

Crime and Punishment Analysis

by Dean Gladish

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Dean Gladish

Wysocki

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In this excerpt from his novel *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky describes Raskolnikov's unexpected encounter with a drunken girl and a predator. In the first part of the passage, Raskolnikov encounters a girl who appears to be drunk and likely not aware of her surroundings. Initially, he instinctively wants to protect the girl, and makes this intention clear to a nearby constable. But moments later, he questions his motivation for wanting to help her and tells the constable to leave the girl and the dandy alone. In the second part of the passage, when he is by himself, Raskolnikov expresses his conflicting inner thoughts. The author uses Raskolnikov's reactions to this situation in order to show his inner torment and his estrangement from society as a whole. Throughout the narrative, Dostoevsky uses a despairing and fatalistic tone to characterize Raskolnikov implicitly and makes effective use of the literary devices of conflict, stream of consciousness, and diction to reveal Raskolnikov's complex character and conflicting thoughts.

In the first part of the passage, Dostoevsky constructs conflict amongst the characters through dialogue and action in order to reveal Raskolnikov as a multi-faceted character. The passage begins with Raskolnikov asking the constable to help "to keep [the girl] out of this scoundrel's hands!" and revealing his sympathy for her. The girl, not wanting to be helped, dismisses them as "shameful wretches". Suddenly, Raskolnikov feels a sense of revulsion toward the girl, changes his mind, and shouts to the constable in pursuit, "Let them be! What is it to do with you?". Raskolnikov's exclamation suggests that he wants to transcend his moral and lawful obligations. Raskolnikov suddenly sees worldly happenings and obligations as irrelevant, revealing a certain aspect of his character that clashes with his inherently compassionate nature - he is trying to see himself as an *Übermensch*. Raskolnikov evidently concludes, based on his rather nihilistic value system, that he must transcend society and distance himself from its constructs in order to rise above it. Throughout this first section, the author demonstrates the rapid and dramatic conflict between Raskolnikov's inherently compassionate nature and his wish to transcend this nature and be completely rational and intellectual.



In the second part of the passage, which demonstrates Raskolnikov's conflicting thoughts through the literary device of stream of consciousness, Dostoevsky reveals the

manner in which Raskolnikov's outward conflict with the world manifests as a microcosm within his mind. As the constable walks away from him toward the dandy and the girl, leaving him alone, Raskolnikov contemplates what has just happened. Dostoevsky continues to show the remarkable speed with which Raskolnikov alternates between perspectives - he has just given twenty kopecks to the constable to help, and now regrets it with anger. Charity becomes a source of revulsion, and he questions whether he had any right to help and interfere. Sympathy and compassion for the girl become indifference, and he concludes that he should "let them devour each other alive". The author then demonstrates Raskolnikov's feelings of conflict and torment by describing the way in which his statements are dissonant with his inner sense of compassion, with Dostoevsky narrating, "In spite of those strange words he felt very wretched". Raskolnikov sits down on the deserted seat, and thinks by himself. His first thought that he has is that he feels sorry for the girl, saying, "Poor girl!". Raskolnikov is sure that the girl's fate is to be a wreck by the age of "eighteen or nineteen". As a result, Raskolnikov tries to console himself with the application of hard logic and reason, recalling a statement that there is inevitably and necessarily a percentage of people who must go to hell in order that others do not. He then asks himself, "But what if Dounia were one of the percentage! Or another one if not that one?". Raskolnikov is unable to console himself and instead relates the drunken girl to Dounia. He continues to grapple with the moral implications of logic and reason, and Dostoevsky's juxtaposition of Raskolnikov's conflicting statements exemplifies this unresolved struggle with the aforementioned issues.

Dostoevsky also reveals Raskolnikov's uncontrollable feelings of revulsion toward the n  3 ough his words and stylistic choices. For example, in the first paragraph of the excerpt, Raskolnikov refers to the dandy as a "scoundrel" and a "brute", showing an instinctive contempt for the man. In his mind, the man clearly represents evil, narcissism, and he  4 n. In addition to his feelings toward the dandy, Raskolnikov obviously wants to help the girl, and this causes him a great deal of distress. Despite Raskolnikov's later reasoning that he does not want to be involved, he feels "wretched" and sits on his "deserted" seat, and his thoughts stray "aimlessly" - three words that aptly describe Raskolnikov's inner torment, his estrangement, and his state of mind. As Raskolnikov contemplates the situation alone, he begins to rationalize that "[a] certain percentage, they tell us, must every year go... that way... to the devil, I suppose, so that the rest may remain chaste, and not be interfered with." Dostoevsky's use of ellipses serves to illustrate how Raskolnikov thinks - his thought process is irregular and nonlinear, switching from one side to the other and unable to resolve the conflict. Dostoevsky's use of the term "percentage" reveals Raskolnikov's attempt to distance himself emotionally from such

unfortunates as the girl by objectifying them as statistics. Dostoevsky's choice of words further reveals the layers of complexity of Raskolnikov's character.

Throughout the excerpt, Dostoevsky shows that Raskolnikov is tormented by a sense of isolation and the senseless and unpredictable reality of fate. The author shows how Raskolnikov wants to deal with this reality - nihilism and indifference. Raskolnikov asks himself repeatedly, "what does it matter?". In this way, Dostoevsky shows his characteristic divide - his instinctive and emotional nature clashes with his rationality and indifference. Dostoevsky writes that Raskolnikov "longed to forget himself altogether, to forget everything, and then to wake up and begin life anew". Raskolnikov tries to follow his value system, and when he fails in this, he longs to forget everything. He believes that through reason, he can bring order out of disorder and thus gain control over his life. Through the use of several literary elements, Dostoevsky reveals this eccentric and complex character of Raskolnikov.

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GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

GENERAL COMMENTS

Instructor

46/50

PAGE 1



Comment 1

Dean - This is a good introduction but it is too long. You do not need to, nor do you have time to, summarize the passage. Get to the meat of your point as quickly as possible.



Comment 2

I like the point that you make but I think you need more evidence from the passage. The Ubermensch idea is something discussed in class. Give us more detail about HOW D shows Rask's desire to rise above the fray - but limit that evidence to what you have in the passage at hand.

PAGE 2



Comment 3

Which man?



Comment 4

Why?

PAGE 3