, p. 14].

Metaphysical guilt also underlies Sartre's philosophy and is generated by the "abandonment" of human existence. As interpreted by the philosopher Yury Davydov, Sartrean "abandonment" is "the existence of a person who from the very outset finds himself in a world not chosen by himself, yet sufficiently rigid, conditioning the stern inevitability of the situations in which he finds himself" [2, p. 149].

Thus, the state of guilt, in its metaphysical understanding, is defined by a threshold, crisis condition of the person. If for Sartre one bears responsibility—and hence guilt—only in an alien world, for Jaspers guilt arises in any world. Consequently, metaphysical guilt is embedded from the start in the imperfection of human nature. The problem of guilt also lies at the core of Dostoevsky's existential thinking.

An analysis of the image system of *Crime and Punishment* clarifies this problem through a multi-level approach. When guilt is considered as a motive of crime, it becomes evident that the very process of self-awareness leads the person to a state of culpability. The protagonist, Rodion Raskolnikov, unable to change the terrifying reality around him and confronted daily with its manifold forms (violated innocence, depravity, drunkenness), seeks to understand his place in life. His effort at self-assertion drives him to the question: "Am I a trembling creature, or do I have the right?" [1, p. 67].

Raskolnikov's article, where he divides people into "ordinary" and "extraordinary" and probes the psychology of the criminal, is the foundation of his own philosophy: "...the man of the future destroys the present in the name of the better and moves the world forward" [1, p. 73], which implies that for a great end all means are permissible, in other words, "everything is allowed." The novel furnishes many examples, not only from Raskolnikov's life but also from those around him: Dunya Raskolnikova's marriage of necessity, perceived by her mother as a natural sacrifice, "there, Rodia, priceless Rodia, there is the firstborn" [1, p. 53]; Katerina Ivanovna sends her stepdaughter Sonia to the streets to save the small children from starvation; the father hides money from his daughter for drink; a fourteen-year-old drunk girl on the street with a clumsily buttoned dress. At first glance these are external causes, yet they generate an inner

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one—a subconscious sense of guilt dwelling in Raskolnikov from the outset. In the novel it emerges in dreams that return him to childhood. As a symbol of subconscious guilt appears the image of the tormented nag; the little boy's kiss on the horse's bloody muzzle expresses metaphysical guilt for an uncommitted crime: "With a cry he breaks through the crowd to the mare, embraces her dead bloody muzzle and kisses it, kisses her eyes, her lips... Then suddenly he jumps up and, in a frenzy, throws his little fists at Mikolka... 'Papa! Why did they... kill the poor horse?' he sobs, his breath catching, the words bursting from his constricted chest" [1, p. 58].

Crime can be viewed as the result of a free person's moral choice, as an expression of subconscious guilt, and as a "trial" of absolute freedom located beyond conscience and repentance. Raskolnikov's question is more properly considered from the standpoint of free moral choice. As Davydov notes, absolute freedom, which recognizes no moral norms of society, can coincide for a time with someone else's striving for freedom, but this is pure accident. Absolute freedom is where there is no conscience and no repentance after the crime. Having killed the pawnbroker, Raskolnikov cannot uproot conscience from his soul or murder the principle itself. His guilt, in terms of moral choice, implies his punishment. His torment after the crime is a model of genuinely existential testing: to verify the truth of one's idea by one's own nature. Raskolnikov's nature says "no" to the deed he committed, affirming that the difference between good and evil is not merely subjective. Human imperfection in *Crime and Punishment* is presented through diverse types that disclose guilt in different ways. The image of Marmeladov embodies the author's idea that guilt inevitably leads to punishment. This is most vividly shown when Semyon Marmeladov returns home: "Marmeladov, without entering the room, fell to his knees in the very doorway..." [1, p. 58], and when Katerina Ivanovna begins to search him, "...he immediately, obediently, and meekly spread his arms to both sides, thus facilitating the search of his pockets..." [1, p. 59]; "...humbly crawled after her on his knees, repeating, 'and this is a delight to me! This is not pain to me, but delight...'" [1, p. 59]. Bearing responsibility for the world's pain, Marmeladov not only feels a kind of pleasure in punishment but elevates punishment to a necessity, taking it as self-evident and therefore as due.

Unconscious crime as another form of guilt is embodied in Svidrigailov. His crimes are existential (subconscious) in that they are not grounded in a sense of guilt. Perceiving the world "naturally," Svidrigailov does not ponder the accursed questions of being; his deeds are driven by momentary desires: the thirst for money and pleasure. Sorting people according to their usefulness for his aims, he does not reflect on responsibility for his crimes. And yet images flickering up from the subconscious—embers of culpability—trouble his conscience (the apparition of the five-year-old already corrupted girl). His suicide is therefore existential as well: he is weary of living, and life itself becomes meaningless to him.

A special state of guilt belongs to Sonia Marmeladova. Her image may be read as a variant of "guilt without guilt." She feels guilty for the sufferings of everyone around her; hence to many her sacrifice appears a moral transgression, a fall. Sonia's "crime" is impelled not by guilt for herself but for her loved ones: her father's drunkenness, Katerina Ivanovna's illness, the hunger of her siblings. Sonia lays bare the degree to which the novel's characters are capable of recognizing guilt. In relation to her, each character experiences her moral purity, through which his own purification occurs (the problem of catharsis). Sonia embodies the idea of punishment because she absorbs universal sorrow and bears punishment for the sins of all. Notably, in nearly every later novel Dostoevsky introduces such a figure, awakening the criminal's conscience: Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot*, Elder Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Nelly in *Humiliated and Insulted*.

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Analyzing *Crime and Punishment* and considering its image system as a reflection of the writer's existential philosophy, we may conclude that the guilt of Dostoevsky's characters is personal in nature.

In this respect Dostoevsky's philosophy stands opposed to Sartre's treatment of guilt. In Dostoevsky, the sense of guilt for a committed crime is always personal, whereas in Sartre crime and punishment occur under the pressure of fate, which removes personal responsibility.

The action of Sartre's drama *The Flies* is based on the myth of Orestes. His return to Argos, the meeting with Electra, and the murder of his mother Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus would seem to enact punishment. Orestes' return is predetermined, as is his beginning his own path with the murder of his mother and her lover to avenge his father, King Agamemnon. Argos becomes a symbol of conscience's torments, a city of stigma, lament, and public repentance. The god of flies and death, Jupiter, symbolizes the citizens' lack of will and complete dependence. Yet Orestes' blood crime raises the crucial question: for what did it occur, to free the city from slavery or himself from the pangs of conscience? Orestes' guilt is not personal (as in Raskolnikov) but universal, since the deed is committed by divine decree, predetermined from above. This predetermination grounds the difference between Sartre's and Dostoevsky's resolutions of guilt.

For Sartre, crime and punishment are ordained by divine will and therefore lack a personal motive, while for Dostoevsky punishment always issues from the person himself. The apparent duality—"I am all" in Dostoevsky versus "I am nothing" in Sartre—is only ostensible, for Sartre's "I am nothing" ultimately unfolds into "I am all and everything."

The question of personal freedom in Sartre and Dostoevsky converges on defeat: the crimes of their heroes end in the failure of their revolt. Yet whereas Orestes' revolt ends in compromise with divine power, Raskolnikov's revolt ends in the recognition of divine power, whatever one deems its primary cause.

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